

## **One Book For All Religions**

By Richard Hewitt at the Chiang Mai, Thailand Symposium (May 9-10, 2024)

Humans fail at bringing religions together. Globalizers have some success but destroy diversity. They're good at that. Diversifiers can't hold unity. They are often disrespectful of core values. There is no human bond that unites us all. Fortunately, there is a Higher Power. He has a plan that brings us all together. I can't describe it intellectually, but I can portray this unifying phenomenon with an incredible true story from my own experience:

Many years ago, I visited a high mountain village in the Tien Shan range. This village had been a winter camp for three nomadic Kyrgyz tribes before the Soviet Union's iron fist descended. I arrived after the USSR's 70-year stint ended. I asked some teenage boys if they would take me to the one elder who knew their culture and history better than anyone else in town. They started taking me to the Mullah, the Islamic religious leader, but then changed their minds and redirected me to the home of an old wise man. After some introductions and tea, I started asking the elder about the Kyrgyz God-guest tradition. He confirmed what I had seen and learned: Kyrgyz must constantly be ready to host God who comes in the form of a human. They believe God could be present anywhere and they eagerly anticipate His arrival at any moment. Kyrgyz never know which guest is The One.

I then asked the elder if I could show him this Kyrgyz tradition in the Ancient Script. He said he wouldn't touch the book for fear of disgracing his

ancestral line and polluting his descendants. The holy book I presented was the ancient text that intersects Kyrgyz culture with an odd familiarity and yet is considered foreign by many Kyrgyz influencers and foreign sponsors. This script has impacted the world like no other, shaping modern and traditional nations alike, outlasting empires and unending streams of enemies.

Since the elder wouldn't touch the book, I asked if I could read a story to him from the feared text. He agreed as long as he didn't have to touch the ancient book. I read the Kyrgyz God-guest tradition from one of the many smaller books or sections within the Great Script. He listened intensely as I read about a nomad named Abraham who noticed someone walking by his tent. Abraham recognized the passerby as God and welcomed God and his angelic companions to his camp. Abraham then had the fattened calf slaughtered just as Kyrgyz would. Detail after detail of this God-guest encounter mirrored Kyrgyz customs and faith. There was one exception in the Script's version: Abraham washed God's feet. Kyrgyz wash their guests' hands. (In the high mountains, Kyrgyz often keep their socks and inner shoes on while dining.) Everything else in this passage of the ancient Script precisely reflected what the old man knew about his cherished traditions.

The elder was so intrigued by the passage that he eventually grabbed the "cursed" book from me to verify that the story I was reading was actually in the text. He had heard of Abraham and knew world religions well enough, but he had never seen a holy book that captured the essence of Kyrgyz culture like this particular portion of the great Script. He begged me for the

book, but I grabbed it back and read another story paralleling Kyrgyz beliefs. Once again, with astonished expression, he pulled the book from me, insisting that I give him the book. Since it was my personal copy with my notes and highlights, I respectfully refused to give it to him.

Later, I sent him a copy, and years after that, I met him again. In secret, he thanked me profusely for the book and considered it the holy book of the Kyrgyz nation and their folk religion, *Tengirchilik*. We agreed that the cover could have been more appealing to Kyrgyz and a few religious words should have been translated better. He and I concluded that we shared a common faith, but not a common religion. I'll let you decide which is more important. My point: this particular man found his own folk religion in a script that most people falsely isolate as Jewish and/or Christian.

High in the Tien Shan Mountains the Book fits perfectly into the ancient *Tengir* beliefs of semi-nomadic Kyrgyz. This text achieves the impossible by representing the heart of every faith. It is not a human creation. This Script is humanity's gift. The Islamic Quran also recognizes core sections of the book as "early revelations of Allah (God)" and commands Muslims to believe these early revelations (Surah 2:285). In 2020, Japanese Shinto priests traveled to Israel to understand why their faith aligns with this same Script. Native Americans have customs that match the Good Book's customs, causing many European colonists and early Americans to conclude that Native Americans come from one of the Book's lost tribes. Missionaries to China's Qiang-min and SE Asia's Hill Tribes on the other side of the world came to the same conclusions. Ancient versions of the Script's original mid-Bronze Age alphabet have also been found in regions

as far away as the Americas. There is even substantial evidence to suggest Siddhartha Gautama Buddha, the later Vedas, and Confucius were all influenced by this same controversial book. How did this book, which has become the basis for modern law in many democratic nations, also form the basis of so many indigenous cultures and faiths from antiquity? The One who speaks to nations says:

Your offspring will possess the nations and will resettle the desolate cities. Fear not... For your Maker is your husband - The Lord of Armies is his name - the Holy One of Israel is your redeemer. He will be called "God of all the Earth". "For the Lord has called you back like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of one's youth that is rejected," says your God. (Isaiah 54:3-6)

Humanity has strayed far from this intimate relationship. According to Script, we are a deserted wife or a runaway child who recollects our origin and responds to the familiar call that longs for our return. The One known as the God of one nation, Israel, is making Himself known as the God of all nations. That happened in the mountain village when an elder read the book in his own context. He met the God of the Kyrgyz. If there is one God with one universal text (and without compulsion to convert to an unfamiliar religion), wouldn't the elder's response make sense? He found his home in the Good Book, just as Jews and Christians and more recently, as a new wave of Muslims and Shintos have. Buddhists, Hindus, and other Easterners are next. On God's behalf, one of His prophets said:

It is not enough for you to be My Servant raising up the tribes of

Jacob and restoring the protected ones of Israel. I will also make you a light for the nations, to be My salvation (yeshua) to the ends of the earth. (Isaiah 49:6)

We should expect “a light for the nations” to resonate with each culture. Maybe all we need to do is let people read the book in their context. Yes, translate the text, adapt names like Abraham to Ibragim, and change the cover and title to fit the context, then let the book and the Spirit do their work as was done with the elder in Kyrgyzstan’s high mountains.