

Sacred Sites:
Opportunity for Improving
Biocultural Conservation and
Governance in Ysyk-Köl
Biosphere Reserve, Kyrgyz
Republic

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Introduction and context

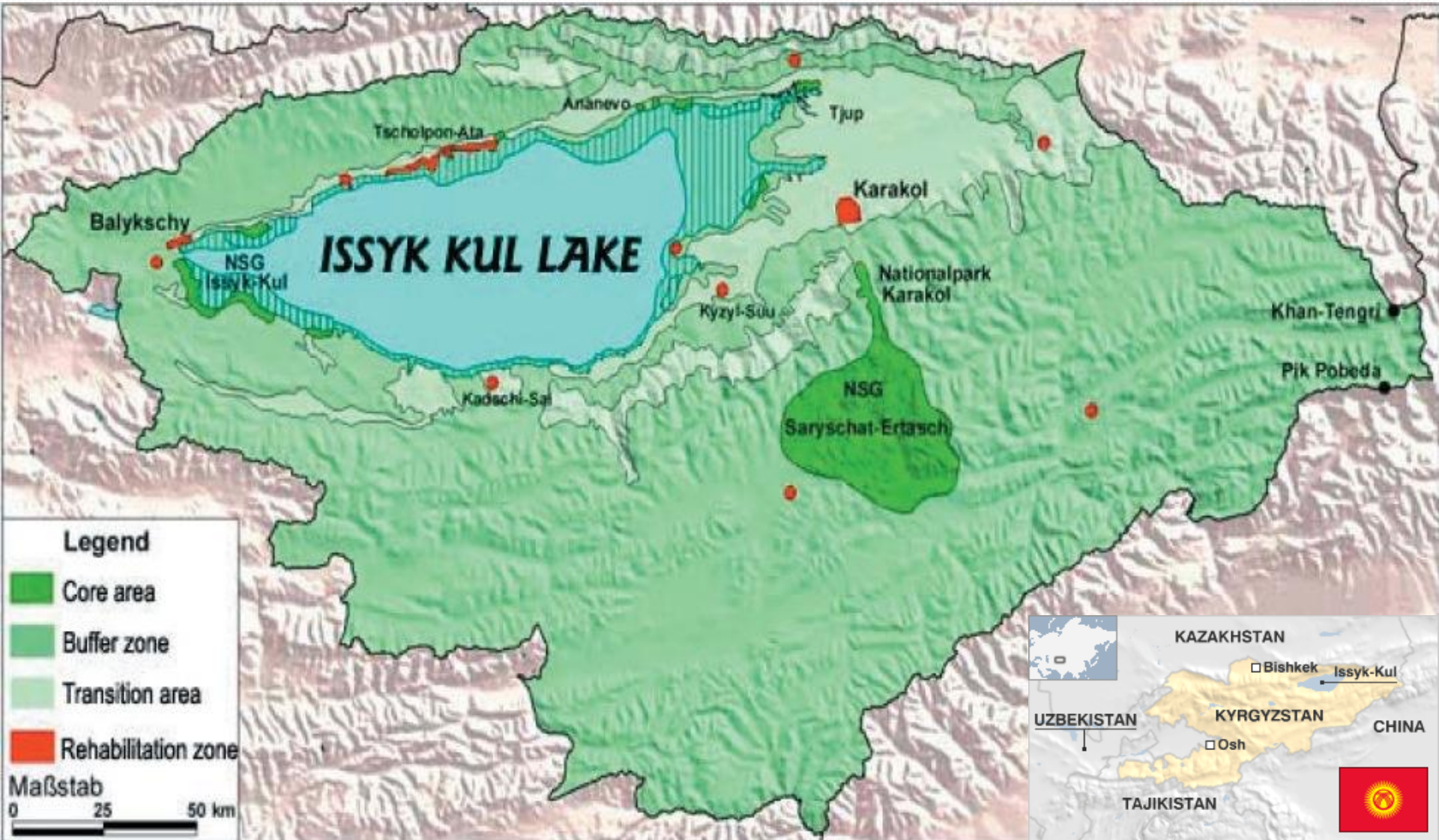


Research goal

How sacred sites might fit into formal conservation strategies in Ysyk-Köl Biosphere Reserve?

