

SYNCRETIC ETHEREAL MAGNITUDES OF TATAR CULTURE AND ITS REFLECTION IN ‘OZYN KƏY’

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Abstract

In a consistently advancing world, the practice of ‘ozyn kəy’ has become subject to different changes in the deduction of Tatar music. Beginning, as implied in this article, in Tengri ethereal aspect, ‘ozyn kəy’ may have been then impacted by the Islamic custom of Koran recitations, its melismatic designs, along with parts of the munajat type (which itself experienced different changes). As a result, it is essential to acknowledge that the current version of ‘ozyn kəy’ carries the marks of both the extensive shamanic culture of the Tengri people and the undeniably flourishing Islamic tradition. The rich practice contains plenty of different impacts and multicultural examples, yet antiquated custom structures its very center. Subsequently, it very well may be acknowledged that, compelling stylistics, figurative symbolism, topical substance of affection and high virtues, and, surprisingly, a few parts of the melismatic singing might start from the old Bulgar (Volga) legacy of Tatar culture, as opposed to being totally acquired from the Islamic and Arabo-Persian culture.

Keywords

Tatar music, cultural ideas, ethnomusicology, shaman, ozyn kəy

INTRODUCTION

...The fortress cities and settlements of the ancient Bulgar were destroyed - not a single trace of them remained. But these folk poems - our priceless heritage - were neither smashed by cannons, nor pierced by arrows. To this day, safe and sound, having escaped all disasters and austerities, they live in the memory of the people, they sound and prosper. (Tukay, 2011:171)

As Nettl suggested, one may define the field of ethnomusicology as the “science of music history” supposing that its “value and contribution” are “essentially and very broadly historical” (quoted in Rice, 2014:96). Therefore, the study of a folksong, which can be best described as “a condensed expression of various facets of human spiritual life” (Minnulin, 2001:67), thus showcases ethnomusicology’s central bonds with music history research and incorporeality.

Moreover, Niegmetzyanov, in the preface of his book “Tatar Folk Music” (2003), highlights the importance of studying musical folklore in a multifaceted manner. Apart from researching the structure of the songs such as the use of the rhyme and the content of the texts, it is crucial to view historical landscape, ideology, organology, language dialects, ethnography, and connections with other ethnic groups in the light of the recent ethnomusicological achievements. Accordingly, Saydasheva (2008) affirms that Tatar vocal tradition encapsulates folk memory, reflects their religious and cultural context, incorporeality, and life perception. This research aims to explore the influence of Tengrism as one of the most significant belief systems in Tatar history and its influence on the formation, development, and specifics of the ‘ozyn kəy’ genre.

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Indeed, this vocal art demonstrates a strong bond with the history of the nation itself, ever reflecting the intertwining of multiple religious traditions and cultures, which in turn gave rise to this particular genre headlining heritage and distinction.

Equally important, Salimova (1997:9) calls to attention that in Volga Bulgaria, the first government settlement of the Tatars (at that time called under the ethnonym of the Bulgars), music played an essential role as a part of the ritual, accompanying religious pagan rites in the form of special vocalizations that exclusively appraised the forces of nature. Unfortunately, Salimova does not reveal the nature of those “pagan rites” further, neglecting the significance of that period in her historical overview. Although, for instance, Salimova mentions that “sensitivity to the novelty, to the achievements of other cultures and at the same time a careful approach and loyalty to traditions remained the distinctive features of Tatar folk art” (1997:8), she does not specify the Bulgar-era traditions that still constitute the basis of Tatar culture at present. Yet, Salimova hurriedly proceeds to the Islamic period of Tatar culture, choosing to concentrate on its influences instead. However, Salimova’s approach is not one of a kind and similarities can be observed in studies by a prominent Tatar ethnomusicologist, Saydasheva (2007).

Furthermore, in her chapter on the “Musical Culture of Medieval Volga Bulgaria,” Saydasheva provides a general overview of this centralized state formed in the 9th-10th century: a period when different systems of spiritual culture were consolidated, “On the one hand, the pagan beliefs...that are still present today, on the other, the Muslim faith that started to disseminate very quickly” (2008:48-49).

Thus, based on their studies, both Salimova and Saydasheva clearly favor the viewpoint of Islamic tradition heavily influencing Tatar music, particularly in the ‘ozyn key’ genre. However, it would be unfair to suppose that Tatar culture of the earlier Kazan Khanate and Volga Bulgaria periods were bereft of any heritage that were able to ignite new musical achievements that would, in turn, both nurture and echo in the following art forms through spans of time. Unfortunately, this unwillingness to research the richness of Tatar ancient heritage and its system of beliefs from the pre-Islamic times is quite noticeable. Surely, the reasons for such a serious gap existing in Tatar ethnomusicological study warrant a separate channel of scientific query.

