

Pressbook

# Tengri

## Blue Heavens

*From the heart of Central Asia a tale of love*

A film written & directed  
by Marie Jaoul de Poncheville

An L Films and Cine Dok Production  
in association with Arte France Cinéma

Press material from  
[www.tengri-film.com](http://www.tengri-film.com)

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**Cine Dok:** Holzmarktstr 10, 10179 Berlin, Germany. Phone +49 30 240 88 197 Fax +49 30 240 88 199

## Cast

Amira  
Temur  
Raissa  
Uljan  
Erofei  
Shashi  
Askar  
Mansur

Albina Imacheva  
Ilimbek Kalmouratov  
Hélène Patarot  
Taalaikan Abazova  
Nikolai Marousitch  
Bousourman Odourakaev  
Askat Soulaimanov  
Tabildi Aktanov

## Crew

Script

Marie Jaoul de Poncheville & Jean François  
Goyet

Director

Marie Jaoul de Poncheville

Executive Producers

Emmanuel Schlumberger and Frank Müller

Line Producer

Dieter Horres

Art Director

Charles Castella

Camera

Sylvie Carcédo, Frank Müller

Editing

Catherine Quesemand

Sound

William Franck, Ingo Burghardt

Sound Designer

Manuel Laval

Music Composer

Birgit Løkke

Costumes

Tatiana Tychinskaia

## Production

Production Companies

L Films (SARL), Paris, Cine Dok GmbH, Berlin

Associate Producer

Arte Cinéma France

Funding Agencies

FFA Mini Traité, MFG Baden-Württemberg,  
CNC, DFFF & Eurimages

## Technical Details

Cinema Version:

Length: 110 min

Format: 1:2,35 cinemascope

Sound: Dolby SR-D

Language: Kyrgyz/ Russian with English, French, German subtitles.

TV Version:

Length: 104 min

Format: HD/Digibeta 16:9

Production year: May 2008

Film shot on location in Kyrgyzstan and Germany (June to August 2007)

Editing (September 2007 - January 2008) in Paris

Post Production (January 2008 - May 2008) in ARRI Schwarzfilm (Berlin, Munich, Bern) and Elektrofilm (Stuttgart, Berlin).

One of the first films to be shot with an Arri 2 Perf Camera technology in Asia. As an alternative to S16mm the 2 Perf format secures high quality in Cinemascope at an affordable price. The film is transported with 2 instead of 4 perforation grips. In this way enormous costs for Film material and development are saved without compromising on screening quality.

## Short Synopsis

A nomadic love story set in the heart of today's Central Asia, amongst the ruins of Sovietism, amidst rebirth of nationalities and echoes of the Afghan wars.

A young married Kyrgyz girl and a noble Kazakh settler returning from abroad each strive to escape a dead-end history, struggle for fresh air and find each other. Breaking and at the same time in keeping with traditions, their love holds through valleys, mountains, steppes, and cities, following the courses of rivers that invigorate the earth, pulling them towards a new world. Between east and west, they invent a universe where life again becomes worth living.

## Synopsis

Once a fisher on the Aral Sea in Central Asia, Temur, a thirty-year-old Kazakh, decides to return to his ancestral village in the Kyrghyz Mountains. His dream of a new life in Europe does not work. The story begins when Temur arrives full of hope in a nomad mountain jailoo with a few tents, in late spring.

Temur is received in the village with mistrust. In return for shelter he is given jobs usually reserved for women. He supports Amira without realizing that he has fallen in love with her.

A very brief return of her husband allows Amira to live through a sad wedding night and consummate a hopeless marriage. Despite this she commits herself to a desperate and alcoholic spouse and to a village community steeped in traditions.

Together with Taib, her brother in law, Amira and Temur take on the challenge to help their village to survive. They are shouldered with a heavy responsibility to go regularly to the towns to sell rugs, fur, handicrafts and farm produce. Trading in a fast changing world is tough but the three complement each other perfectly in this work. Amira's seductive, insolent and mature temperament and Temur's silent authority along with Taib's innocent charm complement each other very well. Through this work Temur and Amira observe each other gradually beginning to realize their affection. Young Taib protects this secret love with a bad conscience of someone who is betraying his family.

