

Traces of Ancient Turkish Belief Systems in Kazakh: The Example of ‘Baksı’

Abstract

This study examines the figure of the *baksı* as a living reflection of ancient Turkic belief systems in contemporary Kazakh culture. The *baksı*, whose earliest attestations in Old Uyghur Turkic derive from the Chinese *po-shih* (“scholar, teacher”), historically denoted a wide range of roles, including religious guide, scholar, scribe, healer, bard, and shaman. Employing an interdisciplinary methodology that integrates philological, lexicographic, folkloric, and ethnographic perspectives, the research traces the semantic development of the term across Turkic and Mongolic traditions, its uses in historical texts, and its representations in Kazakh oral literature such as proverbs, idioms, epics, and fairy tales. The findings show that while the *baksı* has been idealised as a healer, sage, and spiritual mediator, it has also been depicted with suspicion as a deceiver or figure associated with jinn, particularly in the post-Islamic period. Ethnographic insights further reveal that becoming a *baksı* involves a sacred calling, initiation rituals, and distinctive clothing and performance practices, situating the figure at the intersection of religion, medicine, and art. The study concludes that the *baksı* is not only a historical heritage but also a dynamic cultural institution, mediating between past and present, nature and society, and continuing to shape Kazakh identity today.

Keywords: Baksı tradition; semantic change; ancient Turkic beliefs; Kazakh culture

1. Introduction

Belief systems have played a central role in shaping the cultural memory, worldview, and social order of Turkish peoples since ancient times. In the nomadic societies of Central Asia, religion and cosmology were not limited to ritual practices; they also had a profound impact on art, language, medicine, and governance. In this respect, belief systems functioned not only as spiritual structures but also as the founding elements of social harmony and cultural transmission. Thanks to oral traditions, many of these elements have survived to the present day, providing an opportunity to observe both their historical continuity and their transformations (Eliade, 1964; Hultkrantz, 1993/2007; Pentikäinen, 1996). Within this broad framework, one of the most prominent figures embodying the traces of ancient Turkic belief systems in contemporary Kazakh culture is the *baksı*—a shaman, healer, bard, and intermediary between worlds.

The concept of *baksı* has gained richness of meaning throughout history. In its earliest uses in Old Uyghur Turkish, it was derived from the Chinese word *po-shih* (博士, “scholar, teacher”) and expressed functions such as teacher, scholar, and religious guide (Clouston, 1972; Wilkens, 2021). Over time, its meaning expanded to encompass roles such as shaman, bard, musician, physician, soothsayer, and fortune teller. This development can be traced in both Turkish and Mongolian traditions: in Chagatai texts, it evolved from the meaning “scribe” to “folk healer, bard, and shaman” in later periods (Doerfer, 1963–1975; Räsänen, 1969; Köprülü, 1999). Therefore, *baksı* is more than just a single word; it is a

symbol of historical continuity and cultural transformation. Understanding how this multi-layered structure evolved is important not only from a philological perspective but also from a cultural history perspective.

In Kazakh oral culture, *baksı* is remembered and reinterpreted through proverbs, idioms, epics, and folk tales. In these narratives, *baksı* appears as a healer who cures illnesses, predicts the future, and communicates with spirits; however, especially after the spread of Islam, he is also depicted as a suspicious figure who deceives people or instills fear (Alpısbayeva et al., 2010; Gürsu, 2009). This duality reflects the religious transformations in the steppe. Furthermore, being a *baksı* is not just a profession but a sacred identity. Ethnographic studies show that the process begins with supernatural signs—dreams, illnesses, or visions of ancestral spirits—and continues with initiation rituals, spiritual purification, and social acceptance (Älimbay, 2011; Çobanoğlu, 2018). Resisting this call usually leads to suffering, while accepting it results in metaphysical and social empowerment. In the ritual context, the *baksı* further emphasises his sanctity through healing ceremonies accompanied by the *kobız*, distinctive clothing, and trance states.

