

Santha Istvan, Somfai Kara David (Budapest, Hungary)

**NORTHERN TURKESTAN. EPIC SOUNDSCAPES
ANTHROPOLOGICAL FIELD TAPES II.
(VYNIL, TROTTEL RECORDS 2021, HUNGARY)**

Дунай (Dunai)

*Ай, Дунайза айлы кистә һыу эсерзем аттарға,
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Тик бер үзем генә беләм һинһез йәшәй алмақты.*

(Bashkir folk song, performed by Räsül Karabulatov)

We started to explore the region of Central Asia and its traditional music (soundscape) in the 1990s. We were the first exchange student to Kazakhstan (1993-1995) but both of us visited the neighboring Kyrgyzstan too. We travelled around the Ala-tau (Tian Shan) Mountains, the regions of the former Kazakh capital Almaty, the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek and the Ysyk-köl Lake. We followed the footsteps of György Almásy (1867-1933) who visited this area twice in 1900 and 1906.

The area inhabited by the Turkic peoples of Eurasia is called Turkestan (its meaning in Persian is Land of the Turks). It originally meant the region of the Syr-daria River but nowadays the term is extended to all the Turkic speaking countries: Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan (including Karakalpakstan) and Turkmenistan. We can include to this region Bashkortostan (Bashkiria) in Russia and the Xinjiang Uighur Region in China.

Unlike the Turkic population living in the Altai-Saian (Southern Siberia) region the peoples of Turkestan became Muslims between the 10th and 15th centuries and nowadays it has more the 50 million Turkic speaking population. Uzbek 30 million (including Karluk, Sart, Kypchak and Oghuz groups), Kazak 16 million, Uighur 12 million (including Taranchi, Khotani and Lopnori), Türkmen 8 million, Kyrgyz 6 million (including Kypchak,) Bashkir 1.6 million, Kazan Tatar 1.6 million (excluding the Tatars from Tatarstan and Russia around 3 million) and Karakalpak 600 thousand.

This project takes us through Northern Turkestan from Bashkortostan through Kazakhstan to Karakalpakstan, Tashkent and Northern Kyrgyzstan. The Southern part:

Turkmenistan, Southern Uzbekistan (Khiva, Kashka-daria) and Southern Kyrgyzstan (Pamir-Alai, we would like to explore by an upcoming project.

Kazak and Kyrgyz traditional folk music (Dávid Somfai Kara)

The Kazakh and Kyrgyz folk music recordings were made during my fieldworks between 1995 and 2013. In 1995 I visited the Talas Valley where in the village of Aral I met Asankan Jumanaliev (1947-2011), an epic story teller. He just returned back home tired from a long trip but at my request he performed well into the night from the Kyrgyz epic tradition of Manas. I had heard a great deal about this epic cycle since Hungarian scholar György Almásy collected extracts from the epic. His Kyrgyz assistant Turgan Berdike-uulu (born around 1890) helped him to translate parts of it (Keleti Szemle 1911).

According to the written sources (e.g. *majmu'a al-tawārih*) Manas lived at the end of the 14th centuries and fought along with Toktamyskh khan against the rebels. But in the epic cycle he is the leader of Kyrgyz independence from the Jungar and the Manchus Empires in the 17th and 18th centuries. Manas is recited by the epic singer without an accompanying instrument. This monumental epic cycle (Manas, his son Semetei and his grandson Seitek) is considered to be the longest oral epic tradition in the World. Its recorded texts extend half a million lines. The Manas epic singers were able to sing its episode for days. I witnessed the first time that despite 70 years of communist ideology epic tradition was still alive. This encounter encouraged me to try and meet all the living epic singers. I wanted to record their singing styles and find out how they had become epic singers. I was interested to understand how their role changed in the 20th century in their rural communities.

