WHERE RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS SING

SOUND, MUSIC, AND NOMADISM IN TUVA AND BEYOND

Theodore Levin

with Valentina Süzükei

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PREFACE

> *The word "civilization" is charged with moral and ethical overtones, the accumulated inheritance of our own self-esteem. We contrast it with barbarism, savagery, and even bestiality, whereas it means nothing more than "living in cities."*
>
> —Bruce Chatwin,
> "The Nomadic Alternative"

In recent years, nomads have taken their place among the subversive heroes of modernity. For the burgeoning percentage of humans yoked to computers, cellphones, and mechanized transport, pastoral nomadism may have come to symbolize the last vestige of a lost innocence—a freedom and intuitive closeness to the natural world from which our technology-laden lives have distanced us. Ironically, this collective nostalgia is nourished by a highly sophisticated "vanishing cultures" industry that is itself very much a product of technology. Nomad-centered coffee-table books, photojournalist essays, television documentaries, and the occasional cult film or travelogue by turn elicit admiration, guilt, sympathy, and horror.[1] The nomadic heroes of travelogues and coffee-table books, however, are silent nomads, and the wondrous sound world to which their expressive culture is so intimately linked has had little airing, even in media ideally configured to represent it.

This work strives to represent the voices of musicians and sound artists whose remarkable art and craft are rooted in Inner Asian nomadism. The book's central focus is the relationship between nomadic music and sound-making and the natural and social environments that have shaped them. I distinguish sound from music at the outset because many of the sound-making practices discussed in the book are not considered to be music by those who practice them. Moreover, none of the Turkic and Mongolian languages and dialects in Inner Asia has a word that encompasses the diverse practices and concepts covered by the English word "music." Rather, particular categories and techniques of sound-making each have their own names. These names, categories, and techniques bring into focus the finely honed acuity of the nomadic sensorium and the deep respect for the natural world that imbues nomadic sound-making with a sacred quality.

Offerings to spirits, blessings, praise-songs, and rituals of healing and purification are core elements of nomadic expressive culture. All of them exemplify what I call "sound mimesis"—the use of sound to represent and interact with the natural environment and the living creatures that inhabit it. This mimetic impulse also appears in a variety of narrative forms. Epic tales as long as thirty times the length of Homer's *Iliad,* and instrumental pieces whose wordless melodies and rhythms relate beloved stories, all reflect a nomadic spirituality. In passing from one generation to the next, this spirituality has been actively reshaped and reanimated wherever nomadism, or the cultural memory of nomadism, is alive.

Existing studies of music in Inner Asia typically use contemporary national identities or political boundaries as templates for documenting musical styles and repertories, for example, *Tuvan Folk Music, Kyrgyz Folk Musical Art,* and *Mongolian Music, Dance, and Oral Narrative.*[2] Yet as I learned during more than a decade of music research in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, such templates tend to be either too large or too small to represent the musical richness of a region both united and divided by its complex history of ethnic migration and intermingling.[3] The featured actors of *Where Rivers and Mountains Sing* come from different nations, speak different languages, and represent the worldviews of different generations. Their musical practices illustrate continuities as well as ruptures of repertory, style, and sensibility that are incongruent with present-day political boundaries. My aim has been to cross these boundaries—literally and figuratively—to look at Inner Asia from a broader perspective that illuminates links among ethnohistory, physical environment, and sound-making.

My own interest in nomads—or "mobile pastoralists," as they have recently been renamed by scholars in search of a more rigorous nomenclature[4]—arose not as a result of any epiphany, but gradually, and by accident. As a musician, and later, a musical ethnographer, I was educated in the musical and pedagogic traditions of sedentary societies, first in the West and later in Central Asia. After studying piano and European music history, I traveled east in the 1970s and became immersed in the art music traditions of the Islamic world. As I read learned treatises by medieval Muslim scholars amid the urban bustle of Tashkent, Uzbekistan and stood awestruck before the great architectural monuments of Samarkand and Bukhara, the nomadic

world seemed far beyond the horizon—and indeed, it was. The distance was not only geographic, but conceptual. For my urbane colleagues schooled in Central Asia's stormy history, the devastating thirteenth-century Mongol conquests seemed all too fresh, and nomads remained unrepentant barbarians. As for nomadic music, a typical view was expressed by an acquaintance, a virtuoso performer of Persian classical music, who said, "Nomads have no civilization; they have no music."

It was in Tuva (or Tyva), an isolated swath of south Siberian grasslands, mountains, and boreal forest far northeast of Central Asia, where I had my first encounter with the world of pastoral nomads—or what was left of them after decades of Soviet social engineering that favored and often forced a sedentary life on nomadic groups.[5] In 1987 I had wangled an assignment from *National Geographic* magazine to travel to Tuva with a photographer and produce an article about the miraculous vocal technique whose Tuvan name, *xöömei,* is usually translated into English as "throat-singing" (the *Geographic* never published the article). In throat-singing, a single vocalist can simultaneously produce two distinct pitches by selectively amplifying harmonics naturally present in the voice.

In the mid-1980s throat-singing was all but unknown in the West, and Tuva, an autonomous republic within the Soviet Union, was a destination diplomatically off-limits to Americans.[6] I knew little about throat-singing other than that it was a musical and physiological wonder and that I wanted to meet people who were able to do it.[7] What I did not expect to discover in Tuva was that throat-singing was only the most visible—or rather, audible—point of entry into a vast realm where music, music-making, and music cognition were attuned to a nomadic understanding of sound and its place in the world. This understanding was nowhere written down, nowhere codified as a theory. But it wasn't secret or esoteric. On the contrary, it was embodied in knowledge and experience so utterly ordinary among the pastoralists that it was difficult for them to talk about—like explaining how to tie shoes. Only by deeply sharing their life could one begin to fathom the motivating principles and ideas that lay behind their music. But that wasn't easy.

My first explorations of music in Tuva in 1987 were treated by the local government as a challenge to create a Potemkin village that would conceal much of what I was searching for behind the facade of official performing troupes and choreographed presentations. Working with Moscow-based folklorist Eduard Alekseyev, chairman of the U.S.S.R.'s All-Union Folklore Commission, and Tuvan musicologist Zoya Kyrgys, of the Tuvan Institute for History, Language, and Literature, I was able to collect enough material during two month-long expeditions to release a recording in 1990 that provided an initial glimpse into the Tuvan sound world.[8] Beginning in 1995, I returned almost annually to Tuva and later traveled to other parts of the south Siberian Altai region—western Mongolia, Xakasia, the Altai Republic—and to Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, where nomadic heritage is being newly celebrated as a focal point of national identity (see maps pp. xxvi–xxvii).

Throughout my Inner Asian travels, Tuva has remained a core focus of interest for reasons both personal and professional. My visit to Tuva in 1987 marked the first time that a researcher from the West had been given permission to study Tuvan music in situ. Since then, my affection and respect for the place, its people, and its music has continued to grow, and with each visit, I have ventured more deeply into the music and the social and natural environment that has nourished it. At the same time, the remarkable worldwide circulation of Tuvan music over the past fifteen years has become a story in itself. Almost from the beginning of my visits, Tuvan music has been traveling far beyond the borders of the Altai. Music from Tuva and, increasingly, from other parts of nomadic Inner Asia has taken on a globalized life of its own, and to write an ethnography of this music that ignores its worldly adventures would be to leave out an essential part of the story.

These days if you are traveling to Tuva to study music, you're likely to find that Tuva's famous throat-singers are all away on tour. Folk music has become Tuva's best-known export product, and possibly its most lucrative. The savvy ethnographer will have telephoned or e-mailed his musical friends far in advance to ensure that they are back in Tuva awaiting his arrival, and that they stay put long enough to run through a few songs and tunes before flying off to their next engagement in Los Angeles, London, or Athens. Or alternatively, one can simply tag along with the musicians. The field, as I have learned, is wherever the music is.

The urban nomadism represented by the travels of musicians from Tuva and other parts of Inner Asia is not simply a postmodern calque of ancient cultural patterns of migration, emigration, or diaspora. Rather, globe-trotting Tuvan musicians—and they are of course only a tiny subset of Tuvans generally—represent a new form of cultural equipoise in which they simultaneously inhabit two worlds. Like middle-class Americans, these musicians drive cars, own cellphones, and have passports. They are knowledgeable about Western music—from Mozart to Miles Davis—and they're interested in exploring the potential meeting points of Western traditions with their own. But they are not on a linear trajectory that is carrying them from a traditional way of life to a postmodern one. On the contrary, their working lives take them constantly back and forth. Many were trained on Western musical instruments and gradually worked their way backward toward their own cultural roots, making them what one could call "neotraditionalists."

These days, shamans in Tuva read Carlos Castaneda and present workshops in Mill Valley, California. In a remote region of western Mongolia, a throat-singing master awaits a helicopter full of Japanese tourists. Yesterday's "informants" are today's Internet mavens. How could I have imagined upon first alighting in Tuva that, a decade-and-a-half later, I'd be e-mailing with one of the shy musicians who was trotted out in his colorful silk robe and pointed hat to demonstrate throat-singing for an errant American? Being a world music performer these days demands extraordinary inner strength as well as flexibility—musical, emotional, and psychological. It is only a little more than a decade since Tuvan music came to the West, yet there are already too many tragic stories of talented young singers who couldn't play the Janus-like game that being a Tuvan musician now demands—young musicians who left this earth at the height of their powers.

For an outsider coming to learn about music in the Altai region—not only in Tuva but also in neighboring western Mongolia, Xakasia, and the Altai Republic—the conditions I have described create a field fraught with sensitivities. What right does an outsider have to come from far away with the intention of exporting and exploiting—even in the best sense of the word—an individual's or group's intellectual property, as contemporary jurisprudence would now define what used to be called "traditional knowledge"? What is the exchange value of such knowledge? And what about locally based professional colleagues who serve as culture brokers, providing access to musicians, putting their own credibility on the line, offering invaluable explanations, interpretations, translations? What obligations does an outsider assume to help insider colleagues join the global economy of scholarship: travel to conferences, opportunities for research stipends, access to English-language publishing?

The only sensible way to do ethnographic research is collaboratively, and I have had the greatest of fortune to work with a fellow ethnographer from Tuva, Valentina Süzükei, who is at once an outstanding intellect, intrepid fieldworker, and delightful traveling companion (see color plate 1). My outsider perspective is balanced by her insider knowledge and experience, and her important contribution merited recognition in the authorship of this work. Though I have written *Where Rivers and Mountains Sing* in its entirety, the ideas presented in the first section of chapter 3, "Timbre-Centered Music," are almost entirely Valentina Süzükei's, and these ideas resonate in other parts of the book as well (though the conversations recorded in the text were in Russian, Valentina reads English well and approved the final version of all textual accounts of these conversations).[9]

The kaleidoscopic musical world that is everyday fare for musicians from Tuva begs for a form of ethnographic description that can adequately represent it. How to convey the creative tensions that both inspire and bedevil those who move back and forth between their own communities and the West, between a sense of place and the jarring effect of displacement? Rather than generalize, my solution has been to particularize—to build the text of *Where Rivers and Mountains Sing* around a select group of these musical road warriors. Beginning in the early 1990s, I hitched myself to Huun-Huur-Tu, the four-man ensemble from Tuva whose picaresque travels have carried Tuvan music around the world in forms both traditional and contemporary—and, at times, futuristic. These are the travels depicted in the ethnographic snapshots that open the book, illustrating the sometimes bizarre effects of radical cultural decontextualization.

For a glimpse of Huun-Huur-Tu in the United States, see the accompanying DVD, track 1, "Huun-Huur-Tu on the Road."

Back in Tuva, the text zooms in on members of Huun-Huur-Tu on their own turf, and then arcs backward to the Soviet era, when Tuvan music succumbed to the Procrustean schemes of Soviet cultural policies aimed at modernizing and Russifying the expressive traditions of Asian peoples. Picking up in the early post-Soviet years, the text follows Huun-Huur-Tu and other musicians as they illustrate the multiple ways in which Inner Asian pastoralists have used sound and music—prominent among them, throat-singing—to represent and interact with the physical, biological, and spiritual habitat of the Altai region. The middle part of the book surveys various forms of sound mimesis and looks at the central role of animals in the nomadic soundscape. Completing the circle, the last chapter consists of a series of personal encounters with tradition-bearers that depict the tensions between renascent forms of expressive culture, which are rooted in beliefs about animistic spirituality, and the forces of the cultural marketplace that are dominated by Western tastes and capital.

Throughout the book, musicians speak in their own voices and address readers directly. Authors, of course, maintain editorial control over the voices in their texts, and in representing these voices, I have made every attempt to ensure the accuracy of quotations. Most of what is quoted was transcribed from audio recordings or written down directly in notebooks or on a laptop computer, and subsequently translated into English. Though I am a neophyte videographer, wherever possible I have included video clips on the accompanying DVD in order to share with readers the extraordinary visual interest of nomadic performance traditions, in particular, those involving gesture, narration, and movement. I hope that the inherent value of the material will compensate for its technical shortcomings.

As drafts of this work have been written and rewritten, read and reread, I have been asked by readers—and often asked myself—in what tense I mean to be writing. Do the forms of nomadic knowledge and traditions described by the book's actors belong to the present, the past, or both? Providing an answer is complicated because the actors themselves are frequently inconsistent or vague about whether certain practices exist, have disappeared, or exist more in cultural memory than in reality. In the end, though, notwithstanding the ubiquitous discourse of "endangerment" that surrounds present-day representations of nomads, I have emerged from this project a musical optimist. Wherever I traveled, I met musicians who have contributed generously to the resilience of the nomadic spirit amid grave social, economic, and environmental challenges. Moreover, the nomadic imagination's ingenious transformation of landscape and soundscape into music can surely inspire not only pastoralists. For the rest of us, such music may provide a moment of clarity that connects us to our collective past—and if we listen carefully enough, to a future more in harmony with the environment that sustains our planet's fragile experiment with human life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The travels, research, and conversations that became this book cover nearly two decades, and during that time I have accumulated many debts of gratitude both to organizations and individuals. It is a pleasure to acknowledge them here, not only to express appreciation for generous help and support but also to illustrate the highly collaborative nature of this project.

Most of all, I am indebted to the many musicians whose names appear in the following pages for so graciously sharing their knowledge, talent, and ideas. I feel privileged and blessed to have been entrusted to represent their voices.

My first visits to Tuva in 1987 and 1988 were made possible by an assignment from *National Geographic* magazine. Smithsonian Folkways released the recordings gathered during those visits and supported a second Tuvan recording project in 1998. Twelve of those recordings appear on the accompanying audio-video disc, and I thank Smithsonian Folkways for licensing them back to me.

For support of field research and writing, I am grateful to the following organizations: the John Sloane Dickey Center for International Understanding at Dartmouth College, the Ford Foundation, and, in particular, Ken Wilson; the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Geographic Committee for Research and Exploration, the Silk Road Project, the Trust for Mutual Understanding, and the Jasper and Marion Whiting Foundation. Valentina Süzükei and I both thank the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Study and Conference Center, which provided the opportunity to work collaboratively in its idyllic facilities, and also Dartmouth's Dickey Center for the opportunity to work collaboratively at Dartmouth. Field research in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan was seamlessly interwoven with my work as a consultant to the Aga Khan Music Initiative in Central Asia, a program of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture. I thank the Music Initiative and in particular, its director, Fairouz Nishanova, for enthusiastic help and support.

This project connected me to many wonderful colleagues and friends who joined my own nomadic peregrinations to study and document music. For all that they so generously gave to our collective work, I thank Eduard Alekseyev, Sayan Bapa, Erdenechimig, Bill Gaspirini, Joel Gordon, David Harrison, Stefan Kamola, Anatoli Kuular, Zoya Kyrgys, Peter Marsh, Nurlanbek Nyshanov, Liesbet Nyssen, Sansargereltech, Aleksei Saryglar, Karen Sherlock, Raziya Syrdybaeva, Mark van Tongeren, and Kaigal-ool Xovalyg. I also thank Ross Daly for warm hospitality on Crete while I accompanied Huun-Huur-Tu on their Grecian travels, and Alexander Cheparukhin and Raisa Cheparukhina for untiring assistance with travel and logistics.

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Drafts of the book manuscript were read by Eduard Alekseyev, Marjorie Balzer, Katheryn Doran, Joel Gordon, Lenore Grenoble, David Harrison, Molly Levin, David Peterson, Mark Slobin, and Kathryn Woodard, and I thank all of them for suggesting improvements. Marjorie Balzer went far beyond the call of readerly duty in pointing me toward work by other scholars that has enriched my own. I also thank the Dickey Center at Dartmouth College for supporting a seminar that brought three of the above-named readers together for discussion and critique of a first draft of the manuscript.

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The two maps were created by geographer-cartographer Sebastien Cacquard, and the audio-video disc was designed and engineered by Yuri Spitsyn, working in Dartmouth's Bregman Electro-Acoustic Music Studio. To both of them, I express thanks for their expertise and patience. I am also grateful to Raziya Syrdybaeva and Janyl Chytyrbaeva, who helped me translate the excerpt of the Kyrgyz epic *Manas* included here, and to Vyacheslav Kuchenov and Liesbet Nyssen for their help with the translation of Kuchenov's Xakas-language epic "Siber Chyltys." Kathryn Greenwood assembled much of the bibliography, and I thank her for her careful work. Thanks also to Molly Levin for preparing the index.

For permission to use photos, I thank Karen Sherlock, who accompanied me to Tuva in 1987 and 1988 on assignment from *National Geographic;* Cloé Drieu; Clark Quin; Coriolana Simon; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (photos not identified by a credit are my own). Thanks also to Joan Morris for helping me organize and prepare the photos.

Permission to include "Ancestors," a track from a recording by the Tuvan fusion group Malerija, was kindly granted by the group's manager, Alexander Cheparukhin. I am most grateful to Manos Andriotis and Lily Polydorou of Kino TV & Movie Productions S.A. for arranging permission to include a television advertisement produced by Kino with music by Huun-Huur-Tu, and to Alexander Cheparukhin and Greenwave Music for licensing the music rights. Mark van Tongeren gave permission to include video footage of Altai singer Raisa Modorova. A television advertisement with music by Huun-Huur-Tu that was directed and produced by Traktor is included by courtesy of Traktor.

Finally, I express my profound gratitude to Valentina Süzükei for all she has contributed to our collaborative work, and for making it so rewarding and enjoyable along the way.

ON LANGUAGE AND PRONUNCIATION

Field research for this study took place among native speakers of seven distinct languages: Tuvan, Xakas (Khakas), Altai, Mongolian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Russian. All except Mongolian and Russian are Turkic languages that share many features of syntax, morphology, and phonology. Mongolian does not belong to the Turkic group, but centuries of cultural intermingling between Turkic and Mongol peoples has led to a significant number of shared words, particularly in contemporary Tuvan and Mongolian. Examples include *xögjüm,* the word that corresponds most closely to "music" in both languages, and *xöömei* (Tuvan) or *höömii* (Mongolian), the general term for "throat-singing."

With one or two exceptions, all of the musicians and scholars who figure in this work spoke Russian in addition to their native language, and in some cases, Russian *was* their native language. During the Soviet era, official language policy favored the adoption of Russian by the "small peoples" of Siberia, and many of these groups, among them the Xakas and Altai, experienced severe language loss. Fortunately, Tuvans managed to preserve their language—the 1989 U.S.S.R. census showed that 99.2 percent of Tuvans consider Tuvan their mother tongue, while around 60 percent of Tuvans also know Russian.[10]

Notwithstanding the dark side of Soviet language policies, the ubiquity of Russian as a language of scholarship in the former U.S.S.R. has made it an indispensable research tool for musical ethnography. In my own case, it has also served as a lingua franca for musical fieldwork: the conversations with musicians quoted in the text were almost all in Russian (in Mongolia, I also benefited from the Mongolian-Russian translations of Mongolian colleagues Erdenechimig and Sansargereltech). Bilingual speakers of Russian and a Turkic language helped me elucidate the meaning of local musical terms, while my own earlier work with Turkic languages (Uzbek and Turkish) provided a grounding that facilitated the translation of song and poetic texts in collaboration with native speakers (see Acknowledgments). In these texts, which appear in the original language as well as in English translation, transcriptions from Turkic languages and Mongolian into the Latin alphabet follow international conventions adopted by present-day scholars. The pronunciation of most letters will be intuitive to English-speakers, but the following pronunciation guide is provided for sounds not found in English, as well as for a few letters with more than one possible English pronunciation:

Transcription	**Sound**	**Example**
x	"ch" as in Scottish "loch"	*xöömei* (throat-singing)
j	"j" as in jewel	jaxsy (good)
ö	"u" as in "put"	*kök* (blue, green)
ü	"u" as in "tutor"	*xün* (sun)
q	"c" as in "cot" (a hard "c" formed in the back of the throat)	*qil qiyak* (two-stringed fiddle)
y	"i" as in "lit"	*sygyt* (style of throat-singing)

During the Soviet era, spellings of many toponyms and ethnonyms in indigenous languages were Russified, and in the post-Soviet era, these have tended to revert to their pre-Soviet forms. For this study, the most significant of these transformations concerns "Tuva" itself, for Tuva is a Russification of what in Tuvan is pronounced "Tyva" (written in Cyrillic as Тыва). The widespread use of "Tuva," however, offers a persuasive reason to adopt it in this work.

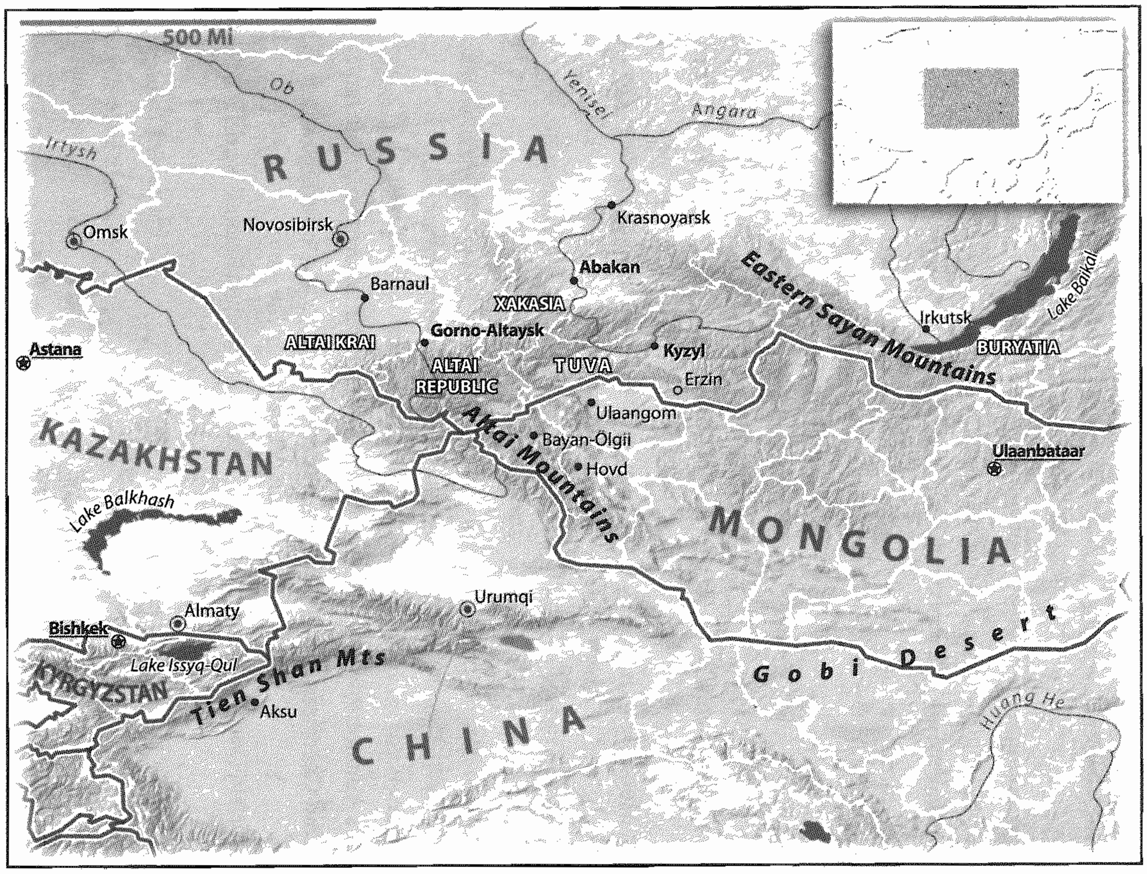
DRAMATIS PERSONAE

(in order of appearance)

Huun-Huur-Tu	Four-person musical group from Tuva, whose members include: Sayan Bapa Anatoli (Tolya) Kuular* Kaigal-ool Xovalyg Alexei Saryglar
Alexander Cheparukhin	Huun-Huur-Tu's manager
Eduard Alekseyev	Russian-Sakha specialist in Siberian music who participated in 1987–1988 Tuva expeditions
Zoya Kyrgys	Tuvan folklorist and expert on *xöömei* (throat-singing) who participated in 1987–1988 Tuva expeditions
Idamchap Xomushtu	Tuvan stringed instrument and jew's harp player; important informant of Valentina Süzükei
Alexander Bapa	Former member of Huun-Huur-Tu; brother of Sayan Bapa
Anya Xovalyg	Kaigal-ool's wife
Sengedorj	Mongolian musician and outstanding throat-singer from Hovd City
Tserendavaa	Mongolian musician from Chandman Sum, Hovd Aimag
Tumat Kara-ool	Throat-singer recorded for Smithsonian Folkways release later licensed for television commercial