Despite being the subject of considerable academic interest, most studies have approached *baksı* from a single perspective—either philological, folkloric, or ethnographic. However, few studies systematically combine these approaches to evaluate *baksı* as both a linguistic phenomenon and a cultural institution. Classical anthropological studies (Eliade, 1964; Hultkrantz, 1993/2007; Pentikäinen, 1996; DeWeese, 2014; Znamenski, 2007) emphasise the importance of the ecstatic experience, interworldly mediation, and adaptation under religious change. However, comprehensive studies linking this anthropological framework to philological and lexicographical evidence, specifically in the context of Kazakh cultural identity, are still lacking. This study aims to fill this gap.

In this regard, the article has four objectives:

1. To trace the etymological and semantic development of *baksı* throughout Turkic and Mongolian traditions;
2. To examine its lexical definitions and layers of meaning in Kazakh;
3. To analyze its reflections and functions in proverbs, idioms, epics, and fairy tales;
4. To contextualise its ethnographic and anthropological dimensions, particularly the sacredness of the process of becoming a *baksı* and the duality in its social perception.

Through this interdisciplinary framework, the study argues that the *baksı* is not merely a relic of pre-Islamic shamanism but a dynamic cultural institution that has adapted across centuries while retaining its central role in Kazakh identity. By mediating between past and present, humans and spirits, and society and nature, the *baksı* exemplifies both continuity and transformation in the survival of ancient Turkic belief systems.

2. Methodology

This study adopts an interdisciplinary methodology that integrates philological, historical, and ethnographic approaches in order to investigate the semantic, cultural, and functional dimensions of the concept of *baksı*. First, philological and historical-comparative analyses of Old Uyghur, Kipchak, and Chagatai texts were conducted, supported by standard etymological dictionaries and recent lexicographic research. These analyses trace semantic shifts, phonological developments, and potential borrowings from Chinese and other languages. The outcomes of this method are primarily presented in *Section 4* (Historical Development of the Word) and *Section 5* (Usage of the Word in Historical Turkic Dialects). Second, a lexicographic and semantic examination of Kazakh dictionaries has made it possible to identify distinct historical layers of meaning, including “teacher”, “scholar”, “scribe”, “shaman”, “bard”, and “healer”. The results of this analysis are discussed in *Section 3* (Lexicological Definition of the Word in Kazakh). Third, a folklore-based cultural analysis was applied to Kazakh oral literature—including proverbs,

idioms, epics, and folktales—demonstrating how the figure of the *baksı* has been remembered and represented within collective memory. These findings are elaborated in *Section 6* (The Place of the Word in Kazakh Folk Discourse). Fourth, ethnographic and anthropological sources provide contextual information on initiation rituals, lineage, symbolic clothing, healing practices, and the incorporation of Islamic elements, thereby situating the *baksı* within broader processes of cultural and religious transformation. These aspects are addressed in *Section 8* (The Place and Importance of the Concept of "Baksı" in Kazakh Society). In addition, *Section 7* (Baksı and the Shamanic Worldview: An Anthropological Perspective) also incorporates anthropological perspectives on shamanism, drawing particularly on Eliade, Hultkrantz, Pentikäinen, DeWeese, and Znamenski, in order to highlight the cosmological, ritual, and social dimensions of the *baksı* tradition. Finally, a comparative perspective has been employed to highlight the continuities and differences of the *baksı* tradition among Turkic and Mongolic communities. While this comparative framework shapes the study as a whole, it is particularly emphasised in the *Conclusion* (Section 9).

By synthesising these methodological approaches, the study not only documents the historical and semantic evolution of the term *baksı* but also interprets its cultural functions in contemporary Kazakh society, framing it as both a historical phenomenon and a living tradition. In doing so, it fills a significant gap in existing scholarship: whereas earlier studies often treated the term *baksı* either as a folkloric figure, a shamanic healer, or a historical word, very few have systematically integrated philological, lexicographic, and ethnographic perspectives. Therefore, this study contributes to the field by offering a comprehensive, multi-layered analysis that bridges textual history with living cultural practices. Ultimately, it enables us to understand the term *baksı* not only as a linguistic and historical construct but also as a dynamic cultural institution that continues to shape Kazakh identity.