Therefore, this study aims to critically analyze such a straightforward and widely disseminated view on the one-way origins of ‘ozyn key’ that has been linked with predominantly Islamic tradition. It also aims to reconsider the historical legacies associated with “ozyn key.”

Accordingly, instead of following the general assertion of the craft’s straightforward origins from Islamic tradition, this research advocates a syncretic nature of ‘ozyn key’ songs by providing a historical overview of Tatar culture and discussing the possible predecessors to “ozyn key,” thereby suggesting that the syncretic nature of Tatar music was not only formed by Islamic tradition but also shaped by older practices aligned with ancient Shamanic², or Tengri heritage.

Although it is exceedingly difficult to attribute intangible musical tradition to an exact historical period, there are methodologies that aid researchers in their quest to unravel the aforementioned problems; as ethnomusicological discussions reach “deeply into the culture’s cosmology and...social life” (Rice, 2014:66). Consequently, this study applies several methods to better understand the origins of the ‘ozyn key’ genre.

² Here, the term ‘shamanism’ appears in its definition of “a technique, the man’s practice of interaction with the Universe.” Shamanism, thus, does not appear as a standalone system of beliefs, but a part of a larger spiritual worldview. As stated by Zhernosenko and Mamyev (2013, n.p.): “All the ancient Vedic systems, of which Tengrism is also part of, knew these technologies” and used the shamanic practices within their spiritual communities. “These are not the different stages of the development of the religious consciousness, but two sides of one process. The process of intuitive revelation of the Being through the mystical experience of interaction with the Highest reality in all its manifestations: on spiritual as well as material levels” (Zhernosenko and Mamyev, 2013, n.p.), Researchers’ translation).

LINGUO-CULTURAL METHOD: ANALYSIS OF THE SONGS' LYRICS AND THEIR MEANING

The historical analysis comes with an aim to reveal a genealogy of 'ozyn key' in connection with Tengri tradition and the Islamic tradition, with its genre of 'munajats.'

As suggested hereby, mixed origins of 'ozyn key' reflect the syncretic devotional aspect of Tatar culture. As such, modern research complements perceptions of Tatar culture's origins in ancient Bulgar, Tengri, and Islamic traditions (Halitov).

TENGRISM AND ITS REFLECTION IN 'OZYN KEY'

Without a doubt, the ancient belief system of Tengrism is still strongly evident in certain beliefs, customs, celebrations, and various aspects of Tatar culture today. "In Tatar religious worldview's structure an important place belongs to the spiritual values and traditions of Tengrism – religion professed by the ancestors of the modern Tatars before the adoption of Islam. The ancient beliefs associated with personification and sacralization of nature, with the possibility to influence current events by thaumaturgic means, experiencing specific transmutations survived till now with the unique elements distinguishing the Tatars from other nations in spiritual regard" (Mirkhaev & Gumerov, 2016:42).

Khusainov in his work titled "The History of the Development of Tatars' Ecological Culture" (2014) mentions about Tengrism as the main spiritual system of values, beliefs, and customs regarding the ancient past of Tatar people. Although Tatar sentimentalism was undoubtedly subject to significant influences of Islam, it also sustains an imprint of Tengrism, the ancient Turkic religion practiced by the Tatars before the introduction of the Muslim faith in the 10th century. In particular, Niegmetzyanov, while examining concepts of "ozyn key"'s Islamic origins, also emphasizes that Tatar peasantry preserved their pagan traditions during the introduction and expansion of the Muslim faith, "an important fact to bear in mind when researching folk music, and the development of its various genres" (Niegmetzyanov, 2003:38).

The deification of nature and the appraisal of ancestral spirits have been Tengrism's main characteristic traits with the heavenly God, Tengri³, as a central figure of veneration (Bezertinov, 2000; Mirkhaev & Gumerov, 2016).

However, Tengrism is neither strictly monotheistic, nor a pagan faith. It is believed that various spirits of nature, gods, and goddesses coexist in the Tengri spiritual universe alongside the God of the Skies: Tengri himself. As the case may be, the monotheistic aspects of appraising Tengri as the main God, in all likelihood, endorsed the devotees of this faith to organically embrace Islam. Hence, a new spiritual dimension emerged in the Tatar culture that could be determined as syncretic in its nature, combining the Arabo-Persian influences of monotheistic religion with Turkic roots of Tengrism and its shamanic rituals. In this process, the figures of Tengri and Allah became unified. As mentioned by Gumerov and Mirkhaev (2016), the Tatars still use both words, Tengri and Allah, as synonymous in their meaning in contemporary language.