Between 1995 and 2002 I was mostly collecting epic tradition among Southern Siberian Turkic (Altai-Telengit, Tuva, Khakas) peoples (see our previous musical project) but during my 1999 fieldwork I had the chance to meet one of the last great Manas epic singers. Shaabai Aziz-uulu (1924 or 1927-2004) lived on the east side of Ysyk-köl near Karakol (Üch-Kainar village). At Shaabai's request we offered a sheep to the spirits of the ancestors. Only after that he started to sing the epic in his small house. Shaabai was sitting on his sofa when he suddenly went into trance and fell on the ground and sitting cross-legged moved forward on the floor. One our passed when he came to his senses but he did not know how he got to the other side of the room. This is how I realized that real epic singers were able to sing for days in a trance and the story came to them as a vision. Shaabai also explained me how the spirits had initiated him in his youth to the art of epic singing.

From that time on I conducted research on the relationship between epic tradition and spirituality (folk belief). Unfortunately, Shaabai died in 2004 but in 2006 during the shooting of a documentary movie on György Almásy's trip (My Travel to the Heart of Asia), I met the other great Manas singer Kaba Atabekov (1926-2008) in his home of Törtkül village. We visited the old Manaschy with my father-in-law Pamirbek Kazybaiev. He was so happy to see us that he hugged us with tears in his eyes.

I did not managed to meet a genuine epic singer before in Kazakhstan who were initiated by the spirits just like the spirit-mediators (*baksy*). I had already lost hope to find a real Kazak *jyraw* singer when in 2011 during the shooting of a documentary I met Bolatbek Erdäwletov (1947-2014) in the town of Kentaw. As soon as he started to play on his

stringed instrument (*dombyra*), I knew that he had those special abilities. We became friends and during my fieldwork in 2012 and 2013 I spent weeks with him. I have recorded his epic songs and interviewed him about his initiation by the spirits.

While the Manas epic cycle was generally preserved by Northern Kyrgyz (Ysyk-köl, Chüi and Talas valleys), the Kazaks do not have a uniform epic tradition. Every region had its own local tradition but epic singing was preserved well along the Syr-daria River and in Mangkystaw (between the Caspian and Aral). The Kypchak clan (Jezkazgan, Kostanai) had Koblandy, the Kongyrat (Kara-taw) clan had Alpamysh while the Western Kazak clans (Jeti-ruw, Alim-uly, Bai-uly) preserved the Forty Heroes of Crimea Nogai epic tradition. Nogais are the closest relatives of the Karakalpaks of the Aral (Khorezm) but the Western Kazaks also mixed with them.

Bolatbek was from the Jeti-ruw tribe's Tabyn clan and grew up around Kazaly town near the Aral Sea. He was initiated in his adulthood during an illness by the spirits. In him the two main pillars of the nomadic spirituality unite: epic singing and spirit invoking. Bolatbek informed me that he also practiced in spirit invoking and healing, so he was a kind of Muslim "shaman". He also took me to a spirit-invoking ritual to his birthplace where his disciple invoked the spirit of a fairy by performing the swan dance. That swan fairy was the ancestor of Edige emir of the Nogais. In this ritual epic myth came into life by the ritual dance.

In 2017 we conducted our first fieldtrip together with István Sántha in the wake of Turgan Berdike-uulu who was György Almásy's assistant. He was a Kyrgyz student in Karakol came to Hungary to help translating extracts from the Manas collected among the Bugu clan. In Bishkek we met Talantaaly Bakchiev, who is a modern Manas singer. He not only sings it but also teaches and does research about the Manas epic cycle. It turned out that he was a member of the same Bugu clan where Almásy collected from the epic song. Furthermore, he was from Maman near Karakol just like his master Shaabai.

In 1999 I collected from Shaabai, the disciple of Choiuke (1863-1925) who was a famous Manaschy of the Bugu when Almásy visited the Karakol region. Probably an extract from Choiuke thus returned to the Bugu clan when Talantaaly at our request performed the 72 lines that was published in 1911 (the journal of Keleti Szemle).

