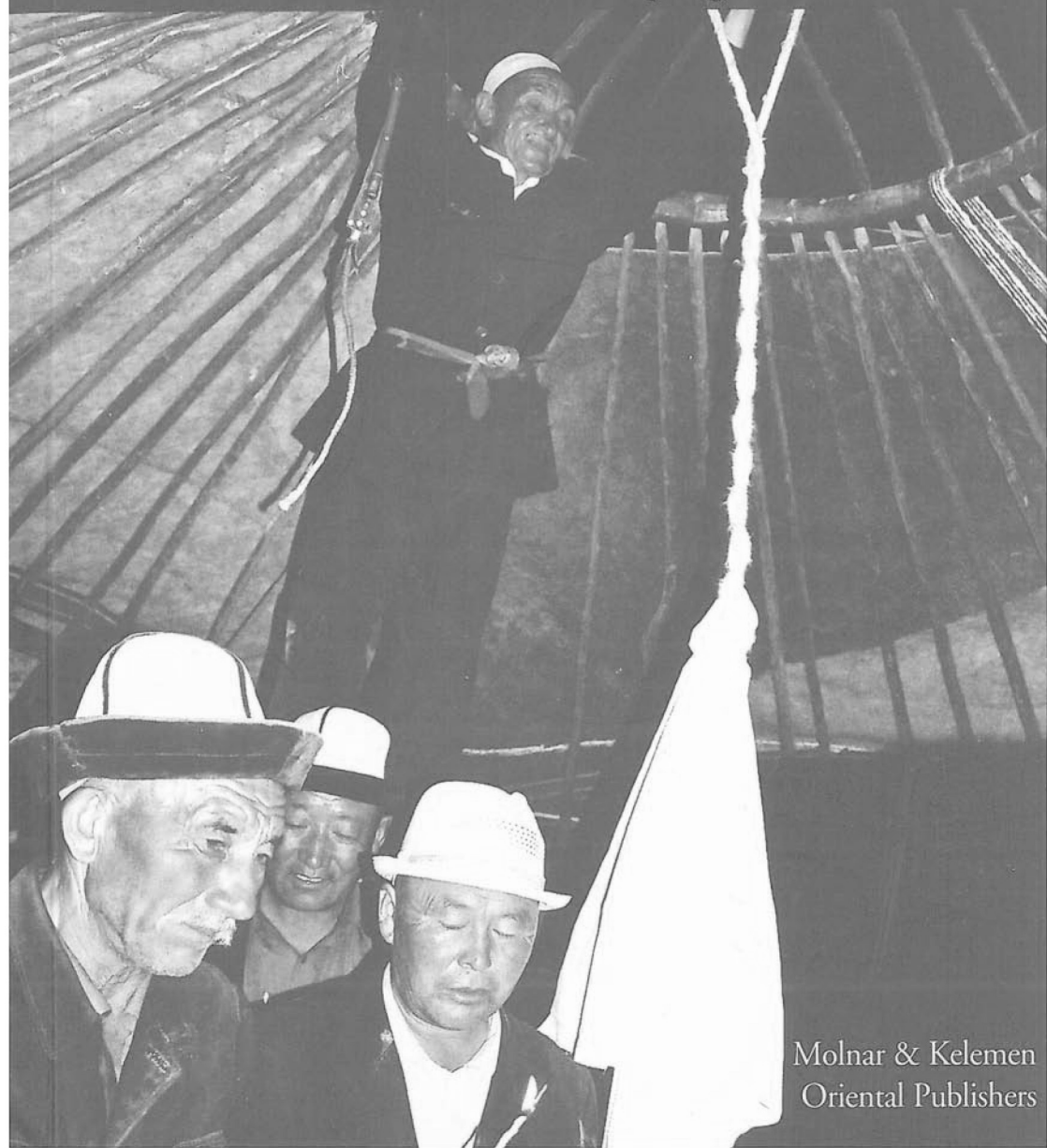


# SHAMAN

Volume 15 Numbers 1 and 2  
Spring and Autumn 2007



Molnar & Kelemen  
Oriental Publishers

SHAMAN  
Journal of the International Society  
for Shamanistic Research

**Honorary Editor-in-Chief (1993–2006):**

ÅKE HULTKRANTZ, Stockholm

**Editors:**

MIHÁLY HOPPÁL, Budapest  
([hoppal@etnologia.mta.hu](mailto:hoppal@etnologia.mta.hu))

ÁDÁM MOLNÁR, Budapest  
([molnar@folkscene.hu](mailto:molnar@folkscene.hu))

**Editorial Board:**

DANIEL A. KISTER, Seoul (*Korea*)

PETER KNECHT, Nagoya (*Japan*)

GREGORY G. MASKARINEC, Honolulu (*Nepal, South Asia and Tibet*)

GIOVANNI STARY, Venezia (*Manchu, Xibe, China*)

CATHERINE URAY-KÓHALMI, Budapest (*Mongol and Tunguz Peoples*)

VILMOS VOIGT, Budapest (*Uralic Peoples*)

*Shaman. Journal of the International Society for Shamanistic Research* (ISSN 1216-7827) is an international periodical for shamanistic studies and as such publishes original articles on shamanism and neighboring fields. In addition, the journal publishes reviews of current books, brief accounts of work in progress and announcements of coming events. The language of publication will be English. Submissions are considered for publication on the understanding that the author is offering *Shaman* the exclusive option to publish and that the paper is not currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.

*Editorial policy* Manuscripts submitted to *Shaman* will be considered for publication by members of the Editorial Board and the Editors.

*Editorial correspondence* (manuscripts, communications, books for review) should be sent to the publishers: Budapest, Marczibányi tér 9. Hungary, H-1022.

*Shaman on the Internet* Contents and abstracts of all previous and current issues, subscription information are available at [www.folkscene.hu](http://www.folkscene.hu)

*Subscription information* For the actual subscription rates, payable by checks or bank transfers, please visit [www.folkscene.hu](http://www.folkscene.hu). Orders may be placed with the publishers or with the major subscription agencies. Checks should be made payable and mailed to Molnar & Kelemen Oriental Publishers.

*Copyright Shaman* retains the copyright on everything it publishes.

*Shaman* (ISSN 1216-7827) is published once a year (two numbers bound in one) by Molnar & Kelemen Oriental Publishers, Budapest, Marczibányi tér 9. Hungary, H-1022.



Sponsored by



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

nka

The National Cultural Fund of Hungary

*Maps drawn by Zsuzsa Draskovits and István Sántha*

*Front cover: The Kirghiz shaman grabs the smoke ring of the yurt, the symbol of the Upper World, as he stands on the shoulder of a helper. Photograph by Mihály Hoppál.*

*Photograph from Dávid Somfai Kara, Mihály Hoppál and János Sipos, The Sacred Valley of Jay Ata and a Kirghiz Shaman from Xinjiang, China*

Copyright © 2007 by Molnar & Kelemen Oriental Publishers, Budapest  
Photographs @ Mátyás Balogh, Ágnes Birtalan, Márta Csepregi, Mihály Hoppál,  
Museum of Ethnography (Budapest), Otto Mamen, Richard Noll, Kun Shi, Zsolt Szilágyi  
and Dávid Somfai Kara  
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, in any form or by any means,  
electronic, photocopying or otherwise, without permission in writing from the publishers.