Similarly, Galiullina (2009) reveals how the anthroponomic worldview of the Tatars echoes in the semantic national code and reflects the centrality of Tengri in ancient spiritual culture: "The cult of Tengri occupied a central place..., being the highest god in all the Turkic nations before the acceptance of Islam." Indeed, until Islam's penetration into Volga Bulgaria, Tengrism had been the ancestral religion for the Turkic Tatars, however, "even after accepting the Muslim religion, the national consciousness kept this tradition alive" (Galiullina, 2009:19)⁴, thus,

³ Тәңре

⁴ "В древних верованиях тюрко-татар центральное место занимал культ Тенгри, являвшегося верховным божеством у всех тюркских народов до принятия ислама. вплоть до проникновения ислама в Волжскую Булгарию тенгрианство было основной религией предков тюрко-татар. Даже после принятия мусульманства народное сознание сохранило эту традицию имя-названия. народная традиция,

integrating the root component ‘Tengri’ in many names⁴. “A national tradition, based on religious and mythological worldview, continued its existence after the adaptation of Islam” (Galiullina, 2009:19): not only in anthroponomic dimension of the language, one may add, but also in music. As pinpointed by Monelle in his semiotic essays on ‘The Sense of Music’: “The setting of words in a song can prove a useful clue to musical semantics. But musical meaning is independent of words, and is of a different kind from linguistic meaning” (Monelle, 2000:9). In the case with ‘ozyn key’ songs – including the most prominent examples such as ‘Su Buylap’ and ‘Kara Urman’ – the lyrics that literally mention nature direct listeners to the personification of its forces, deification, and animistic ideology. In ‘Kara Urman,’ for instance, the ‘black forest’ plays a central role in the lyrical imagery of the song, acting as a metaphor of life. The semantic weight of these songs – their meaning and imagery – echo the ancient Tatar beliefs and the Tengri ideology, where the spirits of nature occupied a central place in the teleological query of Tatar people. Moreover, this complements Urmansheev’s statement that “the images of natural phenomena...are widely used in Tatar song poetry. They...ascend to the folklore heritage of tribal society with its pagan cults” (Urmansheev quoted in Minnulin, 2001:43).

Therefore, the imagery of Tatar song poetry consists of various components such as “the pictures of flora, fauna, and natural occurrences.” Likewise, “they express national characteristics of Tatar people and reflect the process of developing the art of the word throughout several centuries” (Minnulin, 2001:68).

In addition, one more prominent example of ‘ozyn key’ genre, a song titled ‘Su Buylap,’ features diverse metaphors associated with nature. The song itself is a call for ‘the River Idel’ to carry away all the sorrows, relayed from the standpoint of a protagonist who expresses his lyrical and emotional state.⁵ Importantly, the song’s protagonist does not preach to God, Allah, as it would appear in ‘munajats.’ Instead, he asks for the ‘murmuring waters’ of the river to alleviate the problems: “Coming to the high banks of the Great River, / I’ll tell the Volga River: / - Take my deep sorrow with you, carry it to the sea.” Throughout the text, the protagonist addresses various natural or abstract forces, such as the “blowing winds” that “make his heart tremble” and the “waves of destiny” that may connect the lovers again. Again, nowhere in the text⁵ is a call for proximity with the monotheistic belief of the Muslim origin, which would, first and foremost, acclaim Allah in his power to change the direction of life. On the other hand, the semantic load of ‘munajats,’ originating from Islamic and Sufi prayers, is distinct in Abdulpapov’s study of this genre in the Crimean Tatar community (2018). Indeed, his study mentions a common use of ‘redif’ in munajats that ‘addresses God and accentuates the recipient of the prayer – «İlâhî» («God»).' By the same token, this ‘redif’ also appears in munajats as a common trope laden with emotional meaning, representing one of the God’s titles.⁶ In this spiritual context, it is exclusively used in conveying the highest love to God, “the most passionate and sincerest feelings.” What is more, the vocabulary of munajats consists of the active use of “various names and titles of God, epithets and characteristics of a praying person” (2018: 63-64). Alas, it should be noted that the feeling of love exhibited in songs like ‘Su Buylap’ is

основанная на религиозно- мифологических представлениях, продолжала свое существование и после принятия ислама” (Galiullina, 2009:19).

⁵ The Volga river is great, because it is deep; It is deep, it is wide.
The night is dark, the day is overcast. We broke up with you, on a day like this.
The Volga river is Great because it is full of water, It carries its waters to the sea.
The murmuring waters, the blowing winds,
My heart still trembles, the blowing wings make it pulsate.
Coming to the high banks of the Great River, I'll tell the Volga River:
Take my deep sorrow with you, carry it to the sea.
The shores were deserted, the waters were sad, When we left each other.
Oh, Waves of Destiny...
Maybe they will connect us again.
And my sorrows will be carried by the sea...

