

- A nonprofit membership organization inspired by the spirit of traditional Kazakh communities
- Dedicated to building a bridge to Kazakhstan
- A Kazakh cultural resource



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News from the Aul

Volume I, Issue 2

Fall 2005



Aul members participate in a traditional stone ceremony at Zhailau led by Daniyar Baidaralin. Photo courtesy of Susannah Snowden of the Westerly Sun.

Zhailau

More than 90 people came together for a heritage weekend retreat in August to celebrate our children and the wonderful Kazakh culture. The occasion was *Zhailau*, the Kazakh word for the nomads' summer encampment. Our Aul made our summer camp at the Pine Point School in Stonington, CT, and raised our yurt on an adjacent nature preserve managed by the Dennison Pequotsepos Nature Center (DPNC). Both organizations graciously donated the use of their spaces to our Aul. Families came from all along the eastern seaboard to participate, Americans and Kazakhs, from states that included Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York, Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

Families participated in a range of activities over the weekend that included communal meals, setting up the yurt, traditional ceremonies and games, lectures and discussions inside the yurt about nomadic life, movies about nomadic culture, Kazakh cooking, and a hands-on nature presentation for children conducted by a teacher from the DPNC. Above all, it was a wonderful opportunity for families and children to connect.

Pictured above is a traditional stone ceremony held at the end of the weekend to say goodbye and to celebrate the people of our Aul coming together. Daniyar Baidaralin is pictured kneeling in front of our stone pile, his back to the camera, dressed in traditional garb. This special and very meaningful ceremony began with all the participants having to "beg" Daniyar to come out of the yurt, and when we finally made enough noise, he emerged. Then, each person was handed a stone and Daniyar led everyone in a procession around the yurt, hands held high with our stones. Once we all circled the yurt, we followed Daniyar and placed our stones together in a single pile in front of the yurt. We gathered in a circle around our stone pile and Daniyar explained that the stones represented each member of the Aul, and the pile symbolized our new bond and coming together as a community. We held hands,

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Letter from the Administrative Executive Director



Susan Saxon presents an original painting by Daniyar Baidaralin to Paul Geise, the Head of the Pine Point School as a "Thank You" for donating the use of the school for Zhailau. Taking part in the presentation are from left, Kairat O'Toole, Sara Remmler, & Alina O'Toole.

It has been a busy few months! As featured in this newsletter, we had a wonderful Zhailau weekend in August for Aul families, this was followed in September with an appearance at the Pawtucket, RI Arts Festival, and then in October, we exhibited at the national conference of Families for Russian and Ukrainian Adoption—FRUA—in greater Boston.

The Pawtucket Arts festival was a unique opportunity for us to spread the word about Kazakhstan to the general public. Indeed, all the feedback we received at the festival was that our yurt and Daniyar's talks inside it were the hit of the day! I am proud to say that many people who had never heard of Kazakhstan now not only know where it is, but they remain enthralled by the comfortable yurt and beautiful rugs, tapestries, etc. inside. Also, because it was an arts festival, Daniyar had the opportunity to sell his traditional artworks, Vera to sell her dolls, and the Aul to sell Leila's Kazakh souvenirs. Best of all, the festival was an opportunity to meet new friends and hang out with old ones.

The FRUA conference was a great opportunity to network with professionals in the adoption and adoption support community. Since our Aul is specialized to Kazakhstan,

many of the attendees were not interested in us; however, those that were—oh, my gosh. It was a wonderful way to get the word out about our Aul.

I also want to tell you about some exciting things we are working on here at the Aul. Zhanat Baidaralin garnered a commitment from a representative of the MOE in Kazakhstan to sponsor a group of talented children (non-orphanage) to come over next summer to attend our heritage festival camp (the dates of which will be announced in December). If they come, their chaperones will be artisans, musicians, and traditional craftspeople who will double as culture instructors for the rest of us. The only catch – and there is a catch – is that while the MOE will find sponsors to send the group over and pay for their plane tickets, we *have to pay for everything for them once they arrive stateside*. Despite this challenge, we nonetheless remain excited and thrilled at the possibilities and are trying to think of ways to raise funds that will enable our Aul to conduct this and all our other cultural programming.

Another major initiative we are working on is trying to implement the part of our mission that seeks to establish a Kazakh-American cultural center, and we are trying to develop creative ways to generate interest in this exciting project. Zhanat and I are preparing a letter to President Nazarbayev to inform him of all our Aul's activities and to request his assistance. We have no idea how our request will be received, but of course, we remain hopeful. Depending on how things go, we may be asking you, your family and friends to write letters of support for the Aul to Mr. Nazarbayev. Through this process I have been learning so much from Zhanat about the Kazakh approach to such things; every action we take must be calculated very carefully, because missteps can be very detrimental to the cause. We are very lucky to have Zhanat to guide us!

As always, we are trying to figure out ways to raise funds to support our Aul. As this year comes to a close and if you are considering making charitable donations, please consider donating to our Aul. Please know that we are still waiting for our 501(3)c federal tax exemption status. Until we receive it, donations will not be tax deductible—but once we do, all donations will be *retroactively* tax deductible. If you are unable to donate this year, please consider purchasing a Zhailau Kazakh Counting Coloring Book, or a Nauryz home DVD. All proceeds from the sales will go to the Aul, and details on how to purchase are on page 12. Also, please consider donating your time by volunteering for the Aul. We are all volunteers and we need help in all areas—it doesn't matter where you live. Please see page 13 for more details.



It's been a great first year for our Aul, and we look forward to many more. Warmest wishes to everyone for a very happy holiday season! - Susan

Pictured to the left is our new friend, Erlan from Kyrgyzstan, minding the table with Vera Kurmasheva's dolls at the Pawtucket Arts Festival. Vera will donate \$5 from the sale of each doll to our Aul. Email her at Vera.Kur@cox.net



The Aul's set-up at the Pawtucket Arts Festival in Rhode Island.