3. Lexicological Definition of the Word in Kazakh

Mythological meaning: According to ancient beliefs, a person who can communicate with the mysterious/spiritual world; a person with extraordinary abilities such as healing, fortune-telling, divination, foretelling, and witchcraft. *In the sense of folk medicine:* A folk physician who treats the sick with various methods (pulse, blowing, performing rituals, etc.); a healer (Väli et al., 2013, p. 179); In the past, a fortune teller who travelled from village to village, saying that he cured diseases thanks to his "jinns" and making a living by deceiving ignorant people (Kenesbayev et al. I, 1959, p. 85); *baksı*, kam, bard, shaman (Koç et al., 2003, p. 75); fortune teller, healer, shaman (Bektayev, 2007, p. 85); healer who treats patients with various methods (pulse, blowing, etc.) (Kuralulı, 1997, p. 293).

In Kazakh dialects: *baksı kuşşı* "shaman, healer, seer" → Abay Province¹ - Subartav district² (Kaliyev et al., 2005, p. 121).

4. Historical Development of the Word

Wilkens gives the usage of the word in Old Uyghur as *bahşı* ~ *pahşı* ~ *pahşı* with a Chinese record (< Chin. < 博士 'bo shi'). The word is used in Old Uyghur texts in the sense of "teacher, instructor, master, adept; Guru, Siddha": *bahşı açarı* "Lehrer || teacher, tutor, master"; *bahşı arşı* "Lehrer-Seher || teacher-priest"; *bahşı ulug* "Lehrer und Vorgesetzter, Guru || teacher and master, Guru"; *bahşı yaratığı* "Guruyoga (Ritualwerk im Tantra) ||

Guruyoga (ritual work in Tantrism)"; *bahşılı tetseli* "Lehrer und Schüler, teacher and student" (Wilkins, 2021, p. 138).

Clauson suggests that the word was borrowed from Chinese (cf. *po-shih* 'pâk-dz'i'). The word appeared as *bâkşi* in old Chinese Buddhist texts, was borrowed into Mongolian as a loan word with the meaning of "religious teacher" in the early period, and survives as *bağşı* in two *ḥ-P'ags-pa* inscriptions dated to 1352 AD, but the meaning of the word has changed considerably. Clauson also says that the pronunciation *bağşı* is the most probable vocalisation at the time of borrowing and that this usage is probably also valid in Uyghur. This is because the word is common in Uyghur. However, since the phonetic compound -ğş- is not possible in pure Turkish words, this structure probably soon became *bahşı* in Turkish texts. There is no trace of this word between Uyghur and the Kipchak (Kuman) period. The word reappeared in the Chagatai sources of the XVth century, probably as a re-borrowing of the word from Mongolian. In Chagatai texts of this period, the word now means "scribe", and more specifically "a scribe who can write in the Uyghur script (or more precisely in the Mongolian official script)". The word is still used today with the meanings of "strolling minstrel, magician, shaman, quack doctor" (Clauson, 1972, p. 321a).

Karahan, in the article *bakşı* of the *Köken Bilgisi Sözlüğü* conducted by the Türk Dil Kurumu, states that the word is accepted to have passed into Old Turkic from Chinese (*pâk-si* > modern Chinese *bo-şi* / *po-şih*) with the meanings of "Buddhist priest, teacher, religious teacher, etc." The study also cites Tekin (cf. Tekin, 2013, p. 227) and states that the word is first attested in the 10th-century Old Uyghur texts, that it is widely used in Old Uyghur in the sense of "teacher," and that it has undergone a change of meaning by being used together with the Turkish word *otaçı* meaning "physician" (Karahan, 2024+).