*replaced in 2003 by Andrei Mongush

Joel Gordon	Recording engineer and radio producer from Boston who participated in Tuvan and Mongolian field research
David Harrison	Linguist and advocate for preservation of endangered languages; specialist in Tuvan language and culture
Sarymai Orchimaev	*Kai* singer and multi-instrumentalist from the Altai Republic
Sat Maar-ool	Throat-singer and teacher from Teeli, in western Tuva
Narantsogt	Elderly *tsuur* (reed flute) player in Hovd Aimag, western Mongolia
Gombojav	*Tsuur* player from Hovd City, son of Narantsogt
Albert Saspyk-ool	Expert mimic of animal sounds from Chyraa-Bajy, Tuva
Alexander Tülüsh	Hunter who imitated sound and movement of wolves and other animals
Aldyn-ool Sevek	Throat-singer and school teacher from Kyzyl-Xaya, in western Tuva
Grigori Mongush	Tuvan musician who transforms visual landscapes into whistled sound sketches
Evgeni Ulugbashev	Xakas singer who performs on the *chatxan* (zither) and composes songs
Nurlanbek Nyshanov	Kyrgyz multi-instrumentalist, leader of Ensemble Tengir-Too
Abdulhamit Raimbergenov	Kazakh *dombra* (long-necked lute) player and music educator
Ruslan Jumabaev	Kyrgyz *komuz* (long-necked lute) virtuoso
Namazbek Uraliev	Kyrgyz *komuz* virtuoso
Deleg Bayansair	Tuvan singer in Tsengel Sum, western Mongolia
Mongush Kenin-Lopsan	Tuvan scholar of shamanism, writer, and cultural revivalist
Dari Bandi	Mongolian singer and herder, expert at using sound to manage herd animals
Vyacheslav Kuchenov	Xakas musician and epic composer, member of ensemble Sabjilar
Sergei Charkhov	Xakas musician and instrument builder, member of ensemble Sabjilar
Anya Burnakova	Xakas musician, member of ensemble Sabjilar
Lazo Mongush	Tuvan shaman
Kara-ool Dopchuur	Tuvan shaman
Ai-Churek Oyun	Tuvan shamaness
Rysbek Jumabaev	Kyrgyz *manaschi* (epic singer)
Tyva Kyzy	Female throat-singing group from Tuva whose members include: Choduraa Tumat Ailangmaa Damyrang Ailang Ondar Shoraana Kuular
Raisa Modorova	Altai singer-songwriter and performer of *kai* (guttural) vocal style
Kongar-ool Ondar	Tuvan throat-singer and informal cultural ambassador
Svetlana Bapa	Wife of Huun-Huur-Tu member Sayan Bapa
Ross Daly	Irish musician and world music impresario who resides on Crete
Manos Andriotis	Greek music producer and world music fan
Jamchid Chemirani	Iranian percussionist who performed with Huun-Huur-Tu in Greece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Ob
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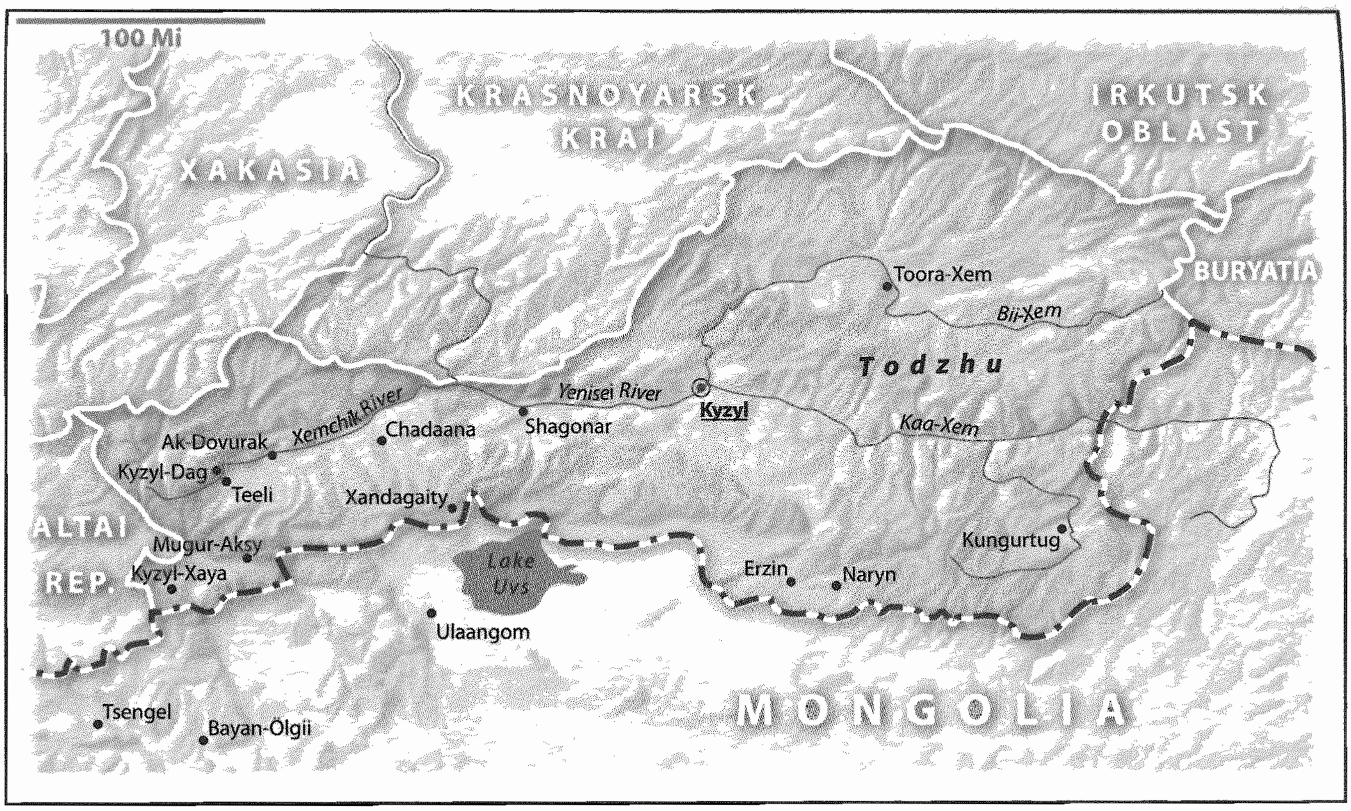
ALTAI KRAI
Astana
Kyzyl
Erzin
TUVA
ALTAI REPUBLIC
Irkutsk
Lake Baikal
BURYATIA
Eastern Sayan Mountains
Ulaangom
Bayan-Ölgii
Hovd
Altai Mountains
Ulaanbataar
KAZAKHSTAN
Lake Balkhash
MONGOLIA
Urumqi
Almaty
Bishkek
Lake Issyq-Qul
KYRGYZSTAN
Tien Shan Mts
Aksu
Gobi Desert
Huang He
CHINA

The Altai Region. The mountainous Altai region lies at the center of the map and comprises territory belonging to Russia, China, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan.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IRKUTSK OBLAST
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Toora-Xem
BURYATIA
Bii-Xem
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Kaa-Xem
Xemchik River
Chadaana
Shagonar
Ak-Dovurak
Kyzyl-Dag
Teeli
Xandagaity
ALTAI REP.
Mugur-Aksy
Kyzyl-Xaya
Lake Uvs
Kungurtug
Erzin
Naryn
Ulaangom
Tsengel
Bayan-Ölgii
MONGOLIA

Tuva. The Republic of Tuva (Tyva) shares borders with Mongolia as well as five administrative units of the Russian Federation: Altai Republic, Republic of Xakasia (Khakasia), Krasnoyarsk Krai, Irkutsk Oblast, and the Republic of Buryatia.

mads of antiquity to the Turkic and Mongolian nomads of yesterday and today across vast gulfs of time and the cyclical rise and fall of steppe empires. Yet, despite differences in form, style, and medium, nomadic art and music reveal an underlying continuity that must arise from the shared experience of steppe pastoralism—an experience shaped by perceptions of space, time, sound, and color, and by spending the days and nights of a lifetime surrounded by animals. Valentina Süzükei had said that you cannot destroy the timbre-centered system at the center of nomadic music because the sounds are lodged in the cultural memory of nomads; that it will survive as long as herders live in nature and listen to the sounds of the taiga and the steppe, birds and animals, water and wind. That centuries and millennia of nomadic civilization seem to have come up with such similar means of artistic expression suggests that she is right.

6

AN ANIMIST VIEW OF THE WORLD

HUUN-HUUR-TU AT HOME

KYZYL: AUGUST 2003

If you stroll slowly along the central part of Kochetova Street, Kyzyl's congestion-free main thoroughfare, sooner or later you'll run into everyone you know—or so it seemed during my visit in the sunny days of Siberian midsummer. I had spotted Kaigal-ool Xovalyg three times in as many mornings. Now here he was again, leaning pensively against the front door of his car, ever-present cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth, as he waited for his wife Anya to emerge from an office building. The car was not the beat-up Zhiguli he had driven in 1998 but a shiny white Toyota station wagon imported from Japan. Kaigal-ool and Anya were preparing for a trip to Krasnoyarsk, 400 miles to the north, where their eighteen-year-old daughter would soon begin studies at a management institute. Meanwhile, Kaigal-ool was also finalizing arrangements to purchase an apartment in Kyzyl for his son, who planned to return to Tuva after graduating from law school in Moscow.

These two summer weeks between concert tours were filled with chores and family obligations that had accumulated while Kaigal-ool had been on the road with Huun-Huur-Tu and also with his new band, Malerija. Malerija (rhymes with "galleria") performs a techno version of Huun-Huur-Tu's repertory that combines Kaigal-ool's voice and *igil* with electric guitar, synthesizer, and drums played by Sayan Bapa and two Russian musicians. Most recently, they had performed at a world music festival on the island of Borneo, where according to Kaigal-ool, the young, mostly Indonesian audience danced enthusiastically to the band's galloping rhythms and heavy metal covers of Tuvan songs.

Kaigal-ool was tired. The trip to Borneo came in the middle of a tour itinerary that had started in May at a festival on the Reunion Islands, off the coast of Madagascar, and continued on to France, Norway, Germany, Malaysia, and Singapore. Then had come a recording session in Saint Petersburg, interrupted midway by a single concert appearance in London. Another round of concerts in Norway and France followed the recording session, and after a final concert in Denmark, Huun-Huur-Tu returned to Moscow, whence they'd flown with me to Abakan, Xakasia, arriving in the middle of the night and immediately transferring to a taxi for a five-hour ride over the Sayan Mountains to Kyzyl. Earlier in the year, they had also performed in the United States, Canada, Ireland, Italy, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic.

I had last met with Huun-Huur-Tu a year ago at the previous summer's Philadelphia Folk Festival. Onstage during that festival, Huun-Huur-Tu looked exhausted, and later, when we met at the suburban Holiday Inn where they were staying, my impression was confirmed. "You need to get off the road for a while and recharge your batteries," was my unsolicited advice. We agreed to meet in Tuva the following August and do some leisurely fieldwork together. But now that we were there, the month-long window of opportunity I had envisaged for our travels had been politely, yet firmly, condensed into less than a fortnight by Huun-Huur-Tu's Moscow-based manager, Sasha Cheparukhin. Sasha sent me e-mails describing a series of important performance opportunities in Greece and Germany that Huun-Huur-Tu could ill-afford to turn down. Moreover, since the previous summer, Huun-Huur-Tu had undergone a transformation. In spring 2003, Tolya Kuular had left the group.

"We didn't have any arguments or disagreements," Tolya told me one afternoon when we met in Valentina Süzükei's office at the Tuvan Institute for Humanities Research on the east end of Kochetova Street. "I had told them the previous spring that I'd play with them for one more year, and that I wanted to leave after that. We traveled together for ten years. That's not a small amount of time. It was rare that we had a chance just to stay here in Tuva and hang out with musicians. There are a lot of old people—they're not going to live forever—and I wanted time to talk with them and learn from them. I want to work with hunters, for example, recording the *amyrga* as they actually use it during a hunt. And there's a great singer who wants me to play *igil* and *byzaanchy* to accompany shamanic songs. For us young people, our work is here in Tuva."

Explaining Tolya's departure from Huun-Huur-Tu's perspective, Kaigal-ool drew a laconic analogy to horses. "Old Tuvans say that if you leave one stallion in the same herd for too long, you won't have good results. It was the same with Tolya. We needed fresh blood—someone who wanted to develop himself artistically. I didn't feel that Tolya was trying to break new ground."

Anatoli Kuular (bottom row, second from left) with Sayan Bapa and Kaigal-ool Xovalyg, lending a hand to Tolya's relatives during haying season in Xorum-Dag, Chüün-Xemchik Region, late summer 1996.

For Huun-Huur-Tu, "breaking new ground" had come to mean not simply rediscovering traditional Tuvan songs, reviving lost instruments, or redefining the stylistic boundaries of throat-singing but rather experimenting with plugged-in arrangements of their repertory, sophisticated mixing techniques, and cross-cultural fusion projects. Much of their touring schedule was filled with hybrid musical events organized by a coterie of impresarios, freelance producers, promoters, record companies, and Western-based musicians who viewed Tuvan music—and invariably throat-singing in particular—as an elixir that could rejuvenate their own musical endeavors. Huun-Huur-Tu had recorded and concertized with the Bulgarian female vocal ensemble Angelite, the jazz-inspired Moscow Art Trio, and the monarchs of classical-world music crossover, the Kronos Quartet. Just before returning to Tuva in August 2003, Huun-Huur-Tu played a concert in Copenhagen with the hybridized East-West percussionist Trilok Gurtu and his ensemble. Kaigal-ool belonged to Veshki da Koreshki, a fusion group that included a Senegalese *kora* player and a Russian accordionist; he also worked with Sayan in Malerija, the plugged-in doppelganger of Huun-Huur-Tu.

The challenge of joining musical inspiration from traditional sources to the often-quirky projects proposed by outsiders had become a leitmotif in the creative lives of the members of Huun-Huur-Tu. How could music linked to the beauty of natural landscapes and the reassuring presence of herd animals, the importance of humility before the spirit-masters and respect for the values of family life, be expressed in the hybrid musical idioms and crossover styles that epitomized contemporary world music? Huun-Huur-Tu, of course, was not alone in trying to reconcile the competing forces of the cultural marketplace. Nourishing global connections while maintaining the integrity of art rooted in an authentic tradition is a challenge for musicians everywhere, and young musicians all over the Altai region are only too well aware of the benefits of getting connected. In these conditions, what is the future of the animist view of the world that first inspired music-making among the south Siberian pastoralists?

Examples of bad outcomes are not hard to find. Some musicians lose their spiritual equilibrium and descend into a spiral of alcoholism and depression. Others lose their aesthetic equilibrium and transform tradition into kitsch, embracing hybrid styles where subtleties of timbre, rhythm, and melody that evolved over centuries or millennia are summarily trammeled by thumping bass guitars, synthesized drones, and robotic drum machines. But what about tradition-bearers who successfully manage the relationship between global connections and local roots—producing music and other forms of expressive culture that can be exported, yet also maintain their authority among a local audience?

Huun-Huur-Tu provided an enviable model of achievement. They had deftly negotiated the Janus-faced demands of world music musicianship, and their success beyond the borders of Tuva had brought them rock star status at home, even though—or perhaps because—they rarely performed there. Huun-Huur-Tu's cachet as hometown heroes was ratcheted even higher when, following Tolya Kuular's departure, they inducted into the group a local heartthrob, twenty-six-year-old Andrei Mongush. Mongush's arrangement of a recently composed song "Men Tyva Men" (I am a Tuvan) had become a chartbuster after he turned it up during a visit to the Tuvans of Tsengel Sum in 1999 and arranged it in the style of *estrada,* or pop music. In Kyzyl there was talk about designating "Men Tyva Men" as Tuva's "national" anthem.[1]

The enthusiastic worldwide reception of Tuvan music created a fertile climate for musical revivalism in Tuva itself, where new ensembles sprang up like wildflowers. By one count, Kyzyl alone boasted twenty traditional music ensembles, the vast majority of them featuring young performers. The energy of Tuva's musical renascence reverberated throughout the Altai region and encouraged nascent revivalists beyond Tuva's borders. In Xakasia and

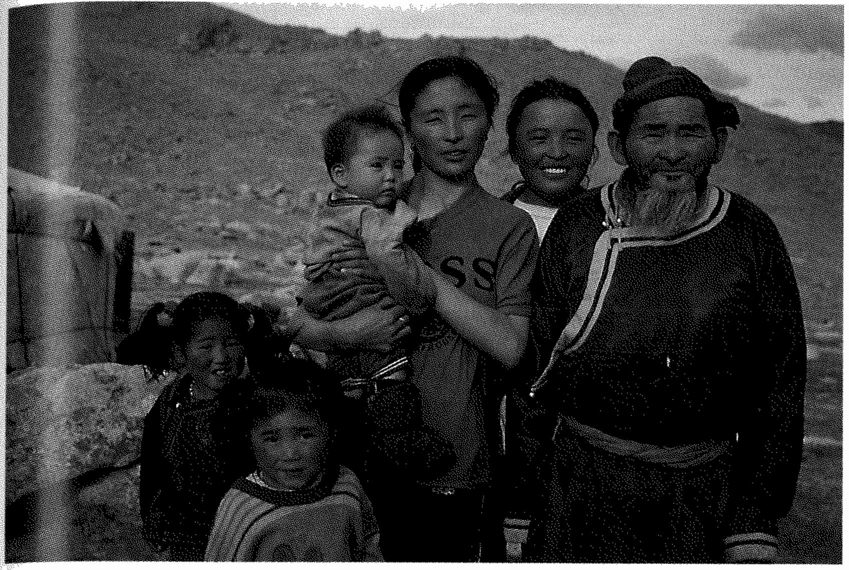


Plate 17. Narantsogt and members of his family. Meeren, Duut Sum, Hovd Aimag, Mongolia, 2000.

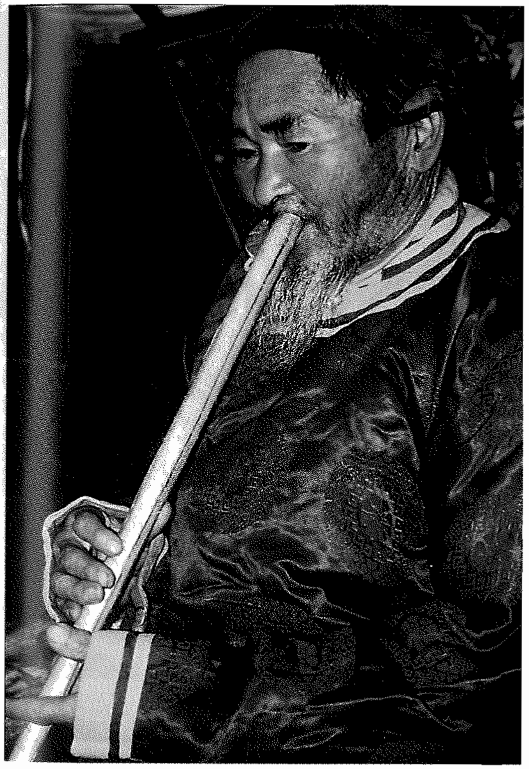


Plate 18. Narantsogt playing the *tsuur* inside his *ger* (yurt). Meeren, Duut Sum, Hovd Aimag, Mongolia, 2000.

Plate 19. Pasturage on the outskirts of Hovd City, Mongolia, 2000.

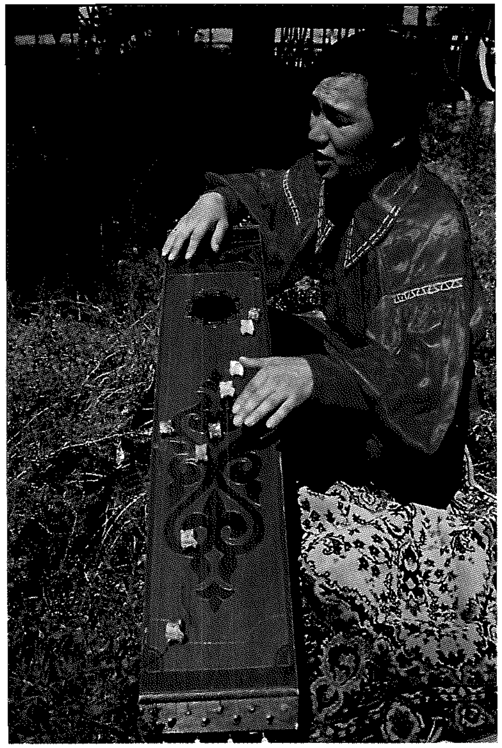


Plate 20. Xakas musician Evgeni (Zhenya) Ulugbashev plays the *chatxan*. The movable bridges under each string are made from sheep knee bones. Abakan, Xakasia, 2000.

Plate 21. The red "shaman" after placing a curse on us. Tsengel Sum, Bayan-Ölgii Aimag, Mongolia, 2000.

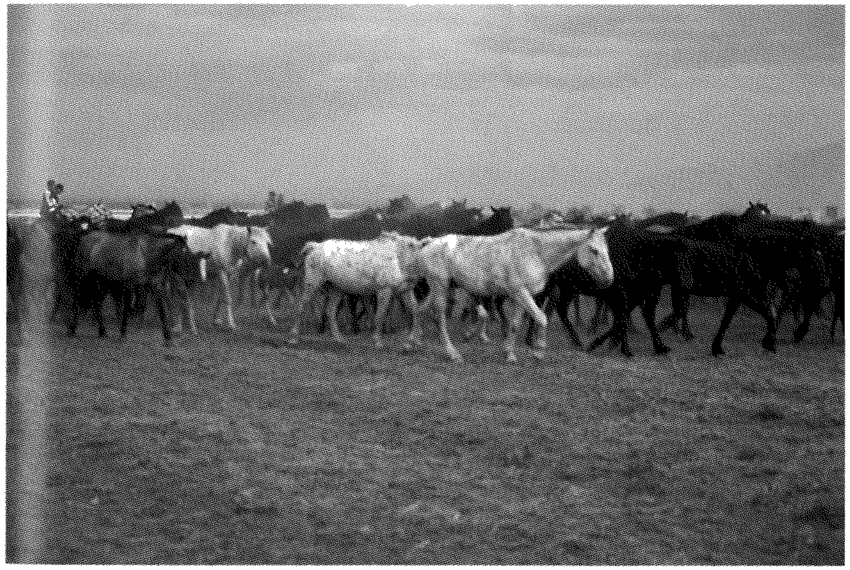


Plate 22. Horses are driven toward microphones held by sound engineer Joel Gordon during the recording of the Smithsonian Folkways compact disc, *Tuva, Among the Spirits. Central Tuva*, 1998.

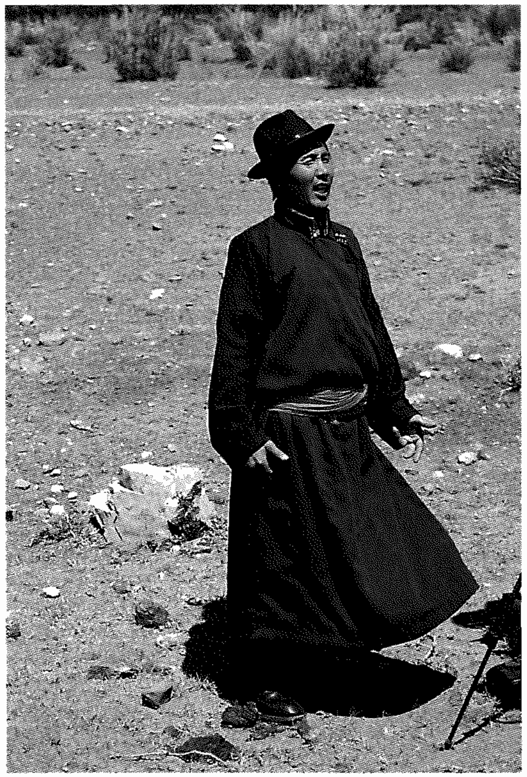


Plate 23. Praise-singer Dari Bandi performing "The Black-Spotted Yak" for a video shoot. Türgen Sum, Uvs Aimag, Mongolia, 2000.

Plate 24. Kazakh musician Yedil Huseinov. Photo by Chloé Drieu, 2001.

Plate 25. Sabjilar: from left, Sergei Charkhov, Anna Burnakova, Slava Kuchenov. Xakasia, 2003.

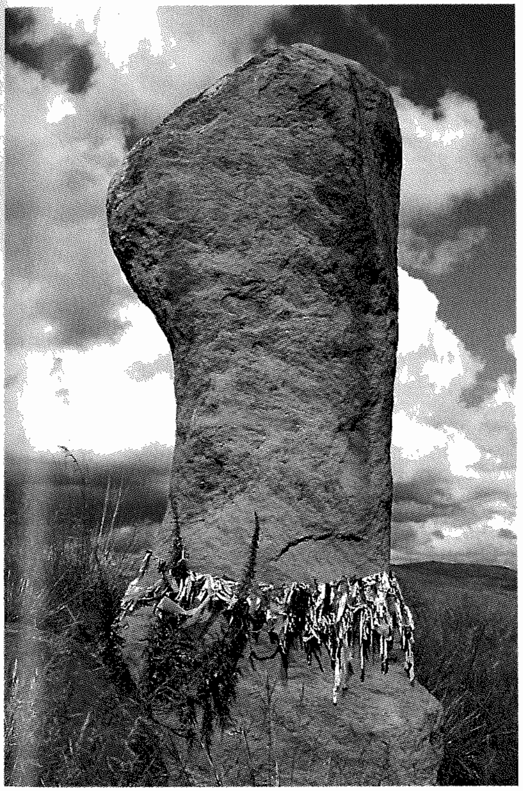


Plate 26. One of eighteen giant stones at the Great Salbyk Kurgan in Xakasia, 2003.

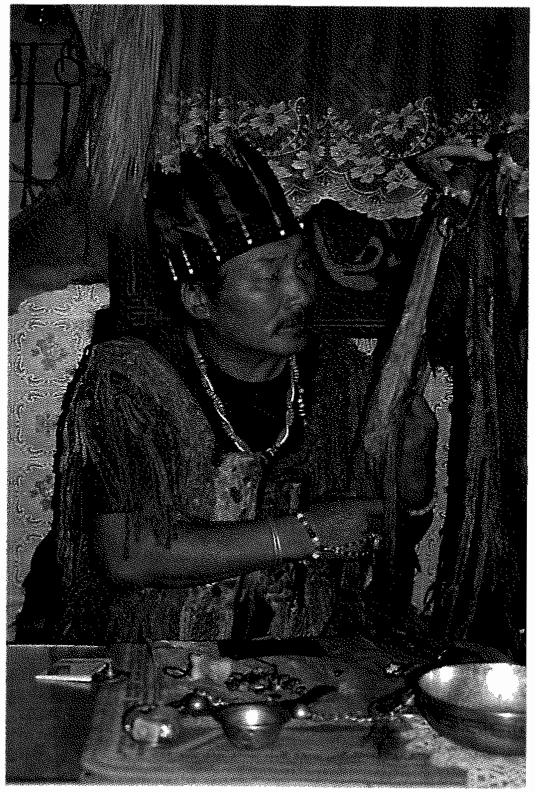


Plate 27. Lazo Mongush divining with stones in his treatment room at the Düngür Society. Kyzyl, 2003.

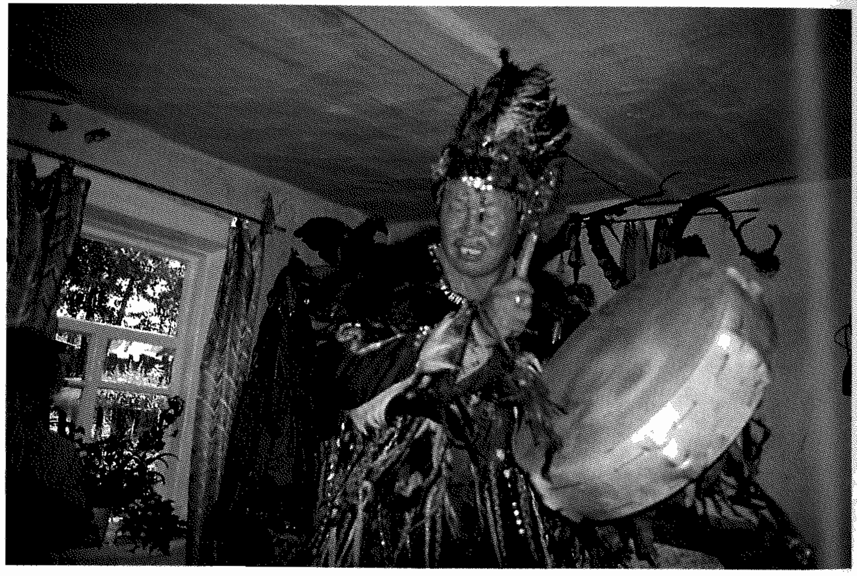


Plate 28. Shaman Kara-ool Dopchuur-ool demonstrating how different drum sounds are used in a purification ritual. Kyzyl, 2003.