⁶ “A term of the poetics of the Middle Eastern literature. One word (a short redif) or several words (a broad redif) that are repeated at the end of the poetic verse, after the rhyme.” (Contemporary Encyclopedia, 2000)

far from the Sufi concept of love, which transpositions romantic longing as a devotion to God – for in munajats, there are actually two “semantic centers” (Abdulvapov, 2018:64), of God and a devotee, constituting the main axis of relationship. While in most ‘ozyn key’ songs this axis is represented by multiple semantic centers, including a protagonist, other individuals, and diverse forces of nature that instigate feelings of romantic intimacy or spiritual character. Reputably, the poetic message of ‘Su Buylap,’ as classical example of ‘ozone key,’ centers around the theme of secular love. Hence, the song’s metaphors are related with a human being and his natural habitat rather than with the spiritual concepts of Islam. As a matter of fact, that this song is considered emblematic of the ‘ozyn key’ genre and Tatar musical culture, much reveals about the historical legacies associated with this vocal tradition and Tatar musical heritage.

Likewise, it is not by mere coincidence that ‘ozyn key’ songs passionately appraise ‘the shining stars,’ ‘the Idel river,’ ‘black forest,’ or ‘murmuring waters’ and ‘blowing winds,’ while the same tropes are evident in the Tengri mythology, as “Figures of the spirit-host of the forest (Urman Iyase) and of the water (Su Iyase) are present in all the ethnic sub-groups of Tatar nation” (Mirkhaev & Gumerov, 2016:41). At the same time, it would be irrelevant to attribute such metaphors that are strongly linked with the pagan worldview and its deification of natural forces, to Islamic faith and Allah.

Although many researchers suggest that the genre of munajat is the main precursor to ‘ozyn key’ songs, the linguistic analysis of these songs demonstrate an alternative trajectory of its genesis. While munajats appraise Allah, feature texts with potent allusions to Koran, and reflect foundational Muslim values, ‘ozyn key’ songs incorporate none of these aspects. Although lyrical in their meaning, ‘ozyn key’ songs are less didactic than munajats, encapsulate abstract concepts, personify natural objects, and appraise multiple spirits rather than one single God. Besides, ‘ozyn key’ songs also feature extended vocalizations, signifying “long plangent songs” in their literal meaning, whereas munajats recount a monologue or speech-like recitation.

It can be said that Tengrism does not only encapsulate the animistic worldview but also a cult of ancestors. Even though family values present in Islam may have prompted the organic appropriation of this religion by the Tatars, one must acknowledge, however, that such values existed in Tatar consciousness even at the earlier stages of their history. Thus, the cult of ancestral spirits elucidates common lyrical themes in Tatar musical culture, especially in ‘ozyn key’ songs promoting deep spiritual ties with the Motherland and its nature, the native language, and the longing for the reconnection with family and the native land when being abroad, constitute the thematic universe of ‘ozyn key.’ These themes run profoundly throughout many songs of this genre such as ‘We’ve been so far,’⁷ ‘The willow tree,’⁸ ‘The Winds,’⁹ ‘Aellyuky.’¹⁰

Indeed, the multifaceted spiritual dimension of Tatar history proves to be deeply-rooted in national consciousness, and its common tropes are evident in musical tradition’s language despite the foreign Arabo-Persian influences of Islam. Although the latter have been appropriated in the process of acculturation, evidently, the Tatars have been preserving their initial belief system in ‘ozyn key’ songs, which include these archaic forms of communal theoretical framework of Boris Asafyev’s ‘Intonational Vocabulary of a worldview in their lyrics, echoing aspects of ancient Tengri cosmology.’ Moreover, according to the Epoque, certain metaphors consolidate in national consciousness and thus reflect a specific context (1976). Therefore, vocabulary used in ozyn key songs correlates with discursive tropes and metaphors used in Tengri tradition, thus indicating alternative historical origins of this vocal genre.

⁷ Бик еракта идек без (Bik yerakta idek bez) lyrics + Russian translation (lyricstranslate.com)

⁸ Бодрэ таллар, слова песни (webkind.ru)

⁹ Искэн жиллэр перевод, слова песни, видео, клип (teksti-pesenok.ru)

¹⁰ Илһам Шакиров - Эллуки перевод, слова песни, видео, клип (teksti-pesenok.ru)

SHAPED BUT NOT ORIGINATED: DEVELOPMENT OF 'OZYN KØY' IN ISLAMIC CONTEXT

By the 10th century, Islamic culture came to Volga Bulgaria and further influenced its rich culture. In the opinion of the most eminent Tatar researchers, this influence caused the emergence of the *munajat* genre: originating from the Islamic and Sufistic spiritual dimension of the Volga Tatars and acting as a predecessor to 'ozyn køy' (Niegmetzyanov, Saydasheva, Salimova).

