

GUZEL SAYFULLINA
gsayfi@gmail.com
orcid.org/0000-0001-6606-8604

Traditions of Sufi Dhikr in the Musical-Poetical Culture of Tatar Muslims

ABSTRACT

The subject of the dhikr remains one of the unexplored areas of the Tatar religious culture today. The 'Tatar dhikr' has received adequate attention from researchers neither as part of the normative liturgical ritual, nor in the context of the Sufi culture that existed in the past. To some degree, it can be explained by the influence of the atheistic campaign of the Soviet decades, which caused a decline in the existence of, as well as competence in, ritual practices.

At the present time, together with the return of many religious rituals to the life of the Tatar-Muslims, the dhikr has been re-introduced into the practice of normative service. Much less is known about the Sufi dhikr in the Tatar milieu, where the Yasawiya and the Naqshbandiya traditions were the most widespread. The handwritten and printed sources in Arabic script of the past are still waiting for special studies.

Against this background, the materials recorded by Tatar ethnomusicologists in the last decades of the 20th century seem to be especially important: there are texts that reflect the importance of the Sufi dhikr for Muslims and show its structural features. Towards the end of the 20th century, such texts entered the repertoire of Tatar folk monajats and were recited in the style of the monajats. To a certain extent, the study of such samples provides an idea of the forms of the dhikr in the Tatar culture of the past; particularly it shows their connection with the Yasawiya tradition, and as a whole, proves the persistence of Sufi traditions in the folk culture.

This paper is based on the survey of little-studied religious and historical sources, recordings, and interviews made during field trips in the 1990-2000s on the territory of the Republic of Tatarstan (Russia).

KEYWORDS

Dhikr
Sufi
Tatar
Music
Poetry

The theme of the *dhikr* today is one of the most frequently discussed subjects in connection with various aspects of Islamic culture: the practice of different Sufi *tarikats*, the specificity of rituals (correlation of the 'silent' and the 'loud' *dhikr*), the cultural traditions of 'folk Islam', as a subject of the source studies, and the studies on Islamic music.¹

Such a remarkable increase of interest in this phenomenon is due, inter alia, to the increasing availability of Islamic ritual practice to the researcher, who as an outside observer, was previously deprived of such opportunities. The first descriptions of Sufi rituals, the photographs of dervishes, made by travellers and ethnographers in the past, were replaced by audio and video recordings of rituals and even concerts, meaning that researchers now had a chance to get a sense of the environment. Thanks to this, we know about the traditions of the *dhikr* in Central Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, the Caucasus, and number of other regions.

This information allows us to observe both the similarities and the differences between the various *dhikr* traditions, and not only in connection with the peculiarities of the ritual practice of different orders, or with the influence of local musical traditions. Different historical and cultural conditions, when the religious culture itself undergoes fundamental changes, which influence not only the traditions themselves, but their interpretation in a religious environment, are of special importance in this sense.

This is the case with the Volga Tatar Muslims who, together with other Muslim peoples of the former USSR, survived all stages of atheistic policy in the 20th century. The result of these policies was a gap in the continuity of religious knowledge, a gradual isolation from any textual information on the Arabic alphabet², and changes in the format of some rituals.

The post-Soviet period was the time characterized by the return of Islam to the Tatars' lives, and by the revival of Islamic culture in the Tatar society. But many factors show how different it became from what the religious culture of Tatar Muslims had been a

¹ Partly, these subjects are reflected in the Bibliography. See: Algar, 2013; Babajanov, 2008; Feldman, 1992; Papas, 2014; Sultanove, 2012; Togan, 1999. Among the last publications, the articles from the volume *The Music of Central Asia* (2016) can be mentioned: "Religious Music and Chant in the Culture of Sedentary-Dwellers" by Aleksandr Djumaev; Sufism and the Ceremony of Dhikr in Ghulja by Mukaddas Mijit.

² The Arabic alphabet served as the basis of Tatar literature for a millennium.

hundred years earlier.³ For Muslims of new generations, the return to Islam begins with the study of the basics of normative worship, which, as observations show, is understood by them as the main meaning of 'being' in religion. Against this background, it is difficult to talk about the traditions that fully represented the diversity of manifestations of Islamic culture in previous periods of Tatar history, in particular, everything related to Sufism. Here we encounter a number of manifestations of a weak or distorted notion on the part of Muslims (and in general by modern Tatars) about this phenomenon,⁴ or complete ignorance regarding the nature of Sufism.

Observations that "by the middle of the 20th century, there was no longer that environment ... which was vital for Sufism as a part of everyday life," enabled A. Bustanov, one of the most active investigators of modern Tatar Islam, to conclude that "in the twentieth century Sufism among the Tatars" died by itself" (Bustanov, 2016).⁵

If so, then, to what extent can we talk about the 'legacy' of Sufism in the culture of the Tatars today, and if it so, what are its manifestations?