Susan Saxon and Heather O'Toole at the national FRUA conference in metro Boston.

Zhailau (continued from page 1)

and Daniyar spoke about the wonderful event of the birth of our Aul—a Kazakh aul in America! - and how meaningful this is to himself and his family. Everyone present felt our new bond as an aul, and many people later said they can't wait to come back next year. It was an emotional moment as we all stood together and quietly reflected on what our Aul represents for our families, What a special way to celebrate our children, their tremendous heritage, and the cool new connections among Aul families!

On this, and the next two pages, are photographs of some of the highlights of the weekend. A really big thank you to all of you who came from near and far, and to those of you who were able to help out with set-up and clean-up. And, as always, a special thank you to the Baidaralin-Kurmasheva family who lovingly and tirelessly worked to bring us their native culture at Zhailau.

- Susan Saxon



Adult and teen Aul members worked together to raise the yurt. Here, Joe Piccolo of New York and Bakh Baidaralin, originally from Almaty and now of Rhode Island, combine forces to securely tie things up. Photo courtesy of the Westerly Sun.

We learned that Tug-of-War is a universal game, and our young children gamely attempted it. Pictured from the left are Nicholas & Joseph Piccolo of NY, Sara Remmler of RI, Julia & Anne Chernin of FL, Brendan Mclaughlin of MD, Zhanara Ray of CT, Kairat O'Toole of MA, Darya Updegraph of MA, Dana Tagliaferro of NJ, Hannah Sperber of NY, Tim McGill of DE, Alina O'Toole of MA, Devin Young of VA, Eric Aubin of MA, and Audrey Englander of MA.



New friends, Hannah Sperber of NY and Darya Updegraph of MA get busy and pretend to cook inside the yurt. Shinara DeCore of NY is in the background.

ZHAILAU continued on the next page

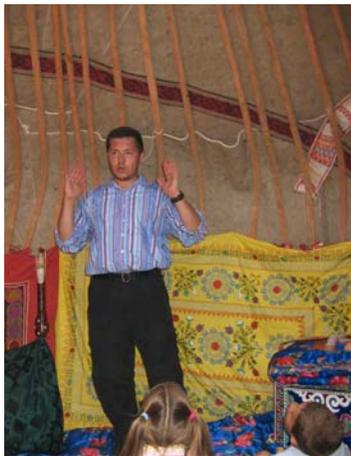
Zhailau (continued)



Food, we had lots of food! Above, Zhanat Baidaralin cooks Plov in a huge pot that was sent all the way from Almaty. See page 12 for Vera's recipe for Plov. Photo courtesy of the Westerly Sun.



Vera Kurmasheva and Irina Serkebaeva, both originally from Almaty and now of RI, make Boursak, a traditional fried dough.



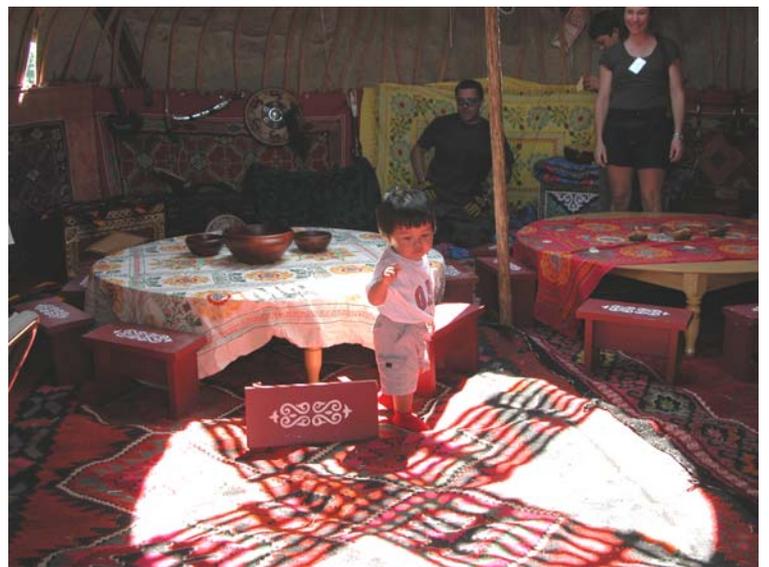
Pictured to the left, Daniyar Baidaralin, originally from Almaty and now living in RI, gives a talk in the yurt about nomadic life.



Pictured to the right, Alina O'Toole of MA and Natalie O'Connor of PA, touch a turtle during the nature program taught by an instructor from the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center.



New friends, Tim McGill of DE and Alexander O'Connor of PA.



Andrew Gogolin of MA hangs out in the yurt and checks out the striking shadow of the Shanyrak.



Adults hang out and talk during a Kazakh-style morning tea prepared by Vera, while the children play in the gym.



Natalie O'Connor of PA, Lauren Libou of NY and Julia Chernin of FL work hard in the crafts room.



Marzhan and her mom, Rasa Kregzdys, both of VA, relax in the yurt.



Eric Aubin of MA was the pied piper of playmates for the children. Here he is being dragged around by ?, Tim McGill of DE, Sara Remmler of RI, and Kairat O'Toole of MA.



Daniyar Baidaralin leads the procession around the yurt during the stone ceremony. Photo courtesy of Susannah Snowden of the Westerly Sun.



Vera Kurmasheva leads her new friends Dennis Miklebost of NJ and Zhanara Ray of CT to the goodbye ceremonies by the yurt.

The Seasonal Homes of the Nomads

By Daniyar Baidaralin



Yurt prepared for a *Toi* at *Zhailau*. Graphic by Daniyar Baidaralin

“The Kazakh nomads were great shepherds who designed very efficient and flexible systems to keep their herds in good health.”

Nomads: “A group of people who have no fixed home and move according to the seasons from place to place in search of food, water, and grazing land” (Dictionary.com).