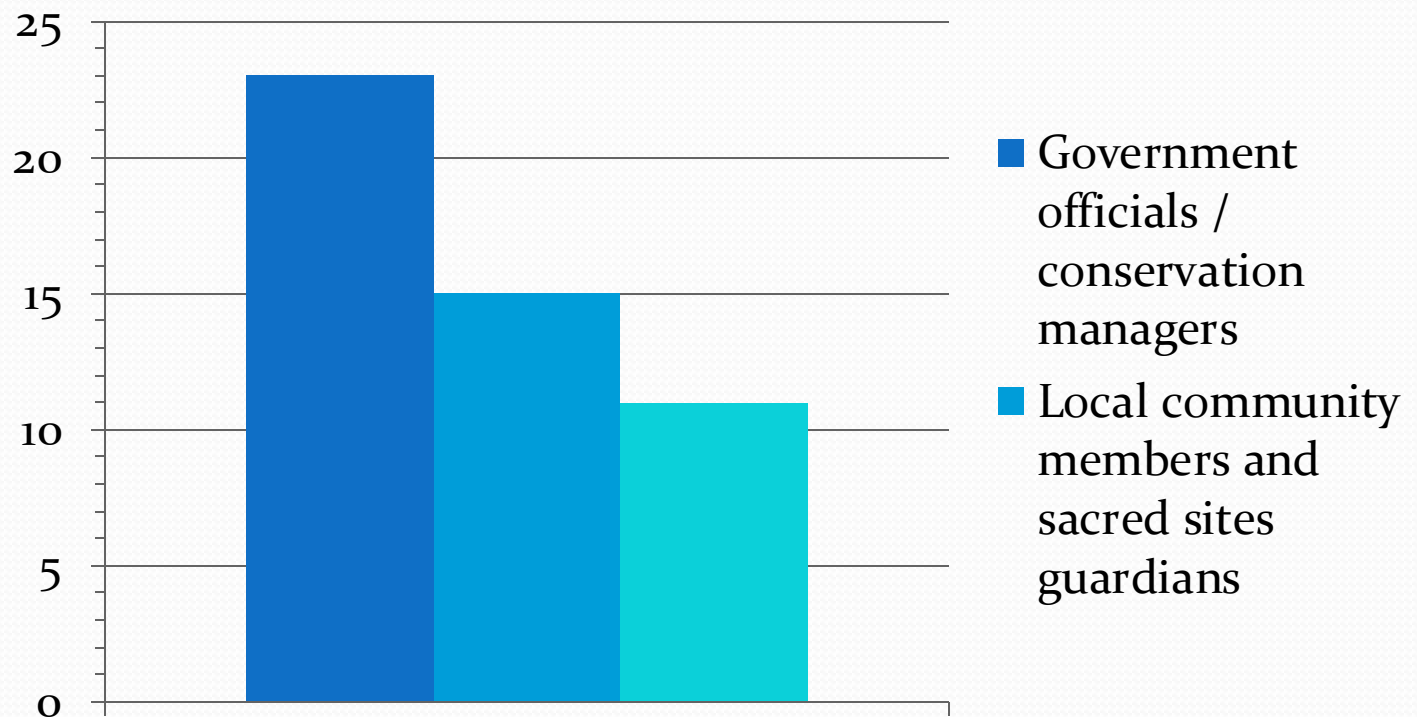


Ysyk-Köl Biosphere Reserve



Methods

- Semi-structured interviews (n=49)
- Focus group discussion (n=15) and group discussions (n=4)
- Participant observation (5 months)