ISSN 1216-7827

Printed in Hungary

# SHAMAN

Volume 15 Numbers 1 & 2 Spring/Autumn 2007

## Contents

### *Articles*

- An Eastern Khanty Shaman Song  
MÁRTA CSEPREGI 5
- On a Shamanic Drum of the Vasiugan River Khanty  
ZOLTÁN NAGY 27
- The Sacred Valley of Jay Ata  
and a Kirghiz Shaman from Xinjiang, China  
DÁVID SOMFAI KARA, MIHÁLY HOPPÁL and JÁNOS SIPOS 47
- The Shaman(ess) – the Performer. Examples of the Activities  
and Life Stories of Darkhad Mongolian Shamanesses  
ÁGNES BIRTALAN 69
- Shamanic Traditions, Rites and Songs Among the Mongolian Buriads:  
Meeting a Shamaness and her Assistant  
MÁTYÁS BALOGH 87
- The Jurchen Shamaness. An Analysis  
of the First Written Reference to the Word ‘Shaman’  
GÁBOR KÓSA 117
- The Shaman and the Spirit World  
CATHERINE URAY-KÓHALMI 129
- The Shamanic Healer: Master of Nonlocal Information?  
EDE FRECSKA and LUIS EDUARDO LUNA 135
- Field Reports*
- A Solon Ewenki Shaman and her Abagaldai Shaman Mask  
RICHARD NOLL and KUN SHI 167

# ACTA ORIENTALIA

ACADEMIAE SCIENTIARUM  
HUNGARICAE

Editor-in-Chief ■ ISTVÁN VÁSÁRY

Editor ■ IMRE HAMAR

## Aims and scope

Acta Orientalia provides an international forum for original papers in the field of oriental studies, including Turkic, Mongolian, Manchu-Tungusian, Chinese, Tibetan, Indian, Iranian and Semitic philology, linguistics, literature and history.

Papers mainly in English, but also in French, German and Russian

Publishes book reviews and advertisements

## Please send your order to

AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ  
Journals Business Centre  
P.O. Box 245  
H-1519 Budapest, Hungary  
Phone: (+36 1) 464 8222  
Fax: (+36 1) 464 8221  
E-mail: journals@akkrt.hu



**FOUNDED IN 1950**

HU ISSN 0001-6446

(print)

HU ISSN 1588-2667

(online)

### Publication:

one volume  
of four issues annually

**2007:** Vol. 60

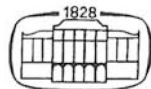
### Subscription price per volume:

EUR 248

incl.

### FREE ONLINE

access



AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

www.akademiai.com  
www.akademiaikiado.hu

## The Sacred Valley of Jay Ata and a Kirghiz Shaman from Xinjiang, China

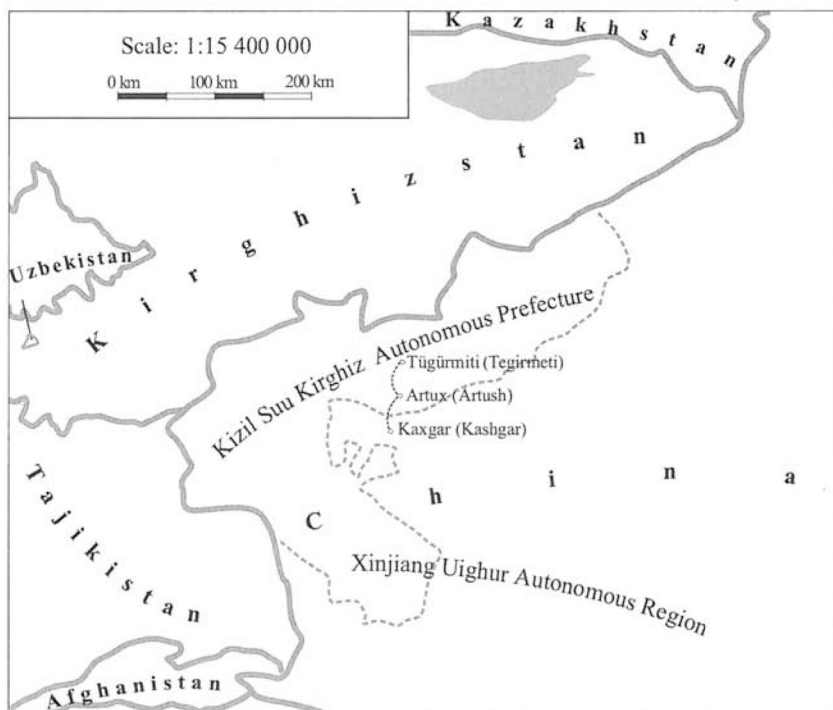
D. SOMFAI KARA, M. HOPPÁL and J. SIPOS ✓ BUDAPEST

*The present account discusses the close relationship between two important elements of Kirghiz popular beliefs, the so-called sacred mazar sites and the shaman (bakši). During our field trip in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China in 2004 we visited the sacred valley of Jay Ata, which offers a good example of the mixture of animism and Islam. The animist worship of nature and the popular Islamic respect for the tombs of holy personages is combined in the Kirghiz concept of mazar sites. Later we witnessed a unique healing ritual of a Kirghiz shaman. During this ritual the shaman performed a dance (talma biy) that has already disappeared among the Kirghiz population of Kirghizstan. We were also able to observe the use of the shaman's flag (tuu), which symbolized his travel to the Upper World. This article presents interviews with the shaman and the guard of the sacred valley, a written source on the Islamic legitimization of the valley and a musical analysis of the shaman's song. Analysis of the shamanic ritual also reveals a strong link between the ritual and the mazar sites.*

This account is based on a field trip conducted by Mihály Hoppál and Dávid Somfai Kara to China at the beginning of September, 2004. First we (Hoppál and Somfai Kara) attended the 7th Conference of the ISSR held in Changchun, Jilin Province, China, on August 22–25, 2004. Then, together with some other members of the ISSR, we were invited to Ürümqi, capital of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, China, by Dilmurat Omar, Head of the Department of Ethnology of the Xinjiang Normal University, to take part in another, smaller conference on shamanism. After that we traveled from Ürümqi to Kaxgar,<sup>1</sup> one of

---

<sup>1</sup> In Modern Uighur this is pronounced Qäšqär, in Kirghiz Kaškar.



Map. 1. The Kizil Suu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, China. Drawn by István Sántha.

the ancient centers on the Silk Road, and later visited the city of Artux,<sup>2</sup> north of Kaxgar.

Artux is the center of the Kizil Su (Kizil Suu) Kirghiz Autonomous prefecture, which was founded in 1954. The Kirghiz nomads live along the border with Kirghizstan and Tajikistan, up in the Tianshan and Pamir Mountains. According to the official census of the year 2000,<sup>3</sup> the Kirghiz population in China was around 160,000. We traveled to Tügürmiti, a small Kirghiz village<sup>4</sup> with a population of some 4,000 approximately 70 kilometers northeast of Artux (see Map 1).

<sup>2</sup> The name of the town in Uighur is Atuš, in Kirghiz Artış. A road runs from Artux to the Kirghiz capital Bishkek through the Torug-art Pass. The majority of the city's population is Uighur, but Han Chinese and Kirghiz also live there.

<sup>3</sup> See *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu fenbu tuji*, 2002: 190.

<sup>4</sup> The Kirghiz name of the village is Tegirmeti; its Uighur name is Tügürmiti.