In his study, Şen similarly states that the word is borrowed from the Chinese *po-shih* (*pâk-dz'i*) "scholar." During the Tang dynasty in China, the word was also used in meanings such as "male teacher; outpost manager, district or outpost guardian." Şen also states that the word *bahşı*, which is given in Old Uyghur texts as "scholar, teacher," lost its old meaning after the Turks converted to Islam and began to mean "a scribe who knew Uyghur hafis and literary Turkic and Mogol languages." However, there are also historical Turkish texts from the post-Islamic period in which the word is used in the sense of "physician, surgeon" (Şen, 2007, p. 180).

Doerfer discusses the historical and cultural development of the word *bahşı* or *bakşı* in Turkic languages, especially Chagatai and other Turkic dialects. The word originated in Old Chinese; it was borrowed from the Chinese 博士 (now pronounced *bóshì*, formerly *bakşı*) and originally meant "scholar." This word, which entered Turkish under the influence of Buddhist texts in the early period, was first used in the sense of a kind of clergyman, especially a Buddhist monk or sage who performed miracles. In time, this meaning expanded and spread to both administrative and military fields; people who knew how to write, especially those who could write with the Uyghur alphabet or Mongolian official script, i.e., secretaries or clerks, were also called *bahşı*. The word acquired new meanings among the people in later periods. Travelling singers, minstrels, magicians, shamans, and even folk physicians, popularly known as exorcists, were given this name. This polysemy is also evident in different historical dictionaries and documents. Doerfer states that in the texts cited by researchers such as Malov, Radloff, and Berezin, the word *bahşı* can, on the one hand, refer to Buddhist monks or sages who know the law, and on the other hand, to an official who distributes salaries, a surgeon, or an advisor serving in war. There are variants of the word in different geographies, such as Kyrgyz, Uyghur, Turkmen, Sart and Khiva Turkic, and these variants were used in the meanings of "scribe, musician, surgeon, teacher, or fortune teller" (Doerfer II, 1965, pp. 271-277).

Räsänen, borrowed from the Chinese word *po-shih* and meaning "scholar, high-ranking teacher" in its classical sense, the word has been translated as *bakşı* "teacher, Buddhist

scholar" in Uyghur; *bakši* "folk physician" in Sart dialect; *bakşı* "minstrel, musician" in the Chovdur dialect of Turkmen; *bakşı*, "scribe" in Kumuk; *baksı* "shaman" in Kazakh; *bahşı* "teacher" in Chagatai, Ottoman and Tarancı dialects; *bagşı* "teacher, master" in Mongolian; and *paksi* "teacher" in Tuvan (Räsänen, 1969, p. 59). The word has acquired a wide variety of meanings such as "teacher, sage, shaman, bard, scribe, Buddhist scholar" in different geographies and historical periods of Central Asia. This diversity reflects both cultural interactions and local functional transformations. However, the main core meaning has remained centred on the axis of "knowledge transmitter (teacher/shaman)."

