

**THE ROLE OF SPIRITUAL  
LEADER, ZHYRAU, IN  
HARMONIZATION OF  
NOMADIC SOCIETY OF  
THE 15<sup>TH</sup>-18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES**

Conversation of science to spiritual frameworks of disappearing cultures, to musical-and-verbal art, epos, folklore, mythology – everything that is named today as a non-material cultural heritage, is especially topical in the period of rapid development of Internet and entertaining technologies. Therefore, Cultural Studies Science as a comprehensive science about human being and human development received its justification in the 21st century. It is connected with spiritual crisis problem in a whole, but first of all, the spirituality as the only absolute source of national cultures, spirit focus, myth, national memory as the unique part of panhuman culture.

Cultural and historical phenomena were of special interest. At one time, they historically appeared and played decisive role in history of its nations and disappeared in time-stream. Therefore, the main task of any national Cultural Studies is to study unique forms of these cultural phenomena in detail, investigate their initial bases to save specific features and national identity of these historical phenomena.

We talk about harmony, Turkic nomadic harmony of the Middle Ages. Initially, it might seem to be that the harmony theme, so developed in detail and so habitual to ear of philosopher, philologist, cultural specialist, is designed to put forward well-known principles, approaches leading the harmony understanding to absolute unity of opposites.

Before saying about physical and spiritual harmony, as a special form of agon in Turkic musical-and-epic tradition of the Old and Middle Ages turks-nomads, it will be focused on some general characteristics, factors of harmony having theoretical value and relating to essence specificity, as a special aesthetical category, as well as features of its existence and functioning in nomadic environment. This culture might seem to be spontaneous, unorganized, daring and even destructive in its primitive beginning, close to chaotic for researcher who are inexperienced in the eastern psychology and firstly contiguous with a brisk militant poetry, music and mobile lifestyle of Turkic nomads and stricken by them.

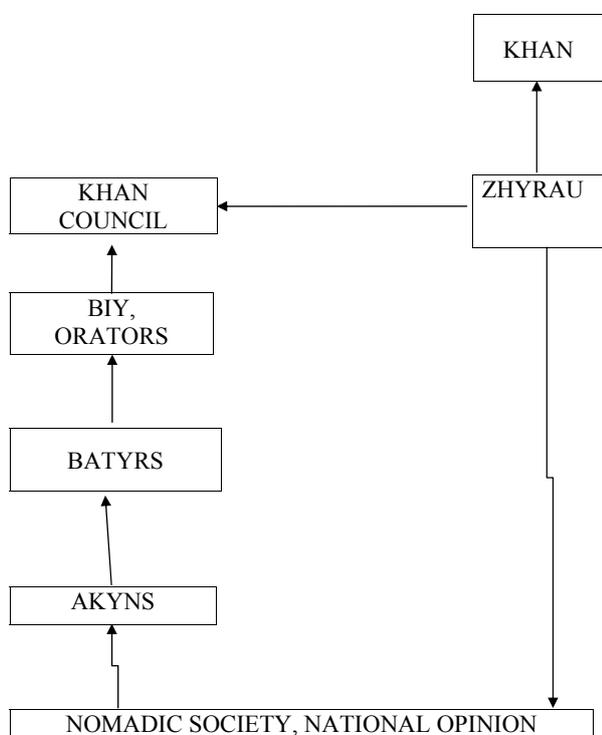
In addition, like any type of human civilization, nomadic military-and-tribal world order, its musical-and-verbal culture, its military severe way of life, its vigorous and mobile lifestyle have an amazing harmonic structure in its initial foundation.

To the foreground, there is tribal structure, the head of which is patriarch, the head who managed by tribal council: biys (judges and orators) and elders (wise representatives of elder generation). The beginning of organization is already seen here: consensus, subordination of all members of tribe to tribal council and central ruler of the tribal, i.e. subordination of lower to higher. And this higher manages by the tribe as the one capacious and compact social and administrative and military-and-nomadic combat unit. And this is not authoritarian form of government, not usurpation of power by nomadic feudal lord, and not dictatorship of any separate khan that might seem at first sight. And patriarch of the tribe and tribal council itself are always subject to criticism from ‘opposition’ side, the initial structural component of which is the singer. This epic singer, zhyrau, is usually wise spiritual leader of the tribe, nation, permanently attending in khan council and always having the right for decisive vote in it. Here, the epic singer is an intellectual figure and the leader of khan council. He, who we knew as a poet and musician, transforms into khan’s spiritual teacher of the whole tribe and the whole nation [1. 240]. He is the first governor of power and public relationships in nomadic society.