The answer to these questions involves the study of both historical and long-unavailable theological materials,⁶ and the still almost unexplored, folk textual (musical and non-musical) traditions, which seem to be an invaluable source in this sense.⁷

The subject of the *dhikr*, one of the main known 'signs' of Sufi practice, seems particularly important in this respect.

³ On the level and content of the Tatar religious culture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in particular, one can judge from the activities of such intellectuals as A. Kursawi, Sh. Mardjani, M. Bigiev, G. Barudi, R. Fakhretdin and other thinkers, who made a special contribution to the development of world Islamic thought of this time,- a fact, which was repeatedly commented on in the modern Islamic studies. As Taufik Ibragim noted in a recent interview, "... the Tatar theology of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries stood at the most advanced positions in the Muslim world... We did not advance much in comparison with what was in it. It is absolutely relevant today..." (Ibragim, 2017).

⁴ For example, an inability to comment on who the Sufis are. (From an interview with a sixty year old woman in a Tatar village in 1995: "Who was this Sufi-babay?" - "An educated old man; he also played violin..."), or hasty conclusions of some musicologists about "the influence of Sufism" on music of composers who were educated in the Soviet time.

⁵ A similar remark was made by Th. Zarcone in his article "Sufi Lineages and Saint Veneration in Russia, Soviet Tatarstan and Central Asia in the 20th Century" (2002: 96).

⁶ The processes of "return" (reprints to the modern Tatar alphabet and translations) of religious sources of the past and their study began in Tatarstan in the 1990s. An example is the volumes of *Anthology of Tatar Theological Thought*, one of which was specially dedicated to the subject of Islam and music (Sayfullina, ed., 2015).

⁷ Among the first publications on this subject are works by G. Sayfullina (2005; 2009;2015); the collection of folk tunes and texts by G. Makarov, titled *In the company of dervishes* (2011).

This study is based on the survey of a number of religious sources (both from the pre-revolutionary and Soviet time), recordings, and interviews made during field trips beginning in the 1990s on the territory of Tatarstan and Russia, and materials of various poetic and musical folklore collections from these years.

Speaking about Sufi traditions in the Tatar environment, one must bear in mind that Islam was spread to the territory of the Volga-Ural⁸ more than a thousand years ago, and until the 1920s-1930s, was the determining factor in the development of the Tatar culture.

The spread of Sufism is associated here with the influence of two Central Asian *tarikats*: *Yasawiya* (connected with the name of Ahmad Yasawi, a 12th century mystic leader who exerted a powerful influence on the Turkic-speaking world) and, later, *Naqshbandiya* (named after Baha' ad-din Naqshbandi, from the 14th cent.).⁹ Historically interconnected, these brotherhoods differed in the type of *dhikr* practiced: the loud *dhikr* in the case of *Yasawiya*, and the silent *dhikr* in *Naqshbandiya*. The importance of this feature was also reflected in the names of the brotherhoods. As D. DeWeese writes: “the [*Yasawiya*] tradition is also called the 'Jahriyya', after the vocal *dhikr* (*dhikr-i jahri*) that was the hallmark of its mystical practice”; “... the Naqshbandi preference for the silent *dhikr* (*dhikr -i khafi*) led to the use of the term *khafiyya* to refer to the order”. (DeWeese, 1996: 181-185).

It is noteworthy that the *Yasawiya*, which was not a structurally organized order,¹⁰ and in the 18 -19th centuries gave way to the *Naqshbandiya*, had a strong influence on the folk Tatar culture, and traces of this influence can be detected to this day.¹¹

As for the *Naqshbandiya*, its influence was largely reflected in the formation of the intellectual elite in the Tatar community. This is indisputably proven by dozens of works (both hand-written and published before 1917) of the Tatar *Naqshbandiya shaykhs*, which have survived to this day. It is known that all the major thinkers-

⁸ Contemporary historians are unanimous in asserting that, with the official recognition of Islam in the Volga Bulgaria in 922, the ancestors of the Tatars were already familiar with the teachings of Islam long before.

⁹ As of this moment, there are various publications on this subject: works by F. Koprulu (1918), H. Algar (1992), M. Kemper (1998), number of works by D. DeWeese, A. Rorlich (1983) and others.

¹⁰ See works by D. DeWeese, in particular, the article in the Encyclopedic Dictionary “*Islam in the territory of the former Russian Empire*” (DeWeese, 2003).

¹¹ On this subject see: Sayfullina, 2015.

theologians of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were, to a certain degree, connected with the circles of the *Naqshbandiya*.¹²

Relying on various kinds of information, it can be assumed that the forms of *dhikr*, characteristic of both the *Yasawiya* and the *Naqshbandiya* practice, were in use at various times and with varying degrees of activity in the Tatar-Muslim environment.¹³

Does it mean, however, that the traditions of the *dhikr*, which were preserved up to the end of the 20th century, can directly be associated with the ritual practice of these orders?