Inspired by the personality of Turgan we followed the footsteps of another man from Turkestan. Ibrahim-uly Isaq (molla) arrived to Hungary in 1864 with Ármin Vámbéry, a Hungarian scholar who disguised as dervish travelled through Uzbekistan and Karakaplanistan. Isaq (1836-1892) was born in the town of Kongyrat (Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan), south of the Aral Lake (those days it belonged to the Khwarazm Kongyrat Khanate).

We arrived in November 2019 to Nöküs (Karakalpak capital) to visit Isaq's homeland. We immediately started to enquire about the local epic traditions. We found out that Karakalpaks preserved two types of epic singing styles: the Kypchak style with throat singing accompanied by *kyl-kobyz* and the Oghuz style accompanied by the copper stringed *dutar*. Heroic epic stories are performed by the *jyraw* in Kypchak style, while lyrical epic songs are performed by the *baksy* in Oghuz style. We arrived a little late because the last real Karakalpak *jyraw* Jumabai (1927-2006) had died already.

In Isaq's hometown (Kongyrat) we listened to the singing by Turganbai Atamuratov *gyraw* who admitted that he only knew extracts from epic songs. Returning to Nöküs we met the son of Jaksylyk *gyraw*, who was the disciple of the famous Kyias *gyraw*. Bakbergen performed extracts from the Edige epic song as a professional singer and his most talented student Salamat also authentically preserved the *gyraw* epic singing style. But they have never received spiritual initiation and thus cannot perform whole epic songs in the state of trance like the Kazak and Kyrgyz epic singers whom I met before.

Anyway, we enjoyed their performances singing about the Edige, the famous emir of the Nogais (1391-1419). Karakalpak were once part of the enormous Nogai Horde that scattered during the wars with the Russian Empire (between 16th and 19th centuries) in Eastern Europe. Salamat warned us that if we invoked the spirit of Edige there would be a storm. During the night a big storm struck the Karakalpak land.

Isaq molla translated the famous poem by János Arany "Legend about the Magic Deer" (related to the land-conquering Hungarians) to Khorerzmi Turkic literary language for the birthday of the famous Hungarian poet. Our Karakalpak friend Seidin Amirlan converted this to modern Karakalpak. At our request Bakbergen and Salamat also sang that in traditional epic style. After extract from Manas by Almásy and Turgan, Isaq's translation of the "Magic Deer" also came to life by the Karakalpak epic-singers: *the song is passed from lip to lip...*

We did not ignore the Oghuz style of the Epic tradition either. In the music school of Nöküs we visited Tengel Kalliev *baksy* singer, who was a teacher there. He performed a lyrical song (*kosyk*) accompanied by *dutar* just like a Turkmen *bagshy*. When in 1994 I first visited Karakalpakstan with Hungarian Turkologist József Torma, we were looking for a spirit mediator (*baksy* in Kazak) but they sent us to a *baksy*-singer. In Northern Turkestan *baksy/bakshy* means "spirit mediator" while in Southern Turkestan it means "epic singer". The two terms are linked since epic songs also invoke the spirits of ancestors.

On our musical project we find the songs of two other Turkic peoples. Our soundscape journey starts at the edge of Europe where the Jaiyk (nowadays Ural) River flows from the Ural Mountains to the Kazak Steppe. This is the land of the Bashkir (Bashkortostan) where friar Julian found nomads who spoke Hungarian language. I first visited Bashkortostan with Hungarian photographer László Kunkovács. When we crossed the Ural Mountains I met old Mäkhmütyän who sang a so-called "long song" (*ozon köi*) Sibai (Fatima) accompanied by a Bashkir *kurai*-flute (in 1909 Gyula Mészáros Hungarian Turkologist also travelled through this area).