During the trip, Mihály Hoppál used a video camera to record events, while Dávid Somfai Kara, who can speak Kirghiz, talked with the local people. We conducted two interviews and took part in a shamanic ritual. Besides the video recording we also took many photographs. Later, with the help of the video recording, Somfai Kara wrote down and translated the interviews and shamanic texts. Ethnomusicologist János Sipos was invited to analyze the shamanic song. The reader will find his musicological notes under the title “A Musical Analysis of the Kirghiz Shaman’s Song” at the end of this article.

Our host, Omar Dilmurat, originally planned a visit to a Uighur shaman, but in the end we met a younger Kazakh shaman and an older Kirghiz one. In the present article we give an account of the healing ritual performed by the Kirghiz shaman.<sup>5</sup>

First of all we visited the sacred valley known as Jay Ata (in Uighur Jay Pächim),<sup>6</sup> which is situated by a small river. Certain rocks, trees and springs are considered sacred. These are called *mazar*<sup>7</sup> by the Kirghiz, according to whom they are possessed<sup>8</sup> by the spirits (*arbak*, from Arabic *arwāh*) of Muslim saints or martyrs (*šeyit*, from Arabic *šahīd*). In other Central Asian Turkic languages the word *mazar* has preserved its original meaning from the Arabic: ‘a tomb, a grave’. There are seven such sacred sites in the Jay Ata Valley. Local people make sacrifices (*tülöö* or *tilöö*, from the Kirghiz verb *tile-* ‘to wish’) at the *mazar* sites, where they pray and bathe in the water of the springs. They believe that, in return, the spirits will mediate between themselves and Allah, so that the pilgrims’ wishes come true. The valley is watched over by an old Kirghiz guard (*karool*) called Abdīrakman Seyit, 63 years of age, who also helps the pilgrims to choose the proper *mazar* and spirit for their sacrifice. But let us cite his words:

---

<sup>5</sup> Kazakh shamans of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region have been recently studied by Dilmurat Omar (2003).

<sup>6</sup> The local people could not explain the meaning of the valley’s name (Jay Ata or Jay Pächim). The Uighur name seems to be older, but the word *pächim* does not have a meaning in their language either.

<sup>7</sup> This word comes from Arabic *mazār* ‘visiting, place of visitation, a shrine, a tomb or grave’.

<sup>8</sup> Kirghiz *ee-le-* means ‘to possess’, from the Kirghiz word *ee*, which means ‘master’ or ‘spirit’; see also the Mongolian *ejen* ‘id.’

In the 900s a sultan by the name of Satuk Bughra Khan from the Karluk tribe had to flee, and he found a sanctuary in this very valley. He took a rest here in the Valley of the Seven Sacred Sites. The names of the mazar sites are: Sögät Mazar (Willow Mazar), Töö Taš Mazar (Camel Stone Mazar), Tamči Mazar (Water-Drop Mazar), Šarkiratma Mazar (Waterfall Mazar), Kök Köl Mazar (Blue Lake Mazar<sup>9</sup>), Kol Saldı Mazar (Hand-Touched Mazar) and Bešigerim<sup>10</sup> Mazar. Bughra Khan accepted Islam in this very place. He became a Muslim while hiding here, he started to pray here and he made his first morning prayer (Arabic *adhān*) too. It was more than a thousand years ago. A lot of pilgrims come to visit this place from Artux, Kaɣgar, and even Aksu, from many places. They can find peace here throughout the summer from May till October.

In winter only sick people come. The water of the springs can cure them. They take fallen stones from the rocks to heal themselves by beating the ailing parts of their body with the stones. The springs are mainly good for hypertension. But they can also heal headaches and pain in the limbs. These pilgrims sacrifice an animal to the spirits. Then they give a blessing and ask the owner spirits of the *mazar* sites to protect and heal them. The shaman (*bakši*) also invokes the spirits of Jay Ata Valley during his ritual. Then at the end of the ritual he sends them back to the valley. Every *mazar* has its peculiar curing ability; for example, the Hand-Touched *Mazar* is visited by barren women and they touch it with their hands. The spring of that *mazar* has a healing power. At the Water-Drop *Mazar* people place their mouth or hands against the drops. The saints' spirits hide in these *mazars*. They were martyrs. Bešigerim was also a martyr. She was a holy lady, who became pregnant. During her delivery she lost her baby and then died here. Since then this place has been called Bešigerim *mazar*.

My task is to check the pilgrims and visitors. They come here in groups or sometimes alone. A lot of people come between May and June. They can hardly fit in the valley. They come here during festivals or on ordinary days. They believe that the *mazars* are martyrs turned into stones. Their spirits are the masters of the *mazar*; they live inside them. The shamans invoke these spirits, the martyrs of the *mazar*, but they can tell you more about it. If the spirits agree to come they shout: "Behold, they've arrived." The shamans

---

<sup>9</sup> See pl. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Bešigerim is a proper name, see the text below.



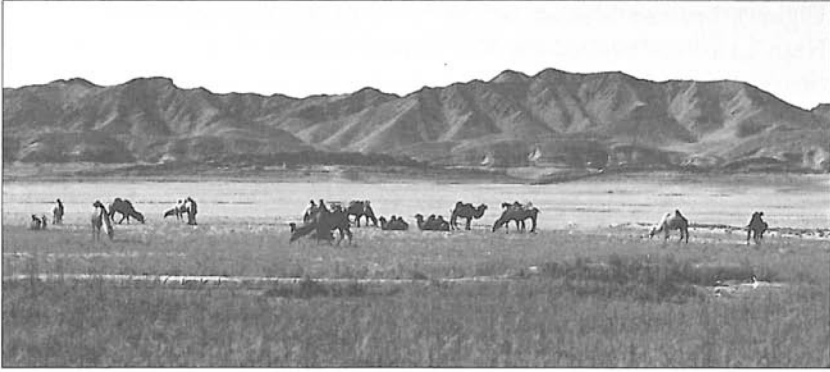


Fig 1. Camels graze by a dam on the way to the Kirghiz village of Tegirmeti.  
Photo: Dávid Somfai Kara, 2004.

call the spirits by shouting. At the end of the ritual they say: “Now return home.” They invoke them from the valley of Jay Ata, they sing: “Jay Ata, my sacred valley, I invoke your spirits.” When the shaman calls the spirits they come, when he sends them away they return home. They call the *mazars* by their names: “Camel Stone *Mazar*, Hand-Touched *Mazar*, Beşigerim. Oh, my saints, bless these people!” They shout like that.

The springs have healing power. They are so helpful that nearly a hundred animals are sacrificed to their spirits. We worship the *mazars* according to the Kirghiz custom. Pilgrims tie white ribbons and make a wish. They tie the sacred white ribbons around their necks at the entrance. Then they bind the ribbons to trees and bushes and express their wishes.<sup>11</sup> Men and women equally bind ribbons. They visit the Jay Ata valley to make a ribbon sacrifice so that their wishes come true. This custom is inherited from our Kirghiz ancestors. Uighur people do not bind ribbons, only the Kirghiz do. The Uighur people sacrifice animals and read the *Koran* out of respect for the Muslim martyrs.

As we have seen, here the cult of nature is linked to a Central Asian Muslim legend. Artush was once the center of the Bughra Khans (Golden 1992: 214–215) from the Karluk Turkic tribes who ruled the area. One of these khans, by the name of Satuk (or Sutuk in modern

---

<sup>11</sup> See pl. 5.