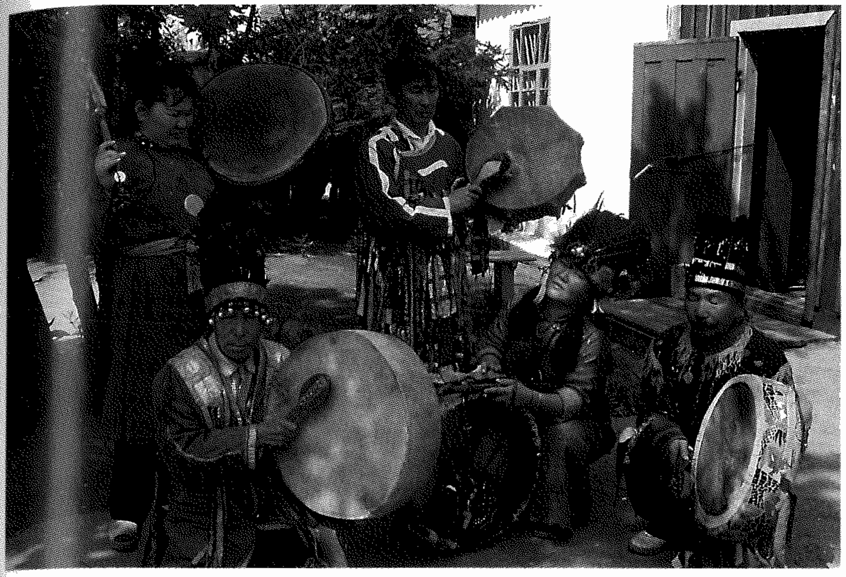


Plate 29. Shamans of the Dünggür Society pose for a photo outside their building. Ai-Chürek Oyun is seated in the middle. Kyzyl, 1998.

Plate 30. Rysbek Jumabaev, Yo-Yo Ma, and Nurlanbek Nyshanov during a Silk Road Project residency at the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, January 2004.

Plate 31. Tyva Kyzy during a recording session near Kyzyl. From left: Ailang Ondar, Shoraana Kuular, Ailangmaa Damyrang, Choduraa Tumat, 2003.

Plate 32. Kongar-ool Ondar (right), with Kaigal-ool Xovalyg and Anatoli Kuular, Boston, Massachusetts. Photo by Clark Quin, 1993.

the Altai Republic, singer-songwriters and epic reciters, seers and shamans, prophets and poets all emerged to claim their place in the bustling marketplace of post-Soviet neotraditionalism—a marketplace that catered both to indigenous peoples and to outsiders from European Russia, the West, and Japan. Meanwhile, in Kyrgyzstan, customarily linked to the cultural sphere of "Islamic" Central Asia, Kyrgyz cultural revivalists, at least in the northern half of the country, looked not southwest toward the core Islamic world, but northeast, toward their ancient animistic roots in the Altai. With the aim of learning more about the animist view of the world that seemed so alive in the expressive culture of the larger Altai region, and also among the Kyrygz, whose *Volkswanderung* had led them out of the Altai and into the Tien Shan, I set out on a series of travels in the summers of 2000 and 2003. In both years, one of my principal destinations was Abakan, capital of the Republic of Xakasia, and home to a remarkable musical ensemble called Sabjilar.

EPIC DREAMS

"Go to our website and click on 'tour schedule,'" Slava Kuchenov, founder and leader of Sabjilar e-mailed in response to my query about coming for a visit. "You'll see when we're going to be on the road, and then you can make your own plans." Good advice, as it turned out. Sabjilar indeed had a busy concert season ahead: several weeks in Europe as part of an East-West fusion music project called Tien Shan Express, conceived and funded by a Swiss impresario, followed by a break, and then several more weeks of touring in Central Asia. I was fortunate to be able to snag Sabjilar for a few days in mid-August, between concert tours.

In addition to Slava Kuchenov, Sabjilar consists of Slava's wife Anya Burnakova, who plays jew's harp, traditional percussion instruments, and sings, and Sergei Charkhov, a vocalist and multi-instrumentalist who also builds finely crafted shaman drums and *chatxans*—the Xakas plucked zither. Slava serves as lead singer and backup *chatxan* player (see color plate 25). I met Sabjilar in summer 2000, when Liesbet Nyssen, a young Belgian ethnomusicologist doing fieldwork on Xakas music, offered to introduce me to her circle of musical friends in Abakan, a city of around 170,000 that lies 250 miles north of Kyzyl. I was seduced by Sabjilar's gutsy arrangements of traditional material and newly composed music for voices, *chatxan*, *yyx* (two-stringed fiddle), jew's harp, and percussion and invited them to come to Washington, D.C. in summer 2002 to participate in the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, whose theme that year was the Silk Road.

Sabjilar performs their arrangment of a Xakas folksong, "Pis Kildibis" (DVD, track 17).

The Xakas are a small minority in their own republic, which is a land of farmers and stockbreeders, almost all of them sedentarized, that extends westward from the Yenisei River as it flows out of the Tuvan grasslands and transects the Sayan Mountains en route to the distant Arctic Sea. Of a total population of 600,000, only 11 percent, or around 70,000, identify themselves as Xakas. The rest of the population is mostly Slavic. Xakas, like Tuvans, have a complex ethnogenesis originating in a confederation of tribal groups that assumed the form of a national identity only in relatively recent times. Unlike the Tuvans, however, who came under the sphere of Russian influence in the early twentieth century following the breakup of the Qing Dynasty, the four feudal princes who reigned over the Xakas signed a treaty and united with Russia in 1726.[2] These days, many Xakas do not speak their own language, and in an authoritative critical edition of Xakas heroic epic published by the Siberian branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1997, the author of an introductory essay wrote, "At present, only one master is known who commands the art of improvising *xai*"—the raspy, guttural vocal style used by epic reciters.[3]

The loss of language and expressive culture is a source of angst among Xakas cultural revivalists. The members of Sabjilar decided that an ensemble trying to reclaim Xakas traditional music should not have performers with Russian names like Slava, Anya, and Sergei, so for stage purposes they took Xakas names. Anya is Altyn Tan Xargha, Sergei is Shibetei Xyrghys, and Slava is Ai Charyx Saiyn. "In fact, my father wanted to call me Ai Charyx," Slava told me, "but when he went to register me at the office of birth registration, they said, 'What kind of a crazy name is that? Pick a Russian name.' So he wrote down the first name that came into his head, and that was Vyacheslav" ("Slava" for short). Friends and family still call the members of Sabjilar Slava, Anya, and Sergei.

As much as I enjoyed Sabjilar as an ensemble, the focus of my visit to Abakan was Slava Kuchenov himself. Slava had mentioned casually during a conversation the year before that he had composed an epic poem—or more precisely, that he had "received" an epic poem, as he put it, in a visionary dream. During the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, I had proposed to Slava that he perform his epic on stage, and he had quickly demurred. "It's not for performance," he said cryptically. "I'll explain later." Amid the bustle of the festival, we never managed to continue that conversation, and that was why in August 2003 I was sitting on the floor of the bare living room in Slava's telephoneless apartment (at the time he was number 14,230 on Abakan's waiting list for a phone) taking notes on my laptop as Slava recounted the story of his life as a musician and a *xaijy*, or Xakas epic reciter.

"I was born in 1969 in a village called Uty, in Beisk Region," Slava began. "When I was five, my mother died and my father went to a different place, so I was raised by my grandmother. She was blind, and at night she told stories, and she'd force me to listen to them. I'd be falling asleep, and she'd hit me to wake me up. She was a pensioner on a collective farm, and she tried to transmit what she knew to me, but out of everything she told me, I remember little.

"From sixth or seventh grade, I began to show talent in art. I went to a children's art school in Abakan, and when I was fifteen, I went to Leningrad to study sculpture. I graduated from the Repin Academy in 1994 and returned to Xakasia. I beat the pavement, trying to find work as a sculptor, but no one needed my sculpture here. I was an orphan and at that time, orphans were supposed to receive apartments. But there weren't any apartments available. I asked the Union of Artists for work, and they didn't have any. Finally, a teacher's college invited me to teach anatomical drawing. I needed to bring my diploma to register for this job, but the diploma was in my village. There wasn't any bus that went all the way to the village, so I took a bus to Esin, and from there I went on foot to my village. There was a strong rain and I got really soaked. I came home late, ate supper, and in the morning, I was supposed to go back to Esin and return to Abakan to bring the diploma. I needed to have dry shoes to leave in the morning, and I left my boots by the stove, and went to sleep.

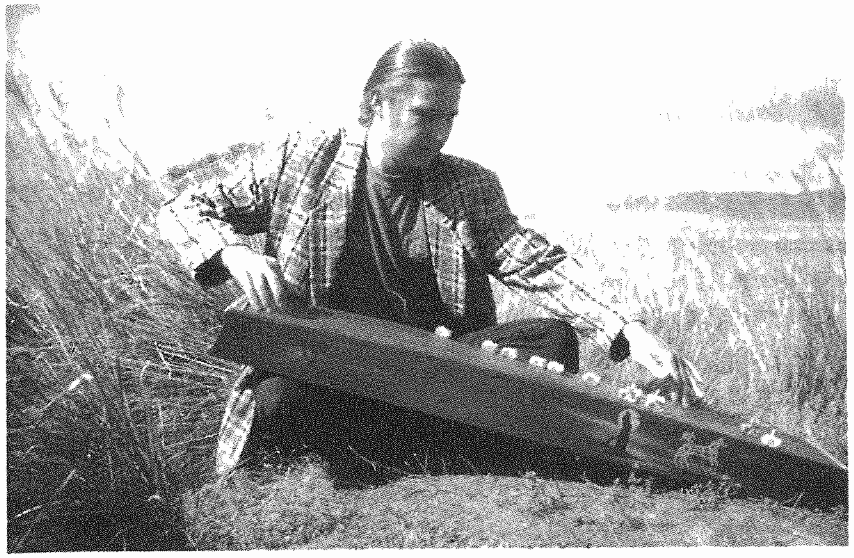
"That night I had a dream. In my dream I saw a shadow. The shadow looked like my uncle—my mother's brother—and it was if he were speaking to me. 'Get up. I have to talk to you,' he said. I knew that he had already died, and I couldn't say no to him. I got up, took my shoes, and we went to a certain kurgan. Then we went to a place called Shazoi, where members of our clan have always offered prayers. After that, we went to Arghyzhyg, which is a place where two rivers merge. There, the shadow started to tell me that I should be a bard—that I should sing, play the *chatxan* or jew's harp, and recite *xai.* I objected. I had never played a *chatxan* or jew's harp, and I'd never sung *xai.* The shadow said that if I didn't do this I'd have a strong illness, and could even die. And then after that, he showed me how *xai* should sound, how the *chatxan* should be played. He said, 'You'll learn all of this.' It was a long dream that went all night, and then I went back to the house and went to sleep.

"In the morning, I woke up and wondered, 'What was that strange dream?' I got up and went to take my shoes to go out to the toilet. The shoes were all dirty and wet. I asked my aunt—my father's younger sister—'Did I get up and go anywhere in the night?' Normally, if anyone gets up, she wakes up too. I had heard that people who have these kinds of dreams sometimes become shamans, and that if they refuse to follow the commands of the dream, they can die. So I decided to try singing *xai,* and found that I could do it. And when I went back to Abakan on the bus, suddenly an epic tale was churning around in my head. I'd never known any of these tales, but suddenly there it was. The text was called 'Ai Charyx Khan on a Grey Horse.' I've looked at a lot of epic texts, but never found this one, even though it has an ancient form. It might well have existed earlier and just not have been written down. A lot of words and expressions I didn't understand myself. It was about an hour's worth of recitation, and I received it all at once. At first, I would close my eyes, so that no one would bother me, and the text would come on its own. Later, I started to add my own improvisations on the text, but realized that it was like patching pants, and I stopped doing that. I ordered instruments—a jew's harp and a *chatxan.* People were surprised. I'd never sung before, and suddenly, I began to sing.[4]

"When I came from the village to Abakan, I was half-atheist, or maybe wholly an atheist. I didn't give much meaning to stories, and didn't think much about stories. But in Abakan, I had a dream in which I saw three horseback riders running after me and whipping me with a horsewhip. I had lines across my forehead and chest from the whippings. And it was after that dream that I ordered the instruments and began to sing. It still happens after a long time when I haven't recited *xai,* that the three horseback riders come with their horsewhips and beat me. So that was the beginning of my musical work. Before that I'd tried to learn to play the guitar when I was in Leningrad, and nothing came of it. I tried for half a year to learn the guitar, and I just couldn't figure it out. Musicians told me that I didn't have a good ear.

"When my first dream appeared, the shadow said that I should turn my palms toward people, not toward myself. What he meant, probably, was that I should turn my soul outward toward other people—that I should serve as a kind of guide. To avoid the awkwardness of always performing with my palms outward, I put a stamp of my palm on the back of all the instruments I play." Slava picked up a *topchy xomys* (long-necked lute) and showed me the palm-print on the back of the body of the instrument that had been outlined from his own hand.

"Later I received another text, 'Siber Chyltys on a Sixty-Foot-Long Brown Horse.'[5] It's not complete. There's maybe one-fifth of it—an hour-and-fifteen-minutes or so. Of course I could complete what I have, but I don't want to do it artificially. I think that if I wait, I'll receive the rest of the text, and so I'm waiting. I tried to compose the rest, but it was silly. There's no sense in hurrying. You just have to wait until it comes to you. The text comes at a moment when you're not expecting it—in a dream, or when you're thinking about something completely different. This second text came in parts. After I started trying to compose it myself, I got really sick, and had to have an operation. That was a message, I think. It happened twice that I started to compose text, and both times I got sick and had to have an operation. During these nine years, I've received two texts, and that's all. I don't perform these texts with Sabjilar."



Slava Kuchenov playing the *chatxan.* Note wolf and horse images on the side of the instrument. Xakasia, 2003.

"Why not?" I asked, returning to the question that had come up at the Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C. the previous year.

Slava responded, "Once I went to Japan and performed my text with some improvisations, and on the way home on the train, again, I got really sick. After that I decided that it was too risky to perform these texts in concerts. I'm sure that the reason I got sick was that I'd performed the text in the wrong surroundings. But if you recite the text in a village, it all goes very easily. And another thing—if I start to sing the text, I have to finish the performance. I can't perform just a section of it and leave it at that. There's an impresario in the Netherlands who was always asking me to perform a little section of it, and it was awkward, because later in the evening, I'd have to sit up alone and perform the rest. The full moon and new moon are good times for performances, and when they occur, I try to perform both texts. I don't have any explanation for why they're good times, but one of the traditional roles of the *xaijy* was to protect people from bad spirits. Some people say that at the full moon, bad spirits are most active, and *xai* threatens them. It's true that at the full moon, my *xai* has a harder edge to it, while at the new moon, it becomes softer, more cultured. The changes are completely unconscious."

"So a *xaijy* is like a type of shaman?" I asked.

"Yes, except that shamans have more functions," Slava said. "A *xaijy* offers prophylaxis, but a shaman is like a surgeon."

It was time to pose the question that had motivated my visit to Abakan. I looked Slava in the eye and asked, "How would you feel about my videotaping a performance of a brief excerpt from 'Siber Chyltys'?"

Slava was silent for what seemed a long time. Did he feel ambushed by my request? In our e-mail correspondence about my visit, I had mentioned my interest in his epic, but never stated outright that I hoped to videotape it.

"If you'd rather that I not tape it, that's okay," I said deferentially, anticipating that I was about to be turned down. "But I'd love at least a chance to hear it." Finally Slava spoke.

"Okay," he said. "But not here. We have to go to a special place."

That special place was a site of spiritual power known as the Great Salbyk Kurgan, a Stonehenge-like circle of eighteen enormous, crudely sculpted rocks set on a broad plain between mountain ranges, located fifty-odd miles northwest of Abakan. Archaeologists first excavated the site in the 1950s and attributed it to the Tagar people, who inhabited the territory of present-day Xakasia in the third century BCE (see color plate 26).

An unmarked dirt track led away from the paved road toward the kurgan, and Slava steered his car carefully to avoid sinking into the muddy ruts. Slava had invited fellow Sabjilar members Anya and Sergei to join us so that I could videotape a song or two by the ensemble after Slava had performed an excerpt from his epic. Fortunately, we were alone at the kurgan on this opalescent August afternoon, but previous visitors had left their mark: the remains of offerings to spirits scattered around a fire pit, a ring of colored fabric strips tied around one of the rocks, and on another rock, fading graffiti. When I read the graffiti aloud, Slava scowled. "It was probably done by kids, but the worst graffiti is over there." He pointed to an iron plaque screwed into one of the rocks that acknowledged the achievement of Russian-led archaeologists who had dug up the kurgan. "How could they deface these sacred rocks?" Slava asked, anger flashing across his face.

Slava Kuchenov performs an excerpt from "Siber Chyltys," using the vocal technique known as *xai* and accompanying himself on the *chatxan* (DVD, track 16).

Slava lit a small fire in the fire pit and made an offering to the spirit-master of the kurgan. Then, while I set up a tape recorder and video camera for the performance, he tuned his *chatxan*. The opening section of "Siber Chyltys" that Slava chanted and recited appears below.[6]

Siber Chyltys on a Sixty-Foot-Long Brown Horse	**Toghys Xulas Küreng Attygh Siber Chyltys**
1. When the universe first appeared	*Ax chaian chir ailanyp syxanynda*
2. And the black earth mixed together,	*Xara palghas pylghal paryptyr*
3. On the black earth	*Xara palghas üstünde*
4. Under the great sky	*Xan tigyrnyng altynda*
5. Arose snowy white peaks.	*Ax synnar pütklep parybystyr.*
6. Cold streams trickled down	*Ax synnarnyng pastarynang*
7. From the summits of the snowy white peaks	*Kök mustarnyng sughlarynang*
8. And from the blue icy water.	*Xara sughlar axlap syghymtyr.*
9. Streams converged	*Xara sughlar pirigip*
10. Cold waters flowed together,	*Soox sughlar xozylyp*
11. Turning into rushing rivers.	*Aghyn sughlar polyp paryptyr.*
(Recitative [lines 12–22] repeats previous 11 lines)	
(*Xai* continues)	
23. In the rushing rivers	*Aghyn sughlarda*
24. Different kinds of fish	*Aimax pasxa palyxtar*
25. Began to live.	*Churtaghlap syghyptyr*
26. Catching these fish	*Ol palyxtarny tudup-y*
27. Killing these water worms*	*Sugh xurtaryn soghyp*
28. The Tadar** people began to live.	*Tadar chony churtapchadadyr.*
29. The herds of the Tadar people	*Tadar chonyng mallary*
30. The sheep of the people with the wide stride***	*Xalyx chonyng xoilary*
31. Grazed on the green steppe.	*Kök chazylarja ottapchadadyr.*
(Recitative [lines 32–52] elaborates on preceding 9 lines)	
32. The rushing rivers diverged sixty times	*Aghyn sughlar alton ailanyp*
33. Seventy times they mixed together	*Chiton pylghalyp axlapchadyr*
34. Spreading out along the green steppe	*Kök chazylarcha chaiypchadyr*
35. Resounding over the white steppe.	*Ax chazylarcha orlapchadadyr.*
36. In deep hollows	*Oiym chirlerde*
37. Quiet lakes were formed.	*Amyr köller pol parchadadyr*
38. In rocky places	*Tastygh chirlerde*
39. Rushing rivers flowed.	*Xazyr sughlar axlapchadyr*
40. In the quiet lakes	*Amyr köllerde*
41. Lived slow-moving fish.	*Maiyng paryxtar churtapchadyr.*
42. In fast-flowing places	*Xazyr chirlerde*

43. Were quick-moving fish	*Chapchang palyxtar*
44. That gleamed in the sun's rays.	*Kün sustaryna chyltyrapchadyr.*
45. Catching these fish	*Ol palyxtarny tudup*
46. Killing the water worms [i.e., fishing]	*Sugh xurtaryn soghyp*
47. Along the banks of the wide rivers	*Aghyn sughlarnyng xastada*
48. The great Tadar people made their livelihood.	*Ilbek Tadar chony churtapchadyr.*
49. The herds of the great people	*Ilbek Tadar chonyng mallary*
50. The sheep of the people with the wide stride	*Xalyx chonyng xoilary*
51. Spread out along the green steppe	*Kök chazylarja chaiylchadadyr*
52. And grazed on the white steppe.	*Ax chazylarja otap chörchededir.*

(*Xai* continues)

53. Siber Chyltys became	*Ol malardyng eezi*
54. The owner of these herds and	*Xalyx chonyng pigi*
55. The leader of the people with the wide stride.	*Siber Chyltys pol paryptyr.*
56. Ai-Arygh became	*Siber Chyltystyng alghany*
57. The wife of Siber Chyltys,	*Siber Chyltystyng xynghany*
58. The beloved of Siber Chyltys.	*Ai-Arygh polyptyi.*
59. The two first people lived	*Iki alyp pir dee nime*
60. Without any sorrows.	*Chobalanmin churtapchaty.*
61. These two strong worlds lived	*Iki külük pir dee nime*
62. Without any want.	*Xyzylbin churt salyptyi.*

(Recitative [lines 63–73] repeats and elaborates on previous 10 lines)

63. Astride a sixty-foot-long brown horse	*Ol mallerdyng eezi*
64. Siber Chyltys became	*Xalyx chonyng pigi*
65. The owner of these herds and	*Toghys xulas küreng attyg*
66. The leader of the people with the wide stride.	*Siber Chyltys polyptyr.*
67. Ai-Arygh became	*Siber Chyltystyng alghany*
68. The chosen wife of Siber Chyltys	*Siber Chyltystynhg xynghany*
69. The beloved of Siber Chyltys.	*Ai-Arygh poltyr.*
70. The first two people didn't grieve for anything	*Iki alyp pirdee nime chobalanmin*
71. They lived with no want of anything	*Pir dee nime xyzylbin chutapchatyrlar*
72. The three-year-old children grew older****	*Üs chastygh palalaryn öskirchetirler*
73. And raised an only son.	*Chalghys oollaryn azyrapchatyrlar.*

* "water worm" is a synonym for "fish"
** "Tadar" is a self-identifying ethnonym used by the Xakas
*** "People with the wide stride" expresses the idea that they are a free people
**** "three-year-old-son" means an eighteen-year-old, since one year in epic time was equal to six actual years

"What I've performed," said Slava, putting down his *chatxan,* "is the beginning of a heroic epic. Siber Chyltys defends his people. His enemies try to trick him and lie to him; later there are descriptions of fights and battles, but Siber Chyltys maintains his power to the end. He's a real hero. This text is from 1996. Once when I performed it, it went on for nine hours and fifteen minutes. I sat in the evening and started to write the words, and then it was morning. I haven't been able to repeat that. If you try to think something up, if it's not 'given,' it's obvious right away. It's like the difference between a natural food and a synthetic one. Writers told me that I'm an amateur poet, that my text was crude, and that I needed to fix it up. I tried that—I tried making it more poetic in a modern sense. But it always ended badly for me. My soul completely rejects that kind of approach."

Initiatory dreams and visions are common—in fact, they are essential—among bards and minstrels in the Turkic-language epic and storytelling traditions of Eurasia, just as they are among shamans and healers. Folklorist Natalie Moyle, who studied the Turkish minstrel-tale tradition in the 1970s, explains the significance of the initiatory dream as a means of augmenting the authority of the performer. "Drawing attention away from the mundane drudgery of slowly learning the techniques of the profession and making minstrelsy seem a product of inspiration alone certainly enhances its stature. What is more, this increases the relative importance of the initiatory dream and emphasizes the element of divine sanction."[7] Or as stated by the literary critic Northrop Frye, writing about William Blake, "Inspiration is the artist's empirical proof of the divinity of his imagination."[8]

Moyle's larger point is that, while dreams may inspire bards and minstrels to choose their profession, "all real minstrels train and practice before they can perform in front of an audience. Remnants of a formal apprenticeship system still exist despite evidence of the profession's decline."[9] In a recent book on heroic poetry, Karl Reichl, a medievalist and leading scholar of Central Asian oral epic, corroborates Moyle's conclusion: "A professional singer has typically learned his profession from another singer, and may remain with his master for years before becoming an independent performer."[10] Moyle and Reichl's generalizations stem from the study of oral literature in historically Islamic cultural milieus, where the master-disciple (or master-apprentice) model of oral transmission, known in Persian and Central Asian Turkic languages as *ustaz-shagird,* is indeed ubiquitous. But farther north, among the Altai pastoralists, the convention of *ustaz-shagird* seems to have been all but nonexistent.

"Who is your teacher?" I continually asked the throat-singers and *igil* players I met during my early trips to Tuva. When they shrugged their shoulders, or looked uninterested in my question, I thought that perhaps I had not pronounced the words correctly, and asked again. Then, apparently not wanting to disappoint me, the musicians would come up with a perfunctory answer: "My uncle used to throat-sing, and I learned from him." Or, "My grandfather was a well-known musician, and he'd sing in our yurt."

Only later did I see the pattern: in the Altai region, not only throat-singers but also musicians in general typically do not learn from a teacher or master in the sense that Indian, Iranian, Uzbek, or, for that matter, American and European professional musicians do. There is no formal acceptance into an apprenticeship nor is there any rite of passage at the end to mark its conclusion. Most important, there is not the sense that a musician's authority depends on the pedigree of a lineage. "So-and-so studied with X and Y" is the standard formula of professional musical resumés, whether in New York or New Delhi. Autodidacts, by contrast, are viewed with a certain suspicion.