The Kazakhs are one nation among the broader Turkic nomadic family, and historically, migration with their livestock was a simple fact of their daily lives. Nomadism was not a matter of choice; it was dictated by the types of land upon which the people dwelt. The quality of the soil in the land now known as Kazakhstan was poor, and long summer droughts made it unsuitable for agriculture. Nomadic stock-breeding was the only way to live. Life was always a difficult fight for survival, but the rewards included social freedoms, physical health, and harmony with nature.

Herds of sheep, camels, and horses were the nomad’s currency. Indeed, the nomads’ herds were their treasure, wealth, health, and food, for life depended on their livestock’s products, such as meat, milk, leather, and wool. These products were used to make clothing, horse and camel equipment, weaponry, and many parts of the yurt. Sheep were the most common animals in the herds, then horses, and camels (cows – the American staple – were rarer because they are not very good for migrations). Because livestock were central to the Turkic nomads’ means of living, nomadic structure was designed to maximize the best conditions for the herds, and the ways of animals dictated nomadic life for thousands

years.

The Kazakh nomads were great shepherds who designed very efficient and flexible systems to keep their herds in good health. They understood that livestock life is fairly simple: the animals’ lives are about looking for new grass and trying to breed. Because herds eat a tremendous amount of grass, they in turn quickly clear large areas of land, and out of necessity, it became imperative for the nomads to move their herds frequently in search of better fields. The nomads divided their life into four seasonal settlements, and this order did not change across the generations, over thousands of years!

In the spring, the nomadic aul would settle on elevated hills with good ventilation and dry ground because the first grass of spring always grows on the tops of hills, while the valleys are still cool and often just starting to thaw. In early spring, hills are the best places for livestock to find grass to eat so they can begin to gain back weight that was lost during harsh winter months. This location is also ideal to mend yurts’ felts that may have gotten soaked during the winter. An Aul’s early spring grounds were known as *Kokteu*, or Spring Place. The Kazakh New Year – *Nauryz* – was traditionally celebrated at *Kokteu*.

When summer arrived, auls moved to the borders of the steppes. They did not venture far into the steppes

so as to avoid high heat, drought and horrible steppe fires, when grass could burn for thousands of miles. The summer settlement was called *Zhailau* or Summer Place, and was often considered to be the best time for auls because grass was in plenty for the animals, and there was food and drink in plenty for the people. *Zhailau* was also the time of year when many celebrations took place. A Kazakh *toi* – a huge party – would last for weeks during *Zhailau*. Games would be played, food eaten, songs sung. People would chat, meet new friends and have a good time.

While *Zhailau* was the most carefree and fun time for the Kazakhs, like all good things, the time would always come for it to end. In the autumn, auls moved to their fall lands, *Kuzdeu*. The position and landscape of *Kuzdeu* was very similar to *Kokteu* – in the hills – and at this time the whole aul prepared for the coming of winter. Clothing, yurts, and any gear would be fixed as needed, and a mass sheep shearing would take place. The livestock gained extra fat and grew new wool in preparation for winter.



Our Aul’s yurt prepared for the *Toi* at *Zhailau*.

Once everything was ready, the aul would move to its winter encampment, or *Kystau*. Winter was the most difficult time for the aul and its herds, due to the poor quality and lack of winter grass that animals usually had to dig out of snow. The aul would spread out to form many smaller auls in order to cover larger areas within its *Kystau*. Winter was the only time when people would build a temporary shed to protect their herds during snowy nights. In December, there was a winter activity, *Soghym*, when people would kill some livestock to stock meat for January and February – the most harsh winter months. The nomads only killed animals that were not going to survive the winter. During the *Soghym*, people would also celebrate and play winter games and sports. This was the last burst of fun before a long and exhausting winter in which people would either stay in their yurts or fight to save their herds all day and night. When spring finally returned, the aul would then move to *Kokteu* and the whole cycle would start anew.



Ask Daniyar

Our Ask Daniyar column is a regular feature of this newsletter devoted to your questions about Kazakh culture. Daniyar Baidaralin is a 27-year-old Kazakh man, born & raised in Almaty. He currently lives in Rhode Island, & is excited to answer your culture questions. Please submit your questions to Dan at askdaniyar@kazakh-aul-us.org.

Salamatzes bah Daniyar,

I am so pleased that you are available to answer questions for us. By chance, do you know any very simple children's songs in Kazakh that you could share or children's nursery rhymes in Kazakh? I've asked every Kazakh American I've met in Seattle and no one remembers any.

We made up our own at our last local Kazakh family gathering to the tune: Old MacDonald.:

"Old Mac Serik had a farm,
Eee liii, Eee lii O
And on his farm there was an "At", (horse)
Eee liii, Eee, liii, O
with a neigh, neigh here and a neigh, neigh there,
here a neigh, there a neigh, everywhere a neigh, neigh,
Old Mac Serik had a farm,
Eee liii, Eee lii O.

We continued with: Koy (sheep), Ooorick (duck), eet (dog), musick (cat).

Rakmet!

Susie Cantor
Seattle, Washington

Salamatzes bah, Susie!

Your song is so cute!!! I will remember this fact – it is really touching! And very creative as well! When I told about your song to my father Zhanat, he almost went sensitive-)))

I have something for you, This is an old Kazakh verse for little kids. It is about 5 fingers. It goes:

Bas Barmak – head finger (thumb)
Balaly Oirek – little duckling (index finger)
Ortan Terek – middle poplar-tree (middle finger)
Shildir Shelmek – bottle (ring finger)
Kishkentai Bopek! – little kiddy (pinky finger)

I'll try to give you a transliteration:

Baas Baar-maac
Baa-laa-ly Ooi-rekh
Ortaan Te-rekh
Shel-dirr Shell-mekh
Kish-can-taai Bo-pekh!