It seems important to begin the answer to this question with a serious reservation. The fact is that the *dhikr* — as the remembrance of Allah in the form of certain verbal formulas in Arabic — has always been an important element of the normative worship (*namaz*), and as such is well known to every non-Sufi Muslim as well. Moreover, a number of phrases occur in both the *namaz* and in Sufi rituals (such as: *Tasbeeh* /'Subhan Allah'/ - Allah is Sublime; *Tahmid* /'Al-Hamdulillah'/ - all praise to Allah; *Takbir* /'Allahu Akbar'/ - Allah is Greatest; *Tahlil* /'La ilaha illa Allah'/ - There is no God but Allah).

¹² This fact was mentioned in many works. See, in particular, works by M. Kemper (1998), Th. Zarccone (2002).

¹³ Probably, with the exception of *dhikr-I arra* / the 'saw dhikr' /, described in detail by A. Djumaev. (Djumaev, 2001). Among special works where the rules of the *Naqshbandiyadhikr* are discussed is the treatise "*Al-fawaid ak-muhima li-l-muridina an-naqshbandiya*" /Divine truths, comprehension of which is necessary for *murids* of the Sufi brotherhood of *Naqshbandiya*, together with the Thanksgiving to Allah and prayers) written by Zaynulla Rasulev in 1899 (Rasulev, 2001).



Photo 01. Performing namaz in the mosque. Or village, Tatarstan. Photo G. Sayfullina 2016

The idea of the *dhikr* as an element of normative worship was strongly supported by the information, which Muslims were receiving at lessons in numerous schools and madrassas that existed before the revolution throughout the territory of the Tatars' settlement. One of examples is the textbook of the outstanding teacher and public figure, A. Maksudi, '*Ghiybadate Islamiya*', which was published in Kazan in 1892 and was especially popular among the Tatars in the past. (It is worth noticing that the re-printing of this very book in 1989 was one of the first signs of changes in the then highly atheistic society).

Over the course of time, when Sufism as a social phenomenon was gradually forced out of the life of the Tatars due to the above-mentioned (and other) reasons,¹⁴ the understanding of the *dhikr* in the folk environment began to be increasingly associated with the normative ritual. The author of the only book on *Tatar Islam of the Soviet time* wrote that "...the *dhikr* is still performed as a part of the rite of prayer in the Tatar

¹⁴ Attitude to Sufism among the Tatars (and also to such its manifestation as '*Ishanism*') was often negative both in the pre-revolutionary period and after the revolution, both on the part of the authorities and on the part of the orthodox Muslim clergy. An evidence for this is the life of Zaynulla Rasulev, one of the most authoritative figures in religious circles in Russia of the turn of the century (See: Algar, 1992). An example of another kind is Zarif Mozaffari's book *Ishannar-dervishlar* (1931), written, undoubtedly, in line with the official anti-religious campaign. At the same time, in its own way, it still shows the existence of various forms of 'popular Sufism' in the Volga-Kama region of the early 20th century.

mosques” (Ishmuhametov, 1979:49). In the field interviews recorded in Tatarstan in the 1990s, elderly Muslims (still remembering pre-Soviet times) talked about the significance of the *dhikr*, referring to the remembrance of Allah through repetition of the prescribed formula phrases during daily prayer and not mentioning Sufi rituals.

The concept of the *dhikr* as only a part of the normative ritual has been asserted in recent decades, when, as it was said, elementary religious instruction was just beginning to develop in Tatarstan.¹⁵ (In the framework of the general, not Sufi tradition, people still retain the custom of uttering the *dhikr* during religious holidays, primarily *Ramadan* and *Mawlud* / see below /).

So, what is the evidence of the forms of Sufi practice, and, in particular, the *dhikr* of the Tatars in the 20th century?

For me, this question first emerged in the analysis of ritual dedications (*baghyshlau*), pronounced after the recitation of the Koran, as well as in the study of the recited books of religious texts and folk *monajats*, which is, nowadays, the most popular genre associated with religious tradition.

Texts of *baghyshlau*, from field recordings of elderly Muslims, are surprising in terms of names, concepts, and vocabulary, which was quite incongruent with the verbal culture of the Tatars of the late 20th century. The gradual realization that here we are confronted with the pure manifestation of old Sufi traditions was, in due course, confirmed by comparing *baghyshlaus* with the texts of the *Khatm-hwajagan* practiced in the *Naqshbandiya*.¹⁶

Another kind of confirmation is the repertoire of the so-called tradition of ‘book singing’ - the most important layer of the Tatar religious folk culture of the late 19th - early 20th century. The review of the texts that were recited by Tatars-Muslims of this time shows that basically these were works, in one or another way (authorship, subject matter, vocabulary) associated with the Sufi tradition: *hikmets* by Ahmad Yasawi, the *Baqirghan*

¹⁵ An example of a generalized, not connected with the Sufi interpretation, notion of *dhikr* can be the first post-Soviet special publication *The Treasury of Dhikr* - a kind of ‘digest’ of different (both Sufi and not-Sufi) sources on this topic. See: Yakupov, 2000.

