



# *Sacred animals of Ala-Too*

***The sacred animals of the Ala-Too Mountains can't wait to share their wisdom and blessings with you—let the adventure begin!***

**Players: 2-4**

**Duration: 30-45 minutes**

**Audience: 9 and over**

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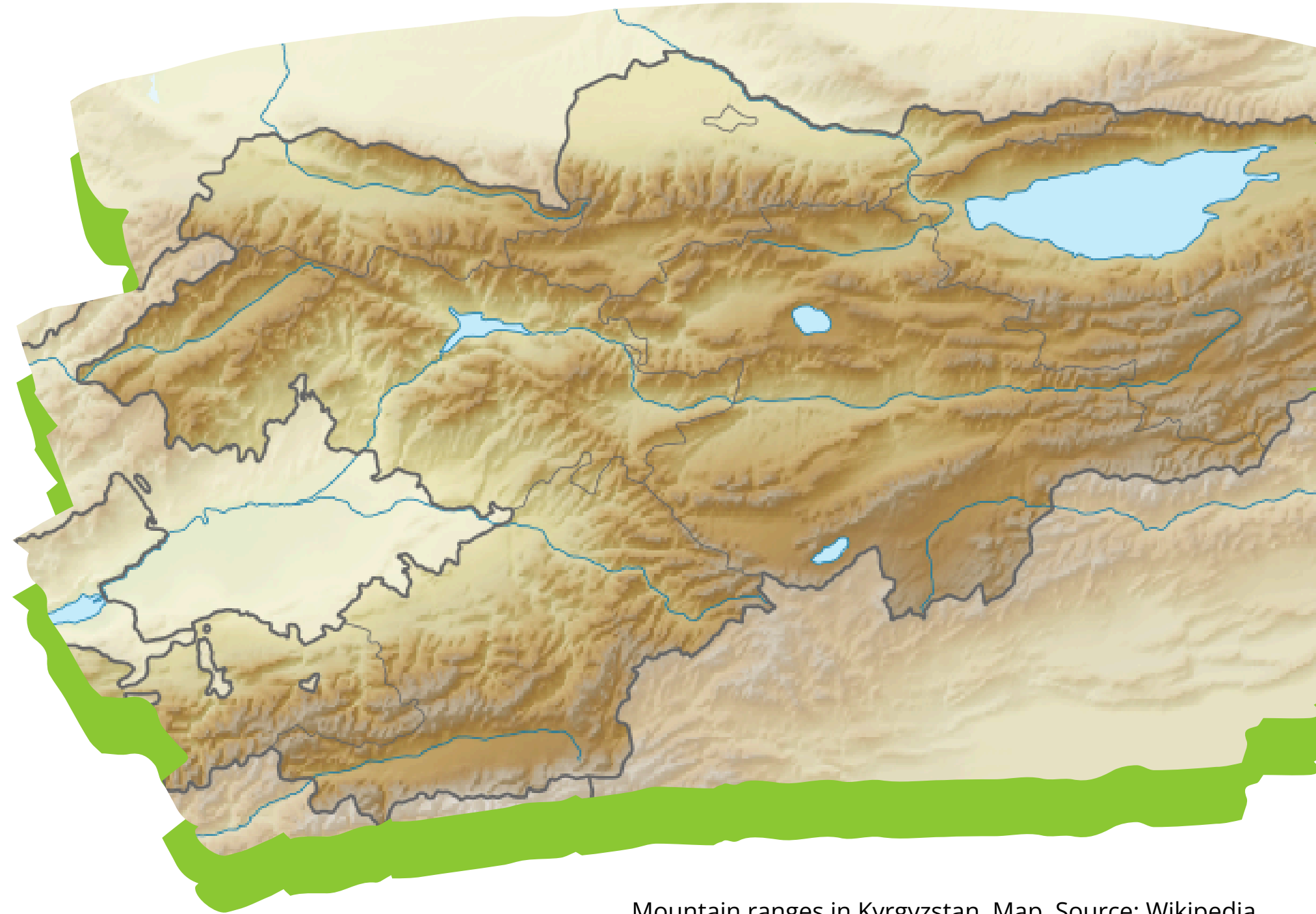
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# Game overview

***Sacred Animals of Ala-Too*** is a competitive tabletop game where players race to collect wisdom tokens from each of the sacred animals of Ala-Too Mountains in Kyrgyzstan. To progress, players draw cards from the deck to earn points by either matching informational cards or answering questions created by other players. These points are then combined with the results of six alchiks (or dice) rolls to create specific sums that move players' tokens along designated paths toward each animal's home in the mountains.

To support understanding and system thinking, the game narrative integrates elements of both scientific and traditional ecological knowledge, alongside the culture, traditions, and folklore of the Kyrgyz people. In doing so, the game aims to convey a holistic, nomadic worldview, emphasizing the deep interconnection and harmony between humans and nature.



Mountain ranges in Kyrgyzstan. Map. Source: Wikipedia

## *Game's materials:*

- Game board cards;
- Deck of special cards: standard informational cards, bonus cards, and trap cards;
- Deck of blank cards;
- Six traditional 'alchiks' (knucklebones) or six four-sided dice;
- Player tokens (18 pieces);
- Wisdom tokens (4 units per animal/ 24 pieces).



# Game setup

1. Game board: Solve the puzzle and arrange the mountain cards in front of the players in columns - in an increasing sequence from 6 to 11 , so that animals are at the top;
2. Stack wisdom tokens on each mountain's peak, corresponding to its animals;
3. Give each player their 5 player tokens (if 2 players ) or 4 tokens (if 3-4 players);
4. Set aside 6 alchiks or 6 dice;
5. Set aside a deck of special cards.
6. Set aside a deck of blank cards.





# How to Play

1. At the beginning, each player adds 2–8 questions to the deck based on game themes.
2. Shuffle all cards together.
3. On your turn, draw a card and follow its instructions, then roll 6 alchiki/dice.
4. Combine card points and dice to form totals between 7 and 12 to move your tokens along the paths.
5. Reach animals on the mountains to collect wisdom tokens.
6. The first player to collect all wisdom tokens wins; the last player loses.
7. Wait at each animal until another player arrives before moving that token again.





# Game End and Debrief:



The first player to collect wisdom tokens from all sacred animals by the end of a round—that is, after all players have taken their turns—wins the game. The player who is the last one remaining loses. The game may have more than one winner and could end in a tie.

A facilitator, teacher, or parent can lead the debrief to guide the follow-up discussion.

1. Have you learned more about the endangered animals of the Kyrgyz mountains? Which facts did you find most interesting?
2. What are some effects of climate change—can you recall any?
3. How do you think traditional knowledge helps protect the natural environment?





# *How this game facilitates its learning goal?*

The game centers on the sacred animals of the Kyrgyz people, with a focus on biodiversity in mountainous ecosystems, folklore, traditional ecological knowledge, and climate change.

Through a carefully designed deck of special cards, the game introduces players to the biodiversity of Kyrgyzstan, offering insights into Kyrgyz culture and ecological knowledge.

These narratives actively influence players' decisions and pathways throughout the game, fostering both engagement and reflection. The player must read the text aloud and take one of the following actions: if it's a bonus card, place it near the animal they believe is the priority to protect; if it's a trap card, set it aside; and if it's an informational card, match it to an animal using the narrative and symbolic hints provided. Blank cards give players the agency to shape the game using their own knowledge. At the same time, creating thought-provoking questions may encourage players to deepen their understanding of the topic by using open resources such as books, digital devices, and other references.