When you name each finger, you have to grab it with yours. That way the kid will learn which finger that is. And, when you reach the pinky finger, you have to tickle your kid. 😊

Dan

Hi Daniyar,

Mika's preschool has a birthday celebration that will not work well for our circumstances. (It has something to do with the 12 months being placed around the earth, and the birthday child walks around 9 months to his or her birth month while the teacher talks about mom and dad waiting 9 months etc. I only know the general idea, but I am single and of course was not involved in that part of her life). Can you think of a Kazakh birthday tradition or story that I could share with her teachers as an alternative? Thanks!

Kirsten Tuttle
Pennsylvania

Hi Kirsten,

I have not found a story or legend about birthdays yet. However, I have found a review of Kazakh rituals related to children. Kazakh traditions for children are so rich, meaningful and significant! Maybe you can use some of the info below, which I am excited to share with you.

There is no bigger deal for Kazakhs than the birth of a child. If it is a boy, he will be an heir of his father's tribe. If it is a girl, she will be a chain between two tribes, the warranty of peace and friendship. That is why the childbirth celebration is among the major events.

After infancy, there is the *Tusay Kesu* (Thu-sayu Khe-su) - the Cutting of the Hobbles. This occurs when a baby takes first steps. Parents invite the most respected Aksakal (Akh-Sakhal – white beard.) He first binds the child's legs together, then triumphantly cuts the ropes and loudly says wish-words; he wishes the child to be able to walk and run fast

The first time a child mounts a horse is called *Atka Otyrgyzu* (Att-kha Otyr-ghi-zoo). It happens very early, because for nomads, riding a horse is a more important skill than walking. Parents or grandparents carefully set the child in the saddle, then adults pass a whip. For a boy they would also pass the father's spear, which symbolizes the son's future warrior status, his duty to defend native lands, and pass the spear to his own sons in the future.

For boys at 5-7 years there is a BIG celebration – the *Sundet Toi* (Soon-deat Toi) – circumcision. This is considered as the first “manly” event in a boy's life. Usually boys are not afraid, quite the opposite – they can hardly wait because it gives the boys a “guy” status as oppose to that of a “child.” In addition, they know they will get A LOT of gifts; because this is a big celebration where ALL of the relatives are invited, and none of them will come empty-handed.

The next BIG event for both boys & girls is *Tilashar* (Til'-asharr) – Opening of Tongue. It is the day when kids go to school for the first time. This is an event for kids, when all of them gather together with their parents. The oldest people test kids by making them solve puzzles to check their knowledge, and get them to compete with one another. Aksakals, starting from the most respected and on down will say words of wisdom.

This is a brief review of major Kazakh celebrations for children. As far as I know, there were no regular birthdays. There were special years that were celebrated over the lifetime, but not every year. I hope this does help you with you an uneasy situation. You can pick up the info that will fit your need the most.

Sincerely,
Daniyar

Spotlight on Zhanat Baidaralin and Vera Kurmasheva

By Jill Updegraph



Jill and Darya Updegraph

I was honored to be asked to write an article profiling Zhanat and Vera, and this assignment has been one of the most enjoyable “tasks” that I have undertaken for our Aul. Zhanat, Vera, and their two sons are, after all, the family that has brought a bit of Kazakhstan into our lives here in the United States. This is the family that has provided us the opportunity to learn and experience our children’s cultural heritage without visas or plane travel. This opportunity is more than my husband and I had ever hoped to be able to provide for our daughter and for this we are eternally grateful.

However, after interviewing Zhanat and Vera and their sons, Daniyar (Dan), age 27 and Bakhtiyar (Bakh), age 16, I was left with the challenge of how to start. That is, should I focus this article on the magic of the love story between Zhanat and Vera – one that was the subject of two national television movies in Kazakhstan? Should I focus on the depth of their immigrant experience that included bringing Bakh, then 12 years old, to Massachusetts from Almaty in January 2001, leaving Daniyar behind because he was no longer a minor and had to apply for a separate visa? Should I write about how Bakh entered the U.S. public school system speaking virtually no English in the middle of a school year, and how

Zhanat and Vera faced the challenge of applying for and finding jobs that would tap into their unique talents in the world of dance, in a new country where they did not yet speak the language? Or, was it best to introduce them from the perspective of their earlier experiences living and growing up in a Soviet controlled country – one which was at once, repressive and protective, harsh and generous? Soviet controlled Kazakhstan was a place where it was frowned upon to explore and express one’s personal or cultural views if they were not aligned with those of the Soviet government; yet, any citizen had access to an excellent educational system at no cost to themselves, a national healthcare system, and assurances that no one would go hungry.

What is perhaps most striking is that Vera and Zhanat achieved a rare accomplishment: They not only survived, but they experienced genuine success in the Soviet-run Kazakh system; Vera as a ballerina and ballet teacher, and Zhanat as a ballet master and choreographer for the stage, television, film and national festivals. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the withdrawal of so many Soviet financial and social supports, Zhanat and Vera lived through the birth of Kazakhstan as a separate country – with all the excitement, pride, and tremendous hardship that this unprecedented change brought.

“What is perhaps most striking is that Vera and Zhanat achieved a rare accomplishment: They not only survived, but they experienced genuine success in the Soviet-run Kazakh system; Vera as a ballerina and ballet teacher, and Zhanat as a ballet master and choreographer for the stage, television, film and national festivals.”

Vera and Zhanat were born three months apart in 1950 and while they came together in the world of ballet, their earliest experiences were very different. Vera’s parents were Tatar and from the region of Kazakhstan near the Ural Mountains. Her mother was a military nurse who met her husband while they both served in the military during WWII. Vera was later born on the Island of Cakhalin (pronounced “Sakhalin”), Russia, where her father was stationed. From the time that Vera could walk, she always walked on her toes and dreamed of becoming a ballerina. When she was five, the young family returned to Kazakhstan and settled in Almaty. When Vera was ten, she successfully auditioned for the government-run ballet school in Almaty. It was there, that same year, she met her future husband, Zhanat Baidaralin.