In the Altai, the formula is reversed. Music connoisseurs regard a musician whose performances are the result of formal instruction, music notation, or written texts as inauthentic, while spirit-inspired autodidacticism is the norm. Slava Kuchenov's insistence that he rely exclusively on oneiric inspiration to "receive" his epic, and that what he produces through his own conscious agency is inescapably deficient, seems unremarkable in the context of present-day musical revivalism. Moreover, his reliance on inspiration rather than on acquiring tradecraft and technique is not simply a ploy to promote his own originality. Quite the contrary; even a cursory examination of his text shows that it relies heavily on formulaic imagery that would be obvious to any culturally informed listener. The opening section of Slava's "Siber Chyltys," for example, bears an uncanny resemblance to the beginning of "Ai-Xuuchyn," a well-known Xakas heroic epic recently published in a book-length critical edition by the Russian Academy of Sciences.[11] Like "Siber Chyltys," "Ai-Xuuchyn" opens with the beginning of the world, describing rushing rivers, pastoral grazing lands, multitudes of livestock, and a rider on a sixty-foot-long horse. Are the texts that Slava "received" merely a paraphrase of older material shaken loose from his memory—for example, the tales he heard as a child, when he was beaten to stay awake at night and listen to his blind grandmother? Or do they stem from a less direct source in what the eminent Jungian psychologist Erich Neumann called the "archetypal canon of the prevailing culture"?[12]

Scholars who have analyzed epic and folktale traditions would be quick to point out the telltale mechanisms of oral composition: formulas and patterns, versions and variants, models and motifs. Yet what is most interesting about Slava's text is not its actual sources—evidently stories like "Siber Chyltys," as well as perhaps a broader cultural narrative about heroes, horses, and epic reciters, must have infiltrated his consciousness and served as a model for his "revelation." Rather, the interest is in how this process of unpremeditated inspiration exemplifies a reawakening of the animist view of the world at the heart of Siberian cultural revivalism. Why does a successful sculptor like Slava Kuchenov suddenly experience a prophetic revelation in which he is told to become a *xaijy*, compose an epic poem, and begin a new life as a musician? A pragmatic, or perhaps cynical, explanation might point to the lure of the marketplace—the success of music from Tuva, Xakasia, Mongolia, and Sakha in attracting worldwide interest among a clientele of seekers interested in shamans and spirits. But the emergence of so many talented musicians in one place at one time cannot be the result of the marketplace alone. The appearance of musicians like Slava—a sculptor who becomes an epic reciter, inspired by a dream—must be linked to a deeper social need.

I would be far from the first ethnographer to note that spiritual callings, whether that of prophet, poet, mystic, or musician, blossom in times of trouble. Roberte Hamayon, the French scholar of Inner Asian shamanism, wrote about the "latent availability of shamanic practices in all types of society." This availability," she suggested, "becomes manifest especially in crisis periods, when such practices easily revive or emerge."[13] By any account, the decade that followed the breakup of the Soviet Union was such a period, and Hamayon's observation was indeed borne out. People calling themselves shamans were not the only ones to rise from the crisis and offer succor. Anyone who could persuasively claim contact with the spirit world was thrust into a position of authority—an authority amplified by the disintegration of the material world that, even in the "period of stagnation" of the U.S.S.R.'s final years, had provided social stability.

Not only shamanism, but music, with its intrinsic closeness to the spirit world and ability to empower charismatic personalities, became a medium of social salvation. One society's response to crisis, though, is another's cultural chic. Shamans and musicians in the Altai region who answered the call to help restore spiritual equilibrium in a society torn asunder quickly found themselves fetishized from afar. "These people have a kind of knowledge for which there's a real need now in the West," was how one young seeker I met summed up his reason for following the meridian lines of global shamanism that extended from California to Kyzyl. That seeker had plenty of company, particularly in the days following the Second International Symposium of Shamans and Shamanologists that convened in Tuva in August 2003. And that was how it came to be that on a sunny August morning I sat in the treatment room of Tuvan shaman Lazo Mongush, sharing a bowl of mutton parts with an acupuncturist from Hawaii and a former military doctor from Novosibirsk who ran a center of Eastern medicine there, while in the anteroom, an art student from Finland waited her turn for a consultation.

SHAMANS AND CHAMPAGNE

When Valentina Süzükei and I pulled up in front of the complex of small wooden buildings that serves as headquarters for the Dünggür Society, the chain of shamanic clinics founded by Mongush Kenin-Lopsan, Lazo greeted me like an old friend. Before he became a shaman, Lazo had been a throat-singer, and in 1988, he and I had sung together on Tuvan television. I had forgotten about that television debut, which occurred in the days before throat-singing enthusiasts far more serious and skilled than I began visiting Tuva, and the threshold for local excitement about throat-singing foreigners had been significantly raised. I had not seen Lazo in fifteen years, and the gaunt figure of my memory had grown more rotund, the face puffier. We made small talk, and after a respectable interval, the acupuncturist and military doctor excused themselves, leaving Valentina and me alone with Lazo and the mutton parts. I asked him to talk about his career change.

"It's not so much that I changed my career," Lazo replied. "I'd always shamanized in secret, when it was forbidden. I can't even remember the first time I healed someone, but I was born near a well known *ovaa,* and my great-grandfather was a shaman, so for me, shamanizing is hereditary."

"Did you know your great-grandfather?" I asked.

"I remember him, but he died when I was six [Lazo was born in 1950]. I was raised by an aunt—my father's sister. My father was a victim of Stalin's terror. He served ten years in a labor camp in the far north of Siberia for selling seed that should have been given to the government. People were starving, and he was trying to take care of his family. After he was released, it took him three years to get home. On the way back to Tuva, he married a Russian woman, but then discovered that she had another husband who was in prison. So he left and made his way to Abakan. From Abakan he joined a caravan. One of the caravan drivers died, and my father was given his horse. My aunt brought me here to Kyzyl, and we found my father working in a cafeteria. Meanwhile, my mother moved away and remarried. I kept in touch with her. She told me that after I was forty, my life was going to be hard, and she was right. I developed a thyroid problem and had to have an operation on my throat. The doctor told me to forget about throat-singing. So I became a journalist, and in 1993, a policeman beat me almost to death.

ХАМНАР КИРЖИКЧИЛЕРИНГЕ ИЗИГ БАЙЫР !
1993
ПРИВЕТ УЧАСТНИКАМ ВТОРОГО МЕЖДУНАРОДНОГО СИМПОЗИУМА ШАМАНОВ ШАМАНОВЕДОВ !
Welcome to Participants of II International Symposium of Shamanologists and Shamans
2003

The headquarters of the Dünggür Society in Kyzyl the week after an international conference, summer 2003.

I had written an article about a colonel in the police who was poaching, and I'd snapped pictures of him through a telephoto lens. Several months passed after the article came out, and nothing happened. I thought people had forgotten about it, and then came the beating. Ever since then, I've been registered as a second-class invalid. But I surmounted all these difficulties. Becoming a shaman isn't simple. There has to be some kind of difficult journey, and if you survive it, you'll be okay.

"My mother had foretold that I'd become a healer, but that I'd only hold a shaman drum after I was forty-eight years old. At age forty-nine, I began to use the drum, and I've been using it now for four years. The drum you see there is one I made myself." Lazo pointed to a large frame drum hanging from the wall. "I've made four drums. On the second one, a figure drew itself in the patterns of the drum skin, which was made from the hide of a yak. I think it's my great-grandfather. When the drum was in good condition, the image was very clear. Now it's ripped and the image is beginning to disappear. A drum is a living organism. You have to feed it and take care of it."

Lazo rose from the bearskin cushion on which he had been seated, picked up the larger of two silver bowls from the corner of his desk, and filled it with milk from a refrigerator in the corner. He sprinkled powdered juniper on the milk, stirred it in with a twig, and added water. "This is the best *arzhaan* [mineral or spring water] for a shaman." Lazo picked up a wooden beater and struck the bowl on its four sides. As it began to resonate, he traced the circumference of the top of the bowl with the beater, producing a chain reaction of shimmering overtones that piled up on top of one another until the bowl was ringing loudly. The excitation of the bowl made the milk "boil" and sizzle.

"When you drink this, it purifies the human organism from the inside," Lazo said, motioning for me to take a sip.

"It's like a Tibetan singing bowl!" I exclaimed.

"The Tibetans don't use it correctly," Lazo replied sharply. "Shamans used these bowls before Buddhist monks, although I was the one who thought up the idea of filling it with milk. I haven't seen others do this. Silver is one of the nine valuable things that a shaman should have, and this bowl is one of my attributes—an *eeren.*" *Eerens* are physical objects that represent spirit-helpers called upon to assist a shaman with particular tasks or rituals. Lazo's *eerens* hung from the sawed-off stubs of a thin tree branch anchored in a weighted stand on his desk: bells, teeth, feathers, a bag of juniper powder, various colored threads and beads (see color plate 27). Other *eerens*—most prominently a wolf skull—were affixed to the back of the shaman's coat that hung from a hook on the wall. A brown kangaroo hide pinned up behind his desk—a gift from a Novosibirsk-based "extra-sense," as New Age healers and parapsychologists are generically called in Russian—rounded out the *eerens.* "Different kinds of animal skins help a shaman overcome any barrier or difficulty," Lazo said, when I asked him about the healing effects of kangaroos.

Valentina and I had come to Lazo to ask about the role of sound-making in his shamanic work. In the practices of traditional healers around the world, sound and music are a ubiquitous presence.[14] Their role seems to be to help induce the nonordinary states of consciousness often grouped together as "trance," in which the relationship of mind and body can become momentarily freed from habit and realigned to startling physical and psychological effect. Scholars who have studied music associated with trance practices have pointed to the cognitive complexity of the relationship between music and trance, to the diversity of forms in which trance music is expressed, and to the resistance of trance phenomena to reductionist explanatory models.[15] As a result of these challenges, recent scholarship by ethnomusicologists has tended to focus on observable aspects of social behavior, for example, on music's role in the social construction of trance experiences, rather than on the internal physical and physiological mechanisms through which sound and music act on listeners to facilitate entry into nonordinary states. Yet where science and scholarship demur, shamans tread intrepidly. The clinicians at the Dünggür Society had no shortage of ideas about the healing power of sound and music. Indeed, anyone who has ever experienced shamanic sound-making up close cannot help but be affected, whether therapeutically or not. I am no exception.

"Hold the talisman between your hands and think positive thoughts," the female shaman ordered me as I sat in one of the Dünggür Society's treatment rooms. The sound of the drum seemed to come from everywhere as the shaman held it close to the back of my head, then far away, then gliding around in front of me. I opened my eyes and noticed that her face was close to the surface of the drum and that she was singing directly at the drumhead. The sound was comforting as it swirled around the room, the thud of the drum blending with the deep growl of her voice. "I'm no singer," said the shaman after the ritual was over, "but the spirits help me."

In that moment I had what was perhaps an epiphany of the obvious: that the drum and the rich array of sound-making accoutrements attached to the shaman's cloak act to mask our perception of the sounds that ordinarily surround us, thus intensifying the internal aural and visual imagery identified with shamanic "trance." Was this fleeting thought a hypothesis that could be empirically confirmed or disproved? Could it be framed as a question that could be meaningfully put to Lazo or his colleagues? Could Lazo comment on the effects of the drum, and of the different timbres and rhythmic patterns that characterize its use? What about other types of shamanic sound-making, such as bells, jingles, clackers, throat-singing, imitations of animal sounds, and of course, *algyshtar*—the shamanic hymns, as Kenin-Lopsan had called them.

Lazo seemed impatient with our questions, and his responses were frustratingly cryptic. "The drum purifies, but the shaman adds his own energy," he said with an air of finality. "If you just beat on the drum without that energy, nothing will happen."

"How can you tell whether a shaman really has that energy?" I asked.

"Empiricism," Lazo replied. "If someone's sick, and a person is able to get rid of the problem, then of course this person is a real shaman. And no matter how many drums you show up with, if you can't cure the illness, then you're not a shaman."

"But surely even a real shaman can't heal everyone?" I said.

"Yes, that's the point. Not everyone can be healed. The spirits decide who will live." Lazo stood and began to tidy up his desk. "Look, I'm not going to be able to explain this by talking to you. If you want to understand how a shaman works, come and watch me do a purification ritual."

Valentina's face broke into a smile. This invitation was what we had hoped for. "When do we leave?" she asked.

"I'll meet you here tomorrow morning at nine o'clock. We'll drive across the river to an *arzhaan* [spring]. You'll need to bring offerings—a kilogram of meat, clarified butter, *kurut* [dried cottage cheese], *dalgan* [roasted ground wheat or barley], an apple, cookies, and a half-kilo of toffee candy. I'll take care of the rest."

Lazo's description of an "*arzhaan* across the river"—by which he meant the Yenisei River—was vague enough, but once we turned off the main road just after crossing the Yenisei and began to follow a dirt track that ran along the high bluffs on the river's north bank, I knew exactly where we were headed. Valentina and I had been to that *arzhaan* three years earlier with another shaman. It was the closest site to Kyzyl that offered ready access to the spirit world, and it was heavily used not only by shamans but also by people who simply wanted to make offerings at a spring and relax around a fire. Colored strips of cloth (*chalama*) left as offerings were tied in dense clusters to trees on either side of the spring, and they were also packed together along a rope strung between them. A pile of garbage moldered behind a bush near the fire pit. Candy wrappers and empty plastic bottles and cups lay among the stones, fouling the water that trickled down from the spring toward the Yenisei far below. A short distance from the fire pit, a large wooden cross had been dug into the ground. Lazo grimaced. "It's Russians who did that," he said. "They know this is a place used by shamans."

Lazo gave me a strip of cloth with a piece of *artysh* tied to it and took another one himself. We hung the strips on a branch of the tree aside the spring, then washed our hands. Next, Lazo burned *artysh* and spread the smoke around the fire pit to purify it. Then he built a log cabin–style fire with split pieces of log that he stripped off with a sharp knife, packing leaves and grass among the logs to create smoke. The raw meat was imbedded in a lower layer of the log cabin, and on the top he placed the other foodstuffs. Finally, he poured milk in a silver bowl, stirred it with a piece of *artysh*, and threw the liquid to the four compass points. The purification ritual was about to begin.

Lazo took a large piece of *artysh* and lit it. As crackling flames consumed the dry juniper bough, he waved it gracefully along the underside of his arms, grasping the *artysh* first with one hand, then the other. The flames appeared to surround his arms, but there was no sign that he was being burned. After laying the piece of *artysh* atop the ensemble of logs and food offerings, he retreated to a bush near the fire pit where his shamanic accoutrements were laid out on the ground and hung from the branches of an adjacent tree.

Lazo had prepared the fire wearing his shaman's feathered headdress and street clothes—a green T-shirt and dungarees—but as the smoke from the fire began to thicken, he slipped a bracelet onto each forearm and pulled his heavy shaman coat up over his shoulders, adjusting the fit as he slid his arms into the sleeves. He replaced his sneakers with black boots, and to the front of the costume he tied a belt with a string of jingles that clattered loudly as he shook the coat from side to side to test the sound. Affixed to the end of the belt was a massive bear claw—an important *eeren* that would facilitate contact with the bear spirit. Twirling a *kuduk* (a mop-like wand of braided string) from different positions around the fire pit to stir up the smoke, he whistled a series of rapid, descending cadences. Then he took his drum from its perch on a tree branch and used the beater (*orba*) to sprinkle milk from the silver bowl over its skin. He rubbed the milk into the skin with his hand and held it over the fire to dry, beating the head intermittently and tapping with his fingers to test the tightness. The beater was also purified by shaking it over the flame. As Lazo moved the wooden beater with quick, short strokes while simultaneously jiggling the drum and twisting his headdress-bedecked head, tiny bells attached to the back of the beater joined the clamorous sound emanating from the bells and jingles on his coat, headdress, and drum. Lazo had turned himself into a human idiophone.

Offerings surround the spring where Lazo Mongush performed a purification ritual near Kyzyl, 2003.

An abridged version of Lazo Mongush's performance of a shamanic purification ritual is included on the DVD, track 18. The full text is transcribed below.

Now he stood by the fire and began beating the center of the drum. Not satisfied with the timbre, he held the drum over the fire to heat the skin so it would be still more taut. Then, to the accompaniment of rapid strokes of the beater to various parts of the drumhead, Lazo began to chant and sing an *algysh.*

Shaking the beater, I get ready to shamanize	*Orba chaiyp xamnaarym ol*
Sit, be seated	*Olurungar, saadangar, ooi*
Be respectful and free up the road	*Oran-Tangdym eeleringe*
For the spirit-masters of my Oran Tangdy.	*Oruk chailap bolgaanyngar, ooi.*

Beating the drum, I get ready to shamanize	*Dünggür soktap xamnaarym ol*
Be seated, and be patient	*Tüveksinmein saadangar, ooi*
Be respectful and free up the road	*Dündük deerning eeleringe*
For the spirit-masters of the sky.	*Oruk chailap bolgaanyngar, ooi.*

My nine wooded mountains, my Ursa Major	*Tos-la tangdym Dolaan Burgan*
My moon, my sun, my golden land	*Aiym, xünüm, aldyn cherim*
My land is my mother, my sky is my father	*Ie cherim, deer adam*
The Pleiades and the polestar are my eyes.	*Ülger sholban karaktarym.*

Spirit-masters of the underworld	*Aldyy cherning azalary*
Sit on your horse, and put on your robe	*A'ttanyngar, tonanyngar*
We'll travel around the *aals* and the yurts	*Aaldar, ögler keziilinger*
We'll free and purify those	*Ajyg, shüjüg tutturganga*
Who are seized by grief and sadness.	*Avyraldap aktaalyngar.*

We'll establish peace and tranquility	*Amyr taibyng turguzaaly*
So that work can proceed	*Ajyl-ishti chogudaaly*
Spirit-masters of my Oran-Tangdy	*Oran-Tangdym eeleri*
Spirit-masters of my fire and hearth	*Odum-közüm eeleri*
Master-spirits of the earth and water	*Cherning-sugnung eeleri*
Now I bow down to you to the ground.	*Cherge chedir mögeidim-ne.*

Now I burn my *artysh* and Siberian juniper	*Artysh shaanaam kyvystym-na*
I toss my spring water and milk in the air	*Arzhaan südüm örü chashtym*
Give freedom and forgiveness	*Avyraldap örsheenger-le*
Take pity on children.	*Azhy-töldü keergenger.*

Spirit-masters of my Oran-Tangdy	*Oran-Tangdym eeleri*
Spirit-masters of my birthplace	*Oran churtum eeleri*
Spirit-masters of my land and water	*Cherning sugnum eeleri*
Now I bow down to you to the ground	*Cherge chedir mögeidim-ne*
Take pity on us and forgive us.	*Cher-le keergep örsheenger-le.*

Help yourself to the food that we put in the fire	*Otka salgan a'shty-chemni*
And let us depart	*Orta chooglap örsheenger-le*
Open my road and let me accomplish what I want to do	*Oruk choruum ajydyngar*
Don't let me have any accidents along the way.	*Ozal-ondak boldurbangar.*

Spirit-masters of my sky and my taiga	*Kudai tangdym eeleri*
Spirit-masters of *kurbustu* [the upper sky]	*Kurbustunung eeleri*
I sing, swinging the *kuduk**	*Kuduk chaiyp yrlap tur menxi*
Don't allow any sadness.	*Kudaraldy boldurbangar.*
* A wand of braided string.	

Help yourself to the food that we put in the fire	*Otka salgan a'shty-chemni*
And let us depart	*Orta chooglap örsheenger-le*
Open my road and let me accomplish what I want to do	*Oruk choruum ajydyngar*
Don't let me have any accidents along the way.	*Ozal-ondak boldurbangar.*

Spirit-masters of fire and hearth	*Odum-közüm eeleri*
Spirit-masters of my Oran-Tangdy*	*Oran-Tangdym eeleri*
Spirit-masters of spring water	*Arjaan sugnung eeleri*
Spirit-masters of golden water	*Aldyn sugnung eeleri*
I bless and praise you	*Algap iöreep maktap tur men*
Protect and forgive us.	*Avyraldap örsheenger-le.*
* A place with high mountains	

I purify the flowing spring water	*Agyp chydar kara sugnu*
With my *artysh* and *aitys* [powdered juniper]	*Artyjadym aityzadym*
I purify my mineral water and spring water	*Arjaan suumnu kara suumnu*
With my *artysh* and *aitys.*	*Aityzadym artyjadym.*

Ribbons that represent my *eerens*	*Charnym bajyn chara baskan*
Hanging from my shoulder blades	*Chavagalar eerennerim*
Don't allow any laziness	*Chalgaa choruk boldurbangar*
And don't allow any conflicts.	*Chargy chaaly ündürbenger.*

(First two lines are undecipherable)	(undecipherable)
People who have come from far and near	*Yrak chooktan kelgen chonu*
Let them sing and not be wanting.	*Yrlap turzun, todug turzun.*

For him who carries misfortune on his back	*Bachyt xalap chüktep algan*
Let bad habits stay far away	*Bagai changchyl yngai turzun*
For him who carries black misfortune on his back	*Kara xalap chüktep algan*
Let the dark forces stay far away.	*Kara küshter yngai turzun.*

Let my people live well	*Arat chonum eki chorzun*
Let their work go well	*Ajyl-iji chogup chorzun*
Let children live well	*Ajy-tölüm eki chorzun*
Let life be without obstacles.	*Amydyral ajyk bolzun.*

Let suffering not surround The black-haired child of humanity Let dark forces not envelop He who is entrapped by suffering.	*Kachygdaldy körüp choruur* *Kara bashtyg kiji tölü* *Kara küshke bürgetpezin* *Kachygdalga tutturbazyn.*
Let poverty not surround The human child with hair on his head Let the dark night not crush him Let the cyclone wind not carry him away.	*Türegdeldi körüp choruur* *Düktüg bashtyg kiji tölü* *Dümbei düne bastyrbazyn* *Düvü xatka alyspazyn.*
Let evil forces not close his road And spread their bad influence [to him] Let misfortune not weigh on his head And spread its bad influence.	*Bachyttyglar oruk dozup* *Bala chyvaan xaldatpazyn* *Bagai choruk bashka xaldap* *Bala chyvaan xaldatpazyn.*
Help yourself to my offerings And bless us again With respect I give you my offerings of *Artysh,* my juniper, my spring water, and my milk.	*Ajym chemim deejizin* *Am-daa chooglap örsheenger-le* *Artysh shaanaam arzhaan südüm* *Avyraldap chaj̈yp tür men.*
Spirits of my upper world and taiga, Don't allow sadness Spirit-masters of earth and water, Don't allow unfortunate events.	*Kudai tangdym eeleri* *Kudaraldy boldurbangar* *Cherning sugnung eeleri* *Cherle xalap boldurbangar.*
Let the middle *aza** which blocks my fire Stand far away *Aza* spirits that awaited my help Can I fufill your wish? * malevolent or demonic spirit	*Odum közüm bajyn doskan* *Ortun aza yngai turzun* *Chaglak manaan aza chetker* *Sagyjyngar ajyttym be?*
(First two lines are undecipherable) Spirit-masters of my taiga Actually noticed me.	(undecipherable) *Oran tangdym eeleri* *Okta körüp amyrady.*
Spirit-masters of my land and my birthplace Don't forget about me Don't allow death and loss And don't allow enmity.	*Cherim churtum eeleri* *Cherle ojaap örsheenger-le* *Ölüm chidim boldurbangar* *Öjen kylyk ööskütpenger.*
Spirits of the spring Take me into account from time to time Don't allow dark forces Suffering, and sadness.	*Kara-sugnung eeleri* *Xaigaarangar tegeeringer* *Xai-la bachyt kara küshtü* *Kachygdaldy boldurbangar.*
Spirit of my upper world and taiga Don't allow misfortune and sadness Don't allow the *aza* spirit to become active So that they can cause illness.	*Kudai tangdym eeleri* *Kudaraldy boldurbangar* *Aza chetker doyuldurup* *Aaryg arjyk boldurbangar.*

Spirit-masters of my golden taiga Take me under your protection and forgive me Please give happiness To my people.	*Aldyn tangdym eeleri* *Avyraldap örsheenger-le* *Arat chonum aas-kejiin* *Ala chaigaar xaiyrlangar.*
Spirit-masters of the upper sky I bow to my waist Push away sadness And let there be laughter and joy.	*Kurbustunung eeleri* *Kurlak chedir mögeidim-ne* *Kudaraldy chailadyngar* *Katky xögnü boldurungar.*
Spirit-masters of earth and water I bow to the ground Ensure that the blue-eyed wild *aza* Does not have success.	*Cherning sugnung eeleri* *Cherge chedir mögeidim-ne* *Cherlik aza karaa köktü* *Chedimche chok boldurungar.*

After around ten minutes of texted singing, Lazo beat the drum for a long time and then, to the accompaniment of the drum, began throat-singing in a guttural *kargyraa* style, continuing for several minutes without words. At the first sound of the *kargyraa,* Valentina and I both looked up from our video cameras at the same moment. Throat-singing by shamans was a controversial topic. Some shamans believe that real shamans don't throat-sing. "They use it like a 'show,'" complained Kara-ool Dopchuur-ool, a member of the Adyg-Eeren (Bear Eeren) Society that had broken off from the Dünggür group to which Lazo belonged. "It's art," Kara-ool scoffed. "Every shaman *can* use it, of course, but my grandmother, who was a great shaman, said that it's forbidden." Lazo evidently disagreed. When I asked him about it later, he had a straightforward explanation. "*Kargyraa* takes away stress."

The ceremony ended abruptly. After finishing a quatrain of text, Lazo beat the *dünggür* quietly for another half-minute, stopped, twirled the instrument around so that the bells jingled, and set it down on the ground. Picking up the silver bowl filled with milk, he used a sprig of *artysh* to sprinkle liquid on the fire, then flicked it in different directions, and finally daubed milk on Valentina's hands and then on my hands. We rubbed the liquid into our skin, leaving a sticky coating. I eyed the fresh spring water, but the point of the ritual was of course not to wash off the milk. Lazo poured the remaining contents of the silver bowl on the burning embers and the hot rocks that lined the fire pit. Then he rang a bell over each of our heads, brushed our clothes and hair with the belted bear claw that he had detached from his costume, and jingled the bells on the bear claw belt around our bodies.

As Lazo took off his headdress and boots and folded his shaman coat, Valentina and I put away our video cameras. Neither of us spoke. Maybe it was just the absence of the pounding drum, but I felt a deep silence in my body—and yes, a sort of purification. The loud drumming and chanting, the clanging of bells and crackle of burning wood, the pungent smell of smoke and burning *artysh* had indeed driven tension away and left me utterly calm. I had not the slightest desire to move from our idyllic perch overlooking the Yenisei, but Lazo had picked up his things and was heading back up the steep embankment to his car. Valentina and I grabbed what was left of our gear and followed behind him. Lazo stowed his shaman costume in the trunk, climbed into the driver's seat, and navigated slowly along the dirt road back to the main highway to Kyzyl. As we approached the bridge across the Yenisei, he turned on the radio. A Tuvan pop song was playing, and Lazo hummed along.

Back at the Dünggür Society, Lazo, Valentina, and I made our way to Lazo's treatment room through a knot of anxious-looking clients gathered around the receptionist's desk. Lazo shut the door. While Valentina and I made ourselves comfortable, he checked messages on the cellphone lying on his desk, then retrieved a bottle of champagne from a table in the back corner. Popping the cork, he filled a white mug on his desk labeled "Scorpio" in Russian and pushed it toward me.

"Do you drink champagne?" he asked.

"Yes, if it's good."

"Don't worry, I only drink good champagne." Lazo searched for a knife and stirred the warm liquid around in his mug until it fizzled. "Here, try this." I drank a mouthful and passed the cup back to Lazo, who sipped it like coffee as we continued to talk. Veuve Clicquot it was not.