Tagan Ghälimyän (1892-1948) was also a Bashkir, who arrived from Japan to Hungary in 1922 with Benedek Baráthosi Balogh. The first Hungarian Tungusic scholar wanted to return to the Amur region when he met in Tokyo the Bashkir military leader fleeing the Bolsheviks. Ghälimyän later obtained a doctorate in Hungary and became the researcher of the Ethnography Museum. In 1931 he went to Vienna where Bashkir songs were recorded from him. Later these songs were played to the Bashkir flutist Yulai Ghäinetdin who learned them. When in 2018 in the wake of Ghälimyän we visited Bashkortostan Yulai sang these songs accompanied by his wonderful *kurai*-flute play. Thus we also "invoked" the spirit of Ghälimyän as well.

On the way to Karakalpakstan we stopped at the ancient city of Tashkent where the famous classic composer Yunus Rajabiy's son, Hasan *aka* accompanied by the tanbur instrument sang us a poem by the great figure of Central Asian (Chagatai) Turkic literature from the 15th century Alisher Nava'i. His pleasant voice and the soothing music took us back to the time of Nava'i.

Northern Turkestan Soundscapes (István Sántha)

In December 2017 we started our first journey together with David Somfai Kara to Almaty (Kazakhstan) to participate in the preparation of the memorial tablet for György Almásy, the first Hungarian explorer of the Kazak and Kyrgyz lands. We never had travelled together before to Asia. Both of us had been on different paths that had never crossed each other. Little had we known that it would be the beginning of a joint research not only with each other but also the local people.

In the wake of Ármin Vámbéry's companion on his 1863 travel to Central Asia, Isaq molla we travelled to Karakalpakstan (Uzbekstan). Following the path of György Almásy's companion we visited Ysyk-köl (Kyrgyzstan). Thanks to Benedek Baráthosi Balogh's Ulcha and Nanai, Aidanu and Bogdan Onienko we went to the Amur River. Baráthosi's Japanese companion Imaoka Jūichirō led us to Japan and his adopted son Ghälimyän Tagan's descendants to the Baskhir lands (Russia).

Our adjacent research led us also to related regions: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Russian Far East as well as Sakhalin and Hokkaidō islands. We not only did fieldwork in these various regions but we also *provided* information avoiding the centers and *generated* questions and (friendly and cousinly) feelings.

We have to thank Ghälimyän Tagan for the title of this musical project. He along with other Bashkir politicians and warlords (e.g. Zäki Väliidi) fought for Bashkir sovereignty. Joined by the Kazaks and other Turkic speaking nations they wanted to form a so-called Union of Turkestan. This idea unites the various regions and their people (musicians).

During our anthropological, ethnological and linguistic research we always paid attention to the musical folklore (audio and listening culture) emerging from the landscape and soundscape. In the rhythm of life there are also fragments of music and noise with their local interpretations.

Just like our Siberian musical project the choices of this project are also not accidental. We consciously searched for situations where the local noise can be heard. On the other hand, we also tried to keep the sequence of the recorded music in line with our journey.

The main theme of the current project was to create situations not linked to mechanical learning or other merely theatrical credentials. It is the coercion of spiritual boundaries that lead humans to make music. We wanted to include the amateur performance of the Ural batyr epic song recorded in Bashkortostan (Russia), but audibility prevented us to do so. The young musician relaxed his frustration when he performed this music with an epic content. He was practicing a social activity that eased his psychological illness.

Another unique musical style to be mentioned is the *mönazhat* (petition) song. The performer by singing the tragedy suffered by their family eases the pain. We recorded two

such songs among the Bashkirs. The other one was a mourning song by a mother, who waited in vain for her husband and four sons to return from the war. The song was performed by her granddaughter. We could not include it to our project due technical problems.