Under the heading of "Bahşı," Köprülü conducts a meticulous philological and historical analysis that aims to analyse the structure of belief, bureaucracy, literature, and folk tradition of Turkish and Mongolian societies through the multi-layered historical and cultural adventure of the word. According to Köprülü, until recently the word was considered to have been borrowed from the Sanskrit word *bhikṣu* (beggar and wandering Buddhist monk); however, scholars such as Ramstedt, Schmidt, and Pelliot believe that the word was not borrowed from Sanskrit but from Chinese into Mongolian. Ramstedt argued that it was taken from Chinese *fa-še* (religious master, spiritual), and Schmidt argued that it came from *po-še* (scholar, learned). According to Radloff, the word came from the Turkish *bağ-* root. Köprülü says that all these explanations of the word are still hypothetical and that the opinion that the word was borrowed from Sanskrit has lost its certainty. In the historical development of Turkish, the word was first used in the sense of "priest" among the Buddhist Uighurs, and it gained the meaning of "scribe" when Buddhist priests carried out the state's scribal affairs as well as religious authority. The *bahşı*, who played important roles in the Mongolian palaces in the XIIIth-XIVth centuries, appear as educated scribes who knew the Uyghur alphabet in the Ilkhanid and Timurid periods. During the Mughal period in India, the word *bahşı* was institutionalised in the meanings of army clerk and administrative officer and became an important position with the title of "mir bahşı," while its use in the sense of "clerk" in general came to the fore with the influence of Persian in this period. On the other hand, among the Turkmens of the Trans-Caspian region, *bağşı* became widespread in the sense of a folk minstrel who recites poetry accompanied by *saz* (a traditional Turkish long-necked lute); among the Kyrgyz and Kazakhs, as a continuation of the pre-Islamic shaman tradition, it has survived to the present day by preserving the meanings of magician, exorcist, and folk physician. In the Anatolian and Azerbaijani areas, the word *bahşı* did not become widespread due to the strong influence of Islamic culture, and instead of it, the concept of "ozan" and, especially from the XVIth century onwards, the concept of "aşık" was adopted in the sense of folk poet. Thus, *bahşı* has left its mark in different layers of Turkish cultural history by undergoing a multifaceted evolution from religious leadership to clerk and from medicine to folk literature (Köprülü, 1999, pp. 145-156).

In the light of all these data, it is seen that the word *baksı* has undergone a wide range of transformations from its etymological origin to its historical development, from changes in meaning to geographical variants. In this context, the word has not only signified a profession or social role but also transformed into a multifunctional concept shaped by the interaction of different cultures, throughout history. The word *baksı* is a multi-layered word that originated from Old Chinese *po-shih* (pāk-si) and entered Old Uyghur with the meanings of "teacher, scholar, religious guide." This multifaceted development makes it possible to consider the word not only as a linguistic element but also as a historical indicator reflecting the interactions between belief systems, scriptural cultures and social structures in Central Asia.

5. Usage of the Word in Historical Turkic Dialects

The findings on how the word, which has been used since the Old Uighur Turkic period, has been used throughout the historical development process of the Turkish language have been revealed through the testimonies in religious, legal, literary, and administrative texts from various periods. In this context, the main works of the period in which traces of the word in question are found and the contextual uses of the word in these works are as follows:

Uyg.: Man III *bahşı*: (216) → [*χoš*]/*ti singa baχšisinga* "Lehrer, seinem geistlichen Führer // teacher, spiritual leader" (Le Coq, 1922, p. 21); USp *bakşı* "uçitel' (<sansk. bhikṣu) // teacher (<Sanskritçe bhikṣu)" (26n) → *bilgä nomluk bakşılardın inča ešittimiz*" (Radloff, 1928, pp. 38, 266); U III *bahşı* (461) → *tngrī baχši ärklig ol .. nätäg taplasar* "... der göttliche Lehrer ist Herr (darüber). Wie es ihm belieben mag // The Divine Teacher is sovereign in this matter. As it suits him (so it is)" (Müller III, 1922, p. 46), U IV *bahşı* (284) → *äšidgil tüz-ün baχši-a bu ädgülüg qutluγ tinly* "[Höre], edler Meister! Ist dieses vortreffliche, gesegnete Wesen // [Listen], noble master! This perfect, blessed being..." (Müller IV, 1931, pp. 28, 29); TT VIII (A₃, C₁₉, D₁₉) → *pahşı*, (F₄) → *pāhşı*, (H₄) → *bhāhşı* "Meister, gelehrter // Master, scholar" (Gabain, 1954, p. 95); IsrapilTulufan *bakşı* (129) → *qangım(ı)z buqa baqşı olmamış täg*, (210) → *šišilmāz d(a)rm-a ötgürü baqşı täg* (Israpil, 2014, pp. 46, 50); Suv. *bahşı* (672) → *torma birgü yaγın bodı d(a)rma bahşı yaratmışıg*, (721) → *kuvragıg :: burkan bahşı şravaklarıg tüüz* (Kaya, 2021, pp. 104, 106); Matyr. *bakşı* "master, teacher" (73/ 9) → *toğup örtenür yalar biz .. bakşı*, (108/ 1) → ... malark(a ö)güg kaγıg baqş(ıg) (Tekin, 1976, pp. 136, 178); Üçitig. *bahşı* "teacher, master" (98b/ 7) → *otğurak bilmek tiptiser bar bir bahşı söz-l(e)r bilü tüketmiş* (Özender, 1998, p. 31); Abitaki *bahşı* "master, instructor" (41) → *ädgü ögli bahşı ulug öskümüztä yüüz y[ügärü bol]* (Karaayak, 2021, p. 62); AYS VI *bahşı* "master, teacher" (0288) → *çı üzä yolçı yerçi ulug bahşı* (Ayazlı, 2012, p. 86); AYS X *bahşı* "teacher, master" (58) → *[t(ä)ηrinin]g altın yal(a)ηoknuγ yal(a)ηuz bahşısı nom[çısı]* (Gulcalı, 2021, p. 148); AYS IV. *bahşı* "teacher" (2397) → *ögüg kaγıg bahşılariγ uluglarıγ* (Tokyürek, 2018, p. 483).