Zhanat’s journey to the ballet school was not like Vera’s. Zhanat came from a very poor but hard-working Kazakh farm family and was raised in a rural village (an aul) not far from Almaty. His father was a teacher who taught history, geography and other subjects. He was also the oldest person in the village, and thereby served as the village “elder.

Zhanat’s father presided over disputes, officiated at marriages, divorces, property sales, etc., and Zhanat recalls that every evening, he overheard his father hearing and resolving one dispute or another. The family was typical of a rural Kazakh family in that his mother bore 16 children, although Zhanat remembered only six of them - four brothers and two sisters. He described that at the time, people lived under strict social rules and it was expected that women would marry young and bear a child almost every year because large families were necessary for survival. Although Zhanat’s family did not live in a yurt, there were families in his village who did, especially in the summer months. The village was what was known then as a Soviet



Vera Kurmasheva strikes a pose during a break from cooking Plov at Zhailau.

SPOTLIGHT continued on next page

Spotlight (continued)

“collective farm.” These were farms that were formed by force by Soviet troops; traditionally nomadic peoples were told that they would immediately become farmers. They were told what crops they would farm, and how much they were expected to produce. Those who protested, and/or who did not produce at the expected rate were “disappeared.” Zhanat described a very harsh life, with people being brought to his village from other areas – even other countries – speaking no Russian or Kazakh, and dumped there with orders to farm. The people of the aul helped the newcomers or they would not have survived.

Zhanat described a close-knit aul, despite all the hardships, and attributed this to a strong Kazakh culture that has survived over the years through the telling of stories and the making of traditional crafts. His ancestral nomads did not build buildings and leave ancient ruins or centuries-old cities like Paris or Rome, so oral traditions were the only method of passing on the culture. According to Zhanat, the telling of stories is in the blood of the Kazakh people, and sitting by campfires at night and sharing stories brought people of villages together and bonded them to one another. These stories were passed down through the generations like old clothing; they were well worn and became a part of a person’s identity.

Coming from this rural poor environment (though only about an hour from Almaty), Zhanat was not brought to audition at the Almaty ballet school like Vera. Rather, the Russian Ballet School sent scouts to some villages to search out talent, and it was in this way that Zhanat was “discovered.” Because his family did not live in the city, Zhanat, from the age of ten, lived in a dormitory during the weeks and saw his family only on weekends. Harsh as this may have sounded, it provided Zhanat with great opportunities, both professionally and personally.



Zhanat Baidaralin at the Pawtucket Arts Festival in Rhode Island.

For eight years, from the ages of ten to eighteen when they both graduated, Vera and Zhanat grew up together and fell in love. They studied a wide variety of dance-related skills together, including fine arts, dance, music, and choreography. They graduated in 1968 and were both invited to work for the Youth Ballet of Almaty, where they spent two years dancing together. In 1970, Zhanat made the difficult decision to travel to Moscow to further his education in a four-year choreography program. Vera describes that during those four years, he wrote her 200 love letters, all of which she still has today. Upon Zhanat’s return in 1974, they married and continued to work and love together in Almaty.

Vera worked for more than 20 years as a solo ballerina, stopping to teach only when she became pregnant with her second son, Bakh, in 1988. Since then, she has taught classical dance to young people both in Almaty and now in Providence, Rhode Island. She has a master’s degree in teaching, and has offered to put her tremendous talents to use by hosting a ballet clinic during our Kazakh Aul summer camp in the summer of 2006 where she will demonstrate and teach both classical ballet and traditional Kazakh dances. (Vera confided that as much as she enjoys preparing traditional Kazakh dishes, including Boursak, which we know as fried dough, she signed a contract with her current employer that she will not eat things like this because she might otherwise jeopardize her dancing figure).

As for Zhanat, upon his return from Moscow, he spent eight years as a dancer and choreographer for the theater, opera, and Ballet of Almaty. During that time, he was the official choreographer for Kazakhstan during the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow and subsequently, choreographed the opening ceremonies for the changing of the country’s capital from Almaty to Astana in 1996. Since coming to the United States, Zhanat has worked as a choreographer for the Dance Theater of Harlem and the Amerisoul Circus. Recently, he has thought of opening his own school of fine arts! Given the tremendous talent that his entire family brings, this will be a huge gift for those lucky enough to study there.

There is more to learn about this very interesting Kazakh family, but you will have to tune into the next newsletter to find out. 😊

“...the telling of stories is in the blood of the Kazakh people, and sitting by campfires at night and sharing stories brought people of villages together and bonded them to one another. These stories were passed down through the generations like old clothing; they were well worn and became a part of a person’s identity.”



The Kazakh Yurt

by Daniyar Baidaralin and Susan Saxon
Graphics by Daniyar Baidaralin

Yurt...There is so much in this simple word, for like so many Kazakh words, “yurt” has several levels of meaning. There are four major definitions:

1. The physical structure of the yurt itself—its walls, dome, skylight, and doors. This definition is the most commonly used, but the least correct.
2. Literally translated, *yurt* means a geographical site, a settlement’s physical locale, or a living area.
3. Household, as in the American notion of the word. For example, Zhanat Baidaralin moved his *yurt*--his household, including his wife and two sons—to the US. Zhanat’s title is *Yurt-Basy* – head of household.
4. *Yurt* also can describe an extended family or kin. Like Shakespeare’s “House of Capulet,” we can say that Daniyar and Bakhtiyar are men from Baidaralin’s *Yurt*. Used in poetry and literature, it is the least commonly used definition. re men from Baidaralin’s *Yurt*. This is the least commonly used definition, and is only used in poetry and literature.