Uighur), became Muslim by the help of a Persian nobleman Abū al-Naṣr. Later he founded the Karakhanid Empire (10th and 11th centuries). According to a legend Satuk met the Muslim pilgrim in the Valley of Jay Ata and secretly accepted the Islamic faith. He first practised his five-times daily prayer (Persian *namāz*) to Allah here. This legend has a historic foundation. The English scholar Robert B. Shaw published a text in Central Asian literary Turkic<sup>12</sup> (also known as Chagatai in the west) written in the Arabic script, which tells the famous story of Bughra Khan (called *Tazkirat-ul-Buğra* in Arabic).<sup>13</sup> We cite from the third passage of this text, translated into English by Dávid Somfai Kara.

Until he was 12 years old, Satuk lived the life of the infidels (Arabic *kāfir*). One day he went to hunt, and while he was hunting he came to the Valley of Baku (probably the same as Jay Ata) near Artush. He noticed that some well-dressed foreigners were sitting on the grass. The holy Sultan went nearer to the foreigners.

“I have never seen such men in our city, what kind of foreigners are they?” he asked, puzzled.

“Let us go and see them,” he said, and approached them. These foreigners were Al-Naṣr Sāmānī and his companions. Abū al-Naṣr Khodja noticed that horsemen were approaching. When they got closer he recognized Satuk Bughra Khan, the future *gāzī*<sup>14</sup> about whom he had read in the *ḥādīth* (sacred text).

“Allah has been merciful, I have found the one I was searching for,” he thought joyfully, and he turned to his servants:

“Oh Lord of the World and Judgment Day (Allāh), here comes the one I was waiting for. I believe he is the reason that I came to this land. Servants, open the luggage!” he said, and then they all started to pray. After the prayer they sat down in the same place. The holy Sultan watched these things on horseback and was amazed.

---

<sup>12</sup> The sedentary Turkic population of East Turkistan did not use the term Uighur, their neighbours called them Taranči (from Oirat-Mongolian *tārānči* ‘peasant’) or Sart ‘sedentary’. They called themselves the People of the Seven Cities (in Uighur *yätü šähärlük*). In English their language used to be called Eastern Turki. They began to use the term Uighur after 1930s because their intelligentsia decided to do so at a conference.

<sup>13</sup> See Shaw 1875, *Appendix*, 3–5.

<sup>14</sup> The *ghāzī* is a sacred warrior who fights for the spread of Islam, see Mélikoff 1965.

“What strange people these are. They do not fear us. What is more, they opened up their luggage. They even put their heads on the ground.”

The Sultan approached to within seven paces of the holy Khodja. He descended from his horse and greeted the Khodja, who respectfully invited him into his camp. The Khodja placed two expensive textiles in front of the Sultan.

The Sultan found the Khodja very appealing. Once in a dream of his the holy spirit of the *Khidr* had appeared and informed him that one day a man would come who would convert him to the true faith. “He might be the one” thought the Sultan, and asked him his name. The Khodja answered: “My name is Abū al-Naṣr Sāmānī.”

The Sultan was happy because he realized that the holy *Khidr* spirit<sup>15</sup> had inspired this man’s coming to him.

“Father, ask anything and I will do it. But explain to me one thing. When we were approaching on horseback you opened up your luggage. Were not you afraid that we would rob you? Why did you do this?” he asked. The Khodja said:

“Oh, my prince, this world is transitory. Everyone passes away. Our money and wealth cannot save us. On the contrary, it is money and wealth that lead people to hell. Nobody can avoid the Last Day (Arabic *ākhirat*). But the true faith prepares you for the Last Day,” he answered. The Sultan became frightened.

“Oh Khodja, you speak about the true faith. I want to believe in the true faith, what shall I do?” he said, and the Khodja answered:

“Speak the words of the proclamation (Arabic *kalimat ul-ṣāhida*) *Lā ilāha illā'llāh, Muḥammad rasūlu'llāh* (There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the apostle of Allah).”

“Who is Mohammed?” asked the Sultan. The Khodja said:

“Mohammed is Allah’s best friend. The Great God offered the world and Judgment Day to Mohammed. At that Judgment (Arabic *qiyamat*) the sins of the people of the true faith will be forgiven and they will go to heaven. Mohammed’s faith is true, and his law (Arabic *ṣart'at*) is right. It is not like that of other prophets, their laws are false. One who takes the path of Mohammed will reach his goal.” He told him about Mohammed, and the Sultan said to the Khodja:

---

<sup>15</sup> The meaning of the Arabic word *al-khadir* or *khidr* is ‘green’. *Khidr* is a mythological figure that is connected with life and vegetation. In Central Asia it is good spirit which appears in the form of an old man and gives people blessings and disappears, see Wensinck 1990.

“Oh, my teacher, is there anything else important besides the proclamation of the faith? Tell me, I will learn it and I will be a good Muslim.”

As we have seen, the legend of the Kirghiz nomads is quite similar to the written historical legend. It is difficult to see the process whereby the written legend spread among the illiterate nomads. But this phenomenon illustrates well the formation of syncretic religion. The nomads legitimized their cult of nature by recourse to the ancient Muslim legend of the Jay Ata Valley. So the owner spirits (Kirghiz *ee*) of the sacred rocks, springs and trees became the spirits of Muslim saints (Kirghiz *šeyit*).

## Conversation before the Ritual

After our visit to the valley a sheep was sacrificed to the spirits. Then our host made delicious kebab from its meat and we said goodbye to the sacred canyon. We reached the Kirghiz village of Tegirmeti in the afternoon, where the older men of the village (*ak sakal* ‘white-bearded’) received us. A nomad felt yurt (*boz üy*) was put up in our honour on the edge of the village and we were treated with real nomadic hospitality. Later they introduced us to Abdikadir *bakši*,<sup>16</sup> with whom we had a long conversation about how he became a shaman.

Abdikadir’s shamanic illness started when he was only 11 years old. Once he noticed that a grey ram (*kök kočkor*)<sup>17</sup> joined the flock of sheep he was shepherding. Nobody could see the ram apart from him, so he was afraid to mention it to others. Later he suffered from a lack of appetite and fell ill a few times. Then, when he turned 15, the ram changed into a human being. It was the spirit of a Muslim saint, who challenged the boy to become a shaman. These were the boy’s hallucinations which he experienced in a state of unconsciousness. When he was 19, the spirit ordered him to heal a dying boy. The young *bakši* managed to heal the

---

<sup>16</sup> The original meaning of the word *bakši* is ‘a teacher, a master’. Before the acceptance of Islam, the term was used of Buddhist priests. Nowadays Uighurs, Kirghiz and Kazak nomads use it in the sense of ‘shaman’ or ‘healer’. In the Uzbek, Karakalpak and Turkmen languages it means ‘epic story-teller, signer’, while they use the word *porxan* for ‘shaman’.

<sup>17</sup> A similar grey ram (Kazak *kök koškar*) or helping spirit can be found in the collection of Seyfullin, who published the shamanic Song of Dosmırza, a shaman from the Arġin tribe, see Seyfullin 1964: 153–176 and Dawrenbekov and Tursynov 1993: 81.

boy, who was already considered dead. He started to heal officially at the age of 25. After that he obtained other helping spirits (*peri*),<sup>18</sup> but his main helping spirit remained the grey ram. Abdikadir, 59 years old when we met him, talked about this during our interview with him.