¹⁶ Of course, the folk tradition has made its ‘adjustments’ to the content of such texts. However, their connection can be seen in the structure of dedication, in the selection of mentioned names - a kind of *silsila* of revered shaykhs. See: Sayfullina, 2005. On the *naqshbandi* tradition of *Khatm-i hwajagan* among Tatars of Siberia see: Bustanov, 2011.

kitabı – a collection of poems of the Central Asian Sufi authors of the *Yasawiya* tradition of the 12 - 18 centuries, *Muhammadiya* by the Ottoman Sufi Muhammad Yazijoglu Celebi (15 century), and others.

True, for most of the Tatar-Muslim population of this time, their existence had functions that were no longer connected with the Sufi practice: they were primarily used for educational purposes. (I already referred to the Russian missionary S. Matveev, who at the end of the 19th century, noted differences in the use of Sufi verses in the Tatar milieu and in Central Asia, in connection with one of the books of Baqırghani: “For the *Mahommedans* of the Kazan land. The story of Suleyman [i.e. Baqırghani] serves as a religious-didactic reading for children, whereas in Central Asia, these verses are recited together with the poems of Hojja Ahmad Yasawi by the whirling dervishes in their praying sessions” (Matveev, 1895:34).

Testimonies of another kind on the importance of the Sufi component in the culture of the Tatars are given by folk *monajats* (a genre currently characterized by a wide range of content, including secular themes). Originally connected with the common Islamic literary tradition, a form of individual and very emotional address to God with repentance, the Tatar *monajats* accurately reflected the changes in the religious culture in the 20th century.¹⁷ Recordings, made in the last decades of this century, indicate that with the disappearance of the opportunity to openly perform religious rites, *monajat* became the main form that absorbed the traditions of various textual rituals, including the *dhikr*. (There are examples when, both in popular culture and literature, *dhikrs* were simply called *monajat*).

The first thing that attracts attention when analyzing the Tatar *monajat*, is the abundance of texts on the importance of the *dhikr* as the remembrance of Allah as a whole.

¹⁷ On the changes in the concept of monajat in Tatar culture see: Sayfullina, 2017.

One of the examples:

“... Allah” disä kemneng tele,
Zeker äiter aning küngle.
“Allah” disäng, kalbeng ülmäs,
Qaberdä alar ‘azab kürmäs.

chachak atar qaleb göle,
Äitik “Allah-Allah” diep!
imaningning nuri sünmäs,
Äitik “Allah-Allah” diep...”

(Yaghfarov, 2000: 168)

/If the tongue of someone pronounce “Allah”, the flower of his heart will bloom,
His soul will keep performing dhikr. Let’s repeat “Allah-Allah”!
If you say “Allah”, your heart will not die, the light of your faith will not go out;
They will not suffer in the grave. Let’s repeat “Allah-Allah”!/
/

A further analysis of the *monajats* shows that a) many of them are, in fact, folklore variants of the above-mentioned book of Sufi texts and of their fragments; b) often, their vocabulary and structure repeat the texts, most likely used in rituals of the *dhikr*.

One of the direct indicators of the connection of such texts to the practice of the Sufi *dhikr* is the well-known word-formulas, connected with the name of Allah: *Allah, Allahu, Ya-Hu, Hu*. (Another ‘Sufi element’ of such texts is the mentioning ‘*pir*’ or ‘*shaykh*’ – the master of the author of the poem).

The greatest number of examples showing the connection of the *monajat* with Sufi primary sources is given by their comparison with the texts of *Baqirghan kitabı* - the old collection of poets of the *Yasawiya* tradition, which was ubiquitous in the Tatar-Muslim environment, thanks to the numerous publications in Kazan beginning from 1840.

The topic of the vital importance of uttering the *dhikr* for the Sufi, the use of typical formulas — phrases and words, a structure where the main principle is the regular repetition of special phrases, characterize many of the poems of the collection, especially those by Ahmad Yasawi, Suleiman Baqirghani, Shamseddin, and Qul Sharif.¹⁸

¹⁸ The life time of Yasawi and his follower Baqirghani, according to the date of DeWeese, is not the 12th, as was previously assumed, but the 13th century; Qul Sharif, according to Tatar scholars, is a Kazan poet of the 16th century.

The 'trail' of these texts in the *monajats* can be seen in many details: in direct quoting of individual stanzas or lines, in their rephrasing, in how the images and vocabulary of the author's verses are 'fused' in folk speech.

One example is a text from the *monajat* collection of 2000, opening with a stanza of the poem by Qul Sharif on the topic of impossibility for the Sufi to ignore the *dhikr* 'Hu':

"Hu-hu!" tiyu Hu qoshi, aqar küzendin yashe,
Köyar eche häm tishi; ghafil torma, "Hu!" tigel.

/"Hu-hu!" talks the bird Hu, tears run from eyes,
Everything, what is inside and outside, burn; don't be ignorant, repeat "Hu"/.