However, the role of music, specifically singing, is more apparent in Tengrism with its shamanic practices rather than in Islam. Therefore, *munajats* appeared when musical performances were reframed in the context of strict Muslim rites such as the readings from the Koran (Saydasheva, 2008), representing a type of religious practice. Here, music is excluded from rituals and instead "special vocal forms" are used "such as recitation and incantation" (Clayton, 2008: 51). As a genre of recitation, it featured texts of spiritual connotation that were oftentimes presented in poetic form.

Interestingly, one may consider a song performance as a ritual in itself in terms of the liminoid experience (Turner, 1969). To illustrate, the rationale of a liminoid ritual is valid in relation with shamanic practices in the Tengri context, and the performance of "ozyn køy," as both elevate the sense of togetherness; the communal feeling through the practice associated with music. In shamanic practices that featured songs, participants experienced "a temporary subversion of the existing social structure and the experiencing of a state of 'communitas' – Turner's word for a sense of shared experience and communal feeling, in which we do not lose our sense of individuality so much as feel ourselves in complete accord with our surrounding community" (Clayton, 2008: 52).

However, the emergence of the "communitas" feeling is less apparent in the genre of *munajat*, with its strict hierarchy between the sender and the receiver, as it is a monodic tradition presupposing transmission of the message, usually of a didactic nature. Of course, this genre communicates an intimate conversation with God, a prayer: "the recitation of the Koran, of theological texts was intended for listening and non-participatory perception predisposing to the distinction of functions: performer and listener" (Saydasheva, 2007: 59).

Although 'ozyn køy' genre is monodic, too, and has never been performed in groups (Kalimullina, 2021), it invokes the view by Zuckerkandl (2008:116) in relation to the lyrical folksong by the following statement: "the individual in so far as his relation to the others is not one of 'facing them' but one of togetherness." Again, if one is to see Islamic religion and its musical culture acting as a predecessor to 'ozyn køy,' its meaning, and aesthetics, then it is important to reflect upon how and why the drastic change in the performance hierarchy and other aspects occurred. In addition, the aforementioned comparative analysis of 'munajat' and 'ozyn køy' genres spurs to seriously question Saydasheva's opinion that *munajats* act as "examples of an early lyrical song" (2007:82).

Yet, in terms of its beginnings, the *munajat* genre itself authenticates its other than Islamic origins, questioning the much-favored stance on 'ozyn køy' even further. If Saydasheva's point that *munajats*, as examples of an early lyrical song, ...provided a foundation for...ozyn køy" (Ibid.) still appears to be correct, then one should think about the origins of this Islamic genre itself, the origins that have been pinpointed by one of the Tatar ethnomusicologists and historians, Urmanshe (2002). It is quite regretting that Saydasheva does not refer to his seminal works that would otherwise reframe the genesis of the 'ozyn køy' genre. Indeed, Urmanshe closely analyzes the spread of the *munajat* genre among the Tatars, during the 10 up to the 11th centuries "when Islam becomes the sole government religion in Volga Bulgaria" (2002: n.p.). Again,

as Urmanshe further highlights, “the origins of this genre relate to an earlier historical epoqe and are associated with shamanism” (Urmanshe, 2002: n.p.).

Additionally, Urmanshe sheds more light on the subject with striking and concrete linguistic evidence in the following: “Thus, in Tajik language the shamanic exhortations (pleas) have been called with the same term: *munojot*.¹¹”

For example, Urmanshe, in his thorough historical analysis of this genre, verifies that those ancient shamanic “*munojots*” would commence with the shaman’s pleas to different spirits, elements, the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, and others. In later periods, however, these objects, central to the shaman’s plea, would be interchanged with Koranic expressions constituting the Muslim prayer. Therefore, these certainties allow for the contradiction of Salimova’s claims that the genre of *munajats* appeared to the Tatars exclusively after intersecting with the “rich and developed culture of the medieval Arab world.” Accordingly, it also requestions Saydasheva’s vision of ‘*ozyn key*’ belonging to the Muslim spiritual dimension and *stemming* entirely from Islamic vocal art. Consequently, Urmanshe’s study provides the groundwork to better understand that “the origins and the formation of the ‘*munajats*’ as a genre of the folk art relates to the pre-Islamic epoqe” (Urmanshe, 2002).