I was 11 years old when this thing happened. In those days I had to look after the sheep—I was a shepherd. Once I drove the sheep out of the village and reached the foot of a mountain. Before I reached the pasture I heard a lamb bleating. “What kind of lamb is that?” I asked myself, looking around. But I could not see the lamb. Then suddenly I noticed a young ram among the sheep. But it was not one of our rams. I had never seen that ram before, I thought. As I was wondering the ram got separated from the sheep. I drove the sheep further, and as I was reaching the pasture three ewes turned back to the village. I shouted at them but they would not listen. I ran to the sheep, yelling, and started to curse them too. Then the ram spoke with a human voice: “Stop it!” I was a little boy, so I was frightened. I could not even speak any more. After hearing the ram’s voice I became silent and drove the sheep to the pasture. I only returned home in the evening. The ram stayed with the sheep even though I drove them inside the corral. I thought that my parents would see the new ram, but they did not even notice. During supper I could not eat at all, I had no appetite.

I was so frightened that I did not want to talk, I just sat there. My mother poured some tea into my cup, but I could not drink it either. She asked me anxiously: “What happened to you, my son?” “Nothing,” I answered briefly. Then my mother went out to take care of the lambs. When she had finished we went to sleep. In the morning they counted the sheep and I realized that they could not see the ram.

This ram followed me for three years, grazing among the sheep. Nobody knew about this and I did not tell them all those years. Four years passed, and I turned fifteen years old. That time the ram appeared to me as a human being. Once I was on my way to the pasture. I noticed that six men were standing in the fields. They were about to pray as I approached them. I went there to pray with them but suddenly I lost consciousness. I had no idea what happened

---

<sup>18</sup> The helping spirits of the *bakši* are a male Bactrian camel (*buura*) and a male Dromedary camel (*nar*), but he invokes the spirits (*arbak*) of Muslim saints to the ritual and the owner-spirits of the *mazars* (Kirghiz *mazar eesi*) from the Jay Ata Valley, see Baialieva 1992: 138, Abramzon 1971: 317 and Seyfullin 1964: 160.

to me. I simply fell down beside these men. Then I felt that I was walking towards the mountains. In one place I saw lots of eggs lying on the ground. One of the eggs in the middle was standing upright. First I was afraid to touch it. But then I said “Bismilla” (in the name of God) and grabbed it. I took the egg and cracked its shell. There was some strange liquid inside. I sipped it and went further to the mountains. I left the sheep far behind.

Then I noticed a few wild sheep (*arkar*) tied to each other. I have encountered all kinds of strange things, the wild sheep turned into ladies. I only returned home after sunset and was full of fear. I tried to tell my family what had happened, but I did not know how to start. So I quickly lay down to sleep. Next day I drove the sheep out again. In the pasture I met an old man with a white beard. I think I had seen him before. He gave me a big piece of flat bread (*nan*). I tasted it and began to see the spirits. This is how it all happened.

Then many days passed and I was not ill any more. After I turned seventeen I noticed that if I touched an ill person he soon became well. I touched quite a few people in the village, but only secretly, not telling them why. Then when I turned 19 one of the sons of my aunt became very ill. I was attending sheep near the village when suddenly I heard somebody’s voice: “Hurry to the village, Kurban’s son is dying. When you get there they will already be starting to remove his clothes.” Then he taught me a prayer (*sürö*, from Arabic *sūra*) and told me to say this prayer next to the boy. The boy would be healed through that. I memorized the prayer and set off. When I reached their house I entered immediately. I saw that three women were taking the boy’s clothes off. They thought that he was dead already. Having entered I started to say the prayer. I took the boy into my hands, finished my prayer and blew on him. Something ran out of his body. That is how everything started; gradually I started to heal people. I became an official healer in 1970 and I have been healing ever since.

## About a Kirghiz Healing Ritual

The ritual began in a felt yurt<sup>19</sup> which served solely as a healing place for the shaman. The trance of the *bakš'i* is expressed by the verb *oyno-*, meaning ‘to play’. A Kirghiz *bakš'i* does not use any musical instrument (like the *tüngür* ‘drum’ among the Altay-kizhi or the *kobiz* ‘fiddle’ among the

---

<sup>19</sup> Kirghiz *boz üy* ‘grey house’ is the native term for yurt among the nomads.

Kazaks) or any other devices to fall into trance.<sup>20</sup> This *bakši* had only a short riding whip (*kamči*) in his hand to chase away the demons from the sick. The *bakši* was accompanied by about seven helpers (*šakirt*, from Persian *šāgird*), male and female, each with a different role in assisting him. During the ritual, the *bakši* and his helpers lined up in the felt yurt. One of the helpers sitting at the main place (*tör*) of the yurt, opposite the entrance, took four candles in his hands (*šam*, from Arabic *šam'*), which were used to invoke the helping spirits. The shaman could see these spirits (*peri*, from Persian *parī*) by the light of the candles.

These malicious helping spirits (*peri*) can harm people but they can also help the *bakši* to fight the demons (*jin*, from Arabic *ǧinn*), who, according to their beliefs, are the different forms of the devil (*šaytan*, from Arabic *šaiṭān*). These *jin* demons cause illnesses when they enter into a person's body (*jin baskan*, "the *jin* attacked him"). Likewise the *peri* spirits also enter into the shaman's body, which multiplies his strength. In that case with the help of Allah and the good spirits (*arbak*) he can overcome the demons and illnesses.

Besides the patients and the helpers, some curious villagers also came into the yurt—mainly women, who have a stronger belief in magical healing. At the beginning of the ritual the shaman warned participants that the impure ones (*aram*, from Arabic *ḥarām*) should leave. A drunken person or women with menses are considered impure, and the helping spirits of the shaman might attack them. The shaman also warned that once the ritual had started nobody should enter or leave the yurt. Four ill young people came to the shaman for help, two men and two women. The two young men had an alcohol problem. One of the women was suffering from nightmares and the other fainted repeatedly.

At the center of the yurt (*kolomto*), where a fire had been built, a big stake was driven into the ground and fastened to the smoke ring (*tündük*) at the top of the yurt. This stake with the rope was called *tuu* 'flag', and it was the shaman's ritual "flag" or "tree."<sup>21</sup> At the very beginning of the ritual the shaman said a prayer in Arabic from the Koran (pl. 6) and participants answered with *oomiin* (amen); then, according to the Muslim custom, they stroked their faces with their hands. The shaman gazed at the candles for a while (pl. 7a) before starting to sing his shamanic song.

<sup>20</sup> These devices are sometimes called 'hand *ongon* or *eeren*' in the scholarly literature (Mongolian *ongyon*, Tuva *eeren* is an 'idol of a spirit'); see Birtalan 2001: 1062.

<sup>21</sup> See Malov 1918: 4 and Basilov 1992: 87.