(Yaghfarov, 2000: 99)

It is interesting that the subsequent stanzas of the folk text to some degree depart from the author's idea, but a new refrain appears, which can be regarded as its own form of the *dhikr*:

"Hu-hu, Allahu,
Allahı Rabbim, täübä Hu" (Yaghfarov, 2000: 99)¹⁹

In the same collection, one can find a variant of the poem by Shamseddin, which could be evaluated as a *dhikr*, thanks to the repeated refrain *Singa saghınırmin, ai Allah*:

"Min üz bashım belän uılap, Singa saghınam, ai Allah!
Ghonahlardan saqlanıp, Singa saghınam, ai Allah!"

(Yaghfarov, 2000: 110)

/Immersed in my thoughts, I long for you, ai Allah!
Hiding from sins, I long for you, ai Allah!/

There are still many *monajats* (especially those that were recorded from the Muslims of older generations), which look like a *dhikr* both in structure and vocabulary, and are most likely associated with written originals whose authorship is yet to be determined. Below is an example of such a *monajat-dhikr*, with Arabic words in the refrain:

¹⁹Täübä- repentance.

*“Ya Rabbi, Sän belersen, mädät äilä Qıyamättä, Hu,
Fighılana-zanubana mädät äilä Qıyamättä, Hu!”* (Husnullin, 2001:164)

*/Ya Rabbi, You know /everything/, help me at the day of Qiyamat, Hu,
Fighılana-zanubana, help me at the day of Qiyamat, Hu!/
/and/ thank You for you made us the believers;*

An example with the refrain ‘*Ya-Hu*’:

*“Hämde äitäm Singa, Rabbım, Shöker qılding bezne möemin,
Yaratting dine islamning, Hämde äitäm Singa Ya-Hu...”*
(Yaghfarov, 2000: 120)

You created the Islam religion, I praise You, Ya-Hu.../

In general, based on the samples of this kind, one can note that here the main verbal elements (words and formulas) that characterize the Sufi rite are preserved, but how do they now correlate with the very idea of *dhikr*?

It seems that here we can observe one of the main results of the changes in religious culture of Tatars in the 20th century, namely, the change in the functions of using such elements.

If, in the past, the aim of the *dhikr* for a Sufi was a gradual rejection of one's own ‘I’²⁰, then for Muslims of new generations this is one of the ritual forms of worship, for which they will receive some kind of reward (*sawap*). The terminology of the Sufi *dhikr* enters the texts simply glorifying Allah and the Prophet Muhammad, and even into other types of folk culture. (One such example is a lullaby based on words ‘*älli-hu, bälli-hu*’, recorded by the first Tatar composer and collector of folklore, Sultan Ghabashi (Ghabashi: n.d.); or the children's playing catchphrase «*Alla-hu! Alla-hu! Käjälärne talga qu!*’/ *Alla-hu! Alla-hu! Drive goats to the willows!*’ recorded in 1991, 2006, in the Baltach and Archa districts of Tatarstan). Here there is no question of correct breathing and necessary movements, which, according to Sufi canons, accompany the performance of a *dhikr*. As

²⁰ The essence of *dhikr* as a kind of “Sufi exercises” was formulated by Fritz Meier as follows: “The central focus and the high point of all these exercises was spiritual retreat during which the mystic withdrew from all external impressions and, inwardly as well, by means of concentration on a formula, sought to eliminate preoccupation with anything other than the idea of God”. (Meier, 1999: 25).

an example, we can cite a text that has become especially popular in recent decades and is found in different regions with a Tatar-Muslim population. The core of this text is the *Tahlil*, the mentioned above phrase ‘*La ilaha illa Allah*’, which takes a special place in Sufi rituals:²¹

*“La ilaha illallahni küp äitegez, mäläiklär,
La ilaha illallahsız qabul bulmyi teläklär.
La ilaha illallahning qaramaghyz äzenä,
La ilaha illallahbyz mäнге betmäshäzinä.
La ilaha illallahbyz – ul bit Sirat baskychy,
La ilaha illallahnbyz jide Tämugh yapkychy...”*

*/Repeat La ilaha illallah many times, angels,
Without La ilaha illallah wishes are not accepted.
Do not look at La ilaha illallah as at /something/ small,
The treasury of La ilaha illallah is endless.
La ilaha illallah - it is a step of the Sirat /bridge/,
La ilaha illallah is a lock for seven Tamugh /Hell.../*

(Yaghfarov, 2000: 127)

Like the examples above, this text is interpreted by Muslims (as well as by modern researchers of Tatar folklore) as a *monajat* and is recited in the same performing tradition.

♩=67

La i - la - ha il - lal - lah - nyng qa - ma - ra - ghyz ä - ze - nä

La i - la - ha il - lal - lah - lah - nyng mäng - e bet - mäshä - zi - nä

Figure 1: Monajat ‘*La ilaha illa Allah*’ (Sayfullina, 2001)

²¹ A description of the rules for the execution of *dhikr* with the *tahlil* formula can be found in a wide range of Sufi sources and research materials, in particular, in the works by J. Trimmingham, F. Meier (1999), A. Papas (2014), A. Hismatuln (who mentions that “*tahlil* was adopted in some brotherhoods, including Naqshbandiya, as a collective form of *dhikr*”. – Hismatuln, 1996: 79). Similar information, although with some irony, is given in the above mentioned atheistic edition *Ishannar-dervishlar* (Mozaffari, 1931).