Furthermore, Fatih Urmanshe (2002) underlines that “these references to natural forces and different spirits have not been preserved in Tatar *munajats*.” Perhaps, what needs to be added to his statement is the likelihood of these tropes being transferred to the present in the genre of “*ozyn key*.” Since the shamanic lifeworld¹² of ancient Tatar people became mediated through the genre of the lyrical song, it is therefore in ‘*ozyn key*’ that the encapsulation of sacred meanings echoes from the *munajats* as they were at the dawn of their existence. Hence, Saydasheva’s statement that ‘*ozyn key*’ may have originated from the *munajats* can therefore be interpreted as correct only if reframed in the light of Urmanshe’s findings. This does not only shed light on the genesis of musical genres such as ‘*munajats*’ and ‘*ozyn key*’, but also tells us more about the origins of Islam as a religion. The study of these genres with an approach of comparative history “would contribute a lot to the revelation of the specificities linked with their origins and formation as well as to the study of the ancient sources of Islam’s mythology” (Urmanshe, 2002: n.p.).

MUSIC, MELISMAS, AND TATAR “MOŇ” RESOUNDING IN A SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF ‘OZYN KEY’

While the semantic load of ‘*ozyn key*’ genre bears a strong imprint of its Tengri past, the aesthetics of its performance, especially the melismatic technique, can be attributed to the genre’s connection with the Islamic tradition of Koran recitations and the singing of ‘*azan*’ (Kalimulina, 2021; Saydasheva, 2007; Salimova, 2003), or to the parallel development of a “flowery” style in the architecture and art of the Kazan Khanate period during the 15th-16th centuries (Iskhakova-Vamba, 1997).

However, even this aspect of ‘*ozyn key*’ allows for debate and requestioning of its historical and spiritual sources. Undoubtedly, melismatic singing in Tatar vocal art – its origins and specifics – requires further substantial research outside this study. However, one can clearly notice

¹¹ ...происхождение...жанра относится к более ранней исторической эпохе и связано с шаманизмом. Об этом можно судить на основе некоторых конкретных данных. Так, в таджикском языке шаманские призывания называются тем же термином *муночот*.»

Они...обычно начинаются с обращения шамана к различным духам, стихиям, Солнцу, Луне, Звездам и другим. Но в более поздние эпохи эти обращения заменяются соответствующими кораническими оборотами, связанными с началом мусульманской молитвы. Все это дает возможность предположить что происхождение и формирование мунажатов как жанра народного творчества относится к доисламской эпохе. Правда, в татарских мунажатах не сохранились образцы обращений к силам природы, к различным духам.» (Urmanshe, 2002: n.p.)

¹² A term coined by Husserl (1970).

that melismatic technique highlights particular words in the text: some of them are ornamented with more weight, others are not, or with a lesser accent. As a matter of fact, in Tatar songs, the singer adorns the concepts that are mostly associated with the aforementioned tropes of national mythology; these tropes are the key signifiers reflecting the Tatar lifeworld comprised of multiple spiritual dimensions. Accordingly, melismas act as intensifiers of the signifiers' semantic and ontological meaning. To demonstrate, 'The willow tree' song, as performed by Saida Muhammajan, conveys the feelings of 'saginu'/'longing' for the Motherland, as patriotic sentiment is conveyed through the appraisal of nature.

Thus, melismatic enrichment occurs with increased volume and vocal power on the key signifiers: 'willow tree,' 'nightingale,' 'dawn,' 'native land,' 'foreign country.'¹³

Moreover, in 'ozyn key' songs, "the worded nature of vocal music may affect the musical surface, but in an unworded way" (Monelle, 2000:9). Consisting of the syllables that are subject to melismatic singing, the words in "ozyn key" songs affect its musical dimension in this "unworded way" of improvisatory vocal ornamentation. However, this improvisation intensifies the meaning of "the worded nature" in songs by means of intonation as well as technique.

Thus, one employs melismatic singing to not only add beauty to the song, but also to accentuate particular words and highlight their meaning. Yet, "much more interesting than a straightforward observation of the reflection of text in music is a discovery of the replacement of text with a denser plane of musical meaning, where a vocal style is taken over by instruments" (Monelle, 2000:9).

In 'ozyn key' songs, the melismatic technique appears as an instrumental layer of reality¹⁴ that intensifies the text imbuing it with that "denser plane of musical meaning." It can be said that ornamenting particular words with melismas, the singer does not fully replace the text but reinforces the significance of specific lyrics. This also complies with Charles S. Myers's (1913) view on both music and speech, and henceforth singing, originating from a mechanism that allows to express the meaning vocally.