"When I see our shamans drunk, I get really angry," said Lazo, whose shamanic antennae had perhaps picked up the question I was silently asking. "Sometimes Mongush Borakhovich [Kenin-Lopsan] sends people over—they beg to work with us. They say, 'Let's work together.' They're persistent, and he sends them over, and I ask them, 'How many days a month do you drink? How many days are you sober?' And I check everything. And if it doesn't check out, I send them away. Or a shaman is invited to a memorial feast, and he sees a beautiful girl and says, 'Oh, a bad spirit has gone to that girl. She has to come to me.' The girl gets scared and goes to the shaman, but he has something else in mind. There are a lot of charlatans."

These days, the issue of charlatanism versus authenticity among shamans and others with claims of access to the spirit world is hotly debated. Kenin-Lopsan's Dünggür Society, with its red membership cards (modeled after the cards once issued to Communist Party members), year-long probationary period for shaman-clinicians, and strict rules of conduct ("We don't take alcoholics," Kenin-Lopsan had assured me when I asked about the selection process) was intended to establish a rigorous standard of certification for all practitioners within his sprawling clinic system. But fractures had grown among the shamans, and splinter groups had broken off. Some shamans accused others of devoting too much attention to foreigners at the expense of the local population, or of shamanizing for personal profit—an animistic version of simony. Lazo had brought up this theme in one of our conversations. "A lot of people in Tuva are suffering," he said. "They're poor, they're hungry. For a shaman to earn from these people. . . ." He shook his head. "I try to take less. People ask you to come and get rid of some horror, and to add to this horror by taking a lot of money—that's terrible."

Kara-ool Dopchuur-ool, the shaman from the competing Adyg-Eeren Society, had been generally skeptical about the foreigners who streamed into Kyzyl to learn the secrets of Tuvan shamans (see color plate 28). "To become a shaman you have to live here for several years and give your all," he said sternly to Valentina and me. "You have to know the voices of nature and the language of spirits. You have to listen to the rippling of a brook, the sound of a river at night, the echo in a mountain ravine—you have to hear those things. And nature spirits are called through text, not just imitation of their sounds. So you have to know our language. Every people has its own language, and to heal someone, you have to know the words of that language—that's simple psychology. The foreigners who come here—they've gathered a lot of information from informants and written it down, and they know how to beat a drum. But when they play the drum, there's no energy. There's no truth. They're just making noise."

Ai-Chürek Oyun, a vivacious young shaman who has become one of the principal links between Tuvan shamans and their American acolytes, had a more positive outlook (see color plate 29). When I asked her, shortly before she set out on a trip to Mill Valley, California (see her web page at www.purenaturemusic.com/ai-churek.htm), whether Americans could be shamans, her eyes lit up. "Yes, why not?" she replied. "America has a great energy." Ai-Chürek (her name means "moon heart") was looking forward to her trip and to spending a little time away from Tuva. "It's hard to be a shaman here," she told me. "There are a lot of bad spirits. The land is pure, but people pollute it." Sounding momentarily weary, she pointed to the door beyond which a throng of clients waited for treatment. "It's not interesting, day after day, trying to purify these people."

The different views articulated by Ai-Chürek and Kara-ool each represent a legitimate take on Tuvan contemporaneity. Kara-ool, for his part, is no xenophobe. He had boasted about having clients from Russia and even abroad. But he was disturbed by the fawning deference to foreigners that he perceived among some of his fellow shamans; by the commodification and franchising of practices that were a response to Tuva's own social chaos and misfortune. Ai-Chürek, by contrast, feared the trivialization of the spirit world that had become endemic among Tuvans themselves. Many clients came to her to ask for purification not of their road toward health, spiritual harmony, or safe travels to a foreign land but rather toward earning more money, winning the lottery, or avoiding mishaps in an expensive new car.[16]

Tuvan shamanism has always had a practical side. Outsiders have been attracted to the High Church shamanic healing rituals that feature plenty of smoke and incense and, of course, drumming. The workaday world of the shaman, however, is much more prosaic: purifying apartments and new cars (for the best residual effect, some shamans advise hanging a compact disc from the rearview mirror to deflect the evil eye), finding lost items, determining whether something has been lost or stolen, or summoning the spirit of financial profit to reign over business enterprises and lottery entries.

Tuvans are very matter-of-fact about using the service of shamans, and they invite them to make house calls in the same way that Americans phone the plumber or electrician. Valentina Süzükei told about calling a shaman to help her husband find his lost keys. She believes fully in the power of certain people to perceive auras and finer energies that most people cannot see. Svetlana Bapa, Sayan's wife, recounted how she had dealt with the problem of purifying their new apartment. She is trained as a nurse and has a modern, rational view of the world. "I don't know whether or not I believe," she confided in me. "But Sayan was concerned that bad spirits may be lingering in our apartment. The family that lived here before us included a man who had been ill for two years, and finally died right in the apartment. Sayan asked me before he left for the United States to take care of the problem.

"I thought about calling a shaman to perform a purification ritual, but I was worried about disturbing the neighbors with all the noise. Not long ago someone in our building bought a new car and invited a shaman to purify it so that it wouldn't have any breakdowns or accidents. He must have beat on that drum—what do you call it, a *dünggür*—for two hours. I was worried that if I invited a shaman, he'd go on and on, and I wouldn't be able to tell him to stop when I—and the neighbors—had had enough. So I decided to go to church instead [Svetlana's mother is Russian]. I hadn't been in years, but I went and talked to the priest. I had to stand for hours while he was busy leading a service. Then I waited for him behind a young Russian with a thick gold chain around his neck, who took the priest outside to where a shiny new car was parked, and the priest blessed the car. Finally he came to me and asked whether I was a Christian, and whether I'd been baptized. 'Do you have your cross with you?' he asked. I showed it to him, and he told me that he'd come to the apartment the following week—he'd say some prayers, and hopefully, that would take care of the problem."

For Svetlana, the priest was a surrogate shaman. The choice of one or the other was not a matter of principle, but of expediency—not disturbing the neighbors. "There's a Tuvan saying," Svetlana said during our discussion. "'The poorer the people, the more shamans appear.' People are out of work. They have nothing to do, and nothing to hope for. Tuberculosis is epidemic here. People are dying from drinking industrial alcohol because it's a third the price of vodka. Families are in terrible shape from alcoholism. I saw a television program which said that these days in Tuva, if you reach the age of sixty, you're considered to be long-lived—like those people in the Caucasus who live to be a hundred by eating a lot of yogurt. So what do people who live in these conditions do? They go to the shaman."

In "Magic and Dependence," the second part of an acerbic essay about the intellectual and moral failings of contemporary India, V. S. Naipaul wrote, "Magic is an Indian need. It simplifies the world and makes it safe."[17] Naipaul's point was that such simplification is the enemy of progress, and that India will only advance to the extent that its inhabitants reject myth and ritual and embrace a Western-style modernity grounded in receptivity to thought. Indians, of course, are not alone in grappling with the tensions between ritual and rationality, and magicians are hardly the only contemporary actors who appeal to a yearning for simplicity and safety in a dangerous world. In the West, that function falls more commonly to politicians and preachers and, increasingly these days, to chimerical hybrids of the two. Americans at the beginning of the twenty-first century live in a country whose president has declared his belief in the Biblical account of creation and where, according to surveys, "many more people believe in the Virgin Birth than in Darwin's theory of evolution."[18] Naipaul's stark partition between the way of magic and the way of thought seems incompatible with both history and human nature. The intermingling of rational and irrational beliefs in the human psyche is surely universal, and the blend of magic and empiricism that infuses Tuvan neoshamanism is replicated in contemporary beliefs about healing and spirituality that range widely through class, culture, and educational background in the West no less than the East.

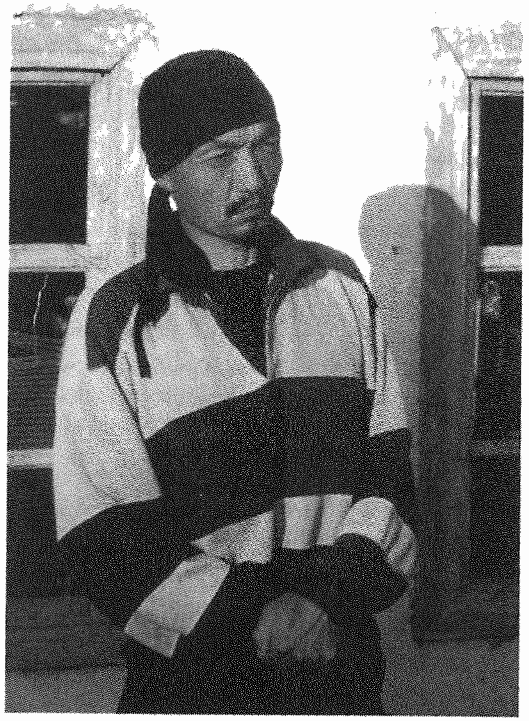
Tuva's neoshamans are worldly and intelligent. Lazo Mongush was a successful journalist before changing careers. Kara-ool Dopchuur-ool had been the director of a hunting cooperative. The doyen of them all, Mongush Kenin-Lopsan, is a celebrated novelist, a doctor of science graduate of Leningrad University, and, as he can never let any visitor forget, one of Tuva's "People of the Century." Like Western self-help gurus, neoshamans offer their own lives as testimony to the possibility of salvation. But salvation invariably comes at a price, both psychic and pecuniary, and if the transformation of spiritual power into commerce leaves some observers of Tuva's neoshamanism with a feeling of queasiness, there are other spirit-inspired domains of neotraditionalism in which commerce has played a lesser role. Most active among these in the realm of expressive culture is the performance of oral epic.

Slava Kuchenov, the Xakas sculptor-turned-*xaiji,* exemplifies the reemergent vitality of epic reciters as contemporary performance artists.[19] Slava, however, is a solitary revivalist as well as a neophyte in the world of Xakas epic, and his dream-induced tale of the horse-mounted hero Siber Chyltys is an epigonic facsimile of the great epic texts. By contrast, the Kyrgyz epic reciter Rysbek Jumabaev belongs to the venerable guild of the *manaschi*—a reciter of the *Manas,* whose thousandth anniversary, however dubious the dating, was celebrated in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan with great fanfare in 1995.

THE SPIRIT OF MANAS

I met Rysbek in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan's capital, in the winter of 2003. Nurlanbek Nyshanov, whose jew's harp playing is discussed in chapter 4, had invited Rysbek to perform in a small concert at the American University. When Rysbek appeared alone on stage, his gaunt face set off by a blue kerchief knotted around short-cropped hair, and began to perform an excerpt from the *Manas* with a Dionysian ardor both thrilling and terrifying, I knew that I was in the presence of a great talent. The *Manas,* which recounts the exploits of its eponymous hero as he battles a range of foes and unites the Kyrgyz clans, was systematically transcribed by Soviet scholars from the recitation of leading *manaschis* beginning in the 1930s.[20] The longest of these transcriptions, from the recitation of Sayakbay Karalaev (1894–1972), includes some 500,000 lines of verse (by comparison, the *Mahabharata* contains around 200,000 lines and the *Iliad* around 16,000). Published transcriptions have served as a source for a new generation of younger *manaschis* to learn the epic, but Rysbek derisively dismisses such performers as "Philharmonia *manaschis*"—academicized performers tainted by the inauthenticity of learning oral poetry from written sources. Rysbek prides himself on having "received" the *Manas* rather than having read it.

"It all began when I was eleven and had a dream in which the famous *manaschi* Sayakbay recited the *Manas,*" Rysbek told me during the first of many meetings that began in Bishkek, later moved to Rysbek's austere home in the village of Darxan, on the south shore of Kyrgyzstan's Lake Issyq-Qul, and following that, to the United States, where Rysbek came to perform with Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble. "My father knew some episodes from the *Manas,* and when I was four years old, Sayakbay came to my house and blessed me so that I would become a *manaschi.* He had a strong effect on me. I was scared of him, but I really wanted to be like him. I consider Sayakbay my teacher, even though I didn't study with him directly."



Rysbek Jumabaev standing in the courtyard of his house. Darxan, Kyrgyzstan, 2003.

"Why did Sayakbay choose you in particular?" I asked.

"It was a gift of God. If a person has God-given talent, he comes to the *Manas* himself. People aren't taught in a formal sense. I started performing at small gatherings when I was sixteen, and at first I performed as an amateur. Then, in 1983, I started having stomach aches. I couldn't eat, I couldn't sleep. I went to various doctors and they gave me drugs, but nothing helped. I had stopped reciting the *Manas* because there weren't any invitations. No concerts, no festivals. Finally, I went to a clairvoyant who lives in Karakol—

his name is Mirbek—and asked why I had fallen into this state. Mirbek said that I had become ill because I had stopped reciting. He told me that I had to go to a *mazar* near Darxan, slaughter a sheep as an offering, spend the night there, and rededicate myself to the *Manas.*"

Mazar is a word of Arabic origin that means "place of visitation." In Central Asia, *mazar*s are typically shrines to Islamic saints. There is no institutional mechanism in Islam for canonizing saints, as there is, for example, in Catholicism. A Muslim saint is not beatified by ecclesiastical authority, but elevated to sainthood by popular zeal. For Muslims, saints are people venerated and revered for their wisdom, beneficence, or miraculous acts, and *mazar*s are typically physical structures erected at or near the burial site—or alleged burial site—of a saint that serve as a locus of pilgrimage. Some *mazar*s are modest, purely local affairs, while others are grandiose and attract pilgrims from afar (for example, Mazar-i Sharif, the major city of northern Afghanistan, is built around a shrine to Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet).

For the Kyrgyz, however, *mazar* has assumed a double meaning. In one sense, it corresponds to the conventional understanding of a physical structure marking the burial site of a saint. In another sense—what some Kyrgyz scholars have called a "natural" *mazar*—it refers to a site of spiritual power marked by a distinctive natural phenomenon: a spring or cave, a distinctive geological formation or botanical oddity, such as a grove of trees amid a landscape of barren steppe. In this second sense, *mazar* overlaps with the Tuvan term *xaiyrakan* (described in chapter 2). But whereas the concept of *xaiyrakan* is purely animistic, with its primary meaning denoting the spirit-essence of bears, the notion of "natural" *mazar* accounts for animistic beliefs within an Islamic frame of reference. For Kyrgyz, the two kinds of *mazars*—built *mazar*s and natural *mazars*—often coincide in one and the same physical site. Veneration of saints is thus physically linked with offerings to spirits, and this linkage is a defining feature of the syncretic Islamic-animistic practices and beliefs of many Kyrgyz.[21]

On August 17, 1983, after two months during which Rysbek said he was neither able to eat or sleep, he obeyed the oracular advice of Mirbek, and went to the *mazar* near his home in Darxan to prepare a sacrifice with the hope of recovering his health and restoring his connection with the spirit of *Manas.* The Darxan *mazar* boasts no link to a saint, but centers around an ancient poplar tree that rises from a plain of scrubby grass and bushes on the southern bank of Lake Issyq-Qul. Close by, four lesser poplars, evidently seedlings of the original tree, spread their roots, but beyond this small grove, no other trees are visible for miles in any direction. The *mazar* was protected by spirit-masters, Rysbek told me, who assumed the form of an old man named Egizbek, an old woman named Segizbek, and a young child with a camel.

"I took seven people with me on that evening in 1983," Rysbek recounted. "We slaughtered a lamb and boiled it, and for the first time in months, I ate meat and fell soundly asleep. During the night, while I slept, my companions were awakened by a tremendous whooshing noise coming from the mountains. They woke me up, and I heard it, too. I couldn't believe my ears. My companions said that it was the sound of a spirit. I don't know, it was some kind of sign from God that a road was being opened."

"After what happened at the *mazar,* did it become easier for you to recite the *Manas?*" I asked.

"Yes. Before going to the *mazar,* I had become very weak. I was living alone—my parents had both died—and after the night at the *mazar,* everything changed. It was as if I'd bumped up against something that led to an opening. Soon after that, a film crew came and filmed me. And I had more dreams in which I saw Sayakbay reciting the *Manas* in a beautiful form—one of the largest parts of the *Manas*—and in the dream, Manas's forty knights came to me. I married and had children. I had three girls, and after I started to recite, I had a son. I answered the call of God and was rewarded. I named my son Syrghak, one of the main characters in the epic.

"Until 1995, I performed at small events—my interest in the *Manas* was more an inner one—but in 1995, Kyrgyzstan celebrated a thousand years of the *Manas,* and that was the first time that I performed for a large audience.[22] I won second place in a *Manas* competition for young performers in Bishkek. It was also in 1995 that I had another strong dream, in which Sayakbay and Saghimbay (1867–1930) led me to two great *manaschis,* Shaabai Azizov (b. 1927) and Choyuke Omur-uulu (1863–1925). They grabbed me and put me on the street, as if to open the road for me. I had been working as a construction worker, a tractor driver, a herder—all the rural professions. I left these professions and became a *manaschi.* This is the profession that best suits me.

"Everything went well for a while, but then again the spirit of Manas began to grow more distant and it became difficult to recite. The stomach aches came back. I suffered for a long time, and finally, I went again to Mirbek, and in January 2001, he took me to the *mazar* of a holy man named Manjaly-*ata.* No one knows exactly when Manjaly-*ata* lived, or where he was buried, but in 1999, they celebrated 5,000 years of Manjaly-*ata.* He was an *oluya*—a person loved by God. His *mazar* is in a willow grove surrounded by clay hills on the south shore of Issyq-Qul. Willows don't grow anywhere else around that place. All you have there is scrubby plants growing out of the clay.

"Mirbek took me there, and he asked me, 'Do you feel anything special here? Do you see something, or maybe hear some kind of echo?' I didn't see anything out of the ordinary, but twice, I heard an echo coming from afar—from the mountains. It was the echo of herders on the move. There were camels, horses, old men and women. A young child was crying hard. Mirbek was testing me, to see whether I had the spirit of Manas. After I heard the echo, he said to me, 'You have something. Those herders you heard are the herders of Manas.' He told me how I should live—what I had to do. He said that I'd experience a lot of wonders—that I'd go to Europe and to America. It seemed ridiculous at the time. But look what's happened. Everything he predicted is coming true.

"It was around this time that I learned I had chronic ulcers, and the doctors told me I had to have an operation. I consulted again with Mirbek, and he said his ancestors had told him that you can be treated for ulcers by urinary therapy. You have to drink your own urine for two-and-a-half months. Mirbek told me to take the therapy and to keep reciting the *Manas,* and not to stop. I did this—I drank urine at five o'clock in the morning every day from the beginning of February to the middle of April, and the ulcers went completely away. I was completely cured. Since then, the road has been open to me. Sometimes I can't sleep all night. I hear the words of the *Manas,* the voices. And in the morning, I begin to recite. I receive information from the heavens. It's not my information. It's like a spirit that comes to me inside. A motive comes to me in a twilight state between wakefulness and sleep. Or sometimes I'll be sweeping the courtyard at home and I begin to recite. I cry out, and people gather. Now I've started to take a piece of paper and write down the information when it comes to me. I have several notebooks like that. But the information comes at such a fast tempo that I'm not able to write it all down."

I asked Rysbek, "Now that you have a family to support, how do you balance family responsibilities with being a *manaschi?*"

"I have this talent, but I don't have any material things. I just don't seem to be very good at earning money," Rysbek lamented. "It's hard for my children—there was a time when they wanted milk and I didn't have enough money to get it for them. I'd like to buy a cow—a dairy cow costs around three hundred dollars. I hope we'll be able to afford it during the next year. But I have to keep myself clean. I can't steal or lie, because I'll be punished. I have to be grateful for this richness that's completely separate from the material world. The *Manas* is given only to certain people. People who are connected to *Manas* have a patron-protector [*koldolchuu*]. It can be a dead ancestor, or one of the companions of *Manas,* or some spirit. But the patron-protector only takes care of people who are clean."[23]

Rysbek had shared these thoughts as we sipped tea in the simple guestroom of his house in Darxan, a village of 1,500 families who keep animals and coax small crops of potatoes from the arid plain south of Lake Issyq-Qul. I had come to Darxan not only to speak with Rysbek but also to make a video recording of his *Manas* recitation at the nearby *mazar,* where, in 1983, he had renewed his devotion to the spirit of Manas. Rysbek had invited me to visit Darxan in May 2003 during a meeting in Bishkek, and we had set a date for early September, when I was scheduled to be back in Kyrgyzstan. But in midsummer, a cruel event had taken place at the Darxan *mazar.* When I showed up in Darxan in September, Rysbek explained what had happened.

"Around a year ago, a new mosque was built in Darxan with help from Saudi Arabia," said Rysbek. "The Saudis want the Kyrgyz to become more religious. They train religious teachers and build mosques, but in Darxan almost no one goes to that mosque. It's a strange thing about the Kyrgyz—you can't really say that we're Muslims. But then again, you can't really say that we're not Muslims. Anyway, one night, some young people from the mosque came to the *mazar* and cut down most of the old poplar tree. And they cut down the four smaller poplar trees next to it. In the mosque, they had learned that God is one, and that it was blasphemous to pray to spirits. They got the idea to destroy this tree, where people came to make offerings and tie strips of cloth [*chüpürök*]. They came at night and sawed most of it down, and hauled away the pieces. When I heard about it, I cried."

"Are you absolutely sure that it was people from the mosque?" I asked Rysbek.

"Absolutely. It was a group of young people. It's known who they were."

Nurlanbek Nyshanov, who had accompanied me to Darxan, chimed in, "People think of nomads as barbarians, but it's my generation of village and city people who are the barbarians. What they have done to nature and the natural world is indescribable. The old people who lived in yurts whom I knew as a kid—they were very soft, and fine. They had a wonderful relationship with children. When it was forty degrees below zero, they'd go to their horses to take care of them at night. Respect for nature was a crucial part of their worldview. For example, I wasn't allowed to cut living trees. We only used wood from fallen trees, even if it meant bringing it from far away."

Rysbek had a pained look as we approached the *mazar* with my video camera. "It was once such a beautiful tree, and now look at it." The poplar's branchless trunk rose bleakly about fifteen feet out of the ground and ended abruptly in a small clump of leaves. Rysbek spread a blanket on the ground beneath the tree and I set up my video camera and tape recorder.

"What section of the *Manas* are you going to recite?" I asked Rysbek.

"I don't know yet. I have to prepare myself to perform. If people tell me, 'You have to perform this place or that place,' nothing will happen. I need freedom to choose the place. Depending on the listeners, I have a sense of which way to go with the performance."

In the past, Rysbek told me, the majority of *manaschis* recited without music. But there were some who accompanied themselves on the *qyl qiyak*, the two-string upright fiddle that is similar to the Kazakh *qyl-qobyz*.[24] Rysbek does not play an instrument in order to leave his hands free for gestural miming. For him, gesture is a central part of performing the *Manas*. There are conventional gestures, for example, knocking hands together to symbolize the bow and arrow, but Rysbek has added many gestures of his own.

As I readied my equipment, Rysbek assumed a theatrical pose, his arms outstretched to the side, his face peering skyward, as if poised to download the *Manas* text from a heavenly source. After a quarter-minute of silent gesticulating, he began to recite. The section of the *Manas* he had chosen is the story of Almambet, the son of a Chinese ruler who meets Kökchö, a companion of Manas. After hearing about the feats of the Kyrgyz hero, Almambet converts to Islam and himself becomes a companion of Manas. Transcribed below is the excerpt of the *Manas* that Rysbek recited at the *mazar*.

Rysbek Jumabaev performs an excerpt from the Kyrgyz epic, *Manas* (DVD, track 19).

The Story of Almambet	**Almambettin oquyiasy**
From Qoqand, where a big battle was in full swing,	*Baatyr kayinap jatqan Qoqondon*
Only two of us managed to escape,	*Oshondon ekööbüz gana arang qachyp qutulup,*
Oh, fickle fate! (lit., "world like your father's grave")	*Atangdyn görü dünüyiö.*
Crossing rounded mountains,	*Tompoyigon gana toonu ashyp*
Crossing icy ridges,	*Tongup jatqan qoonu ashyp*
Crossing countless places,	*Ächen böksö jer ashyp*
Fording a cool desert,	*Muzdagyraaq chöl kechip*
Fording countless rivers and waters,	*Ächen dayira suu kechip*
Oh fickle fate!	*Atangdyn görü dünüyiö.*
I skirted the land of Ak Talaa.*	*Men Ak talaa boyiloyi ashypmyn.*
When I had gone further,	*Aryragyraaq ashkanda*
Oh, fickle fate!	*Atangdyn görü dünüyiö.*
Accompanied by Er Majit,**	*Ärchitkenim Är Majit*
Becoming lost, I went as far as Altai,	*Men Altayiga kettim adashyp*
And while I was wandering around,	*Men adashyp jürgöndö*
I turned [my horse] Sarala's head,	*Saralang oozun burganda*
Oh, fickle fate!	*Atangdyn görü dünüyiö.*
[And found myself among the people] of that Sary-Arka*	*Bayiagy Sary-Arqany jerdegen*
Who were fought against but never beaten,	*Salyshyp ushu adam jengbegen*
Whose wives are praised like young girls,	*Ayialyn qyzdai maktagan*
Whose barley is husked white like stone,	*Taruusun tashtayi aktagan*
Whose grain is sown in autumn,	*Ashtygyn küzdö ayidagan*
Whose forefathers are from the Alash [clan],	*Tüp atasy Alashtan*
Whose yurt frames are made from wood.	*Keregesi jygachtan.*
Aidarhan's Kökchö,	*Ayidarqandyn kökchösü*
Shin of blue boots,	*Kök ötüktün ökchösü*
The friend of the very Alooqe,	*Oshol Alooqengdin ökchösü*
At that moment I came across him	*Oshondo kelip tush boldum*
In the riverbed running through Sary-Arka.	*Sary-Arqanyn sayiynda.*
In the broad steppe	*Bayagy tüzdük talaada*
It was lying stretched out,	*Oshondo jatkan äken jayikalyp*
As you have seen yourself, old man,	*Özüng körgön jaryqtyq*
The very place Sary Arka!	*Oshol kezde Sary-Arka.*
Oh, fickle fate!	*Atangdyn görü dünüyiö,*
And then you'll see, you'll glimpse	*Myna oshondo qarasang*
What a commotion he raised,	*Milte tartyp, duu kylyp*
Shooting his rifle, making noise,	*Ayiabagan chuu qylyp*
Sixty tigers, a hundred bears	*Altymysh jolbors, jüz ayiuu*
He managed to shoot.	*Atyp alyp aldyryp.*
The very Er Kökchö whom you saw	*Özüng görgön Är kökchö*
Took six strong men and forty knights	*Alty balban, qyrk choro*
Along with him as company.	*Janyna joldosh alyptyr*
The very Er Kökchö whom you saw	*Özüng körgön är Kökchö*
Came hunting,	*Oshondong uuga kelip qalyptyr*
Making such a commotion	*Ayiabagan duu kylyp*
That echoed along the open steppe.	*Ayi-talaany jangyrtyp*
Er Kökchö, khan of the Kazakhs	*Qazaqtyng qanyng Är kökchö*
Was on the hunt then,	*Oshondo uuda jürgön kezi äken*
And it was then that I myself,	*Osho kezde men özüm*
Oh, fickle fate!	*Atangdyn görü dünüyiö.*
Saw the khan of the Kazakhs,	*Qazaqtyn qany Kökchönü*
Saw Er Kökchö.	*Är Kökchönü körgöndö.*
And Er Majit was with me,	*Ärchitkenim Är Majit*
I turned [my horse] Sarala's head.	*Saralang oozun burgamyn*
On my broad back was a rifle.	*Ayi dalyda syr barang*
I grabbed my rifle,	*Syr barang alyp turgamyn*
And then I myself	*Myna oshondong men özüm*
scratched and put an ember [in my rifle],	*Kyryp iyiip, chok koyiup*

* Ak Talaa: a valley in Naryn Region, near China.
** "Er" means "courageous," thus "courageous Majit."

