

The *komuz* is generally strummed or plucked and held horizontally while seated, but many musicians demonstrate their skill by playing the instrument upside down or over the shoulder. The *komuz* may be tuned in different ways according to various styles of music although the middle string is generally the highest in pitch.

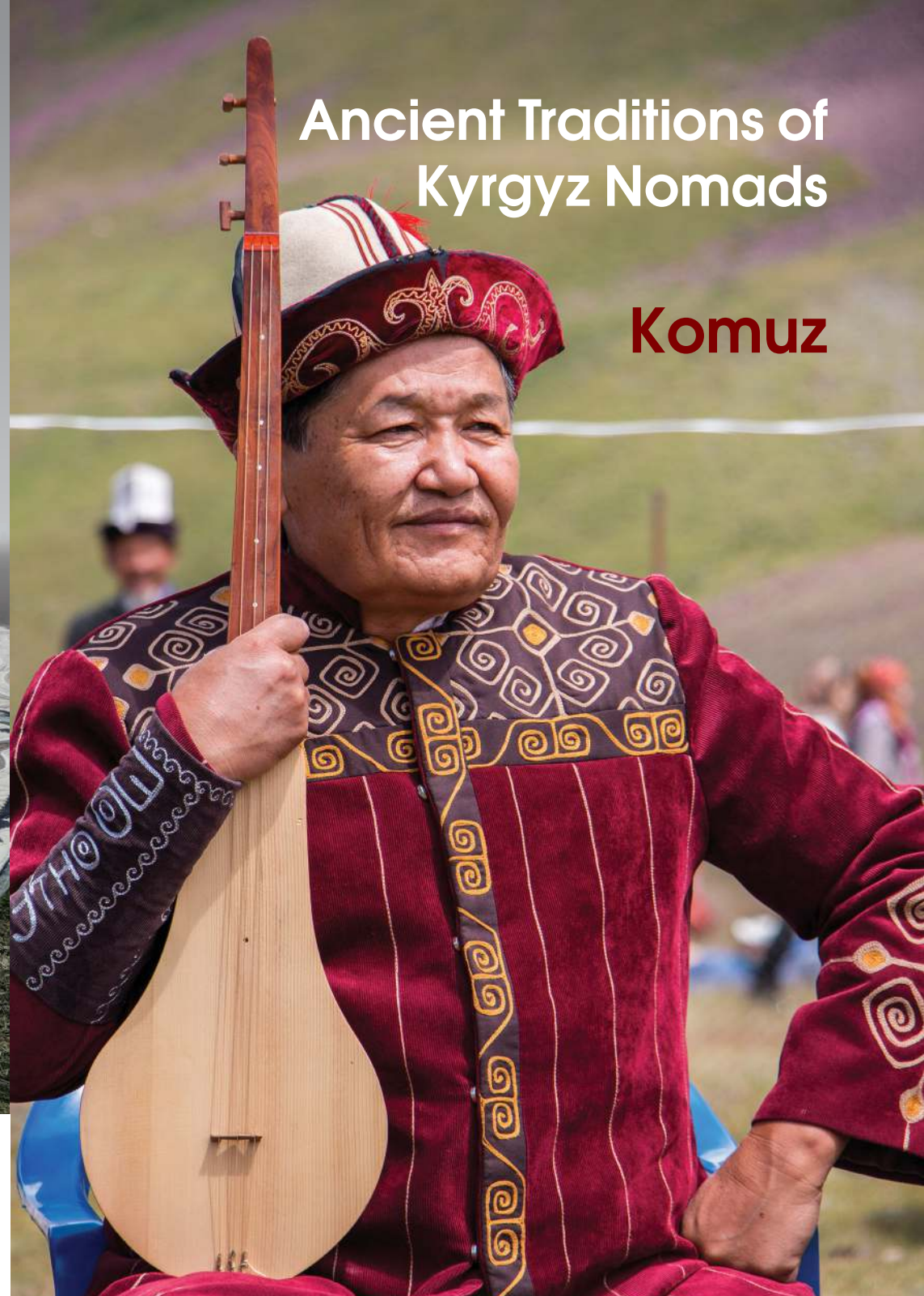
The *komuz* is an enduring symbol of Kyrgyz national pride. During the spectacular World Nomad Games 2016, a concert of one-thousand komuz players enthralled the audience with the traditional melodies of Kyrgyz nomadic life.