In truth, the ways in which words are performed with melismas in 'ozyn key' folksongs reflect an intricate decision-making process happening in the singer's mind. It shows which concepts and meanings are of special importance for the national consciousness of Tatar people. Since a folk song, including 'ozyn key,' is, to quote Zuckerkandl (2008:114) "primarily a poem, that is, a verbal structure." As a result, "it tells a story, evokes a situation, expresses feelings. There can be no doubt that the words of the song are all-important; the tune takes second place. The title of the song refers to what the words say, not to the melody" (Zuckerkandl, 2008:114). Here, the technique primarily acts as a vehicle that serves to carry the meaning forward in the most effective way. In the case with the 'ozyn key' genre, contrary to the munajat in its latest stages of development as envisioned by Saydasheva and her proponents, this meaning does not have an Islamic ideology at its very core, but the older system of worship that appraises the forces of the nature. This system, as evident from the historical development of the Tatars and the linguistic analysis of 'ozyn key,' correlates with the Tengri worldview.

Perhaps, because of the centrality of the melismatic singing technique in Tatar musical culture, many researchers favored Islamic origins of this genre, and in doing so, neglected other aspects. However, the lexical and semantic facets of 'ozyn key' act as a gateway to its spiritual dimension, shedding light upon alternative sources of this genre. Moreover, some performance

¹³ Muhammajan, Saida. 2021. Su Buylap. Available at: <https://youtu.be/CBfY28xgcbk>, last accessed 10 May, 2024.

aesthetics details, such as the ways in which melismas adorn particular words, certainly underlie an alternative vision of ‘ozyn key’'s development.

In all probability, Islam brought the very technique of melismatic singing to the Tatars at the verge of the 10th century.¹⁴

However, the Tatars perceived this technique through their own lens, merging it with their spiritual dimension formed over many centuries, or perhaps several millennia. Additionally, they may have incorporated this technique into their folksongs with the aim to better communicate ancestral memories, concepts, and mythologies. One may assume that, in this syncretic nature, the exquisiteness of ‘ozyn key’ materializes and that here could well lie the reasons why the Tatars feel such a profound connection with this genre as the roots of ‘ozyn key,’ spanning many centuries, from the dawn of Tatar culture till the era of its enrichment with foreign influences.

To conclude, when following the logic expressed in works by Salimova (1997), Iskhakova-Vamba (1997), Niegmetzyanov (2003), and Saydasheva (2007), there is a strong link between melismatic singing and the discursive trope of ‘moñ,’ which researchers believe to be the essence of melismatic singing.

This, again, would require a separate research output, but the authors of this study find it worthy to acknowledge that the concept of ‘moñ’ existed in ancient Turkic consciousness long before Islamic invasions and the possible introduction of melismatic technique. Indeed, Galym (1989: 396-397) provides direct quotes from ancient Turkic epic texts that mention the concept of sorrowness associated with music and death¹⁵. Furthermore, he also states that ancient Turkic people called their instrumental folk music, or key, “the whisper of Tengri.” As can be seen, even the genealogy of one of the most emblematic concepts of Tatar lifeworld and ‘ozyn key,’ alludes to the Tengri past, sadly, a fact that has not been clearly acknowledged by most Tatar ethnomusicologists at the time of this study.

CONCLUSION

The sources of Tengrism and Islam are not exclusive of one another in the history of ‘ozyn key’, rather, they are coexistent. In this, the genesis of ‘ozyn key’ provides a testament to the statement that the “nations are not primarily ‘culture-bearing’ entities, but rather habits of categorization, since the same musical forms can, through discursive mediation, come to generate distinct communities of national belonging” (Barth 1969; Brubaker 2004 quoted in Adriaanz, 2018:709).

Yet, instead of ‘nations,’ one may also consider spiritual systems that bear strong influence on musical traditions as well. The mediation of Tatar musical tradition through several spiritual dimensions, including Tengrism and Islam, allowed its production of ‘ozyn key’ to reflect these multiple influences.

Alas, in an ever-evolving world, the tradition of ‘ozyn key’ has become subject to diverse changes in the derivation of Tatar music. Originating, as purported in this article, in Tengri spiritual dimension, ‘ozyn key’ may have been then influenced by the Islamic tradition of Koran recitations, its melismatic patterns, together with aspects of the *munajat* genre (which itself experienced various fluctuations). Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge that ‘ozyn key,’ as it

¹⁴ Instrumental aspects of Tatar melismatic singing have been mentioned by Saydasheva (2007). The interweaving of instrumental and vocal aspects formed a synthesis for a new genre, where the instrumental thinking gave way to plastic vocal improvisations. The ‘melismatic runs’ in Tatar tradition, however, do not feature broad instrumental intonational leaps.

¹⁵ ‘MYH

appears today, bears the imprints of both the rich shamanic Tengri culture and the indisputably florid Islamic tradition.