* Sary-Arka: the steppes of present-day Kazakhstan.

Filling its barrel with a bullet.	*Miltesine ok koyiup.*
Oh, fickle fate!	*Atangdyn görü dünüyiö.*
At the deer from the nearest mountains	*Budurudagy bugunu*
I shot again and again	*Atkylap osho kezde men özüm*
And killed a countless number of deer	*Oshondo bugunu atyp jayinattym*
And tigers on the hills.	*Adyrdagy sherlerdi.*
It was then that I myself	*Oshol kezde men özüm*
Was shooting and going on a rampage,	*Atkylap shorun qayinattym*
Oh, fickle fate!	*Atangdyn görü dünüyiö.*
All the bears that I shot	*Atkan ayiuu barysyn*
I packed and bound up for Er Kökchö.	*Är kökchögö bayilattym*
Seeing such feats of mine,	*Bul ärdigim görgöndö*
Ayidarqan's Kökchö,	*Ayidarqandyn kökchösü*
Shin of blue boots,	*Kök ötüktün ökchösü*
Began his words from afar,	*Qyngayigan sözdön bashtady*
And then the words he wanted to say	*Oshondo ayita turgan sözdörün*
He threw in front of us,	*Ortogo qoyiup, tashtady*
Oh, fickle fate!	*Atangdyn görü dünüyiö.*
Leave your Kalmyks	*Sen qalmagyngan kayit dedi*
And accept the Muslim faith.	*Bul musulman dinge kir dedi*
And at that time this very Kökchö	*Osho kezde al Kökchö*
If you ask about him,	*Kökchönün jayiyn surasang*
Oh, fickle fate!	*Atangdyn körü dünüyiö!*
The one who finishes the race alone,	*Bu jeke chygat jaryshtan*
Who has very good eyesight,	*Közü göröt alystan*
If you ask about Kökchö's situation,	*Bu kökchönün jaiyn surasang*
Shin of blue boots,	*Kök ötüktün ökchösü*
Aydarqan's Kökchö,	*Ayidarqandyn Kökchösü*
Quoting a lot from the *Sharī'a,*	*Shariattan göp süyilöp*
He spoke like a Mullah.	*Moldolugu bar äken*
He could speak like a charm,	*Jangylbagan jez tangdayi*
He was like an orator,	*Munun chechendigi bar äken*
That uncle of yours,	*Al akengdin jayiy osho*
When I came to Kökchö	*Men Kökchögö kelgende*
And served him six years,	*Alty jyl qyzmat kylganda*
Oh, fickle fate!	*Atangdyn görü dünüyiö.*
So when I came to Kökchö	*Osho men Kökchögö kelgende*
I covered his *tuurduq** with fat	*Tuurdugun mayi qyldym*
To let everyone know that Kökchö	*Tyshta uqanga Kökchönü*
Became khan of many places.	*Tush-tush jerge Qan qyldym.*

* *tuurduq*: the outer felt covering of a yurt. To cover the *tuurduq* with fat means to enrich the owner of the yurt.

A day after performing the *Manas* for me beneath the sawed-off poplar tree near Darxan, Rysbek performed again at the *mazar* of Manjaly-*ata,* where he had his second reinspiration in 1999. As a *mazar* linked both to the veneration of a saintly person and to nature spirits manifested in the botanical oddity of the lone willow grove, Manjaly was not in danger of the kind of desecration that had befallen the poplar trees at Darxan. On the contrary, the site was all set up for pilgrims: to the side of the willow grove a lean-to sheltered fire pits where sacrificed animals were prepared, and directly under the willows was an elevated wooden platform where visitors spread out their festive meals. One such meal of boiled mutton was being laid out as Rysbek and I, along with our traveling companions Nurlanbek and Raziya, and our driver, Volodya, approached the willow grove. The five of us were warmly welcomed to join the feast by complete strangers—an extended family that had come to give thanks for the birth of a new child after the parents, long unable to conceive, had visited the *mazar* and prayed to have children.

Rysbek had been solicitous of my interest in his *Manas* performance, and he was generous in recounting his life story and performing innumerable retakes of the recitation necessitated by my novice videography skills. "I can feel people's auras," Rysbek told me as we sat in the lobby of the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Bishkek near the end of one of my visits. American servicemen from the nearby airbase lolled at the bar while we sat at a small table talking about spirits, visions, and a thousand-year-old epic. "Sometimes I can feel the future, and I can feel right away whether a person who's standing next to me is a good person or a bad person. You're a good person," Rysbek assured me.

Rysbek's sunny assessment was flattering, but was it ingenuous, ironic, or mildly calculating? I could not tell, and that made me uncomfortable. I wanted Rysbek's respect, not his obeisance. And yet, as much as I would have done anything to change it, our relationship was an asymmetrical one. I lived in a wealthy country, Rysbek in a poor one. I came to Kyrgyzstan representing not only myself, but organizations that offered potentially life-changing opportunities to performers like Rysbek. Rysbek, by contrast, was a loner; or, if one wanted to extend him the benefit of the doubt, his accomplices were a gaggle of mercurial spirits as notable for their absence as for their appearance. I had asked Rysbek to make the long trip from Darxan to Bishkek not only to seek his help with my book manuscript but also to extend an invitation from cellist Yo-Yo Ma to come to the United States, together with Nurlanbek Nyshanov, to participate in an innovative musical residency organized by the Silk Road Project, the transnational arts initiative that Ma founded and directs.

Rysbek and Nurlanbek had performed briefly during a reception following a Silk Road Project concert in Bishkek the previous spring, and Yo-Yo Ma and his fellow musicians had been powerfully moved by the performance. The invitation to join the musical residency program—a two-week-long series of gallery performances and cross-cultural, improvisatory music-making inspired by exhibition objects at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts—had grown out of that brief contact. If the Peabody Essex residency went well, other performance opportunities around the world were sure to follow (see color plate 30).

Listening to my description of the residency program, Rysbek could contain neither his excitement nor his conviction that the journey to the United States had been foreordained, both by Mirbek, the clairvoyant who had advised him to visit the *mazar*s, and by his dreams. "I dreamed that I would come to the United States and recite the *Manas,*" Rysbek said triumphantly, "and everything that I dreamed has come true!" But how would performing in the West affect Rysbek? And how would it affect the tradition of the *Manas* itself? Would Rysbek turn into a neo-*manaschi* version of the neoshamans in Tuva whose fawning to foreigners had drawn the ire of Kara-ool Dopchuur-ool? Or worse, a Kyrgyz variant of the Tuvan throat-singers whose immersion in the world music marketplace had fractured their spiritual equilibrium and sent them rocketing toward alcoholism and, in too many cases, an early death? (Indeed, several months after the Silk Road Project residency program, Rysbek's friend, Nurlanbek, complained to me that Rysbek was suffering from "star disease." As this book goes to press, Rysbek had recently completed performances of *Manas at* Carnegie Hall and at the London Coliseum, among other venues in the West. He had agreed to the Carnegie Hall event reluctantly, however, because it took place the same weekend as a *manaschi* contest in Kyrgyzstan that he had long planned to enter.)

The Silk Road Project was dedicated to reinvigorating cultural exchange, and to the belief that artistic innovation and imagination are nourished by the cross-cultural circulation of ideas, technologies, and fashions. There was no question that putting Rysbek and his exceptional artistic gift into wider circulation would enrich the imagination of artists and audiences in other locales. But beyond assuring Rysbek the purchase of his much-wanted dairy cow, what would the swirl of cross-cultural music-making contribute to his own tradition? Would Manas, the ancient hero who vanquished countless enemies, fall victim to the marketplace's voracious appetite for new talent, turning it into entertainment "product" and "content"? Or might fresh impressions spur Rysbek, as well as other tradition-bearers, to search for the roots of artistic evolution within their own expressive culture, and in so doing, challenge convention and break taboos?

WOMEN ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO DO THIS

One enduring convention in the expressive culture of the Altai region concerns the gendering of performance. For example, while women commonly perform a variety of vocal genres, play jew's harps and plucked zithers like the *chatxan* and *yatga,* excel at strummed lutes like *komuz* and *dombra,* and, more rarely, play fiddles such as the *igil* and *qyl qiyak,* epic performance and throat-singing in all their diverse forms are overwhelmingly dominated by men. During my first visit to Tuva in 1987, I had naively asked a male throat-singer why women did not throat-sing, and I can still visualize the smirk on his face as he pronounced the answer: "Because throat-singing makes women barren!" He said those words with an air of incredulity at my ignorance.

The notion that throat-singing causes infertility in women was not the only male-inspired canard about *xöömei* and gender. Another common male riff was that the manipulation of facial muscles involved in throat-singing contorts a woman's face and spoils her beauty. Underlying these explanations, however, was a more basic objection that rested on grounds of unnaturalness. "Making those kinds of low guttural sounds—women are not supposed to do this," one old singer told me solemnly. "It's embarrassing, and if women don't have enough sense not to do it, then their husbands ought to forbid them. If their husbands won't forbid them, then there ought to be a law against women throat-singing in public."

None of the invective against female throat-singers deterred Choduraa Tumat, an energetic Tuvan woman with long braided hair and delicate features, who leads the all-female ensemble Tyva Kyzy—"Daughters of Tuva" (see color plate 31). Choduraa and her fellow band members, Ailangmaa Damyrang, Ailang Ondar, and Shoraana Kuular, were all born in the mid-1970s and attended the High School of Arts in Kyzyl, where they met and started to make music together. During a conversation in summer 2003, Choduraa recalled the group's early years. "It was around 1997 and we were all working in different places in Kyzyl. I was working in a teacher's college, Ailangmaa and Ailang were working in a music school, and we started to think about participating in the Xöömei Symposium that was to take place in 1998. We thought it would be a good idea to create a women's ensemble. There were women who had been soloists such as Valentina Chuldum and Shanchalai Oorzhak, but never an entire group consisting of women.

"In March 1998 we met for the first time. We met a second time in June, three weeks before the symposium. We were seven then, and wanted to find a name. Konushtar-ool [Oorzhak—a famous throat-singer who died in 1993] had dreamed about starting an ensemble called Tyva Kyzy, and we chose that name. Konushtar-ool taught *xöömei* in the High School of Arts for a brief period. He started in September 1992, and in January he got sick and died. He was the only one among men who supported the idea of a women's ensemble. He was very wise. With regard to performing *xöömei,* he looked at women and men as equals. Still, Ailangmaa and Shanchalai were the only girls at the school who sang *xöömei.*"

"My first lesson with Konushtar-ool was in a park," Ailangmaa added. "He wanted to teach singing in a place where there was nature, which was perfect for me, because I was shy and didn't want to sing in front of other people. I had learned a little *kargyraa* from listening to my grandfather. I didn't even know it was throat-singing. I just sang that way because I liked it. I didn't know that I could produce those sounds. The first time I sang for Konushtar-ool, I sang with my back to him because I was too shy to face him."

Choduraa continued her account of the group's history. "In 1999, we made our first trip out of Russia, to the Gdansk Festival in Poland, and in 2000, we went to Osaka and Tokyo. The next year we went to Finland, and then to Berlin and Switzerland. In all these places, we were received with admiration and surprise. On our first trip to Poland, we didn't know that there would also be a male ensemble from Tuva at the Gdansk Festival—we'd arrived a little late, and one of the artists from that ensemble had already told the audience that in Tuva, women weren't allowed to sing *xöömei.*

"It wasn't until 2002 that we gave our first solo concert in Kyzyl. It was in a theater with 640 seats, and more than half of them were filled. One of the newspaper reviewers interviewed an old man who said, 'Why did I come to this concert? Girls are not supposed to do this.' But most of the reviews were positive. Some people came to the concert because they didn't believe that women could sing *xöömei* and wanted to see for themselves. Last year we were hired by five or six candidates running for seats in the Parliament to go on the road with them and play music after they gave speeches. There are always some men in the audience who object to what we do, and sometimes we're uncomfortable about performing. But the main thing is, we don't have any fear before the spirits."

"Which spirits?" I asked Choduraa.

"Not long ago I went to my homeland—the place where my grandparents used to herd—and sang there so that the spirits of my homeland would always defend me. I went to the River Xemchik and stood on the bank of the river and sang *xöömei,* and played the *igil.* It's normal when you sing by a river and make an offering. The place where my family herded is called Xür Taiga. It's higher even than Kyzyl Taiga, and I went up there and sang without any fear of spirits. When my brother died, I thought that it might have been because of my throat-singing. We invited a shaman on the seventh day and on the forty-ninth day after his death, but the shaman didn't say anything about my singing. There have been no bad results from it. The spirit of the apartment where we rehearse should be happy that we're singing, and should listen to this music."

The members of Tyva Kyzy were eager to have me video a performance. They were searching for a new manager, having fired their previous one because they weren't getting enough invitations to perform abroad. In return for filming rights, I agreed to make the video available to whomever they asked me to send it to, and Choduraa and I exchanged e-mail addresses. The video filming was done inside a yurt set up in a tourist camp a little north of Kyzyl. In addition to a *kojamyk*—a light-hearted song that included different techniques of throat-singing—Tyva Kyzy sang a magnificent lullaby that featured dark, luxuriant vocal harmonies in a conventional singing voice, but no throat-singing.

Trying to shed all preconceptions about the propriety of women performing throat-singing, I still found that the lullaby suited Tyva Kyzy far better than the *kojamyk* saturated with throat-singing. Such a judgment, however, is purely a matter of taste. Is there anything ultimately more "natural" about men singing reinforced harmonics than women? The answer has to be no. Moreover, in at least one other example of a traditional musical style centered around the use of reinforced harmonics—the *umngqokolo* technique of the Xhosa people of eastern South Africa—the singers are exclusively women and girls.[25]

The ensemble Tyva Kyzy performs a *kojamyk* and a lullaby whose texts are transcribed below (DVD, tracks 20 and 21).

Kojamyk: "Setkilimden Sergek Yr-Dyr"

My *sygyt* carries a light wind	*Sygydymga ooi syrynnaly eei*
From my soul comes a cheerful song	*Setkilimden ooi sergek yr-dyr eei*
As soon as I begin to sing *borbangnadyr*	*Borbangymga oi bodu kelir ei*
My melody becomes a beautiful song.	*Ayan yrlyg oi ayalgam-dyr ei.*

Like a lullaby for my beloved	*Xöömeiimge oi xongnun chazaan ei*
My *xöömei* raises his spirits	*Xöököiümnüng oi öpeii-dir, ei*
From the cradle, my talent was	*Kargyraamga chazalgham-dyr, ei*
To raise my spirits with *kargyraa.*	*Kavailyymdan, oi chayaalgam-dyr, ei.*

"Lullaby: Öpei Yry"

I'm rocking you, my sweet little jumper	*Uvailaiang ovai opang saryym ovai opeilengim ovai*
My son, the jumper, my sweetie that I'm rocking	*Uvai oglum xopang saryym opeilengim ovai*
The mother's youngest son	*Iezining xeimer oglu*
Without shoes, what will he wear?	*Idii-le chok chünü keder?*
In two beautiful trunks	*Iyi kyzyl aptarada*
Is there leather with which to sew shoes?	*Idik kylyr bylgaar bar be?*
Öpei, öpei, öpei, my little one	*Öpei, öpei, öpei sarrym*
Please fall asleep	*Uduy berem ökpejigim*
So that I can finish what I'm doing	*Kylyr ijim doozup alyin*
Please fall asleep, my youngest son	*Udui berem xeimer oglum*
Öpei, öpei ooi öpei, my little one	*Öpei öpei ooi öpei saryym eei*
Look at how the moon is shining	*Örü körem aining chyryyn*
The sun will shine even more brightly	*Oon artyk xününg chyryy*
My son, it will come to you tomorrow	*Oglum sengee erten kelir*
The beautiful house that your father built	*Achang tutkan charash tuduun*
You will widen and develop	*Algydar sen xögjüder sen*
Let your mother and her lullaby	*Avangnyng meeng öpei yrym*
Be a gift for your peace and rest.	*Amyr dyshtyng belee bolzun.*

During travels around the Altai region in the summer of 2000, I met another musician, Raisa Modorova (b. 1967), who, like the members of Tyva Kyzy, had challenged the gender taboos embedded in traditional expressive culture. Raisa lived in Gorno-Altaisk, the capital of the Altai Republic, which borders Tuva on the west, but is accessible from Tuva only by means of jeep tracks that twist through high mountain passes along the remote boundary between the two republics (the route taken by our Trans-Altai Research Group in summer 2000). Access to the Altai Republic—not to be confused with the Altai Krai, a separate territory of the Russian Federation —is much easier from the north, where a good road links Gorno-Altaisk with the Russian cities of Biysk, Barnaul, and Novosibirsk. The proximity of Altai to Novosibirsk, one of southern Siberia's main transportation hubs, has produced a thriving tourism industry.

Altai has much the same image among urban Russians as does New Mexico among Americans: a land of spectacular natural beauty infused with the mysteries of native religion and archaic culture. The Russian-American painter, adventurer, and spiritualist Nicholas Roerich published a rapturous account of a visit to Altai in 1926 that has become scripture for a new generation of Russian artists, trekkers, and seekers who travel there to camp in the fresh alpine air, commune with nature, and patronize Altai's rich assortment

Raisa Modorova plays the *topshuur* near the bank of the Katyn River outside Gorno-Altaisk. Altai Republic, 2000.

of native healers and religious prophets.[26] Russian Orthodox schismatics, devotees of shamans, Mongolian Buddhists, and members of hybrid religious movements such as Tengrianism and White Faith (*Ak Jang*) or Burkhanism, as it has been called by Russian scholars, all thrive among the Republic of Altai's population of around 200,000.[27]

Like many present-day neotraditionalists, Raisa Modorova returned to her cultural roots only after formal study of a European art form—in her case, opera, which she studied in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Later she began writing pop songs and performed with an *estrada* ensemble in Gorno-Altaisk. In 1995, she had a dream in which she saw herself playing the *topshuur* and singing *kai*—the guttural vocal style used to perform oral poetry. "That dream was a signal to me to order a *topshuur*. I'd wanted to sing *kai* for a long time, and finally I decided to go ahead and do it. I learned to play the *topshuur*, and went to a festival in Almaty, Kazakhstan, where I sang three songs with *kai*. People responded well. After that, I started to sing publicly, but not with courage. People are just starting to react to what I do. They can't decide whether it's good or bad. Old people say that Altai is too sacred a place for women to sing *kai*—they say that it will be the end of Altai. It's hard being the only woman who does it here."

Raisa agreed to perform her music for my tape recorder and Dutch colleague Mark van Tongeren's video camera, and after long discussion about an appropriate location for the recording session, Raisa finally suggested a spot on the bank of the Katun River a little south of Gorno-Altaisk. It was apparent, though, that she had reservations about her choice.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Are you concerned about noise from the road, or from sunbathers?"

"No, I'm afraid that there may be bad consequences if I sing so close to the river. The spirit-master of the Katun is very powerful, and may be displeased by a woman singing *kai.*"

"We can go somewhere else if you'd like," I told Raisa.

She thought for a moment, then shook her head. "No, let's stay here. I believe in what I'm doing. I think the spirits will support me." Raisa tuned up her *topshuur* and, in a transformation that seemed truly shamanic, launched into a performance of a praise-song, "I Ask Permission of My Altai" (*Altaiymnang surap*), using the *kai* technique. The text is transliterated and translated below.

Raisa Modorova performs an Altai praise-song, accompanying herself on the *topshuur* (DVD, track 22).

I praise the river which flows in my Altai,	*Altaiymnyi ichindede burlap iatkan suularyna*
And ask a blessing from the mountains that stretch out around me,	*Alkysh byxtan aidyp iadym tuularynaa köstöp iadym*
Forgive me for the sins I have committed.	*Iamanymdy tashtazyn dep, bui, bui, bui, bui*
I praise the trees so that their tops will reach toward the sky,	*Örö özüp chykkan taldaryna agash tajynn mürgüp iadym*
I want to reveal something to them that comes from my heart.	*Aidagan sözimdi aidyp alym aidy-kuunai kuudim iadym, bui, bui, bui, bui, bui*
I bow down to my blue sky,	*Kök bütken bu tengerimge*
I beg it to excuse the mistakes that people make in this life.	*Aldyma men mürgüp iadym kilinchek albatyn bu buruzym*
The tastiest offerings of the Altai lie before me,	*Kök changkyrga aidyn iadym alama shikir aldymaiadyp iady*
To them I bow down.	*Bash bolzyn, oi, oi*
To the rivers that flow through the valleys,	*Agyp iatkan suularyna*
To the voice of the cuckoo bird in the mountains,	*Küüktii üni bu aldyna*
I offer a prayer and begin to sing my *kai.*	*Mürgüp iadym bash bolzynda, kojoi kaiym torgul iadym.*

Raisa seemed to reassure herself through her performance. "Some people say that women aren't supposed to do this," she said, repeating the mantra of male authority that she felt compelled to challenge. "But I have to do what works for *me.* It doesn't matter whether you're a man or a woman. What's important is to believe in the spirits of these rivers and springs and mountains, to go to the springs and drink pure water, and to fill your *kai* with that purity so the spirits accept your offering."

Raisa's offering appears to have been accepted. Not only did no harm come to her from our recording session, but not long afterward, she remarried and bore a child.

THE ONDAR PHENOMENON

Unlike Raisa Modorova, who seemed more concerned about how her *kai* would be received among the spirits than about its reception among her fellow Altaians, Tuvan throat-singer Kongar-ool Ondar reveled in the attention of human listeners—and the more, the better. At least that was how I remembered Ondar, as he had become known in the West, in the tradition of one-name pop stars like Prince, Madonna, and Bjork. I had seen little of him since 1993, when Ondar—the last-minute replacement for Gennadi Tumat—traveled to the United States with Kaigal-ool Xovalyg and Tolya Kuular to throat-sing on horseback in the Rose Bowl Parade.

When I ran into Ondar on Kochetova Street just after arriving in Kyzyl in summer 2003, he looked less fierce than the pugnacious cowboy of my memory, his erstwhile *kejege*—the shaved crown *cum* braided ponytail that is the traditional coiffure of Tuvan men—replaced by a combed-over receding hairline (see color plate 32). Ondar had adopted the gracious, jaunty persona of a celebrity, which indeed he was after a decade of highly publicized antics. Ondar carried the Olympic torch in a segment of the cross-country marathon preceding the 1996 Atlanta summer games, advertised Oldsmobiles, made the rounds of television talk shows, and flew from Tuva to New York for a long weekend to promote digital recording studio mixing consoles for AT&T ("Singing two notes at once may not be revolutionary for the people of South Siberia, but a system that can be analog and digital at the same time could revolutionize New York, Nashville, London, and L.A.," read the promo brochure). Later, Ondar became known as costar of the highly successful documentary film *Genghis Blues* and also as a recording artist whose Warner Brothers Records compact disc, *Back Tuva Future,* with Willie Nelson and Randy Scruggs, was included by the *New York Post* in its 1999 list of the year's ten best CDs. Ondar's fame in the West reverberated strongly in Tuva, where he was elected a deputy in the Parliament and founded a respected program in traditional music at the High School of Arts. There, a classroom houses Ondar memorabilia, a collection of musical instruments he commissioned, and a floor-to-ceiling hourglass fashioned from boughs of willow wood that symbolizes the link between past and future—a metaphor for tradition in Ondar's understanding.

More than any other Tuvan, Kongar-ool Ondar has emplanted throat-singing in the sphere of American popular culture, and his efforts have drawn both plaudits and groans from fellow throat-singers. Some regard his work as the purest of kitsch. Others accept it as a necessary evil—the price a small Siberian culture has to pay for a stake in the global musical marketplace. And still others view Ondar as an imaginative neotraditionalist who has harnessed the power of popular culture to preserve an endangered tradition. During Ondar's years of throat-singing celebrity, our paths had rarely crossed. Now I wanted to hear how Ondar himself assessed what he had contributed to Tuvan music by bringing it so colorfully—or, depending on one's point of view, kitschfully—to the West.

"It's no secret that when you came to Tuva the first time [in 1987], the reason that we didn't meet was that I was in a camp," Ondar said forthrightly as we sat in his memorabilia-filled classroom-museum in Kyzyl's High School of Arts. "I had been in a fight and my father's friend was the prosecutor of Bai-Taiga Region. He promised to get me off if I admitted my guilt, but he didn't keep his promise, and I was convicted. I spent four years and seven days in jail. After that, I was paroled, but had to work in a brick factory where they employed only ex-convicts.

"I never knew my father, and was raised by my grandparents. During the summers, I'd go to stay with my grandfather where he was herding. In the evenings, they'd drink a little and start singing, and they'd go all night. If you asked my grandfather to sing when he was sober, he'd never do it. He always drank, and then in the morning, he'd go to work. I grew up with those sounds in my ears, and when I was in ninth grade, I began singing myself.

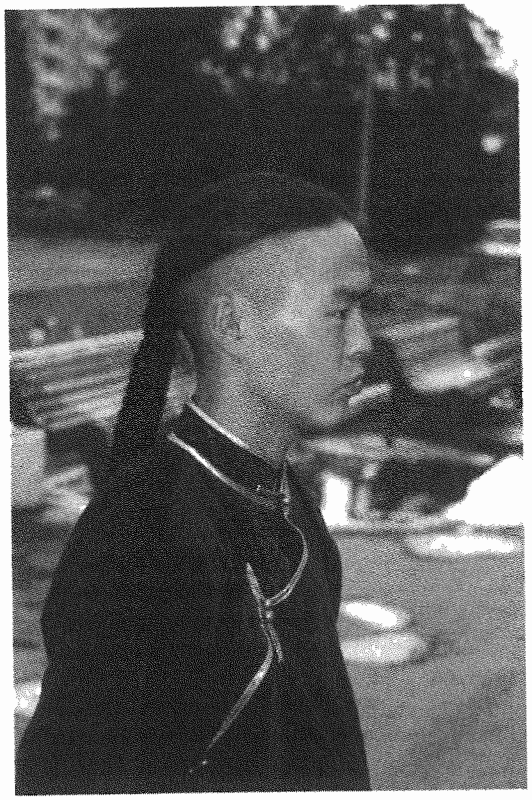
"I really wanted to be a musician, and after I was freed from prison, I went to see Gennadi Tumat [the founder of the Tuva Ensemble]. Tumat talked about how the Sayan Ensemble received invitations to go abroad mainly because of throat-singing, but the throat-singers in the group got the lowest pay and performed the fewest numbers. Tumat said that people called them 'street singers' because they didn't have diplomas. During the show, it was the ballet dancers with diplomas who performed the most. Tumat described how the Sayan Ensemble had gone to Japan and been invited out to dinner, and he had started to eat a napkin, and been laughed at. After that Tumat had thought, 'Let's start our own ensemble. We don't need a tour bus, we don't need anything.' He said to me, 'If you join us, we'll create an ensemble that sings like our ancestors. It will be as if we're sitting around a campfire and singing with one another.' So we started dreaming of having our own independent ensemble. It was just the beginning of the times when we could do that. Zoya Kyrgys put me on a halftime salary at the High School of Arts, and we started to put a repertory together. Zoya suggested that we chant a Buddhist prayer, and she found a Tibetan sacred text. I remembered a few couplets of the song 'Beijing,' about the caravan drivers who traveled from Tuva to China, and we tried to find someone who knew more of the couplets. We made different kinds of jew's harps. There was a shaman who came out on stage while we changed our costumes. That was the beginning of the Tuva Ensemble.