These definitions are not mutually exclusive, as if we are being presented with a list from the Merriam-Webster English dictionary. Instead, the Kazakh view is that one or more meanings may apply, depending on the situation. In order to understand what the yurt represents to Kazakhs, one needs to understand how native Kazakhs view their world and everything in it. The traditional Kazakh world view is very different from the western world view.

In the West, we tend to think on a linear basis, where one thing leads to the next and definitions are cut and dry. However, the native Kazakh approach is essentially an East Asian perspective. Kazakhs view their world in a sphere- or web-like, holistic, manner. Each element of the whole contributes to a deeper level of understanding.

The Kazakhs are descendants of a very ancient civilization, the legacy of which remains in today’s modern cultural sensibility. Nomadic life has always been a social organization that combines harmony with nature with high social and cultural achievements, including a complex tribal and social structure (that has lasted through the centuries), a rich mythology and oral tradition, effective economy, practical engineering, and a military machine.

Nomadic society was complex. Groups of auls survived within a complex social structure called an *Orda* (Horde) ruled by Khans. Inside auls, people lived in nomadic homes – yurts - which were the building blocks of the auls. A group of auls consisted of members of extended families, forming a *Ru* or *Roo-Kaz* (tribe), which was the next level in the social structure of the *Orda*. A group of tribes formed an *El* (a Turkic word meaning nation, or a people), the *Orda*.

Respect for everything in the world predominated. The Kazakhs considered themselves to be a part of nature, not rulers of nature. Animals, humans, nature, the universe, and material objects were all part of One Whole. As such, there was no divergence between the existences of humans and nature, people and society, men and women, or between generations. Kazakhs struggled with nature in the manner that animals did; without destruction, and only taking from nature what was necessary to live. Their grappling with nature was a collective struggle for survival, which to them was the whole point of existence.

A note about the linguistic origins of the word “yurt:”

Although *yurt* is the most common English translation for the nomadic home, linguistically, the term is not correct. *yurt* is a Turkic word; in Kazakh, the word is “*Zhurt*,” and it means settlement, encampment, living place/area, territory. Thus, *yurt/zhurt* actually means the site or place for a yurt, but not the structure itself. The more accurate name for a Kazakh home is “*Uj*,” or “*Kiiz ui*” which means felt home. Nonetheless, *yurt* remains the most common term used today because over time through scientific articles it replaced the original name. Moreover, *ui* now has general meaning and is the Kazakh term for a home or house of any structure.

Science teaches that humans and other mammals have many similarities. But the nomads went further. They believed that everything in the universe has the same structure: trees, stones, mountains, rivers, grass, animals, humans, fish, insects, stars, the sun, moon and even Mother Earth. All of these were believed to have a similar metaphysical body, an aura or spirit that is not a part of the material world.

Nonetheless, the nomads didn’t separate the material and metaphysical worlds; they believed that the two combined to form one universe. They thought of the world as a dwelling with an endless amount of materialistic and non-materialistic creatures, and tried to match this notion of the universe with everything they produced. If you take a closer look, you will notice that every single item produced by Kazakhs is a model of the universe.

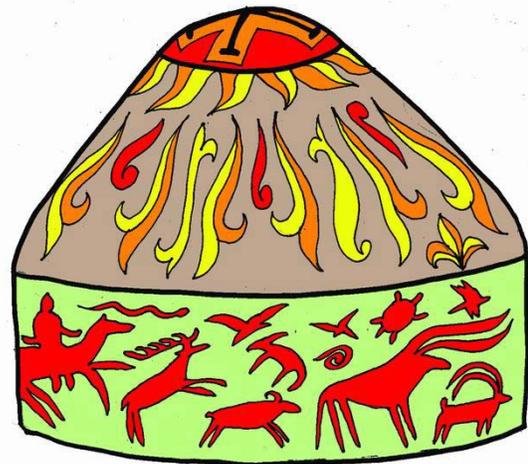
The Kazakh Yurt (continued)

For example, the structure of the yurt symbolizes the three levels of the Universe :

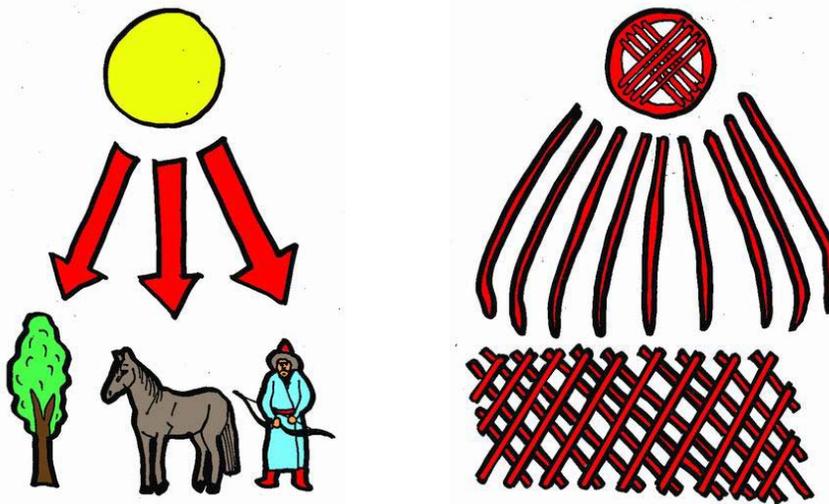
- The walls of the yurt (*Kerege*) represent the Lower world, where humans and animals live their lives.
- The dome structure of the yurt (*Uysks*) represents the Middle world, where spirits live.
- The *Shanyrak* at the top of the yurt symbolizes the Upper world – the world of the Sun; a source of life energy, and the highest spirit.

These beliefs are rooted in an ancient myth called the World Mountain, the World Tree and the World Ocean. The World Tree grows on top of the World Mountain, which stands in the middle of the endless World Ocean. The World Mountain is so tall that it goes through all of the Worlds in the Universe (Lower, Middle and Upper). The shape, structure and symbolism of the yurt was designed to match the representations contained within this myth, and thus, it is also a model and a symbol of the World Mountain. (Egyptian and Indian Pyramids are also examples of this same myth).