As a whole, this style is characterized by the type of melodies which are similar to the so-called 'book tunes' (*kitap küe*) which serve as the basis for the recitation of books. Restrained, narrative, devoid of chanting and rich ornamentation, which distinguishes other Tatar songs, these tunes are not considered music by Muslims. (It is significant that they would never say 'singing *monajat*', but - 'uttering' or 'reading' *monajat*). In the popular culture of the 20th century, religious texts of this kind are predominantly performed without instrumental accompaniment.²² For the most part, these are solo performances: a singer (as a rule, an elderly woman) recites, holding a written (handwritten or printed) text in her hands. However, with the return of Islamic traditions to the public space (in the form of open worship services and even concerts), group performance without a written text becomes natural.



Photo 02. Reciting monajats. Archa village, Tatarstan. Photo G. Sayfullina 1996

As a rule, the recitation of religious texts (both in groups and solo) can be observed at religious holidays, celebrations of which have become increasingly active in recent years. The most important of them are *Mawlud*,²³ when a cycle of texts is chanted in honor of the birthday of the prophet Muhammad, and, especially, at *Ramadan* (in Tatar

²²Although from the historical sources we know about the facts of the performance of spiritual verses by Tatars with *daf* and *tanbur*.

²³ The tradition of celebration Mawlud in the Tatar-Muslim milieu is associated with the initiative of the above-mentioned *Naqshbandi* shaykh of the beginning of the 20th century Zaynulla Rasulev.

– *Ramazan*). It is noteworthy that it was the ritual of Ramadan celebration that proved to be a special factor contributing to the preservation of the *dhikr* tradition in the Tatar community, both in Arabic and Tatar.

In the days of Ramadan, it is recommended to conduct an additional prayer, *Tarawih*, within which, in particular, all the basic formulas of the *dhikr* are loudly repeated.

A special element in the celebration of Ramadan is the ritual of farewell to the holy month, called '*Alvidag*' (literally: farewell²⁴). This is another example of the changes that have affected the perception of religious traditions among the Tatars in the 20th century. The recitation of the texts of '*Alvidag*' (both in Arabic and Tatar), possibly connected with the Sufi ritual, became a national tradition during Ramadan; however, according to expeditionary observations, and to some written materials, one can conclude that during the Soviet era, '*Alvidag*' was conceived in the context of the *monajats*.²⁵

A couplet from the Tatar text of '*Alvidag*':

*"Kidarersan illa bezdan
Barlyk hasrat, alvidag;
Alvidagu, alvidagu, hush kildeng,
Shahri Ramazan, alvidag.
La ilaha illallahu,
La ilaha illallah..."*²⁶

*/You take away
All sorrows, alvidag;
Alvidagu, alvidagu, you were welcomed,
Shahri Ramazan, alvidag /now farewell/.
La ilaha illallahu,
La ilaha illallah.../*

²⁴ Another, less used term with the same meaning is *Alfiraq*.

²⁵ A noteworthy example: in the archive of the mentioned above composer Sultan Ghabashi, there is a recording of the melody that is titled by him '*Dhikr (Alvidag)*'. Next to the title, is the pencil remark (made, apparently, by an employee of the archive): '*Monajat*' (Ghabashi: n.d.).

²⁶ Recorded from Minnebika Hazieva (b. 1920), Or village of the Baltach district, Tatarsan in 1995.



Figure 2: Alvidag (Nigmedzyanov, 1984: 113)²⁷

Conclusion

The understanding of the *dhikr* as a remembrance of God, which is obligatory for every Muslim, remained at the basis of the attitude to this ritual for Tatars at different times, even in decades of atheism, when public forms of worship were persecuted. This explains the veneration of the *dhikr* (as evidenced by folklore texts) and the preservation of this tradition as part of everyday prayer.

Meanwhile, the gradual weakening and actual disappearance of Sufi culture by the end of the 20th century meant the disappearance of both the practice and the very idea of the Sufi *dhikr* for Muslims. Traditions associated with the forms of Sufi rituals of the past now find themselves in the ‘field’ of musical and poetic folklore, namely, in the repertoire and the style of chanted *monajats*. However, while preserving a number of structural elements of the *dhikr* (characterizing the formerly popular *Yasawian* texts), this genre is in no way connected with Sufi practice for performers. The same can be said about the *dhikrs* that sound during religious holidays — a tradition that has become increasingly popular in recent years, but is awaiting special research from these angles.

REFERENCES

Algar, Hamid. (1992). “The Last Great Naqshbandi Shaykh of the Volga-Urals Region” *Muslims in Central Asia. Expressions of Identity and Change*. Ed. by Jo-Ann Gross: pp. 112-133. Duke University Press.