The second important structural component in the system of power regulation and public relationships following the zhyrau is national and military nomadic democracy. This original ‘opposition’ includes representatives of nation, passionate persons, immigrants from nomadic lower environment– intellectual figures consisting of batyrs (leaders of people’s volunteer corps), biys (public judges and eloquent orators) and akyns (democratic singers), often boldly throwing their protests in the face of patriarch of the tribe (khan) and the whole khan council, any charges and complaint on behalf of the whole nation, and when it is needed. And all these angry protests and charges have recitative, singing-and-poetical, sometimes musical-and-poetical form, in other words, by poems and music.

As we see, the balance of external opposite beginnings plays the main role in general system of world nomadic organization and harmonization of its polar beginnings (binary opposition), not dictation of any person, though patriarch, not will of any separate group, though khan council: vertically – khan and epic singer-adviser, horizontally – khan and national representatives (biys, batyrs, akyns). See the diagram No.1

The dominant role in oral poetry in the chronological boundaries of cultural and historical life of Kazakhs, circumscribed by us, i.e. in the 15th-18th centuries, played zhyrau [2. 7]. The singers-zhyrau criticize the governor courageously and relentlessly in almost all cases known to us, starting with legendary Asan Kaigy of the 15th century and up to Bukhara, the singer of the 18th century. The singer remedies some erroneous situation, eliminates the threat to khan and nomadic society seen to him, seeks holding and keeping of bases of right and primary world order and harmony in nomadic structure, correcting khan’s behavior by song, music and word. The epic singer, having ancient shamanistic roots, possessing the gift of prophecy, divination and other magical features, is the main harmony organizer and keeper. And we hear this ‘educative-and-disciplinary’ function of khan, khan council and sometimes the whole society in poetic speech of all zhyraus of the 15th -18th centuries and in fiery poetry of Makhambet Otemisuly, rebellious akyn of the 19th century. I.Yesenberlin demonstrated remarkable illustration of relationships of singer and khan in his ‘Desperation’ novel, writing the character of Bukhar-zhirau, brave truth-seeker of the 18th century. Epic elder concerns about destiny of the Kazakh people, found themselves at the edge of history. The sage laments: “How could happen such trouble to us? Where has our power gone, which



**Diagram 1** – Management structure in nomadic camp.  
The role of spiritual leader –  
zhyrau in harmonization of relationships

was two hundred years ago?" [3.243]. He becomes desperate when he bitterly realizes that the reason of all troubles and national misfortunes lies in governors themselves, in their greediness, cowardice and arrogance. He boldly sings to the khan about that the cruel local rulers govern the nation, that the khan's power itself is a lucky accident. The khan's power is worth nothing unless it pursues the aim of national well-being, care about nation, universal peace and prosperity. Such 'educative-and-disciplinary' musical and poetic tradition traces its cultural and historical roots to the Old Turkic period, the period of Yollig-Tegin and Tonyukuk yrchis, and from it to older – shamanistic, when singer of harmony and 'world reformer' acted as ritual mediator of the highest heaven will of Tengri (supreme Turkic deity), kagan's severe and sober critic and adviser.

For example, it is said in 'Yer Targyn' famous epos that Sypyra zhyrau 'changed nine khans for all his life'[4.9]. The singer of the Old Period, Tonyukuk, 'four kagans' adviser', 'did not sleep at night, did not sit during the day, bleeding and making his black sweat to flow'. Bukhar singer, like his predecessors, cares about integrity and unity of the state, his nation. The following statement can equally belong to Kazakh zhyrau of the Middle Ages period and the Old Turkic singer:

Now I am famous and old. Turks, I am telling you:  
If nation has kagan at any country,  
But his adviser is lazy, this country is in trouble! [5]

Such balance of externally opposites, 'oppositional' beginnings defines not only specific and expressed features of psychological set of Turkic nomadic governance represented by its tribal leader, but all structure of nomadic society and especially spheres of its musical-and-verbal and sports-and-playing culture, stipulated by the factor of stern military-and-nomadic reality. Such culture, the basis of which is fighting, opposition, balance, we called as agonistic.