When you scrutinize the symbolic significance of the yurt, you can see how this all works together: the Sun (represented by the *Shanyrak*) in the Upper world sends its rays (represented by the *Uysks*) to the Lower world (represented by the *Kerege*), thereby giving life energy to all living creatures. Within the yurt, this myth comes alive as sunlight and its life energy enters through the *Shanyrak* to reach the people who live in the Lower world, coexisting with the spirits of ancestors that are believed to live in the dome of the yurt in the Middle world. As a symbol, the nomadic home exists within the greater and more powerful world of nature.



“The walls of the yurt (*Kerege*) represent the Lower world, where humans and animals live their lives. The dome structure of the yurt (*Uysks*) represents the Middle world, where spirits live. The *Shanyrak* at the top of the yurt symbolizes the Upper world – the world of the Sun...”



When a yurt is raised, we also experience the symbolic representation of another ancient myth, “Chaos to Order,” common to all early Central Asian nomads. According to this myth, all the chaotic elements of the universe and the world were born and then came together in an orderly fashion, remaining that way only until the cycle began again and they reverted to chaos and then to order once again, and so on, forever. This is the life cycle of the yurt: always in motion packed and unpacked, raised and then taken down and moved to the next site,-- an endless cycle of chaos and order.

In sum, the structure of the yurt, the process of raising it, and the life inside, represent much more than the daily existence of the nomads, for every aspect of the nomadic home was enhanced by mythology and traditional beliefs of the Kazakh people. In turn, every aspect of the meaning of the word *yurt* impacts Kazakh sensibility in modern times. Today, when people take part in erecting a yurt, they are building a home and simultaneously taking part in ordering their world by building structure out of the chaos of many pieces. For the Kazakh, this act signifies the eternal unity of humanity and the universe, where all creatures live and where everything is a part of a greater whole. We are very lucky that we can still participate in this ancient ritual today in the 21st century!

Kazakh Recipe: Plov

Courtesy of Vera Kurmasheva

Many people have asked for Kazakh recipes and we will start with this most traditional of dishes: Plov (pronounced pea-LOVE). Plov is the most commonly used name for this traditional nomadic dish; however, Plov is a Russian word, and the more correct, Kazakh term is Pahlau (pronounced Pah-La-u).

Here is Vera's recipe, as she prepared at Zhailau:

Asian Plov 16 portions

2 lbs. boneless lamb
 3 cups of rice (white or Indian Basmati)
 ¾ cup of corn oil
 2 lb. carrots
 2 lg. onions
 Salt, pepper to taste

Wash rice in cold water and soak for 30 minutes. Cut meat into small pieces, slice onions, cut carrots (small finger size)

Sauté onions, meat, salt, and pepper in olive oil in a heavy pot. Add carrots, mix and continue cooking for 12 minutes. Drain rice and place over the meat and vegetables (don't mix)!!! Add boiling water over the rice (approximately 1 inch). Continue cooking for about 10 minutes until water has been absorbed by the rice. Cover the pot and simmer for 10-12 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand for 10 minutes without opening the cover.

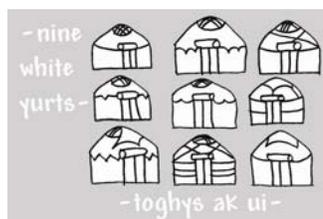
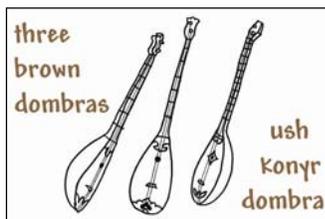
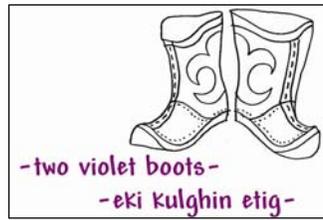
For questions please e-mail: Vera.Kur@cox.net

Kazakh Aul of the U.S. Gifts for Sale

Zhailau Kazakh Counting Coloring Book

by Daniyar Baidaralin & Audrey Englander

This book was a hit when we presented it at Zhailau. Your whole family or friends can enjoy counting to ten in Kazakh using Daniyar's transliterations in English. And, any child will enjoy coloring Daniyar's wonderful graphics! We've improved the book since the summer in that we added a spiral binding (as opposed to old fashioned staples). Produced on the Aul's own color laser jet printer with front and back covers of heavy card stock. \$12.00, plus \$3.50 shipping and handling.



All proceeds from the sale of the Zhailau Kazakh Counting Coloring Book, Nauryz Home DVD, and Aul memberships will go towards the support of the Kazakh Aul of the U.S. Please mail checks or money orders payable to the Kazakh Aul of the U.S., 247 Cypress St., Providence, RI 02906.

Kazakh Aul of the U.S.'s Nauryz 2005 Home DVD

by Edward Bogushevsky

If you attended our Nauryz Festival in April, if you want to see what it was all about, or if you are interested in learning more about the founding of our Aul, you may want to purchase our home DVD. We call it our home DVD because it is not a slick professional production. Nonetheless it is a heartfelt keepsake that commemorates the last Nauryz festival and includes the ancient dance of the Light and Dark Spirits performed by the Baidaralin brothers, a video collage of the entire festival from the raising of the yurt through gatherings inside the yurt, and interviews with Zhanat Baidaralin and Leila Bassenova about what it means to them to be working to bring culture to their young compatriots in the U.S. Edward Bogushevsky initially made this film for Kazakhstan television, but he has graciously provided an English language version for our Aul. English, Kazakh, and Russian language, with English subtitles, \$15.00, plus \$3.50 shipping and handling.