Algar, Hamid. (1976). “Silent and Vocal Dhikr in the Naqshbandi Order” *Akten des VII Kongresses für Arabistik und Islamwissenschaft* (Papers of the VII Congress for Arabic and Islamic Studies), Dietrich, Albert (Ed.), (pp. 39-46.), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

²⁷ The lack of text here is explained by the fact that for ethnomusicologists of the Soviet era, such a form was the only way to publish melodies related to religious rituals.

Babadjanov, Bakhtiyar (2008). “О видах зикра *джахр* у братств Центральной Азии” (About the types of *dhikr jahr* among the brotherhoods of Central Asia) *Собрание фетв по обоснованию зикраджахр и сама* (A collection of fatwas on the rationale of *dhikr jahr* and *sama*). Ed. Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Saidakbar Muhammaddaminov: pp. 205-222. Almaty, Tashkent/Uzbekistan: Дайк-Пресс.

Baqirghan (2000) *Бакырган китабы. 12-18 йөз төрки-татар шагыйрләре әсәрләре*. (Baqirghan kitabı. Works of the Turkic-Tatar poets of the 12-18 centuries).Ed. F. Yahin. Kazan/Russia: Tatar Book Publications.

Bustanov, Alfrid. (2016). “Суфизм в России: proetcontra” (Sufism in Russia: proetcontra). *Реальное время* (Real Time), 31.10.2016. Retrieved from <https://realnoevremya.ru/articles/46721>

Bustanov, Alfrid. (2011). Накшбандийский обряд *хатм-и хваджаган* в Сибири (The Naqshbandi *hatm-i hwajagan* ritual in Siberia). Retrieved from <http://dumrf.ru/islam/rites/2123>.

DeWeese, Devin. (2003). “Йасавийа” *Ислам на территории бывшей Российской империи. Энциклопедический словарь*, Вып.4. (“Yasawiya”. *Encyclopedic Dictionary Islam in the territory of the former Russian Empire*). Ed. Stanislav M. Prozorov: pp. 35-38. Moskow/ Russia: Vostochnaya Literatura.

DeWeese, Devin. (1996). “The Mashā’ikh-i Turk and the Khojagān: Rethinking the Links between the Yasavī and Naqshbandī Sufi Traditions” *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 7(2): 180-207.

Djumaev, Alexander. (2001).: “Зикр в теории и практике Яссавийя” (Dhikr in theory and practice of Yassawi and Yassawiya). *Тамыр* (Tamyр). 2(4). Retrieved from <http://ru-sufi.livejournal.com/193507.html>

Djumaev, Alexander. (2016). “Religious Music and Chant in the Culture of Sedentary-Dwellers” *The Music of Central Asia*. Ed. Theodore Levin, Saida Daukeyeva, and Elmira Köchümkulova: pp. 379-398. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Feldman, Walter. (1992). "Musical Genres and Zikir of the Sunni Tarikats of Istanbul" *The Dervish Lodge. Architecture, Art and Sufism in Ottoman Turkey*. Ed. Raymond Lifchez: pp.187-202. California: California University Press.

Ghabashi, Sultan (n.d.). (Archive of the Institute of Language, Literature and Arts of the Academy of Sciences of Tatarstan Republic). Fond 60, register 1, the storage unit 4.

Hismatulin, Aleksey (1996). *Суфийская ритуальная практика (на примере братства Накибандийа)*. (Sufi ritual practice (the brotherhood of Naqshbandiyya)). St. Petersburg/Russia: Petersburg Oriental Studies.

Husnullin, Kutdus (2001). *Мөнәҗәтләр һәм бәетләр: кәйләп укуга нигезләнган жанрлар*. (*Monajats and bayets: the forms based on chant*). Kazan/Russia: Rannur.

Ibragim, Taufik (2017). Interview in «БИЗНЕС Online» (Business Online). Retrieved from https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/344590_19.04.2017

Ishmuhametov, Zarif (1979). *Социальная роль и эволюция ислама в Татарии. Исторические очерки* (The social role and evolution of Islam in Tatarstan. (Historical essays)). Kazan/Russia: Tatar Book Publications.

Kemper, Michael. (1998). *Sufis und Gelehrte in Tatarien und Baschkirien. Der islamische Diskurs unter russischer Herrschaft*. (Sufis and scholars in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan). Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag.

Köprülü, Mehmed Fuad. (2006). *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature*. Trans., ed. and with an introduction by Gary Leiser and Robert Dankoff. Foreword by Devin DeWeese. Taylor & Francis e-Library. (Original work published 1918).

Makarov, Gennadiy. (2011). *Дәрвишләрнең сөхбәтендә. Бәетләр һәм мөнәҗәтләр*. (In the company of dervishes. *Bayets and monajats*) Kazan/Russia: Tatar Book Publications.

Maksudi Ahmadhadi. (1892). *Ghiybadate Islamiya*. Kazan/Russia: Publishing House of Brothers Karimov.

Matveev, Sergei. (1895). *Мухаммеданский рассказ о Св. Деве Марии* (Muhammadan story of St. Mary). Text and translation. Kazan/Russia: Printing House of the Imperial University.