Kip.: CC *bakşı* "scribe" (25b/ 26) → *bitikçi ~ b[akşı]* (Argunşah & Güner, 2022, p. 203 → also cf. Kuun, 1880, p. 299; Grönbech, 1942, p. 49); Bitig. *bahşı* "scribe" (K. VII. 53) → *bahşımı daγı yola könderdik anuγ kelürine daγı bu hāller eyüdür eyle bilesiz* (Özyetkin, 1996, p. 125).

Chag.: Seng. (119v/ 26) → *bahşı* (Clauson, 1960, p. 44); Sec. Terākime *bahşı* "scribes of the khans of Turkestan, scribe who knows no Persian" (105b-14) → *Türkmennin tārīh bile turğan yahşılari ve bahşılari aytip tururlar* (Ölmez, 2020, p. 213); PavC. *bahşı* "writer; one who does not know Persian; scribe" (Courteille, 1870, p. 156); LÇT *bahşı* "sazende, muganni, aşık-meşreb, koşukçı": *sartğa gerçi yubarur bahşılar, türk ile hem yahşı barur bahşılar* (Durgut, 1995, pp. 159, 160 → also cf. Kúnos, 1902, p. 20); FHL *bahşı* "bard, khan; doctor, physician; overseer, bailiff; one who organises, presides over a hunt" (23a/11) → *elif ve kesre-yi rā-yi mohmele ve sokün-i yā-yi hūtti kedim bahşı be-fetḥe-yi bā ve sokün-i hā* (Öztürk, 2020, p. 130); TEH *bahşı* "clerk, scribe; an official in charge of financial affairs whose main duty is to write and record" (T793a9) → *niçe nevisende niçe bahşı niçe pervaneci cānlarığa yitip yüz hile bile kutulurlar* (Abik, 1993, p. 355); Nezralı *bahşı* "The scribes of the Khans of Turkestan who did not know any Persian" (260) → *Sart'ka ger-çi bu barur yahşılar, Türk ile hem yahşı barur bahşılar* (Rahimi, 2022, p. 172).