**Don't miss the next World Nomad Games
scheduled for September 2018!**



Ancient Traditions of Kyrgyz Nomads

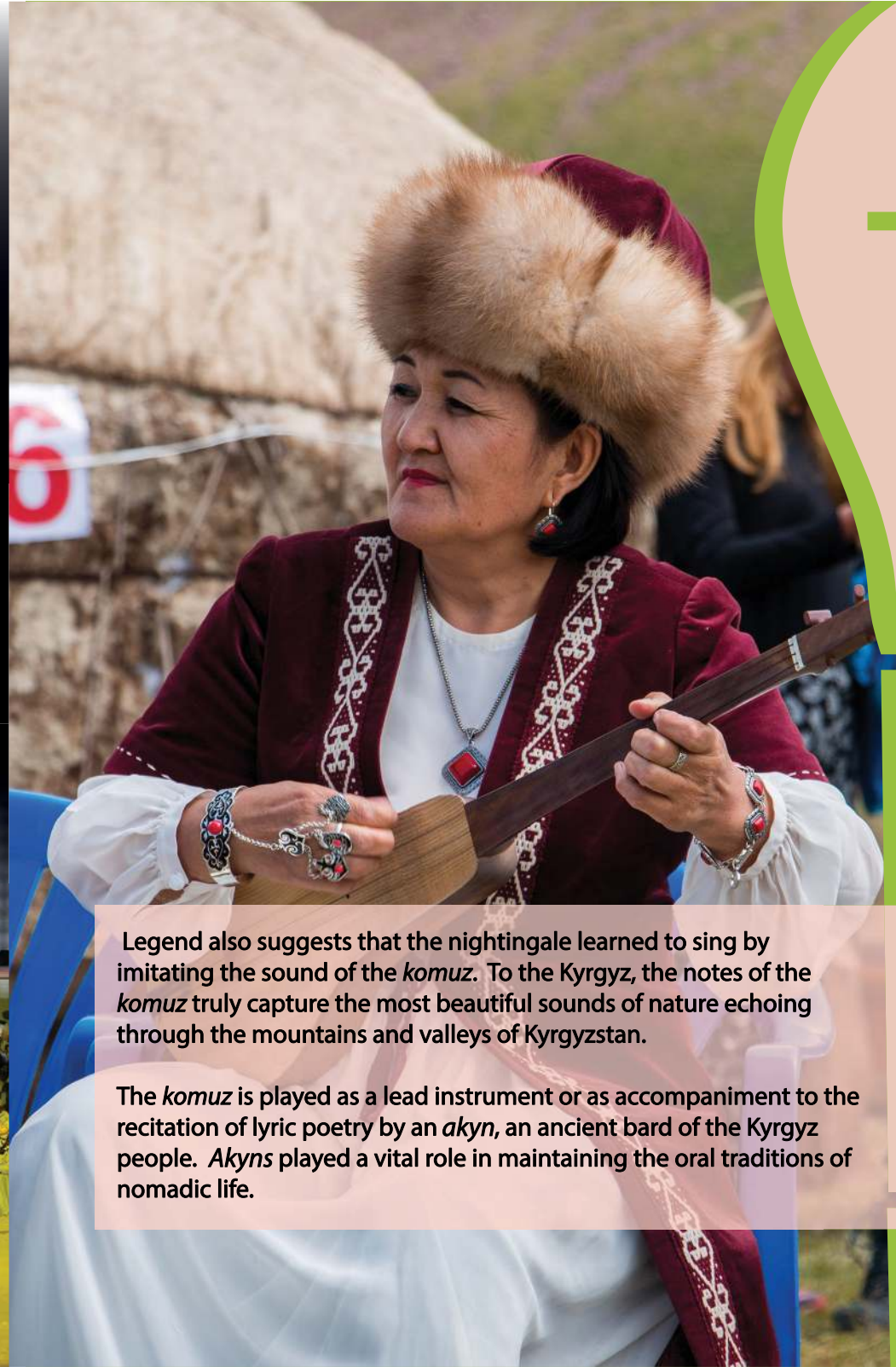
Komuz



The *komuz* is an ancient unfretted, stringed instrument of Turkic origin that has become a cherished symbol of the Kyrgyz people. Its earliest known use by Kyrgyz nomads dates from the fourth century although imprints of a similar three-stringed instrument have appeared in 8,000 year-old archaeological relics found in modern Azerbaijan. Not quite a meter in length, the *komuz* is lightweight and portable, ideal for nomadic life in the mountains and *jailoos* (mountain meadows) of Kyrgyzstan.

Typically, a *komuz* is made of a single piece of juniper or apricot wood, both found in abundance throughout Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz words for the parts of the *komuz* relate to parts of the body or symbols dear to the Kyrgyz people. In addition to the instrument's long, narrow *moyun* (neck), its tuning pegs are called *qulaq* (ears), while its strings, *qyl*, were originally made of the dried intestines of sheep or goats. The name *komuz* is believed to have been derived from the ancient Turkic words *gop* (height) and *uz* (voice) or a magic, musical sound.

Myths abound about the origin of the *komuz*. One reveals that a hunter, named Kambar, was wandering in the forest when he heard breathtakingly beautiful music. He sought its source and found that it was produced by the intestine of a squirrel tied between two tree branches, which he then fashioned into a musical instrument.



Legend also suggests that the nightingale learned to sing by imitating the sound of the *komuz*. To the Kyrgyz, the notes of the *komuz* truly capture the most beautiful sounds of nature echoing through the mountains and valleys of Kyrgyzstan.

The *komuz* is played as a lead instrument or as accompaniment to the recitation of lyric poetry by an *akyn*, an ancient bard of the Kyrgyz people. *Akyns* played a vital role in maintaining the oral traditions of nomadic life.