In the first part of the song he invoked five ancestor spirits (*arbak*) and two helping spirits that chase away the demons (*peri*), who appeared in the form of two male camels (*buura* and *nar*). He also asked the owner spirits (*mazar eesi*) of *mazar* sites from the Jay Ata Valley to assist him during the ritual. This is his song and its translation:

*Suu ay baši Sulayman,*<sup>22</sup>  
*Suu ayagi ey Türkistan.*  
*Ey, Beš-toruk, Beš-toruk atam, oluya,*  
*Özüñdön, özüñdön medet, tileymin.*  
*Kazan bir, Kazan bir, bu dagı oluya,*  
*Özüñdön, özüñdön medet tileymin.*  
*Teşik-taş, Teşik-taş atam, oluyam,*  
*Özüñdön, özüñdön medet tileymin.*  
*Teñge-tar go atam,*  
*Özüñdön, özüñdön medet tileymin.*  
*Kıyla ey, kara nar ey,*  
*Ey, jetip bir, jetip keldi jüyinga.*  
*Ayrı bir, ayrı örköç ak buura,*  
*Insandar, azır bir tüškön jüyinga.*  
*Jay atam da, taš bagım,*  
*Mınakey čak eken kolumda ey.*  
*Bir kara bir kara kaška at mingen,*  
*Čaap keldi ey-ey.*

The source of the river is (Mount) Sulayman,<sup>23</sup>  
 The end of the river is (the town of) Turkistan.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> This same beginning can be found in a Kazak shamanic song, see Divaev 1899: 308.

<sup>23</sup> The Mount of Sulayman (from Arabic *Sulaimān*) is situated near the ancient city of Osh in the Ferhana Valley, Kirghizstan, and it is a holy pilgrimage site. The founder of the Great Moghul Dynasty, Bābur (a Turk from the Ferghana Valley) built here a house of prayer (Arabic *hujra*) around 1500. The springs of Syr-Darya begin in this area, so the text probably mentions that great river.

<sup>24</sup> Turkistan (from Persian *Turkistān*) is the name of the Central Asian territory inhabited by Turkic peoples. Near the ruins of Yasī, an ancient city north of the Syr-Darya, Temir Emir (Tamerlane) founded a small town and named it Turkistan (Kazak *Türkistan*). He built a *madrassa* (religious school) in the town after he learned in the 1390s that the famous Sufi philosopher Aḥmad Yasawī had been buried there.

Besh-toruk, Besh-toruk, my ancestor, my saint,  
I ask assistance from you.  
Oh, my Kazan, Kazan, he is a saint too,  
I ask assistance from you.  
Teshik-tash, Teshik-tash my ancestor, my saint,  
I ask assistance from you.  
Tenge-tar Father,  
I ask assistance from you.  
Big black male camel with one hump,  
He arrived at the ritual.  
My white male camel with two humps,  
Oh my friends, he descended to the ritual.  
My Jay Ata, my dear rocks,  
I feel them in my hands.  
The one who rides a black bald horse,  
He has galloped here.

Under the influence of the song the shaman started to fall into a trance. Then suddenly he grabbed the rope (*tuu*) that was tied to the smoke ring (*tündük*). The yurt appears to be a symbol of the world in the belief of the Kirghiz, just as among other nomads (Birtalan 2001: 1062). The house is the Middle World (*bu düynö*), where people live. Under the yurt lies the Lower World (*o düynö*) or the realm of the dead. The smoke ring symbolizes the Upper World, where divine creatures can be encountered. The stake by the fireplace is a symbolic “shaman tree” (*bay terek*), up which the shaman can climb to heaven (*beyiř*).

The shaman, with a whip in his hand, started to walk around the stake and the rope and his helpers followed him. Later the patients were also taken into the circle and the *bakři* began to hit them symbolically (pl. 7b). He began to sing louder and louder and circled around the rope, grabbing it fitfully. He then fell into a trance and ran round and round, hitting the patients with his whip. He grabbed the shoulders of one of the participants and pushed him around at a crazy pace. Then he began to rattle like a male camel and moved his head back and forth. Two of his helpers, a young man and a middle-aged woman, also fell into a milder trance, but they did not sing, just drove the patients around hitting them with their whips.

Later the raving shaman started to sing a song to his main helping spirit, the grey ram, in a higher tone, calling on him for help as well (pl. 8a). During the most explosive phases the shaman “knocked” the two boys and then the two girls to the ground and began to trample on them (pls. 8b, 9). They bore it silently, and when the shaman released them they continued to circle around obediently.

*Minakey jakin bir jerden keldi,  
Kečeeki jaŋgiz müyüz kök kočkor,  
Kök kočkor, sen keldin go üyöjö.  
Minakey ker-booruŋa saygılayt,  
Minakey Kekiliš ubake kelgileyt.*

From a close place,  
My former one-horned grey ram,  
Grey ram, you came to your yurt.  
Lo, your feel stinger in your side,  
The Kekiliš saint has arrived.

Suddenly the shaman stepped on the top of the stake and shouted as if he was quarrelling with the spirits. Soon he climbed up to the smoke ring of the yurt by the rope with the aid of his helpers. For a while he stood on the shoulders of a helper, grasping the edge of the smoke ring (pls. 10, 11a). By hooking his legs onto the smoke ring of the yurt he hung there upside down (pl. 11b). This act is a classical example of the shaman’s symbolic trip to the Upper World and is rarely observed nowadays (Diószegi 1974: 641). After he climbed back down (pl. 12), he grabbed new patients into the circle. At one point the *bübü* (from Persian *bībī*), a female helper of the shaman, lost consciousness and started to twitch on the floor. When the shaman noticed the unconscious lady he trampled and blew on her and then hit her with his whip.

Later one of the male helpers climbed through the smoke ring of the yurt and stood on it screaming. The shaman kept rattling like an angry male camel and circled around the stake. A patient tried to leave, but the shaman dragged him back into the yurt. Meanwhile the stake broke loose from the ground a couple of times. Finally, they hammered the stake back in with a hoe, but the ritual was never interrupted.

Abdikadir *bakšī* called a young girl out from the spectators because he noticed that a *jin* demon was about to attack her. He took her around the stake and hit her gently with the whip, but stronger intervention was not needed.

Then another purifying part of the ritual commenced. The shaman's helpers brought a cup of water and started to walk beside the circling shaman, who was pushing a patient in front of him. He took a big sip from the cup and blew water over the patient's head and face. This blowing (*üškürüü*) is a well-known method of healing in Central Asia (Somfai 2006: 118). The shaman hit the ill people with his *kamčī* and trampled them. Having done so, he drove the demons out of their body with the help of his spirits (*peri*). Now it was time to "blow them away." The helpers also conducted such purification by blowing but without water.

Some old people in Kirghizstan still remember a similar shamanic ritual of dancing and climbing up to the smoke ring of the yurt.<sup>25</sup> This raving dance of trance is called *talma biy* 'faint dance' (*talma* means 'faint' or 'epilepsy'<sup>26</sup>). The ritual disappeared after the repression of the Stalin era, along with the *bakšī* mediators who practised it.

## The End of the Ritual

As the ritual came to a close the *bakšī* sat down next to the rope while his helpers aided him. The man at the main place (*tör*) of the yurt had been holding the candles and murmuring prayers throughout the ritual. Now he knelt next to the shaman and gave him the candles. The *bakšī* put the burning candles one by one into his mouth so that the helping spirits (*peri*) inside his body would leave through it. When he was sure that the spirit had left his body he put out the candle. However, it seems that one of the spirits was unwilling to leave his body and wanted to make him fall into a trance again—as shown by the fact that at one point he started to twitch and rattle. He put the candle back into his mouth for a second time and the spirit decided to leave (pl. 13). Meanwhile his hands were seized with a cramp, so one of the helpers massaged them.