Undoubtedly, as Salimova (1997:6) mentions, “poetical imagery coming through the époques is present in contemporary Tatar music: whether distinctly or somewhere only in a distant hint.” However, Saltiova’s statement that the most ancient examples of *ozyn key* originated in the Kazan Khanate period (1500-1600) can generate a dispute as well as Niegmetzyanov’s assertion that this very period gave rise to “the main expression tools and lyrical imagery” of Tatar music. Consequently, ‘*ozyn key*’ songs, acting as the mirror of nation’s soul, reflect Tatar history, including the pagan rites that existed until the 10th century. Accordingly, Salimova’s opinion that the ancient references to the powerful natural forces are not present in the folk art anymore, except in some children games¹⁶, can generate a debate through historical and linguistic analyses. In this, we cannot but agree with Niegmetzyanov’s statement that ‘*ozyn key*’ reflect “historical fates of the nation, its challenging past, as well as the most sacred thoughts, feelings, and dreams,” “the character of the national vision, the folk perception of the world,” “an artistic expression of its psychology” (Niegmetzyanov, 2003:30). However, we should do acknowledge the ancient Tengri traditions that inevitably echo through those aspects – something that, surprisingly, Niegmetzyanov, Saydasheva, and Salimova have disregarded in their seminal ethnomusicological works.

Once again, undoubtedly, ‘*ozyn key*’ is a syncretic genre as any other, including *munajats*. It contains the plethora of various influences and multicultural patterns, but ancient tradition forms its core. Therefore, it can be accepted that, plangent stylistics, metaphoric imagery, thematic content of love and high moral values, and even some aspects of the melismatic singing may originate from the ancient Bulgar heritage of Tatar culture, rather than being completely inherited from the Islamic, Arabo-Persian culture.

Zemtsovsky is right by saying that “...different genres did not come from different sides in the unity known to us but rather came somewhat from a unified source” (1971: n.p.).

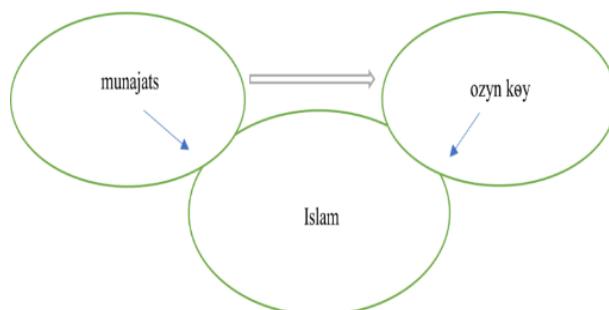


Figure 1: Common Idea of Genres’ Linear Genesis. Drawing by the author.

Genealogical axis of ‘*munajats*’ and ‘*ozyn key*’ should thus comprise a unifying source of Tengri ‘life-world’ acting as a precursor to both genres. In addition, rather than representing a linear trajectory with one genre preceding another, it should locate two genres in their parallel and syncretic relationship with Tengrism at the origins and Islamic traditions as shaping them further, to a greater or lesser extent (Figures 1, 2). Through the critical analysis of a pre-existing research in Tatar ethnomusicology with historical and linguistic approaches, this study reveals

¹⁶ “поклонения многочисленным древним божествам... сохранились вплоть до сегодняшнего дня. Но уже не как обращение к могущественным силам природы или сопровождение религиозных действий, а как детские народные игры, «считалки»”. (Salimova, 1997:22)

the necessity to reconsider historical legacies associated with Islam and the aforementioned genres further.

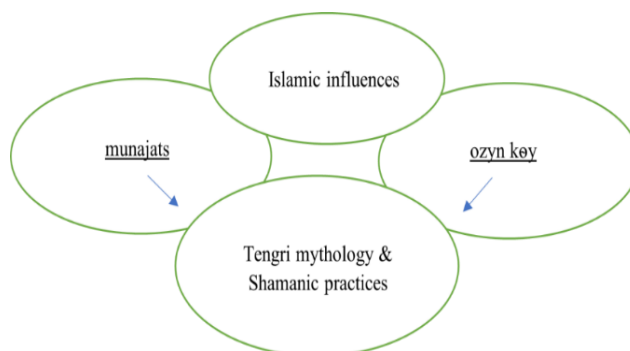


Figure 2: Alternative Idea of Genres Syncretic Genesis. Drawing by the author.

As stated by Clayton (2008: 6), “a group of people can express their communal voice through song.” “Conversely, a vocal or musical style can be taken to stand for the identity of a group, whether that group is defined geographically, in terms of gender, race or ethnicity, or in other ways” (Ibid.). The genre of ‘ozyn key,’ as this research demonstrates, stands for the multifaceted identity of the Tatars, as well as their syncretic and reverential magnitude.

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