"When we toured in Tuva, old people would cry when they heard our songs, which reminded them of their youth. And they'd say, 'You forgot this couplet or that couplet.' They gave us words, and they said, 'You have to dress in national clothes,' and they gave us their boots and their robes, and their trunks to keep them in. When we had toured for the second or third time, there were already little kids who were imitating us. Then we went to Holland, Belgium, Germany, and I thought, if we're going to have professional throat-singers, they should really be professionals. So in 1992 I left the ensemble and started a program at this school. I've worked here for eleven years. It's been hard, because there's no textbook. The school requires solfeggio—European solfeggio—and the students read notation. They can do arranging; there's a national orchestra and they all play in that orchestra. The school also teaches piano, but we don't have any results with piano students. They study for eleven years and at the end, there's nothing. It's not that the teachers are bad, but the piano is a European instrument. With *xöömei*, it's different. We have real results."

"If you believe so strongly that Tuvan kids should focus on their own traditions, why have you devoted so much of your time to crossover and fusion projects with Western artists?" I asked.

"There are people who like to hear folklore and there are people who like to hear pop. You can't leave those pop listeners out of the picture. If I don't do music that interests them, someone else will. We need time to get to the stage of blues, rock, jazz, but we're not going to lag behind the civilized world."

Ondar's reasoning was not unsound. It was the same reasoning I had used in agreeing to allow Smithsonian Folkways to license throat-singing for the Swedish cheese snack commercial. I had argued that the appropria-



Ayan-ool Sam, a student of Kongar-ool Ondar, sports a traditional Tuvan haircut (*kejege*) popular among younger musicians. Kyzyl, 2003.

tion of Tuvan music by Western musicians and media companies is ethically neutral and in any event, unstoppable; that the most one could do was to ensure that musical sacrilege was avoided, and that Tuvan musicians were fairly compensated. Ondar, however, had been more than an accomplice in a licensing deal. He had actively sought opportunities to commercialize Tuvan music in forms that radically decontextualized and repackaged it as an attention-grabbing special effect. Was there really a musical or cultural point to Ondar's collaboration with Willie Nelson in "Where Has My Country Gone? (Kongurei)" on *Back Tuva Future*? Did it open up new vistas for Tuvan music? Did dressing up throat-singing in the safe and familiar style of a musical brand name like country and western offer a way to attract new listeners who would subsequently become curious about Tuvan music on its own terms? This, after all, was one of the bedrock beliefs of the world music industry—an end-justifies-the-means argument that has led many artists to submit to the caprice of producers who promise fame and fortune with the addition of synthesizers, drum machines, bass guitars, and plenty of digital reverb. Musicians, for their part, have typically been only too eager to lard up their recordings with extra effects in search of larger audiences and more touring opportunities.

I had discussed these issues with the members of Huun-Huur-Tu and had been blunt about my reservations concerning some of their recent fusion and crossover projects. These discussions had been lively and constructive, and for my part, I had come to understand that in the case of Huun-Huur-Tu, fusion and crossover were not temporary aberrations in the life of a "traditional" music group but represented a fundamental shift in their own sense of artistic mission. I wanted to observe this increasingly central part of their musical lives up close, not simply through the filter of recordings. E-mailing Huun-Huur-Tu's manager, Sasha Cheparukhin, I asked whether he could recommend an upcoming tour with collaborative concerts on which I might tag along. Sasha's response was immediate: "Best place to see new Huun-Huur-Tu style is Greece. They have concerts with Ross Daly 'Labyrinth' group on Crete and in outdoor amphitheater in Elefsina [the ancient Eleusis], near Athens in early September. You can travel together from Tuva after your fieldwork."

CRETE

SEPTEMBER 2003

The village of Houdetsi's albescent stone and plaster houses hug the contours of a rocky escarpment along the narrow road that weaves southward through dry hill country from Heraklion, the largest city on the island of Crete. The most imposing of these dwellings is a spacious two-story villa set behind a walled-in terrace and tree-shaded lawn just opposite the tiny village square. The villa has been transformed into the headquarters of Ross Daly, a charismatic Irish musician and world music impresario who has lived in Greece for the last twenty-eight years and become an accomplished performer of its traditional music. Daly, fifty-one, is tall and thin with biblical locks of flowing, sun-bleached hair, now greying, which hang down to his shoulders and frame his deep-set eyes. At first sight, he could be mistaken for a superannuated apparition of Yanni, the New Age Greek pop idol, except that Daly's casual dress and tousled mane seem unselfconscious rather than the issue of a fashion stylist. Daly lived in Athens until four years ago, when, through an old friendship with the mayor of Houdetsi, he came to the vil-

Ross Daly and fellow musicians rehearse their concert program with Huun-Huur-Tu. Houdetsi, Crete, 2003.

lage, took a lease on the villa, and began converting it into a museum for his substantial personal collection of musical instruments, as well as a center for workshops, lawn concerts, and cross-cultural musical encounters such as the one to which Huun-Huur-Tu had been invited in the infernally hot days of late summer.

Huun-Huur-Tu had come to Daly's Cretan world music emporium not simply as a traditional music group from Siberia. In Greece, they are rock stars. If in most countries where they have toured, Huun-Huur-Tu's audience has grown from a grassroots base of throat-singing aficionados, worldbeat buffs, and New Agers, in Greece their fame started with soccer. Specifically, it started with a television advertisement for Pro Po, the country's most popular soccer lottery, in which a barber shaves a man's head to resemble a soccer ball, with its black and white patches, to the accompaniment of a soundtrack featuring Huun-Huur-Tu's up-tempo, popular encore piece, "Eki Attar" (Good Horses).

The ad was created in 2001 by Pro Po's advertising agency, Kino TV and Movie Productions SA, whose music department was managed by a world music fan named Manos Andriotis. Andriotis had heard Huun-Huur-Tu's music on recordings, and he selected "Eki Attar" for its "positive energy and tempo, and the wonderful, weird sound of the voices," Andriotis later wrote me.[28] Andriotis was sure that the ad would be a hit and open the way for "Eki Attar" to have a life of its own as a dance remix. His insight led to the release of a compact disc single by Protasis Records and Eros Music that featured four DJ mixes of "Eki Attar." Soon another record company with a competing claim to the publishing rights of "Eki Attar" released its own compact disc with five more dance remixes of "Eki Attar." "Television, radio, and the biggest newspapers in Greece were confused about where Huun-Huur-Tu was from," Andriotis recalled in an e-mail, "and were calling them 'the group from Mongolia' or 'Huun-Huur-Tu from Lapony' [Lapland]. I was yelling to journalists that the group came from Tuva, and they were asking me, 'Are they from Cuba?'"

The Pro Po ad featuring Huun-Huur-Tu performing "Eki Attar" is included on the DVD, track 25.

Huun-Huur-Tu's manager, Sasha Cheparukhin, described what happened next. "With so much attention focused on 'Eki Attar,' one of the remixes fell into first place on the Greek pop charts. Huun-Huur-Tu came into the charts in March 2002, and for a month, 'Eki Attar' was outselling Madonna, the Beatles, and Britney Spears. There were other remixes that were in third place, in fifth place. No one dared to remix another song, because it was not Huun-Huur-Tu that was popular, but 'Eki Attar.' The Greek national lottery organization ordered 50,000 CD singles of 'Eki Attar' as promos for their clients. Then the idea arose to do a tour of Greece. Ross Daly and a concert agency he worked with, Protasis, were the first to organize a tour. When we arrived at Athens airport and I told the immigration officials who I was with, they said, 'Wow, Huun-Huur-Tu!' and immediately abandoned stamping passports and rushed out to ask for autographs. There was pandemonium. Immigration officers, customs officers, passengers—they were all crowding around Huun-Huur-Tu asking for autographs, and for ten minutes, no one could get a passport stamped. The first concert in Athens had three or four thousand people. The next day there was a concert in Salonika, where there were also 3,000 people. When Huun-Huur-Tu played 'Eki Attar,' everyone in the theater stood up and waved their arms and screamed. It was then that we understood what pop fame was."

Huun-Huur-Tu's trip to Greece in September 2003 was not to plug "Eki Attar" and play solo concerts but to participate in a Tuvan-Cretan-Iranian musical collaboration organized by Ross Daly that included, in addition to Huun-Huur-Tu, Daly's group, Labyrinth, and a family percussion trio headed by Iranian *zarb* player Jamshid Chemirani. Daly and members of Labyrinth had jammed with Huun-Huur-Tu during the Tuvans' previous visits to Greece. There had been good chemistry between the groups, and Daly had invited the Tuvans back for a more structured exploration of musical common ground. Three days of rehearsal would precede an outdoor concert on Daly's large lawn in Houdetsi, and, two evenings later, a second concert in Elefsina, on the outskirts of Athens.

While Huun-Huur-Tu caught up on sleep—the journey from Tuva had taken fifty-four hours spread over three days and nights—other musicians arrived and began rehearsing. Rehearsals took place in a square, whitewashed room on the second floor of Daly's villa that was filled with cushions, chairs, and stringed instruments stashed in the corners. At the beginning of the first formal rehearsal session, Daly outlined his plan for the concert program in a mixture of Greek and English. He proposed that Huun-Huur-Tu perform a few solo numbers and suggested some songs he liked from their repertory. He didn't know the names of the songs, but he located them on a mini compact disc player and then played the beginning of each one on a boom box. Sayan nodded his head as the pieces came on one by one.

Daly then introduced his idea for how the musicians from Greece, Iran, and Tuva would play together. "For the third piece, it would be nice to go into the 'Orphan's Lament' [one of Huun-Huur-Tu's signature songs], with some of us accompanying on clarinet, *lyra,* and other instruments. We have a Greek song that's also about orphans, so I thought it would be nice to go into that." Another of Daly's suggestions was to blend together Huun-Huur-Tu's "Kaldak Xamar," an agitprop song from the 1930s about building a road through a mountain pass in the south of Tuva, with two energetic, Indian-flavored unison melodies that he had composed just the day before and that, like "Kaldak Xamar," were based on pentatonic modes. Daly studied sitar for four years before becoming interested in Greek music, and in the arrangement, Huun-Huur-Tu was joined by *lyra, lauta, santuri,* drum, *kopuz,* and *tarhu*—a hybrid spike fiddle that was the invention of an Australian instrument-maker, and whose name combines the Arabic and Chinese words for "string" (*tar* plus *hu*). Daly's musical direction was low-key. He proposed his arrangement to the Tuvans but added emphatically that if they didn't like it, they should feel free to suggest something else.

When the rehearsal came to an end just before the start of a late dinner in a local cafe, I asked Kaigal-ool what he had thought of the "Kaldak Xamar" medley. "I don't know," he replied. "What did you think?"

My reaction was positive. "The sounds of the instruments work well together and the melodies cohere, even though they come from very different traditions. Ross has good taste." Kaigal-ool nodded his head, as I sat poised over my notebook.

"You can write that I share your opinion," he said. Then he added, "It's nice that Ross can invite the musicians he likes, and it's no accident that he invited us a couple of times. He hears something in our music. But it will be even nicer when *we* are the ones doing the inviting—inviting the musicians that *we* find interesting to play with."

I had translated Kaigal-ool's answer for Jamchid Chemirani, the Iranian *zarb* player, who was sitting across from Kaigal-ool, and Chemirani continued Kaigal-ool's line of thought. "You can't really escape participating in these events. This is what people are doing now, and in any case, I like these kinds of projects because they're a way of keeping in contact beyond one's own tradition. Ross's approach is good because it's about trying to approach one another—a meeting rather than a fusion. Nothing is forced. There aren't artificial attempts to impose one music on another. Instead, he brings different music into proximity in order to allow listeners to make up their own minds about how they're similar and different."

As the sky darkened on the evening of the concert, Ross Daly's sun-bleached yard was transformed into an alluring concert venue. The terrace became a carpet-covered stage set against the backdrop of the stone villa awash in pale red light. Thirteen hundred folding chairs had been set up on the lawn, but these were not enough to accommodate the crowd of around 2,000 that overflowed the yard, perched on the surrounding stone wall, and mingled in the square beyond, filling the tavernas beyond capacity. The audience was diverse—craggy villagers from Houdetsi mixed with soigné couples from Heraklion. Teenagers and young children sat among old people. The summer concerts in Houdetsi normally attract around 500 listeners, and when I asked Ross Daly to speculate on the reason for the large attendance he replied right away, "Huun-Huur-Tu, of course."

The concert started at 10:15 PM, forty-five minutes late, and the second set didn't begin until after midnight. Few people left early. During the first half, when Daly's ensemble, Labyrinth, played virtuosic arrangements of Cretan folk music that sounded like a sewing machine with its pedal pushed to the floor, an undercurrent of low conversation rose from the lawn. But when Huun-Huur-Tu opened the second half with the powerful roar of "Mörgül," their musical arrangement of a Buddhist prayer, the lawn became instantly silent. Later, the horse-clopping rhythms of "Eki Attar," the song from the soccer lottery advertisement, evoked loud cheers of recognition that shot into the air like fireworks. The performance of the collaborative Cretan-Tuvan-Iranian pieces was tight, and drew good audience response, but the applause seemed more from politeness than passion.

On the day following the concert, Huun-Huur-Tu arose late. The sky was overcast, and the temperature had dropped precipitously from the previous day's scorching heat. In early afternoon, all the musicians were rounded up and taken to a village a few kilometers away, where at a scenic picnic spot, two sheep were lying on the grass waiting to be turned into lunch. A crowd of village men eagerly brandished knives, and when Ross pointed out that Tuvans also spend a lot of time around sheep, a workshop in cross-cultural sheep-slaughtering was quickly organized. Kaigal-ool, Alexei, and Andrei are all as much at home holding a butcher's knife as a *byzaanchy* or *igil*, and Kaigal-ool, the elder of the group, chose himself to wield the knife. The Cretans looked on with horror as one of the sheep was pinned on its back and Kaigal-ool cut a short slit in its belly, thrust his arm into the incision, and quickly pinched the aorta, instantly killing the sheep. When he pulled his blood-covered arm out of the incision, the Cretans gasped. "*Varvaroi!* [barbarians]" one of them was heard to whisper loudly. In ancient Greece, *varvaros* referred to people who didn't speak Greek or act like Greeks, among whom were nomads, but in modern Greek, the word has the same extended meaning as in English.

Next it was the Cretans' turn to demonstrate their own method of slaughter. Crete was long under Ottoman rule, and the Muslim (and Jewish) tradition of animal slaughter, in which the animal's throat is slit and the blood drained away and discarded, remains the norm. By contrast, nomads in the Altai region, who were never Islamized, use sheep blood to make blood sausage, an important source of nutrients in their diet. After the second sheep's throat was cut, the animal lay heaving on the ground, its limbs jerking intermittently as the blood slowly drained out of the gash in its throat. "Let the blood run like a river!" shouted one of the butchers. Andrei Mongush sidled up next to me, a look of horror on his face. "It's barbaric, what they did," said Andrei, an experienced sheep slaughterer. "I've never seen anything like it. They have no respect for the spirit of the animal."

While the meal was being prepared, I pulled Ross aside and asked him to assess the results of the cross-cultural musical exchange that had transpired during the rehearsals and performance. Had his expectations for the event been met? Did the different kinds of music enhance one another? And how does one even begin to evaluate cross-cultural music that lies beyond the aesthetic canons of specific traditions?

"I wasn't looking for fusion, but for what you could call common ground," Ross replied assuredly. "In my view, nomads are very practical people. They're not interested in ideology, and so the common ground I sought had to be straightforward and obvious. The most obvious common ground between Tuvan and Cretan music lies in their use of pentatonic scales, and of rhythms that suggest horses. I'm not sure that's what the rhythms initially represented in Cretan music, but there's unquestionably a similarity, and the Iranian *zarb* works very well with Tuvan music, the way it marks the rhythm. Also, the mixture of fiddles sounds very nice, and the Tuvan overtones sounded good in one of the Greek songs. It's not that complicated. In the end, the question is, are the musicians enjoying themselves? Are they having a good time playing together? For all the participants, the answer seems to have been an unqualified 'yes.'"

Ross's hallowed "common ground" was indeed carved out of the vast pan-Eurasian territory of modal music—pentatonic and otherwise—whose central axis extends from the Balkans through Turkey, Iran, and Central Asia all the way to India. Notwithstanding the enormous musical diversity of this region, commonalities do exist, among them a tendency for instrumental improvisation to take the form of running up and down minor scales with great rhythmic vigor. Yet for all its alacrity, this approach did not allow the Tuvan music a sustained opportunity to speak in its own voice, to take listeners into the interior of its own world. At best, the audience was offered a brief glimpse of this world, for example, in Kaigal-ool's masterpiece, "The Orphan's Lament." What the musicians created together, at least to my ears, added up to less than the sum of the parts.

Each ensemble and, indeed, each musician had a distinctive flavor to contribute to the Greek salad, but the effect of combining them was to diminish their individual pungency. That was my own view, but I wanted to know Huun-Huur-Tu's. I had barely had a chance to speak with them, aside from brief exchanges with the always laconic Kaigal-ool, who maintained a remarkable inner focus through the hectic regimen of travel, rehearsals, and performances—three days into our stay on Crete, he had looked up from the newspaper he'd been reading ever since leaving Moscow and asked, "What's the name of this island we're on?" As we prepared to take the night ferry from Heraklion to Epirus for the next evening's concert in Elefsina, I sat with Huun-Huur-Tu and turned on a tape recorder. Mostly it was Sayan who spoke.

"So what's really being exchanged when you play with Ross and his musicians?" I asked, trying to get the conversation rolling. "I sat and listened to you performing together. In the beginning, they played, and then you played, and they accompanied you with a drone. Then they played again and you accompanied them with a drone. And it goes like that. Is there really some kind of exchange or syncretism or synthesis? Or is it like when you're sitting around a campfire and you have a song swap?"

"That's the perpetual question around our collaborations," Sayan answered. "People are always saying to us, 'Oh, you're hanging around with all these famous musicians,’ but from the very beginning, we got involved with these people not because of an interest in collaboration per se. The issue for us is about choosing our influences. The main influence that you find between musicians is freedom. You play with someone else, and you improvise. He makes you free, and you make him free. It’s not about digging for details in the other person’s music. Here, for example, I don’t see that Ross and his group literally know our material, and maybe they don’t want to. And maybe I don’t know their material and don’t want to—or maybe I want to but don’t have time. The point is that for me, it’s not necessary right now. You listen to it, and that’s enough. I don’t intend to learn their pieces and they don’t intend to learn mine. But if there’s a common search—a search for the emotion that’s in real music—then people can play together even if they come from very different backgrounds. I’m interested in emotion. If it touches me, I like it. And if musicians like something, they’ll play it freely, with feeling.”

“So your role in this improvisation is to give freedom to others?” I asked.

“Absolutely. Because they feel that freedom in our music—in our instruments, our voices, our songs, our words. They feel the emotion. Some people cry, some get contemplative, some laugh, some get silent and sad. They don’t understand a single word, right? But something’s going on in the music, and they feel it in their heart, not in their head.”

“And that’s true for all Tuvan music?”

“I think so. We’ve talked about how it’s a culture where people spend a lot of time alone, and where they make music for themselves. When you do that, you don’t lie to yourself, and from those conditions come real emotions. If you’re a musician who wants to be well known, you’ll sit and think like a composer, ‘Now what should I do so that people will like this? What words should I write?’ But from the beginning, our music has expressed emotions that people receive from nature. If someone has an emotion, he immediately puts all of it into lines of poetry, into a song, into sounds. Tuvan music is full of emotions, but not just anyone can express them. You have to be immersed in the instruments, in the way of producing sounds.”

“So what about people who aren’t Tuvans—people who are searching for something in Tuvan music that can be useful for them. You’re the chief object of that process. People think that if they only invite Huun-Huur-Tu, your magic will work on them.”

“You can’t judge people for that. Influences are a necessity for any musician. I realized that even when I was working in the Ayan Ensemble and hanging around with older musicians. I understood that if I spent time with them and listened to their music, I’d fall under their magical influence and start using their material. It’s natural. But you’re right—we meet people every single month who come up after a concert and ask, ‘Can we do such-and-such a project with you?’ A lot of people think that once they’ve grabbed onto us, everything will take care of itself. That’s really dumb. They don’t come to us through our own material, through our own old people. They want to jump right into working with us. You shouldn’t judge them, but smart people, like Ross, swim around in the material for a long time. They ask themselves, ‘What’s going on in this music? What kind of mode is this?’ A good musician always tries to go deep from the very start. That’s his interest, his curiosity—he’s been touched, and he wants to understand why.”

“Okay,” I said. “I’ll grant you that there are better and worse ways of collaborating. But whenever I’ve heard Tuvan music blended or fused with some other kind of music, I can’t escape the feeling that it’s more interesting when you hear it on its own.” Extending my point beyond cross-cultural collaborations, I took a swipe at the efforts of Huun-Huur-Tu and its clone, Malerija, to attract young listeners by plugging in and tarting up their newest recordings with gratuitous studio effects. “The way to attract new listeners is to perform music at an extremely high level and let the music speak for itself. Outstanding performers will always attract debutante listeners,” I said. “Look at the example of Ravi Shankar.”

“Yes, look at the example of Ravi Shankar!” countered Sayan. Who would have heard of Ravi Shankar had it not been for George Harrison? It would have taken 300 years for Shankar’s music to get out to the kind of audience that assembled almost instantly as the result of George Harrison’s intervention. Some of the people who found their way to Indian classical music through the Beatles later became devotees of Indian classical music in its pure form. It’s the same with Tuvan music. Even with outstanding performers, not everyone can come and spend years in Tuva studying our music, and it’s difficult to get across the essence of the older musical forms on recordings. We have to meet our audience at least halfway.”

Or do they? I am not so sure, but let listeners judge for themselves. Malerija’s plugged-in performance of “Ancestors,” a Tuvan folk song first arranged and performed by Huun-Huur-Tu, is included on the accompanying CD (track 40). In my view, it represents the best work that Malerija has done. A translation of the text appears below:

> The Yenisei, Sayan and Tandim are our ancient places
> Soft and soulful *sygyt* and *xöömei* are the ancient songs of our people
> The ancestors of our *kargyraa* long ago became like gravestones on the steppe
> But our hearts are proud that among us are still *xöömei* singers.

the representation of a bird, but the sound of a beginning throat-singer imitating an adult, and in so doing, producing a sound like the *chylandyk.*

44. For recent exhibition catalogues of animal-style art, see Emma C. Bunker, *Nomadic Art of the Eastern Eurasian Steppes: The Eugene V. Thaw and Other New York Collections* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002); Joan Aruz et al., eds., *The Golden Deer of Eurasia: Scythian and Sarmatian Treasures from the Russian Steppes* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art/New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000); and Ellen D. Reeder, ed., *Scythian Gold: Treasures from Ancient Ukraine* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999). A somewhat older catalogue is Basilov, ed., *Nomads of Eurasia.*

45. Marianne Devlet, *Petroglify na dne sayanskogo morya* [Petroglyphs on the bottom of the Sayan Sea] (Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Archaeology, 1998), 194. A full English translation of Devlet's book appears in *Anthropology and Archeology of Eurasia* 40:1–2 (2001).

46. Bunker, *Nomadic Art,* 33.

47. The same idea has been proposed by Ann Farkas, "Filippovka and the Art of the Steppes," in Aruz et al., eds., *The Golden Deer of Eurasia: Scythian and Sarmatian Treasures from the Russian Steppes,* 17. Farkas writes: "A folk song from Tuva, in the Sayan Mountains, tells of a poor Tuvan shepherd whose horse was killed by a cruel Mongolian prince. The horse came to the shepherd in a dream and told him to make a musical instrument from the hair of its mane and tail. When the shepherd made the instrument and played it, a thousand horses fell from the sky. If one substitutes a deer for the horse and a bow for the musical instrument and twenty-six deer for the thousand horses, the Filippovka discoveries could illustrate the words of a similar song, but it is unlikely that one would think of deer falling from heaven without knowing that there was such a song."

48. Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

49. Harold Powers, "Illustrated Inventories of Indian Rāgamālā Painting," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 100:4 (1980): 473–493. See also John Andrew Grieg, "Rāgamālā Painting," in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music,* vol. 5, *South Asia,* ed. Alison Arnold (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 312–318.

50. James C. Y. Watt, "The Legacy of Nomadic Art in China and Eastern Central Asia," in Bunker, *Nomadic Art,* 208.

51. Liudmila Barkova, "The Nomadic Culture of the Altai and the Animal Style," in Aruz et al., eds., *The Golden Deer of Eurasia,* 246. A recent analysis of animal-style art as an "art of expressive deformations" has also been presented by Russian art historian V. A. Koreniako in "Nomadic Animalistic Art: Its Origins and Historical Destinies," *Anthropology and Archeology of Eurasia* 38:1 (1999): 73–94.

52. The term "mythography" comes from the French archaeologist and art historian André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech,* 196.

53. Esther Jacobson, "Early Nomadic Sources for Scythian Art," in E. Reeder, ed., *Scythian Gold,* 67.

54. The notion that nomadic civilization never developed architecture is presently an area of sensitivity in parts of Inner Asia. In Kazakhstan, recent archaeological excavations have uncovered the remains of Saraishyq, a city built in the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries that provides Kazakhs with evidence of their forbears' mastery of sophisticated urban living, including adobe architecture. See Imangali Tasmagambetov and Zainolla Samashev, *Saraishyq/Saraichik* (Almaty: Berel, 2001). In Mongolia, the remains of Qaraqorum, the city built in the mid-thirteenth century under orders of Ögedei, the third son of Chingis Khan, are offered as evidence of the same idea: that nomads were not devoid of urban sophistication.