---

<sup>25</sup> Data collected by Dávid Somfai Kara in 2002 in the village of Döŋ-Ališ, Kočkor County, Narın Province, Kirghizstan.

<sup>26</sup> See Baialieva 1972: 122.

Then the shaman stopped by one side of the yurt, and his helpers rolled up the felt wrapping (*üzük*) on the yurt's roof bars (*uuk*). They said farewell to the spirits and all the people present said a prayer together to Allah. The shaman scolded the *bübü* who had lost consciousness because she had let the spirits possess her body fully. Then he turned to the participants and told them that everything they had seen was the might of Allah (Arabic *qudrat*). He said that he himself was a sinful mortal man, and the spirits who had chosen him helped so that with Allah's grace he could overcome the evil powers. He warned them not to live a sinful life and to respect Allah and the spirits of the ancestors. The shaman remained seated for a few minutes before suddenly spreading his arms in a Muslim prayer and stroking his face, which signalled the end of the ritual. The ritual ended as it had started as they asked for the blessing of Allah on a totally pre-Islamic ritual. The whole ceremony had lasted for about fifty minutes.

## Conclusions

We can conclude that there is a strong link between the *mazars* and Kirghiz shamanism. The *mazar* is a syncretic phenomenon of popular Islam among the nomads of Central Asia. Their former animistic cult of nature was transformed into one of visiting these holy sites, where the spirits of ancestors and Muslim saints hide. So the nomads do not worship nature (stones, trees, springs, mountains) any more but turn to the spirits (*arbak*) of the *mazars*, who can mediate their wishes to Allah. The spirits of the *mazars* can be invoked by the shamans, as we have seen in Abdikadir's song. They assist the *bakši* during his healing ritual, along with other helping spirits. Sacred places linked to some Muslim saints, martyrs or champions of Islam provide good legitimization for the shamans, who have to communicate with demons and other evil forces. This is also reflected in their shamanic songs. Furthermore, Abdikadir mentioned two holy sites (Mount Sulayman and the town of Turkistan) and invoked the spirits of Jay Ata. Thus, the valleys of the *mazars* are not only suitable sites for the nomads to perform sacrifices and worship, but the activity of shamans also centers on these places and their spirits.

## A Musical Analysis of the Kirghiz Shaman's Song

Ordinary people usually sing and rarely recite in prose. The same is true of minstrels or shamans, who use the power of music to get in touch with higher powers and, what is sometimes equally important, to hold the attention of their audience. It is beyond question that in general we should study not only the text and the music separately but the relation between them as well.

In the ritual described here, Abdikadir Kirghiz *bakši* repeats a single slightly varied musical line again and again. As the music does not change much during the ceremony, we can leave the relation between the music and the healing process out of consideration; it is sufficient to refer to a few musical sections to paint a quite satisfactory picture of the whole musical process (Example 1). At the same time we study the melody in more detail because it is not baseless to presume that shamanic songs belong to the older layer of music. As the shamans of different areas and peoples often have different repertoires, we might ask if these songs serve exclusively mystic goals or whether they have connections to the secular repertoire as well.

Let us have a closer look at the melody of the healing ceremony. After a small C–F–C “mound” the melodic line ascends to F, where it has a rest before descending to C through D. This is a characteristic phenomenon: the beginning of the line leaps up from G to C and the end of the line leaps down from C to G. Similar leaps of a fourth are not rare in pentatonic folk music, and this pattern occurs in the performance of the famous Kirghiz Manas epos as well.<sup>27</sup> In the pentatonic layers of Hungarian folk music we usually hear it at the end of the musical lines.<sup>28</sup> This musical phenomenon occurs in non-pentatonic folk music as well; as examples I might mention the well-known French Christmas song

---

<sup>27</sup> Similar melodies can be found in my unpublished material collected from a *manasçı* named Jumabay-uulu İrşbek in Darkhan village, Kirghizstan.

<sup>28</sup> We see examples of C–G leaps and of the interchangeability of these notes in Vargyas (2005: 238, Examples 181f–g–h and a1).

*Eveille-toi bergère*, or several English songs with a domed structure that are similar to the so-called “new style” Hungarian melodies.<sup>29</sup>

The most surprising thing, however, is that the melody we are examining is identical to the most typical form of the Kirghiz lament *košok*, as my recordings of 2002 and 2004 made in Narin, İsik Köl and Talas demonstrate.<sup>30</sup> Not only does the scheme of the melodic line seem identical, but the fourths at the beginning and end of the sections and the rendering of the song does too. The only minor difference is that here the singer starts with a small mound, while the melodic line of the most typical laments does not descend to C in the middle of the sections—and especially it does not have a rest there.<sup>31</sup> As we see in Example 1a, the uncertain intonation of the third degree (E–Es) is frequent in Kirghiz laments; this creates ambiguity between major and minor modes—a phenomenon that occurs in the folk music of many different people of the world. And another characteristic phenomenon: the singer sings the longest notes on the meaningless syllable *ey*. Though the first note of the laments is usually sung on the first syllable of a meaningful word, the culminating point in the middle of the sections and the last note are usually sung on the same *ey* syllable.<sup>32</sup>

I examined the relation between the laments of several Turkic people and it turned out that the Kirghiz lament—which includes the melody examined here—is not similar to the laments of the Karachays, Tatars, Bashkirs, Chuvash, Mongolian and Aday Kazaks, Anatolian and Bulgarian Turks or that of the Hungarians.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Songs with a domed structure have low-lying first and closing sections and higher middle sections. A more special structure is typical of the melodies of the Hungarian “new style,” where the middle sections are five tones higher than the first or last (see Vargyas 2005: 0330, 0339a, 0334). The same structure can be seen in many English folksongs (Lloyd 1967: 80). At the end of the Hungarian and English melodies we often see the C–G closing formula.

<sup>30</sup> The Kirghiz lament (e.g. Diushaliev and Luzanova 1999: #8) has a rare form that is identical to the small form of the Hungarian lament.

<sup>31</sup> At the same time, in some sections of the present lament we see this mound-shaped initial.

<sup>32</sup> The use of important notes of the melody on meaningless syllables is not exceptional; see the Anatolian *uzun hava* melodies (Sipos 1994: ##174, 175, 180, 190, etc.).

<sup>33</sup> See Sipos 2004: 238–243.



a)

Ey, bir suu - nun, bir suu-nun bir go ba-ši, ey, Su-lay-man, ey.

b)

A - dır - - - da ga-na jıl-king, ay, a - la baš, ey, a,  
Ey, ey, suum u - ya - gı, ey, Türk-üs - tu - an, ey - e,  
Ar - gı - mak ka - na kü-lük t'oy a - ra - laš.

4

6

9

Ey, ey, Beš-to - ruk, Beš-to - ruk kö a-tam, ey, ow - lu - ya hn, ey,  
Ar - ting - da kal - gan ba-lang jaš, A - la jat ka - na, čo - rom - d'oy, a-la jat,  
Ey, ey, ö-züñg-dön, ö-züñg-dön go me - det, ey, ti - ley - mi - hn, ey,  
Kü - dür - dö ga - na jıl - king, ay, a - la baš, ey, a.

Example 1. (a) Kirghiz shamanic song, (b) Kirghiz lament (Sipos Kirghiz collection: At-Baši 9–36).

In Example 1a we see the melody in question and beneath it a Kirghiz lament (Example 1b). The significant similarity of the two melodies must be evident even for those who cannot read a score.