The permanent return of her injured husband back to the village leads the lovers to finally flee from it all. Amira and Temur realize that they do not stand a chance anywhere together, not even with her parents. A chase begins and they keep on narrowly escaping a group of men which includes her husband. They ride along riverbeds which once fed the Aral Lake. Finally reaching near a border they sell their horses and hitch a lift. With their last strength they climb over a mountain and stand over a valley covered with trees appearing out from nowhere. Perhaps this place will make a fisher of Temür again, and a rider free like the wind, of Amira; a man and a woman, simply happy together. Could it be that have they only seen this place in their dreams?

When we ask ourselves where they went, all these immigrants from the East that Europe doesn't know how to take in, we could try to imagine some of them hidden – "full of experience and of wisdom" and perhaps hope – somewhere in a world between theirs and ours. A world that they are building and which may be invaluable to us someday.

## Director's Note

I always asked myself where those migrants returned to who came from the East and for whom Europe had no place. Here were men and women who on their return must have invented a world which had similarities to theirs and a little to ours. Maybe a universe which we too would find precious one day. However I am not an optimist. I think that this is a dream which will not come true.

I think a man cannot return to something he has fled at the risk of his life easily. To survive he must invent and to invent he must have enough courage. Courage cannot be found unless someone is interested and pays attention to you. The moment we are preoccupied with this someone everything can start anew. Life begins to take on a meaning again.

I wanted to know where Temur came from and what would happen to him afterwards when one saw him at the beginning of the film on the beach in Calais. I wanted to follow this desperate man on his return to his home land and discover with him what was awaiting someone who had nothing.

I shot my film in one of the most beautiful countries on earth, surrounded by mountains, cliffs, crisscrossed by cascading rivers, mysterious and profound lakes and habited by almost mythological and rare species of animals. One also discovers the diversity of the Kyrgyz countryside during the escape of the two lovers; the red peaks as if sculpted by giants, the woods and deserts, the cotton fields and the devastated remains of Soviet built structures resembling a land at the end of its time.

I chose to tell my story set in a nomadic Kyrgyz culture - a fast disappearing world. Here we do not see any towns except when the villagers go to sell their products there. The summer camps high up in the mountains, a pastoral scene with women decorating their tents and embroidering, everyone living according to the beat of nature, gathering to sing in the evenings and sleeping peacefully in their tents - a veritable paradise on earth. We have an imperfect and imprecise picture of Central Asia. We imagine the vastness somewhere further east where a radical Islam is waking up. I have travelled in the region since many years now and seen its rapid and disturbing transformation. In March 2005 was the orange revolution in Kyrgyzstan. It was at this time that I started writing Tengri. The television images of the Kyrgyz arriving on their horses in the presidential palace seemed like a good moment to tell the story of a man and a woman who reject the obsolete traditions and decide to invent a life in which they are active participants.

## Press Notes: facts and figures Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked country that lies on the ancient east-west silk road. To its east is China, Kazakhstan in the north, Uzbekistan to the west, and Tajikistan to the Southwest separate Kyrgyzstan from its near neighbours Afghanistan and, south of the Himalayas, India and Pakistan. There is a relatively flat plain in the north of Kyrgyzstan, where the capital Bishkek lies and most of the arable land, but apart from that most of the country is predominantly mountainous. Kyrgyzstan hosts several of the world's highest mountain ranges including much of the Tian Shan (Celestial Mountains). Ninety percent of the surface area is land over 1,000 metres above sea level. It features spectacular landscapes of valleys, vast high plateaus, forests and meadows, and ever-visible snow covered mountains. The population of Kyrgyzstan is less than 5-million people. First becoming a republic in 1936 Kyrgyzstan was formerly a part of the USSR, and has a Turkic speaking predominantly nomadic population. Independence came abruptly in 1991, bringing enormous changes in economic culture for which the new country was not at all prepared.

It is said that:

- a great passion for all Kyrgyz is horses, horse racing, the epic of Manas, falcon hunting and acrobatics.
- a number of old factories abandoned by the Russians, are being dismantled by mostly the Chinese as scrap metal for China.
- the Kyrgyz earn a living from manufacture of felt, carpets, mining & weaving of silk and cotton.
- nomads practice Islam or Buddhism crossbred with Shamanism.
- in the summer the nomads stay in jaiolos. Everyone knows where to locate a jailoo from any given family. In winter they descend to lower altitudes or settle on the plains near towns.