55. For a précis of how Islamic aesthetic principles are manifested in sound, see "*Handasah Al Sawt* or The Art of Sound" (chap. 23) in Isma'il R. al-Faruqi and Lois Lamya' al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 441–477. On the relationship of Islamic metaphysics and music, see also Jean During, "The Symbolic Universe of Music in Islamic Societies," in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music,* vol. 6, *The Middle East* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 177–188.

56. See Edward H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), esp. 50–57. See also Annette L. Juliano and Judith A. Lerner, eds., *Monks and Merchants along the Silk Road* (New York: Harry N. Abrams with the Asia Society, 2001), and Luce Boulnois, *Silk Road: Monks, Warriors and Merchants on the Silk Road,* trans. Helen Loveday with additional material by Bradley Mayhew and Angela Sheng (Hong Kong: Odyssey Books and Guides, 2004, distributed by W. W. Norton), 72, 115, 207, 263.

57. Bunker, *Nomadic Art,* 187–189.

58. Ibid., 188.

59. Ibid., 189.

60. Ibid., 189.

61. See Laurence E. R. Picken, "The Origin of the Short Lute," *Galpin Society Journal* 8 (1966): 32–42.

62. See John Myers, "Instruments: *Pipa,*" in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music,* vol. 7, *East Asia: China, Japan, and Korea,* ed. Robert C. Provine, Yosihiko Tokumaru, and J. Lawrence Witzleben (New York: Routledge, 2002), 167–170.

63. On the Pazyryk harp, see Bo Lawergren, "The Ancient Harp from Pazyryk," *Beitrage zur allgemeinen und vergleichenden Archäologie* 9–10 (1990): 111–118. See also Sergei I. Rudenko, *Frozen Tombs of Siberia,* trans. M. W. Thompson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), 277–278.

6. AN ANIMIST VIEW OF THE WORLD

1. "Men Tyva Men" and its message of pride in a neotraditional cultural identity has analogues elsewhere in Inner Asia, for example, in the song "Xakasia," by Xakas musician German Tanbaev, and in the book *Min Sakhabyn* [I am a Sakha], the autobiography of Sakha writer Ivan Nikolaev, who writes under the pen name Ukhaan. For a broader look at political and cultural neotraditionalism in Siberia, see Aleksandr Pika, ed., *Neotraditionalism in the Russian North* (Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute Press and Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999).

2. For an authoritative history of Xakasia written by a collective of local scholars, see the Xakas Institute of Language, Literature and History's *Istoriia xakasii s drevneishikh vremen do 1917 goda* [The history of Xakasia from the earliest times until 1917] (Moscow: Nauka/Vostochnaia Literatura, 1993). On Xakas self-identity, see *Anthropology and Archeology of Eurasia* 33:1 (1994), devoted to "Ethnonyms and Origins."

3. V. E. Mainogasheva, "O Xakasskom geroicheskom epose i alyptyx nymaxe 'Aï-Xuuchin'" [On Xakas heroic epic and the heroic tale Ai-Xuuchyn], in *Xakasskii geroicheskii*

epos Ai-Xuuchyn [The Xakas heroic epic Ai-Xuuchyn], vol. 16 of *Pamyatniki fol'klora narodov sibiri i dal'nego vostoka* [Monuments of the folklore of Siberian and Far Eastern peoples] (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1997), 14.

4. A condensed account of Slava Kuchenov's dream was published by Kira van Deusen in *Singing Story, Healing Drum: Shamans and Storytellers of Turkic Siberia,* 75–77, as well as in "The Shamanic Gift and the Performing Arts in Siberia," in *Shamanskii dar* [The shamanic gift] (Moscow: Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 2000), 223–239.

5. In the Xakas original, a "nine-*xulas*-long horse," *xulas* being a measure equivalent to the Russian *sazhen',* or 2.17 meters—approximately the length of a man's arm span.

6. Slava Kuchenov performed his text in the Sagai dialect of Xakas.

7. Natalie Kononenko Moyle, *The Turkish Minstrel Tale Tradition* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 84.

8. Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1947, 91).

9. Moyle, *The Turkish Minstrel Tale Tradition,* 84.

10. Karl Reichl, *Singing the Past: Turkic and Medieval Heroic Poetry* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 37.

11. *Xakasskii geroicheskii epos Ai-Xuuchyn.* [The Xakas heroic epic Ai-Xuuchyn].

12. Erich Neumann, *Art and the Creative Unconscious* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959), 178.

13. Hamayon, "Shamanism in Siberia: From Partnership in Supernature to Counter-Power in Society," in Thomas and Humphrey, eds., *Shamanism, History, and the State,* 76.

14. See Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners,* 1–4.

15. Ibid., 3, 25–27.

16. For reports on neotraditional shamanism in other cultures, see Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, "The Poetry of Sakha (Siberian Yakut) Shamanism," in John Leavitt, ed., *Poetry and Prophecy: The Anthropology of Inspiration* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 93–127; and Balzer, "Healing Failed Faith? Contemporary Siberian Shamanism," *Anthropology and Humanism* 26:2 (2001): 134–149; Laura Kendall, "Korean Shamans and the Spirits of Capitalism," *American Anthropologist* 98:3 (1996): 512–527; Galina Lindquist, *Shamanic Performances on the Urban Scene: Neoshamanism in Contemporary Sweden* (Stockholm: Stockholm University, Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, no. 39, 1997); and Merete Demant Jakobsen, *Shamanism: Traditional and Contemporary Approaches to the Mastery of Spirits and Healing.*

17. V. S. Naipaul, "A Second Visit," in *The Writer and the World* (New York: Knopf, 2002), 24.

18. Gary Wills, "The Day the Enlightenment Went Out," *New York Times,* November 4, 2004, op-ed page.

19. The revival of epic storytelling is much stronger in some parts of Inner Asia than others. In the Sakha Republic, for example, *olonkho* (epic) singing competitions are now held not only at the yearly *yhyakh* festival, which has been made a republic-wide holiday, but also in the new Center for Spiritual Development (*Archy d'ete*) in Yakutsk. (Marjorie Balzer, personal communication, 2004). By contrast, in Tuva, while throat-singing flourishes, "epic storytelling is now a seriously endangered genre," according to Tuvan language and literature specialist David Harrison. In "A Tuvan Hero Tale with Commentary, Morphemic Analysis and Translation" (*Journal of the American Oriental Society,* forthcoming), Harrison writes, "Tuvan youth with talent are increasingly drawn exclusively to throat-singing and its promise of a lucrative stage career, leading to a neglect of epic genres. One genre is now thriving while the other withers away" (David Harrison, personal communication, December 21, 2004).

20. Before the Soviet era, partial transcriptions of the *Manas* had been made in 1856 by Chokan Valichanov and also beginning in 1862 by the great turcologist Wilhelm Radloff (1837–1918). See Arthur T. Hatto, ed. and trans., *The Manas of Wilhelm Radloff* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1990), 9–16.

21. On syncretic Islamic-shamanic *mazars,* see Vladimir N. Basilov, *Shamanstvo u narodov Srednei Azii i Kazakhstana* [Shamanism among the peoples of Central Asia and Kazakhstan] (Moscow: Nauka, 1992). See also Basilov's "Chosen by the Spirits," in Balzer, *Shamanic Worlds,* 38–46, on the fusion between shamanism and Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity. For an ethnography of analogous syncretic practices at the opposite end of the core Islamic world, see Edward Westermarck's classic *Ritual and Belief in Morocco* (London: Macmillan, 1926).

22. Later I learned that from 1985–1987 Rysbek studied acting at a theater school in Moscow (*Teatralnoe uchilishche im. Shchukina*) because he believed that *manaschis* are actors and that his own performance would improve with professional study. He left the school without completing his degree.

23. Every person has such a patron protector, explained Raziya Syrdybaeva, a Kyrgyz folklorist and musicologist who works as local coordinator for the Aga Khan Music Initiative in Central Asia. Syrdybaeva traveled with me to visit Rysbek Jumabaev. "Some people listen to this patron and some don't," Syrdybaeva told me. "Sometimes the patron-protector can be an animal. My grandfather has a patron-protector that was a white rabbit. The patron-protector of sheep is *cholpan-ata,* of cows, *zangi baba,* of girls, *kyngyr ata,* of horses, *jylkynyn piri kambar ata.* Old people say that before death, there's a shadow formed around a person. If you see that shadow, it means that the person doesn't have long to live."

24. Kenje Kara, who lived at the end of the nineteenth century, was one well-known *manaschi* who accompanied himself on the *qyl qiyak.*

25. The following references to work on Xhosa music come from van Tongeren, *Overtone Singing,* 158: David Dargie, *Xhosa Music* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip, 1988); Dargie, "Umngqoolo: Xhosa Overtone Singing and the Song Nondel'ekhaya," *African Music* 7:1 (1991): 33–47.

26. Nicholas Roerich, *Altai-Himalaya: A Travel Diary* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1929; reprint, Brookfield, Conn.: Arun Press, 1983).

27. For a study of the encounter of different belief systems in Altai, see A. Znamenski, *Shamanism and Christianity: Native Encounters with Russian Orthodox Missions in Siberia and Alaska, 1820–1917* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999). For a detailed study of "White Faith," see Andrei Vinogradov, "Ak Jang in the Context of Altai Religious Tradition" (master's degree thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2003). For a contemporary study of the interaction of Buddhism, shamanism, and Burkhanism in Altai, see Abnieszka Halemba, "Contemporary Religious Life in the Republic of Altai: The Interaction of Buddhism and Shamanism," *Sibirica* 3:2 (2003): 165–182.

28. Manos Andriotis, personal communication, December 23, 2003.

POSTLUDE

1. Jacque Attali, *L'homme nomade* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), 356.

GLOSSARY

aal (*ail*) (*aul*)*	A small group of households herding and migrating together. (Tuvan, Mongol, Kazakh)
adyg	Zoological term for "bear." (Tuvan)
aimag	In Mongolia, an administrative subdivision that designates a region or province.
aitys (*aitysh*)	A Kazakh (Kyrgyz) term for a poetry competition.
aitysh	Powdered juniper burned in ritual ceremonies and offerings for its pleasing aroma.
albys	A type of spirit, either male or female, characterized by seductive beauty. (Tuvan)
algysh (*alkysh*)	A Tuvan (Altai) term for a shamanic hymn.
Ak Jang	"White Faith," also known as Burkhanism. A native religious movement in the Altai Republic.
amyrga	A hunting horn used to attract male red deer in rutting season. (Tuvan)
ang-meng mal-magan öttüneri	"Imitation of wild and domestic animals." (Tuvan)
artysh	Twigs of juniper burned in ritual ceremonies and offerings for their pleasing aroma. (Tuvan)
arzhaan	Tuvan word for a spring with healing or curative waters. (Tuvan)

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* Words in parentheses signify cognate terms in other languages.

ayalga	"Melody," "motif," "dialect," "accent," or "pronunciation." (Tuvan)
aza	A malicious spirit. (Tuvan)
bayan	A small accordion. (Russian)
bie (alternate form, *biyelgee*)	A form of mimetic dance in which stylized movements of the hands, arms, and upper torso represent scenes of work and play or narrate the events of myths and legends. (Mongolian)
boidus churumaly	Sonic sketches of nature. (Tuvan)
borbangnadyr	Technique of throat-singing in Tuva, from the verb *borbangnaar,* a causative verb form that means "to cause to roll," "revolve," or "spin."
burxan	A sky deity; god, divinity. (Tuvan and Mongolian)
byzaanchy	Tuvan bowl-bodied fiddle with four horsehair strings.
chadagan	Tuvan name for a plucked zither with movable bridges.
chalama	Strips of cloth affixed to trees, bushes, or lengths of rope as an offering to spirits. (Tuvan)
chanzy	Tuvan three-stringed unfretted long-necked lute.
chatxan	Xakas name for a plucked zither with movable bridges.
choor	Kyrgyz name for an end-blown flute made from reed or wood with four or five holes.
chylandyk	A style of throat-singing in Tuva that imitates the sound of a bird by the same name.
deel	Traditional robe or gown worn by men and women. (Mongolian)
dombra	Kazakh two-stringed fretted long-necked lute. May refer to other types of Central Asian long-necked lutes, both with and without frets.
doshpuluur	Tuvan two-stringed long-necked unfretted lute.
dünggür	Frame drum played by shamans. (Tuvan)
dutâr	Designates different kinds of two-stringed long-necked fretted lutes among Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmens, Qaraqalpaks, Uyghurs, and other groups.

ediski	Small reed made from a folded piece of birch bark used to mimic wild goats or female musk deer. (Tuvan)
ee (*ezen*)	Local spirit-host or spirit-master. (Tuvan/Mongolian)
eeren	Physical object that represents a spirit-helper called upon to assist shamans with particular tasks or rituals. (Tuvan)
eroolch	Praise-singer who performs praise-songs at weddings and other festivities. (Mongolian)
ezenggileer	Style of throat-singing in Tuva that represents the sound of boots clacking in stirrups.
ger	Yurt. (Mongolian)
hargaa	Style of throat-singing in Mongolia—a "light" form of *harhiraa* used in Buddhist temple rituals.
harhiraa	Mongolian term (used by Sengedorj) to describe non-melodic style of throat-singing used by reciters of oral epic and also to accompany the *tsuur.*
höömii	General term for throat-singing. (Mongolian)
höömiich	Throat-singer. (Mongolian)
igil (*ikil*)	Two-stringed upright fiddle with horsehair strings. (Tuvan, West Mongolian)
jetigen	Kazakh name for a plucked zither with movable bridges.
kai	Guttural Altai vocal style used for performance of oral poetry.
kanzyp	Individual style of throat-singing in Tuva with an elegiac character.
kargyraa	Technique of throat-singing characterized by an extremely low-pitched fundamental drone. (Tuvan)
kejege	Traditional coiffure of Tuvan men featuring a shaved crown and braided ponytail.
kemanche	Spike fiddle used in Iranian and Azeri classical music.
kojamyk	Light-hearted song expressing a personal point of view, often performed antiphonally. (Tuvan)

kol oinotuu	"Dance of the hand." The Kyrgyz term that describes hand and arm gestures integral to the performance of instrumental music.
komuz	Three-stringed fretless long-necked lute that is the main folk instrument of the Kyrgyz.
kongguraa	Rattle, especially a rattle used by shamans.
kui	Kazakh term for a narrative instrumental piece tradition ally performed by a solo player.
küü	Kyrgyz term for a narrative instrumental piece traditionally performed by a solo player.
limbi	Tuvan term for a wooden side-blown flute.
magtaal	In Mongolia, a praise-song.
magtaar	In western Mongolia, a short-song.
Manas	The Kyrgyz national epic that recounts the life story of its eponymous hero.
manaschi	A reciter of the *Manas.*
maqām	The modal principle in Turco-Arabic and Persian art music; in Central Asia, a classical suite form.
mazar	A physical structure marking the burial site of a saint; also, among the Kyrgyz, a site of spiritual power marked by a distinctive natural phenomenon.
morin huur	Mongolian two-stringed horsehead fiddle.
noyon	A member of the land-owning nobility in presocialist Tuva.
oboo	A rock cairn that marks a site of spiritual power, often in a mountain pass. (Mongolian)
oluya	A saintly person. (Kyrgyz)
orba	Fur-covered drumstick used to beat a shaman's drum.
ovaa	A rock cairn that marks a site of spiritual power, often in a mountain pass. (Tuvan)
pipa	Chinese short-necked fretted lute.
qin	Chinese plucked zither.

qyl qiyak	Kyrgyz variant of a bowl-bodied fiddle with two horsehair strings.
qyl-qobyz	Kazakh variant of a bowl-bodied fiddle with two horsehair strings.
samodeyatel'nost	Amateur arts programs in the Soviet Union and its successor states.
se	A Chinese zither.
shang-qobyz	Jew's harp. (Kazakh)
shingen höömi	"Liquid throat-singing," a term coined by Mongolian throat-singer Sengedorj.
shoor	Tuvan name for an end-blown flute made from reed or wood with three holes.
shuluraash	Onomatopoetic word that describes sound of flowing water.
sum	In Mongolia, an administrative subdivision of an *aimag.*
sybyzghy	Kazakh name for an end-blown flute made from reed or wood with three holes.
sygyt	One of the principal styles of throat-singing in Tuva, characterized by a fundamental pitch in the baritone register and high, piercing harmonics.
tartys (tartysh)	Kazakh (Kyrgyz) name for a competition among performers of instrumental music.
tatlaga	Bowing technique for Mongolian horsehead fiddle marked by strong rhythmic accentuation that represents rhythms of horse gaits or other animals.
temir komuz	Metal jew's harp. (Kyrgyz)
tespeng xöömei	Individual style ofthroat-singing in Tuva.
topshuur	Long-necked fretted lute played by Altai musicians.
toshpuluur	Variant spelling of *doshpuluur.* (Tuvan long-necked lute)
tsuur	Mongolian name for end-blown flute with three holes.
urtyn duu	Long-song. (Mongolian)

ustaz-shagird	"Master-apprentice." Term used to describe system of traditional oral musical transmission by Muslim musicians in Central, West, and South Asia.
uzun xoyug	Tuvan instrumental music genre analogous to Kyrgyz *küü* and Kazakh *kui.*
uzun yr	Long-song. (Tuvan)
xai	Guttural Xakas vocal style used for performance of oral poetry.
xaiji	A performer of *xai.* (Xakas)
xaiyrakan	A pseudonym for "bear." A sacred topography inhabited by a bear spirit, often shaped like a bear. (Tuvan)
xam	Shaman. (Tuvan)
xapchyk	Rattle consisting of sheep knee bones inside a bull scrotum. (Tuvan)
xem	River. (Tuvan)
xirlee	Children's toy consisting of a wooden propeller or button spun around on a piece of string to imitate the sound of wind. (Tuvan).
xoluraash	Onomatopoetic term describing the sound of flowing water. (Tuvan)
xomus	Jew's harp. (Tuvan)
xöömei	General term for throat-singing. (Tuvan)
xörekteer	A Tuvan neologism for "throat-singing." From *xörek,* "chest."
xovu kargyraazy	Steppe *kargyraa:* a style of throat-singing that represents the acoustical ambience of the steppe. (Tuvan)
xün xürtü	Sun-propeller; the vertical separation of light rays just after sunrise or before sunset. (Tuvan)
yatga	Mongolian name for a plucked zither with movable bridges.
yyx	Xakas bowl-bodied fiddle with horsehair strings, similar to *igil.*

NOTES

PREFACE

1. As a result of new archaeological discoveries, interest in nomads has extended to a group that really did vanish: the Scyths, who in recent years have been the subject of a *National Geographic* article ("Unearthing Siberian Gold," June 2003) and three highly publicized museum exhibitions: "Nomadic Art of the Eastern Eurasian Steppes" (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002); "The Golden Deer of Eurasia" (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000); and "Scythian Gold" (San Antonio Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum of Art, et al., 1999–2001).

2. *Tuvan Folk Music* is a translation of the Russian title of Aleksei Nikolaevich Aksenov, *Tuvinskaia narodnaia muzyka* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1964). *Kyrgyz Folk Musical Art* is a translation of the Russian title of the work by Kamchybek Diushaliev and Ekaterina Luzanova, *Kyrgyzkoe narodnoe muzykal'noe tvorchestvo* (Bishkek: Soros Fund-Kyrgyzstan, 1999).

3. On music in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, see my monograph, *The Hundred Thousand Fools of God: Musical Travels in Central Asia (and Queens, New York)* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

4. See, for example, Caroline Humphrey and David Sneath, *The End of Nomadism?* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press and Cambridge: White Horse Press, 1999), 1.

5. "Tuva" is a Russification of what in Tuvan is pronounced "Tyva" (written in Cyrillic as Тыва). The widespread use of "Tuva," however, offers a persuasive reason to adopt it in this work.

6. Until the 1990s, the primary English-language source for information on Tuvan music was a brief excerpt from A. N. Aksenov's *Tuvinskaia narodnaia muzyka* [Tuvan folk music], translated by ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin in *Asian Music* 4:2 (1973): 7–18.

7. From 1980 to 1985, I was a member of the Harmonic Choir, a New York–based overtone-singing group founded and directed by David Hykes. Hykes's work with overtones was sui generis—as a singer, he was self-taught, and Hykes often pointed out that the music he created with the Harmonic Choir was not beholden in form, style, or technique to the Tuvan, or any other Inner Asian overtone-singing tradition. As Hykes put it, harmonics were like gravity—the consequence of universal physical laws that made them available to anyone in any culture who wanted to use them as a source for musical creativity.

8. The 1990 recording is *Tuva: Voices from the Center of Asia,* released by Smithsonian Folkways (SF CD 40017).

9. As this book goes to press, Valentina Süzükei has completed her own book-length manuscript, *Muzykal'naia kul'tura Tuvy v dvatsatom stoletii* [The musical culture of Tuva in the twentieth century] (forthcoming).

10. Zoia Anaiban, "The Republic of Tuva: A Model of Ethnological Monitoring," *Anthropology and Archeology of Eurasia* 37:3 (1998–99): 61–62.

1. FINDING THE FIELD

1. Otto Mänchen-Helfen, *Journey to Tuva,* trans. Alan Leighton (Los Angeles: Ethnographics Press, 1992): 39–40. Originally published as *Reise ins asiatische Tuwa* (Berlin: Der Bücherkreis, 1931).

2. For Tuvan demographic data through 1996, see Anaiban, "The Republic of Tuva: A Model of Ethnological Monitoring." Data from the 2002 Russian census is available at http://www.gks.ru/PEREPIS/t1.htm.

3. The name "Tanna-Tuva People's Republic" (in Tuvan, *Tangdy-Tyva Ulus Respublika*) was later shortened to "Tuva People's Republic" (*Tyva Arat Respublika*).

4. Mänchen-Helfen, *Journey to Tuva,* 6.

5. Sakha is the ethnonym that has superseded the Russian-inspired "Yakut" as a means of self-identification among members of the titular ethnos of the Republic of Sakha, a part of the Russian Federation.

6. A good description of the role of the shaman's assistant appears in Sergei Shirokogoroff [Shirokogorov], "The Shaman's Assistant," in Jeremy Narby and Francis Huxley, eds., *Shamans Through Time: 500 Years on the Path to Knowledge* (New York: Jeremy Tarcher/Putnam, 2001), 90–93. Shirokogoroff's brief piece is excerpted from his classic work, *Psychomental Complex of the Tungus* (London: Kegan Paul, 1935; reprint, AMS Press, New York, 1982), a pioneering study of shamanism in Siberia.

7. For more on Idamchap, see the section in chapter 3, "Timbre-Centered Music."

8. Shamanism in Siberia has spawned a large literature—much of it in Russian—that ranges from rigorous ethnographic accounts and source-critical studies to highly personal and experiential narratives. A good entry point into the English-language scholarly literature is Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, ed., *Shamanic Worlds: Rituals and Lore of Siberia and Central Asia* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1997). See also Balzer's contribution, "The Poetry of Shamanism," in Tae-gon Kim and Mihály Hoppál, eds., *Shamanism in Performing Arts* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1995), 171–187. On Tuvan shamanism, see Mongush B. Kenin-Lopsan, "Tuvan Shamanic Folklore," in Balzer, *Shamanic Worlds,* 110–152. For a more extensive bibliography of work on Tuvan, Altai, and Xakas shamanism, see chapter 5, n. 2. A useful compendium of Russian-language ethnographic work translated into English is Andrei A. Znamenski, *Shamanism in Siberia: Russian Records of Indigenous Spirituality* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003). Notwithstanding recent critical reassessment, Mircea Eliade's *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964) remains an important source more than a half-century after it first appeared in French (for an interesting contemporary gloss on Eliade's work, see Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). For a recent overview of shamanism and neoshamanism in East and West, see Merete Demant Jakobsen, *Shamanism: Traditional and Contemporary Approaches to the Mastery of Spirits and Healing* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999). A recent book by Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion, and Trancing* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), does not address Siberian shamanism directly, but it outlines "universals of trance experience" (29 ff.) that may be useful in thinking about how Siberian shamanism is both like and unlike other practices glossed as "trance."

9. Zoya Kyrgys translated this text from Tuvan to Russian, and I translated it from Russian to English. The original Tuvan has unfortunately been lost.

10. See Levin, *The Hundred Thousand Fools of God,* especially chap. 1.

11. The expression "brother Russians" refers ironically to the Soviet slogan, "brotherhood among Soviet peoples," in which Russians were depicted as "big brothers," and non-Russians, in particular, the native peoples of Siberia, were depicted as "little brothers." The anti-Russian sentiment expressed by the Tuvan speaker must be understood in the political climate of the late 1980s and early 1990s, when nativist sentiment in Tuvan welled up into a nascent secessionist movement. For a brief overview of this period in Tuvan history, see Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, introduction to "The Republic of Tyva (Tuva): From Romanticism to Realism," *Anthropology and Archeology of Eurasia* 37:3 (1998–99): 5–12. For a broader view of interethnic relations in Siberia, see also Balzer, "Hot and Cold: Interethnic Relations in Siberia," in Bartholomew Dean and Jerome M. Levi, eds., *At the Risk of Being Heard: Identity, Indigenous Rights, and Postcolonial States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 112–141.

12. For a more detailed discussion of the Tuva Ensemble, see Mark C. van Tongeren, *Overtone Singing: Physics and Metaphysics of Harmonics in East and West,* rev. 2d ed. (Amsterdam: Fusica, 2004), 100–103.

13. Kuular, Ondar, and Xovalyg were not the first Tuvan musicians to perform in the United States. That honor goes to Gennadi Chash (1961–1998), who appeared at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival of 1988.

14. Andrew Higgins, "Tunes of War as Throat-Singers Go for the Jugular," *The Independent,* London, April 27, 1995. The motive for Sherig-ool's comment seems to have been a general concern for maintaining the dignity and integrity of Tuva's cultural patrimony and spiritual culture as a bulwark against exploitation by outsiders, whether colonizers or globalizers. Comments by other officials, however, suggest that the Tuvan government viewed itself as the lawful beneficiary of profits accruing from the public performance of its cultural patrimony beyond the borders of Tuva. For an erudite theorization of the role of spiritual culture in forming national identity, see Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories,* in *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 6–9.

15. For a historical study of Buddhism among the Tuvans, see Marina Vasil'evna Mongush, *Istoriia Buddizma v Tuve* [The history of Buddhism in Tuva] (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 2001). See also N. L. Zhukovskaia, "Lamaism in Tuva," *Anthropology and Archeology of Eurasia* 39:4 (2001): 48–49.

16. A. N. Aksenov was one of a pleiad of mid-twentieth-century Russian musical ethnographers—others included Viktor A. Uspensky (1879–1949), Viktor Beliaev (1888–1968), and A. V. Zataevich (1869–1936)—who used concepts of scale, mode, genre, and style derived from Russian musicology and folkloristics to study indigenous music in Siberia and Central Asia. Though aspects of their methodologies may seem dated, the ethnographic value of their published work has not diminished. See, for example, the recent new edition of Uspensky and Beliaev's two-volume *Turkmenskaia muzyka* [Turkmen

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THEODORE LEVIN WITH VALENTINA SÜZÜKEI

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