But why did the shaman sing a lament melody during the ceremony? In many cultures the melody of the laments is similar to the farewell songs of brides, which is understandable because the bride—at least symbolically—dies to her parents when she leaves their house.<sup>34</sup> Anyhow, in the Kirghiz culture the examined musical form has a strong connection with

<sup>34</sup> In some areas, e.g. in Anatolia, lullabies are also similar to laments, a phenomenon that is more difficult to explain.

the deeper layers of the soul, which can explain why the shaman used this melody to such effect in Kirghiz culture to reach a state of trance and to maintain his connection with the other world.<sup>35</sup>

## References

- Abramzon, S. A. 1971. *Kirgizy i ikh étnograficheskie i istoriko-kul'turnye svyazi*. Leningrad: Nauka.
- Baialieva, T. D. 1972. *Doislamskie verovaniia i ikh perezhitki u kirgizov*. Frunze: Ilim.
- Basilov, V. N. 1992. *Shamanstvo u narodov Sredneĭ Azii i Kazakhstana*. Moskva: Nauka.
- Birtalan, Ágnes 2001. *Die Mythologie der mongolischen Volksreligion*. Wörterbuch der Mythologie. I. Abteilung. Die alten Kulturvölker. Hrsg. Egidius Schmalzried and Hans Wilhelm Haussig. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Birtalan, Ágnes and János Sipos 2004. "Talking to the Ongons: The Invocation Text and Music of a Darkhad Shaman." *Shaman. Journal of the International Society for Shamanistic Research* 12(1–2): 25–62.
- Dawrenbekov, J. and Tursynov, E. (eds.) 1993. *Kazak baksĭ-balgerleri (Kazakhskie narodnye celiteli)*. Almatĭ: Ana tili.
- Diószegi, Vilmos 1974. "Shamanism." In *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 15th Edition. London: Macmillan. Volume 16: 638–641.
- Diushaliev, K. and E. Luzanova 1999. *Kirgizskoe narodnoe muzikalnoe tvorchestvo*. Biskek: Soros-Kirgizstan.
- Divaev, A. 1899. "Iz oblasti kirgizskikh verovaniĭ. Baksy, kak lekar' i koldun (Étnograficheskiĭ ocherk)." in *Izvestiia Obshchestva arkheologii, istorii i étnografii pri imperatorskom Kazanskom universitete*. XV(3). Kazan'. 307–341.
- Golden, Peter B. 1992. *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples. Ethnogenesis and State-formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East*. Turcologica 9. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- Le Coq, Albert von 1911. *Sprichwörter und Lieder aus der Gegend von Turfan, mir einem dort aufgenommenen Wörterliste*. Baessler-Archiv, Beiträge zur Völkerkunde 1. Leipzig and Berlin: B. G. Teubner.
- Lloyd, A. L. 1967. *Folk Song in England*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Malov, S. E. 1918. "Shamanstvo u sartov Vostochnogo Turkeстана." in *Sbornik Muzeia Antropologii i Étnografii* V(1): 1–16.

---

<sup>35</sup> At the same time shamans often sing simple twin-bar melodies built up from motifs, e.g. Le Coq (1911: 5051) from East Turkestan or Birtalan and Sipos (2004) from Mongolia.

- Mélikoff, I. 1965. "Ghāzī." In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition*. II. Edited by B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat and J. Schlacht. Leiden: E. J. Brill; London: Luzac & Co.
- Omar, Dilmurat 2003. "Modern Kazakh Shamanism." In Mihály Hoppál and Gábor Kósa (eds.) *Rediscovery of Shamanic Heritage*. Bibliotheca Shamanistica 11. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó. 227–240.
- Seyfullin S. 1964. *Šīgarmalar*, Almaty.
- Shaw, Robert B. 1875. *A Sketch of the Türki Language as Spoken in Eastern Türkistan (Káshghar and Yárkand) together with a Collection of Extracts*. Part I. Lahore: Printed at the Central Jail Press.
- Sipos, János 1994. *Török Népzene I.* [Turkish folk music I.] Műhelytanulmányok a magyar zenetörténethez sorozat 14. Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet.
- . 2004. "Néhány megjegyzés a magyar népzene török-mongol kapcsolataihoz [Remarks on the Turkic and Mongolian connections of Hungarian folk music]." In Bertalan Andrásfalvy, Mária Domokos and Ilona Nagy (eds.) *Az Idő rostájában. Tanulmányok Vargyas Lajos 90. születésnapjára*. 2 vols. Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiadó. 235–269.
- Somfai Kara, Dávid, László Kunkovács and János Sipos, 2006. "Batırkan, a Kazakh Shaman from the Altay Mountains (Mongolia)." *Shaman. Journal of the International Society for Shamanistic Research* 14(1–2): 117–138.
- Vargyas, Lajos 2005. *Folk Music of the Hungarians*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.
- Wensinck, A. 1990. "al-Khaḍr." In *The Encyclopedia of Islam. New Edition*. IV. Edited by E. van Donzel, B. Leweis and Ch. Pellat. Leiden: E. J. Brill. 902–905.
- Zhongguo shaoshu minzu fenbu tuji* [Atlas of distribution of national minorities of China]. 2002. Beijing: Zhongguo Ditu Chubanshe [Sino Maps Press].

MIHÁLY HOPPÁL ([hoppal@etnologia.mta.hu](mailto:hoppal@etnologia.mta.hu)) is director of the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. His researches include the comparative mythology of Uralic peoples, ethnosemiotics, theory of tradition, and shamanism in Eurasia. He has conducted fieldwork in Siberia among the Sakha, Tuva, Buriat and Nanai, and in Northeast China among the Manchu, Daur and Bargu nationalities. He has recorded his work with shamans in ethnographic documentary films. His publications include *Studies on Shamanism* (co-authored with Anna-Leena Siikala, Helsinki and Budapest, 1992), *Schamanen und Schamanismus* (Augsburg, 1994), *Shaman Traditions in Transition* (Budapest, 2000), *Studies on Mythology and Uralic Shamanism* (Budapest, 2000), and *Das Buch der Schamanen: Europa und Asien* (München, 2002). Some of his books have been published in Japan, China,

Finland, Estonia and Italy. He is one of the founders and the president of the International Society for Shamanistic Research.

JÁNOS SIPOS (*sipos@zti.hu*) is senior researcher at the Institute for Musicology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He conducts fieldwork among Turkic peoples (Turkish, Azeri, Kazakh, Kirghiz and Karachay-Balkar), and has published eight books on Turkic folk music. His main field of interest is comparative analysis of folk music of various Turkic and Mongolian peoples. His main publications include *In the Wake of Bartók in Anatolia*; *Kazakh Folksongs from the Two Ends of the Steppe* and *Azeri Folksongs – At the Fountain-Head of Music*.

DÁVID SOMFAI KARA (*somfai-kara@freemail.hu*) is a Turkologist and Mongolist. He graduated from the Department of Inner Asian Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, and currently works as a researcher at the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Between 1994 and 2006 he did fieldwork in Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Siberia and Western China. He collected oral literature (folksongs and epics) and data on Inner Asian shamanism among Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Tuvas, Tofas, Altay Turks, Abakan Tatars (Khakas), Sakhas (Yakuts) and Sart-Kalmaks. He wrote his Ph.D. on the vocabulary of popular beliefs of Turkic and Mongolian peoples of Inner Asia (2006).