Finally, there is the Bashkir wind instrument *kurai* (similar to Hungarian long flute). With the permission of his family we had the chance to include Ghälimyän Taganov's singing style. Yulai, an amateur musician performed Ghälimyän's song first on the *kurai* and by singing as his common algorithm. I was shocked when I heard on earlier the recordings by David singing accompanied by someone else with a *kurai* play. The two performances complemented and strengthened each other. Maybe the above-mentioned amateur musician, (mathematician by profession) only performed the singing a flute parts separately because he had no one to accompany him.

In Karakalpakstan we were following the footsteps of Isaq molla. We let our hosts take us to the sacred sites of Karakalpakstan that consisted of mainly tombs of Muslim saints (*awliya*). We also visited the campsite of their former leader Edige emir, an epic hero in the middle of the Karakalpak desert covered with haloxylon (*saksaul*) of turquoise and pink color. We also visited religious leaders (*ishan* and *maqsum*) who told us about practicing popular Islam and showed us some of their rituals. We spent the nights at private houses and our meals were harmonized with local gatherings by our Karakalpak hosts.

Tashkent is a busy post-soviet city with all its beauty. We tried to get access to the National Archive, unsuccessfully, to find out about the secret police (*okhranka*) files of the Tsarist regime. We had the chance to see the wonderful collection of vinyl records at the National Library, especially the Central Asian folk records of the former Soviet Record Company in Tashkent. We also met the last director of the Record Company in Tashkent who told us about the privatization of the company and the fate of the original recording plates

We also visited museums of musicology. Little did we knew that we would find a musical pearl. Hasan *aka's* father commemorates his father, Yunus Rajabiy's legacy by the museum, where he also lives with his wife. His father was a great Uzbek composer who not only published *maqam* records but also played music in the court of the last emir of Bukhara.

The library of the museum had the largest collection of musicology and records of local and ethnic groups. Hasan Rajabiy gave us an introduction to the local classical music showing a clear Iranian influence. He sang us a lyrical poem from the 15th century Central Asian (Chagatai) Turkic poet, Nava'i accompanied by the *tanbur* instrument. His suggestive and natural performance opened for us a new world of music with Iranian and Oghuz-Turkic influences. Before we said goodbye, I wanted to buy some of his records. He asked me to give him a certain sum for the records. When I said the sum he simply answered: "money is not an issue". We understood that there were more important things than money like listening and playing music.

Uzbek and Uighur *maqams* and Kazak folk music are the best represented among the Central Asian music records published by the Tashkent Record Company. Besides the epic songs we find instrumental and vocal music accompanied by *dombyra*. One of the

best examples of these records is by Bolatbek Erdäwletov. David had the chance to make friends with him. Their last encounter is remembered in David's documentary by the title "Swan Dance in the Desert" (2013). The recordings from the documentary is also shared in our musical project.

We followed the footsteps of György Almásy's assistant Turgan Berdik-uulu from his 1906 journey to Kyrgyzstan. Our goal was to commemorate properly the young Kyrgyz who first translated the Manas epic. During our trip we visited my old friends around Karakol, musicians and instrument making masters. Orozobai Kenchinbaiev komuz making master lives in a former Russian village on the shore of Ysyk-köl. The amateur musician Üsönbek Asanaliev is a retired professor of Turkologist in Karakol. Botbai Kulanbaiev is still an active member of the musical life the same city.

While following the footsteps of Turgan the Manas singer Tanataaly Bakchiev from Karakol was our tour guide. Talantaaly sometimes guided or driver on the streets of Karakol in a singing style that I called jokingly Manas *rap*. Together we visited the memorial site of the famous Manas singer, Choiuke in the hills near Ysyk-köl. Akim Kutsenko, a teacher from Karakol probably collected extracts of the epic from him at the request of Almásy. In the nearby cemetery we also visited Shaabai's tomb who was also a famous Manas epic singer. We said a prayer honoring his memory and Talantaaly spontaneously invoked his spirit by singing. David also had the chance to meet Shaabai a few years before his death (1999).