Give the Gift of the Kazakh Aul of the US

An Aul membership is a great way to share Kazakh culture and community with your family and friends. For each gift recipient, please send us all the important details, and we will happily send each person a personalized gift card. Annual memberships cost a minimum of \$40.00, and more information is available on our website at www.kazakh-aul-us.org or contact info@kazakh-aul-us.org.

The Kazakh Aul of the U.S. gratefully acknowledges its donor base, including the following members who graciously donated during the past quarter. Thank you so much!

Audrey Englander
Kathy & Tom Howe
Elana Peled
John Lesser
Dilara Sarbassova
Anthony Gini & Catherine Torigian



A warm welcome to the following new Aul families:

Adams	Lattmann
Baranowski	LeRoy
Chern	Murray
Day	O'Connor- Lesser
Demshock-Barth	Peled-Power
Englander	Peter
Gayle	Radcliffe
Gogolin	Ray
Groth	Sarbassova
Hippel	Tabora
Howe	Torigian-Gini
Kregzdys-Bieniewicz	Tosi

Your Aul Needs You! *There are many ways to help*

With members already in 21 states, our Aul is growing and there is lots to be done to keep providing Kazakh cultural programming, family gatherings, this newsletter, and more. Please consider helping the Aul - **no matter where you live**. You can do as much or as little as you like, any effort will be greatly appreciated!

Please give the gift of your time, expertise, or passion to your Aul

Very few of us here at the Aul live close to one another and still we get a lot done via email and conference calls. Everyone involved so far donates his/her time, and most of us have full-time jobs outside the home. Nonetheless, we are a passionate bunch who are committed to the Aul's mission.

If you have a special skill or expertise, or simply the passion, we would love to have you join us! We currently have a wide variety of needs that include:

- Accounting
- Publicity and outreach
- Quarterly mailings to adoption agencies
- E-list moderating
- Publicizing the Aul on Internet discussion lists
- Newsletter writing, editing, and layout
- Development/fundraising
- Web design and maintenance
- Researching local chapter development & administration
- Starting local chapters
- Event and Heritage camp planning
- Legal advice for non-profits

If you are interested in contributing your time in any of these or other ways, please email Susan at ssaxon@kazakh-aul-us.org.

A hearty thank you to all who are able to help out with a gift of time or with a monetary donation.

THANK YOU!! 😊

Or, please support your Aul via a monetary donation

As the year comes to a close and you are considering making charitable donations, please consider donating to the Aul. Please be reminded that we do not yet have our 501(3)c federal tax exemption status. Until we receive it, donations will not be tax deductible—but once we do, all donations will be *retroactively* tax deductible. Your contributions will be used to support:

- Aul infrastructure (yurt storage and maintenance, website support, insurance, office supplies, postage, etc.)
- Nauryz Festival & Zhailau heritage camp
- Hopefully bringing over Kazakh children & talented chaperones for Zhailau.
- Local chapter development

Without donations, the reality is that we will not be able to provide extensive cultural resources at events, We really need help! To show our gratitude, thank you gifts will be sent according to following donation levels:

<u>Donation</u>	<u>Gift</u>
\$100	Zhailau Kazakh Counting Coloring Book
\$150	Nauryz 2005 Home DVD
\$200	Coloring Book and Nauryz 2005 Home DVD
\$500	2 year membership
\$1000	2 year membership, 2 coloring books, 1 Nauryz DVD
\$5000	Lifetime membership, 2 coloring books, 1 DVD
\$10,000	Same gifts as the \$5,000 level, plus your name will be listed in every newsletter as a <i>Kurmetteh</i> (Honored Member). As such, you will be invited to partake in raising the yurt at all events.
\$20,000	All the same gifts as the \$10,000 level, plus attendance for 1 adult & 1 child to attend a 5-day Zhailau summer 06 session

Please make checks or money orders payable to the Kazakh Aul of the U.S., 247 Cypress St., Providence, RI 02906. You may also donate via Paypal. Just click on the Paypal link on the Membership/Donation page on our website at www.kazakh-aul-us.org. Thank you for any support you are able to give.



247 Cypress Street
Providence, RI 02906

Phone: 401-486-4023
E-mail: info@kazakh-aul-us.org
www.kazakh-aul-us.org



Our Mission

The Kazakh Aul of the United States, Association for American & Kazakh Families, aims to establish a cultural center dedicated to educating and enriching the lives of children from Kazakhstan who were adopted by loving American families and who are now growing up in the U.S. Together with their families, children will participate in Kazakh heritage camps and cultural education, to develop a deeper sense of knowledge and understanding of their birth culture, how they fit into both the Kazakh and American worlds, and to develop skills that in the future may be used to contribute to both their mother-countries, Kazakhstan and the U.S. The Kazakh Aul of the United States will serve as a cultural bridge to bring together the children of the two countries, helping them be citizens of the world and thereby promoting cross-cultural understanding that will sustain through the generations.



Zhailau 2005—Our Summer Kazakh Culture Weekend—held August 5-7 in Stonington, Connecticut *Information plus more inside*



FUN! While the grown-ups worked to raise the yurt at our *Zhailau* weekend, the kids played traditional Kazakh games. Interestingly, the games we played happened to already be familiar to the Americans, proving that some things are truly universal. Pictured above is a moment from one of many exciting sack races, this one featuring Sara Remmler of RI, Daviana Englander of MA, & Nicholas & Joseph Piccolo of NY. Zhanat Baidaralin, originally from Kazakhstan and now living in Rhode Island, cheers them on in the background.

Kazakh Aul of the U.S., Association for American & Kazakh Families

Board of Directors: Daniyar Baidaralin, Audrey Englander, Karen Myer, Heather O'Toole, Norm Remmler, Susan Saxon, and Jill Updegraph

Administrative Executive Director: Susan Saxon

Cultural & Artistic Executive Director: Zhanat Baidaralin

Director of the Kazakhstan Division, Almaty: Leila Bassenova