"Tengri" is the oldest known Turkic word, believed to have originated in the 6th century B.C. Tengri or the god of blue sky was the main god of the Turkic pantheon, controlling the heavenly universe. In modern Turkish, the derived word "Tanrı" is used as the generic word for "god".



## Marie Jaoul de Poncheville,

Director, Scriptwriter



“Tengri “ Wrter & Director, co-writer Jean – François Goyet.  
Film shot in summer of 2007 in Kirgistan & Germany.

“Yönden“ fiction, Director. With the voice of Charlotte Rampling  
Production Arte & Kuiv Productions. Shot in Mongolia.

“La projection”. Documentary, Director. Shot in Mali Production Arte - Duo  
films - Dominant 7.

“Molom, Conte de Mongolie “, feature film, Director. Production Lungta  
Prod. Cie des Films. Award at the Chicago International Children Film  
Festival, Cannes festival , Beirut festival.

Book “Molom, the Chamane and the child”, Writer.

“Lungta,the wind riders”. Director. Documentary with the voice of Isabelle  
Adjani in French and Richard Gere in English.

Book & Documentary “Seven women on the footsteps of Alexandra David-  
Neel”, Writer.

Directed several documentaries for French TV on Tibet

## Emmanuel Schlumberger

Executive Producer , L Films - below an extract of some of his work

### L Films :

- \* "Tengri" (Marie Jaoul de Poncheville)
- \* "La Vie Nouvelle" (Grandieux)
- \* "Marrakech Express" ( G. Mackinnon )
- \* "La Buena Vida" (D. Trueba )

### Gaumont :

- \* "A nos Amours" (Pialat)
- \* "Un Amour de Swan" (Schloendorf)
- \* "Danton" (Wajda)
- \* "Je vous salue, Marie" (Godard)
- \* "Péril en la Demeure" (Deville)
- \* "Police" (Pialat)

### French Productions :

- \* "Si tu vas à Rio, tu meurs" (P. Clair)
- \* "36 Fillette" (C. Breillat)
- \* "Zanzibar" (C. Pascal)
- \* "Maman" (R. Goupil)
- \* "L'Aventure extraordinaire d'un Papa peu ordinaire" (P. Clair)
- \* "Sale comme un Ange" (C. Breillat)
- \* "Sans un cri" (J. Labrune)
- \* "Le Petit Prince a dit" (C. Pascal)
- \* "L'Instinct de l'Ange" (R. Dembo)
- \* "Belle Epoque" (F. Trueba)
- \* "Sinon oui" (C. Simon)
- \* "Les Palmes de M. Schutz" (C. Pinoteau)

## Frank Müller

Producer, Director & DOP , Cine Dok GmbH

“Tengri - Blue Heavens”, Feature Film, Producer

“ Beirut” documentary, DOP

“Amazonas” documentary, Brazil, ZDF. DOP

“Menschen hautnah” Docu Series, WDR, Megahertz ,DOP

"Hamburger Lektionen" Documentary, Dir: Romuald Karmakar, Camera

“Beslan, eine Stadt sucht die Wahrheit", Documentary, ARTE / Zero Film, Director, Camera

"Happy End" Social Spot, JWT / Unicef, Direction / Camera

"Baghdad Bahn" Documentary, ARD, DOP

"Bam, die verschwundene Oase" Documentary, Iran, ARTE / Zero Film DOP, Director

“Der Fliegende Mann” Documentary, ARTE DOP, Director

“CHECK IT OUT” Feature Film in Cinemascope, Hit and Run Production, DOP

“Secrets of Siberia“ Documentary Trailer IMAX

“Berlin von A - Z“ Cinema Commercial Berliner Zeitung, Scholz & Friends, Camera

“Gesichter einer Metropole“ - St. Petersburg, Documentary, ARTE Camera Direction

“Where the sky meets the earth“, Feature documentary with support from: MfG, FF Meck.-Pomm. and SWR/ARTE CoProducer EURO ARTS ENTERTAINMENT Camera, Direction

“HEIMATGEFÜHLE“, Feature documentary, CinemaScope, SWF, Producer, Director, Camera