Our soundscape journey hopefully will take us to Southern Turkestan. Searching for the Kyrgyz-Kypchak epic song Kurmanbek we would like to travel to Southern Kyrgyz, then to the Souther Uzbek (Kypchak), Turkmen and Tajik to record their epic traditions and mediate these soundscapes to the Hungarian and international audience. Our goal is to learn about each other by listening to newly recorded music and by that influence the cultures of Turkic (Kypchak) peoples in the region.

Track list: Northern Turkestan • Epic Soundscapes / Anthropological Field Tapes II (Turan

Road Music)

A1 *Dunai / Bashkir folk song, Road Music performed by Räsül Karabulatov (interpretation): (somewhere on the road to Gai city IS•DSK 2019)*

A2 *Yelgeldi Bashkir folk song by Ghälimyän Taghanov (1892-1945) (archive wax record, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna 1931) by the permission of Ghälimyän's granddaughter Zübäidä Ghafurova.*

A3 *Sibai or Fatima long song (uzun-küi) performed by Mäkhmütyän Abdullaev (b. 1933) Ishkozha/Jylaiyr county, DSK 1996)*

A4 *Ghälimyän's songs (Yelgeldi, Matur kyz) played on kurai and singing also his own song and playing on kurai by Yolai Ghäynetdin (b. 1954; Ufa/ Bashkortostan IS•DSK 2019)*

A5 *Religious song (münezheth) by Safiya Khäläfetdinova (Isängilde, Khaibulla county, Bashkortostan IS•DSK 2019)*

A6 *Old believer (Russian) religious song (Nöküs/Karakalpakstan IS•DSK 2018)*

A7 *Turganbai Atamuratov Karakalpak jyrav singing and playing on kyl-kobyz „Ata därkar jigitke“ beginning of a terme (educating sing), Kongyrat, Karakalpakstan IS•DSK 2018)*

- A8 *Salamat Ayapov karakalpak jyrav singing and playing on kyl-kobyz from the Edige epic (Nöküs/Karakalpakstan IS•DSK 2018)*
- A9 *Bakbergen Syrymbetov karakalpak jyrav singing and playing on kyl-kobyz (Nöküs/Karakalpakstan IS•DSK 2018)*
- A10 *Tengel Qalliev baksy singing and playing on dutar Jigitke (to young man) lyric song (Nöküs/Karakalpakistan IS•DSK 2018)*
- B1. *Hasan Rajabiy (b. 1942) Özbek musician (the great composer Yunus Rajabi's son) singing Navai's poem and playing on tanbur (Tashkent / Museum of Rajabi, IS•DSK 2018)*
- B2 *Bolatbek Erdäwletov (1947-2014) kazak jirau singing from the Karasai-kazy epic and playing on dombra, (Kazaly, Kyzyl-orda Region / Kazakhstan DSK 2013)*
- B3 *Botbai Kulanbaiev singing a Kyrgyz folk song and playing on kobyz (Karakol IS•DSK 2018)*
- B4 *Bakyt Chytyrbaiev playing on kyl-kyiak (Kyrgyz violin, Bishkek DSK 1999)*
- B5 *Talantaaly Bakchiev (b. 1971) singing excerpt from Manas epic invites the spirit of Shaabai, the great Manas epic teller at his grave (Kyrgyz Soundscape; Maman/Karakol IS•DSK 2018)*
- B6 *Shaabai Aziz-uulu (1927/24-2004) singing Manas epic (Üch-Kainar / Karakol IDSK 1999)*
- B7 *Kaba Atabek-uulu (1926-2008) singing Manas epic, (Törtkül village, Döng county/Ysyk-köl DSK 2006)*
- B8 *Talantaaly Bakchiev directing the driver in epic singing style (Kyrgyz Road Music, Karakol IS•DSK 2018)*
- B9 *Tuuganbai Abdiev singing and playing on kobyz, introducing the Kyrgyz-Kypchak Kurmanbek epic (Kypchak Soundscape)*