And this is only our first view of the leader role, the source of social harmony in the Old and Middle Ages nomadic society. The person, who is bad at knowing features of nomadic world order, might suppose that the leading expressive characteristics was a nature, not a harmony in past turbulent historical life of Saka, Xiongnu, Old Turkic, Turco-Mongol nomadic substrate, in mobile paramilitary society of the Ancient and Middle Ages Central Asian nomads.

When he approached to music and poetry, he also faultily makes out only predominantly heroic,

militant and epic beginning in them, that is only partly true.

And musical-and-verbal and epic art of Turkic nomads should be considered not only as true militant, doubtless, encomiastic and even boastful forms of art, but hear valour and heroism origins in them for the love of tribe, spirit of ancestor, see a mythological-and-sacral connection with the spirit, tribe's ancestors and nation.

And all these songs, starting with the funeral-and-epinician ode (maktau) in honor of dead hero, including rich variety of oral poetical genres, are created by the same zhyrau, the tribe's heroic singer, formalizing ancient militant rituals which inspire soldiers-batyr to fight.

Severe, vigorous, sports and competitive games based on agon, fighting, competition: archery, horse racing, combat with spears, fighting, combat with battle-axe etc. formed by severe historical realities and nomad's military-and-route lifestyle - are so ambiguous.

For instance, Kazakhs' national sports games, directed at batyr's education – the future defender of the tribe, nation, whole nomadic society (khanate, state, kaganate) personified the idea of mythical hero fighting for space against chaos, which initially meant any enemies, and together with them mythical (chthonian) forces threatened to harmony, space and nomadic society as a bearer of fair humanity in high antiquity. [6. 664-666]. During desacralization and demythologization process of the main mythological figure, the epic hero appears to replace him in all its fullness of extravagance and idealization beauty – rudimental myth heritage. The whole Kazakh classical epos is inhabited by these central epic figures. But this epos, as a powerful mean of unity of Turkic nomadic tribes, is created by the same singer, zhyrau, creator of the first ode in honor of hero at the funeral ceremony.

Harmony theme, developed in modern aesthetics and philosophy, cultural studies, literary studies in detail, leads not only to unity of well-known principles understanding. But harmony understanding of live Turkic (Kazakh) culture judged by lifestyle, rest, prosperity, consent and peace. It was more poetical, even metaphoric, not like in understanding and explanation of European esthetes, whose scientific terminology passed a big history and, without doubt, has a rich experience. From the other side, any harmony might be based on the agon - antagonism, opposition, force balance.

Consequently, using concrete examples of nomadic world order organization, we considered the structure of social harmony of nomad camp. We

also made sure of importance of spiritual leader functions, harmony bearer and keeper, controlling khan and khan council by his musical-and-verbal critics. The following researchers write about the role of spiritual leader, zhyrau, and other institutes of nomad camp in harmonization of nomadic society of the 15<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> centuries: A. Mukatayeva, K. Kemelbekova, A. Kudabayev, Sh. Kaiyrgaliyeva, other philosophers and culture specialists.

Currently, this spiritual-and-historical theme appears to us to be topical. Those unique phenomena, social structures about which we informed in this article, played its historical role in harmonization of all elements of nomadic society some time ago. And currently, it is urgently necessary to appeal to origins, initial spiritual bases of disappearing cultures, to their musical-and-verbal art, folklore-and-epic

and religious-and-mythological heritage in the period of rapid development of Internet and internet-technologies. The role of nomadic leader, zhyrau, is absolutely unique phenomenon connected with the principle of harmony and spirituality keeping as the only absolute source of power management (by khan, khan council) and the nation in society of the 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Zhyrau of the 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries is the unique part of historical memory of the whole panhuman epic culture.

This type of singer appeared due to Kazakh state system period (1465), obtained its powerful epic and state development in the Middle Turkic period (15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries) and disappear from historical arena in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, having played its key state constituent role in history of many Turkic nomadic nations.

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