Meier, Fritz. (1999). *Essays on Islamic Rituals and Mysticism*. (O’Kane, John, Trans.). Leiden/Boston/Koln: Brill.

Mijit, Mukaddas. (2016). “Sufism and the Ceremony of Dhikr in Ghulja” *The Music of Central Asia*. Ed. Theodore Levin, Saida Daukeyeva, and Elmira Köchümkulova: pp. 399-405. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Mozaffari, Zarif. (1931). *Işannar-dərvişlər* (The ishans-dervishes). Kazan/Russia: Janalif.

Nigmedzyanov, Mahmud. (1984). *Нигмедзянов Махмуд. Татарские народные песни* (Tatar folk songs). Kazan/Russia: Tatar Publishing House.

Papas, Alexandre. (2014). “Creating a Sufi Soundscape: Recitation (dhikr) and audition (*sama*) according to Ahmad Kāsānī Dahbīdī (d. 1542)” *Performing Islam*. 3: 25-43.

Rasulev, Zaynulla. (2001). “Божественные истины, постижение которых необходимо для мюридов Накшбандийа, славословия [Аллаху] и молитвы «салават» (1899)”. (Divinetruths, comprehension of which is necessary for *murids* of the Sufi brotherhood of *Naqshbandiya*, together with the Thanks giving to Allah and prayers, 1899) Аль-Эрбили (al-Erbili). *Книга вечных даров. О достоинствах и похвальных качествах суфийского братства Накшбандийа и его Пути к Богу* (The book of eternal gifts. On the merits and meritorious qualities of the Sufi brotherhood of *Naqshbandiya* and his Path to God). (Ilshat Nasyrov, Trans.) Ufa/Russia: Kitab

Rorlich, Azade Ayse. (1983). “Sufism in Tatarstan: deep roots and new concerns” *Central Asian Survey*, II(4): 37-45.

Sayfullina, Guzel [audiorecorder]. (2001). Recitation of religious texts by Amina Ibrahimova, b. 1935, in the Cylna village. Tatarstan. [Audio field recordings of music]. July, 27, 2001. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Private Collection.

Sayfullina, Guzel. (2005). *Багышлауга багышлау. Багышлау (посвящения) в контексте культуры народного ислама волжских татар* (Baghishlau – Ritual dedications in the context of the folk Islam of the Volga Tatars). Kazan/Russia: Iman.

Sayfullina, Guzel. (2009). “Категория «кэйле китап» в музыкально-поэтической культуре татар-мусульман” (The *küyle kitap* category in the musical-poetical culture of Tatar Muslims) *Музыка народов мира: проблемы изучения* (World music: problems of learning). Ed. Violetta Yunusova and Alexander Kharuto: pp. 129-141. Moscow/Russia: Moscow state conservatory.

Sayfullina, Guzel. (2015). “Наследие Йасавийа в евразийском пространстве. Традиции волжских мусульман” (The Yasawiya legacy in the Eurasian space. Traditions of the Volga Muslims) *Ладовые коммуникации в евразийском музыкальном пространстве* (Mode communications in the Eurasian music space). Ed. Larisa Brazhnik: pp. 49-60. Kazan/Russia, Kazan state conservatory.

Sayfullina, Guzel. (2017). “Татарский мунаджат: трансформация жанра” (Tatar Munajat: transformation of the genre) *Музыка народов мира. Вып. 2. изучения* (World music.Vol. 2). Ed. Violetta Yunusova and Alexander Kharuto: p. 219-234. Moscow/Russia: Moscow State Conservatory.

Sayfullina, Guzel. (ed.) (2015): *Антология татарской богословской мысли. Ислам и музыка. Х.-Г.Габашу, Р.Фахретдин, Г.Баруди, Х.Кильдебаки* (Anthology of Tatar Theological Thought. Islam and Music. H.-G. Ghabashi, R. Fakhreddin, G. Barudi, H. Kildebaki). Kazan/Russia: Tatar Book Publications.

Sultanova, Razia. (2012). “Yassavi *dhikr* in twenty-first century Central Asia: sound, place and authenticity” *Performing Islam*, 1(1):129-151.

Togan, Isenbike. (1999). “The Khafi, Jahri Controversy in Central Asia Revisited” *Naqshbandis in Western and Central Asia. Change and Continuity*. [Conference Held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul] Ozdalga, Elisabeth (Eds.), (pp. 17-46). Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute.

Yaghfarov, Rasid. and Sadikova, Aysylu (Ed.) (2000). *Мөнәжәтләр (Monajats.)*. Kazan/Russia: Iman.

Үәқуров, Вәлиулла., (Ed) (2000). *Сокровищница зикра* (Treasury of Dhikr). /Russia: Iman.

Zarcone, Thierry. (2002). "Sufi Lineages and Saint Veneration in Russia, Soviet Tatarstan and Central Asia in the 20th Century" *The Turks*, Ed. Hasan Celâl Güzel and C. Cem Oğuz, Osman Karatay: pp. 93-100. Ankara/Turkey: Yeni Türkiye.