Study results

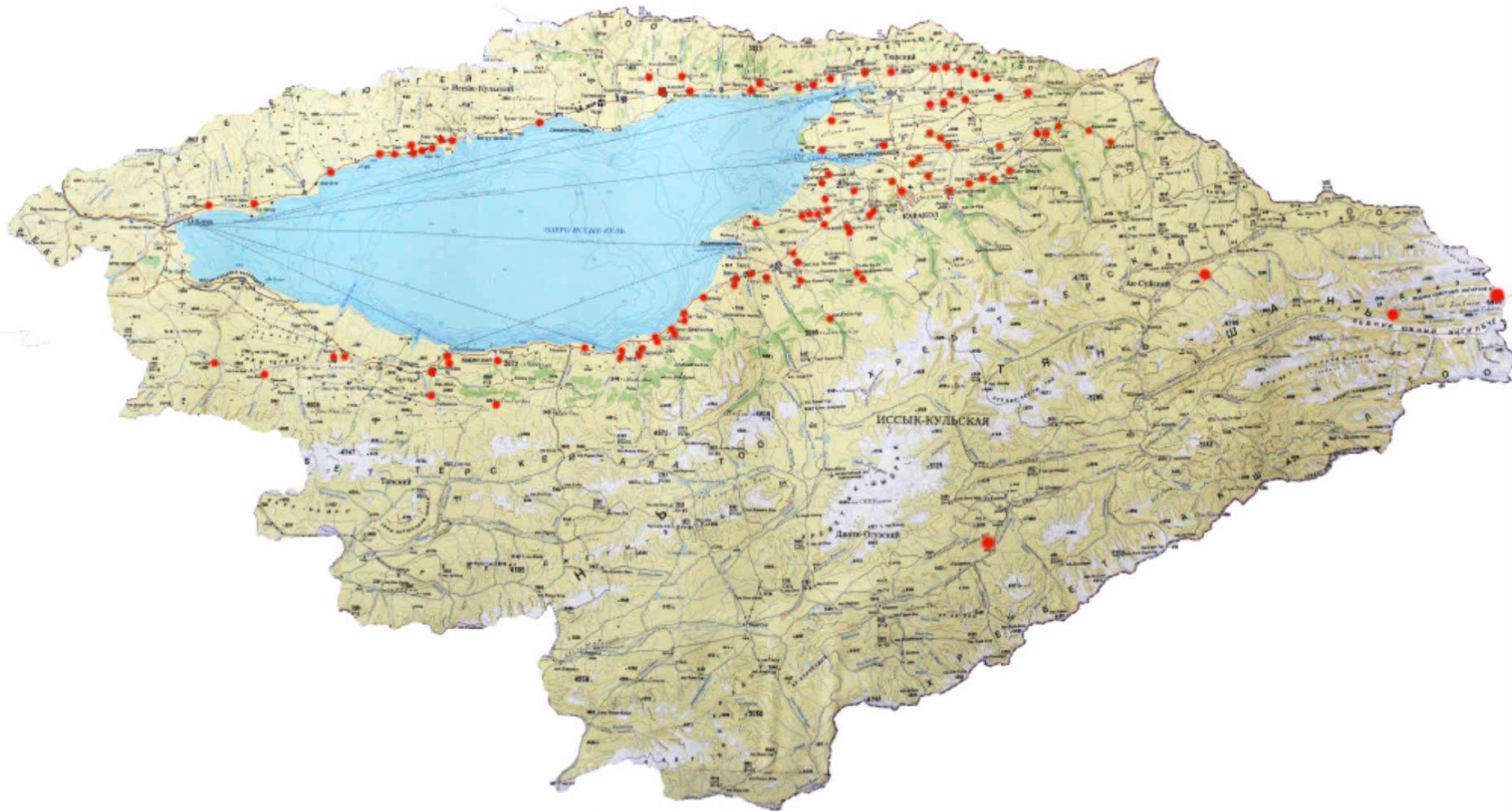


Biosphere Reserve



Sacred sites

Sacred sites within the Biosphere Reserve





Sacred sites in Ysyk-Köl are diverse

Category	Subcategory	Example and description
Water bodies	Springs	Manjly-Ata [father Manjly] contains seven springs, each of which has distinct powers, <i>kasiet</i>
Geological formations	Cliffs	Jeti-Oguz [seven oxen], a red limestone formation that resembles seven oxen
Ecosystems	Groves	Kamanduu-Kol [wild boar lake] is a grove with different kinds of trees and shrubs; springs come out from under the roots
Human-made	Tombs/ graveyards	Karakol-Ata [Father Karakol] comprises tomb, three yellow willows, a poplar, and a spring, all located in a Muslim cemetery

Parallel but complementary...



YKBR

- Biocultural approach
- Reconciliation of conservation and livelihoods
- Zoning scheme



Sacred sites

- Biocultural hybrids
- Emphasizes link between community well-being and sacred sites well being

Sacred sites can improve conservation in the YKBR by:

- providing a complementary ‘heart-induced’ set of incentives for conservation (in addition to rational incentives)
- fostering biocultural approach to conservation
- serving as a communication hub for YKBR managers and local communities and making YKBR more legitimate

Limitations: sacred sites are not universally supported



Active practitioners



Moderate followers



Neutral nonbelievers

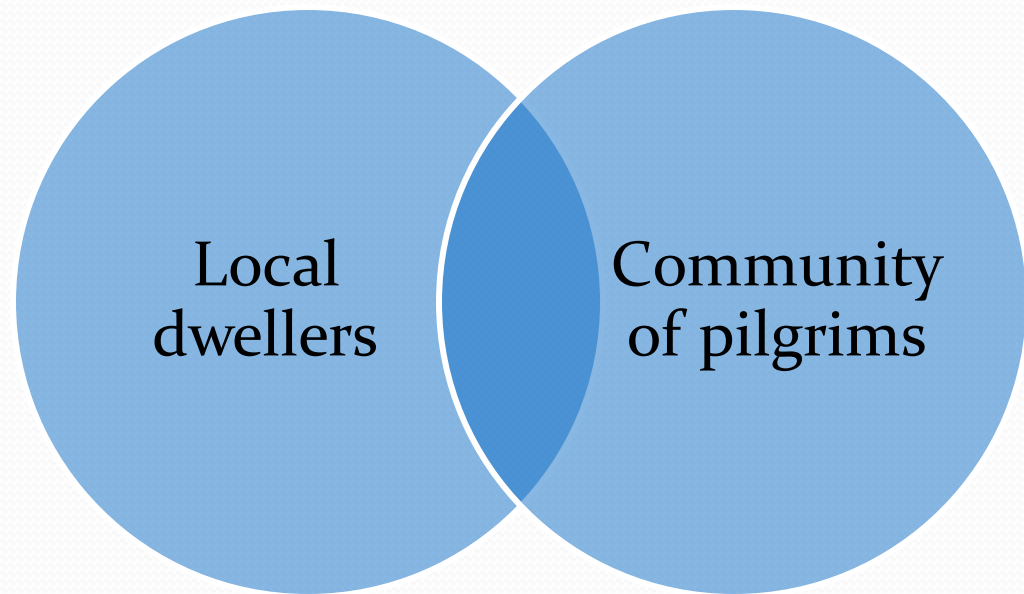


Ardent opponents



Discussion: many faces of a community?

- Local dwellers and community of pilgrims
- Communities are heterogeneous and changing



Acknowledgement



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