In *Nevâi'nin Sözləri ve Çağatayca Tanıklar*, the word *bahşı* is witnessed as follows: *bahşı* [< Çin. bo shi] Türkistān şahlar[ı]nuγ kätiblerine dərler, ki hēc Fārisi bilmeyeler. Hayretü'l-Ebrar 'da on ikinci mākalede gelür. *Sartka gerçi bu barur yahşılar, Türk ile hem yahşı barur bahşılar* [= Even if those who left are Sart, the bards get along well with the Turks]. *Bu barur bahşılar* dedügi kätib-i <'Acem> 'Acemdür; zirā Sārt 'Acem'ün şehrlüsine dərler, ki Türki bilmeye. <*Bu barur bahşılar* dedügi kätib-i 'Acemdür.> Ve yine Münşe'āt'da [otuz] beşinci mektübdä gelür, ki [Netr] [*Bu 'arza-dāšt bitilgen tārīhdin yegirmi kündin burunraqdın*] bəri

şabāhdın kuş vaktiçe pēşin akşamğaça olturup ança iş kılurlar kim nēçe divān nēçe navisende [nēçe] baḥşı nēçe pervāneci cānlarığa yitip yüz ħile bile kūtulurlar [= Since twenty days before the date this petition was written, they have been working from morning until mid-morning and from noon until evening, with such intensity that many divan officials (archivists and registrars), many scribes, many calligraphers, and many record-keepers become utterly exhausted and manage to escape only through countless tricks] (Kaçalın, 2022, pp. 318, 319).

In Radloff's *Opit Slovarya Tyurkskih Narečiy*, the word *baḥşı*, which means "witch doctor," "minstrel," or "hunter," is explained in three items. The word describes three important folk figures in the Taranchi dialect and Chagatai written language. These are a traditional type of shaman who is both a sorcerer and a healer, a person who is believed to tell the truth by prophesying and in this respect is an important representative of Turk-Mongolian shamanism; a travelling bard or folk poet, i.e., an artist who is the carrier of oral culture and informs the society with poems or songs; and finally, the figure of the classical hunter (Radloff IV, 1911, p. 1464).

6. The Place of the Word in Kazakh Folk Discourse

The word, which has acquired a wide variety of meanings such as "teacher, sage, shaman, minstrel, scribe, Buddhist scholar" in different societies of Asia, is widely used in Kazakh, especially in folk literature products. In the work titled *Kazak Edebi Tiliniñ Sözdigi* (Dictionary of Kazakh Literary Language), the word is defined as "a person who, according to ancient beliefs, can communicate with the mysterious world, can prophesy, and has special abilities such as "witchcraft" and "Healer, a healer who heals the sick with different methods (pulsation, blowing, playing)." In the work, there are also word groups in which the word *baksı* appears. One of these words is the idiom "baksınñ jınıñday." This idiom is used metaphorically in Kazakh to describe "violent, uncontrolled, uncontrollable, outrageous anger." Traditionally, *baksı* are seen as people who communicate with jinn, and their jinn is imagined as a spiritual being who comes in moments of anger or madness. Therefore, in figurative usage, the word means "violent anger, uncontrolled behaviour." The expression "baksı oynadı" in Kazakh gives the meaning of "healing, treatment" and "turmoil, uproar, confusion." In other words, the expression refers to the literal meaning of the ritual organisation of a *baksı* performing a healing ceremony and figuratively means "confusion." The idiom "baksısı ustadı" also means "to get angry" in Kazakh. In Kazakh, since *baksı* are imagined as people who call the spirit and who come to ecstasy, this expression is used to describe the spiritual outburst experienced at the moment of anger. The expression "baksı sarını" means a special melody, a melody that *baksı* makes with kopuz or mouth during healing practices. The person who performs the "baksı sarını" is a minstrel, dancer, and composer. In Kazakh culture, this melody is a melodic, poetic prayer or ballad-like supplication sung by *baksı* during treatment or ritual. It has a ritual function as well as an aesthetic aspect (Kaliyev et al. II, 2011, p. 631).

In the work *Babalar Sözi-Kazak Makal-Metelderi* (Babalar Sözü-Kazak Proverbs and Idioms), which is one of the most comprehensive and important corpus of Kazakh folk literature and a giant anthology of the oral cultural heritage of the Kazakh people, the proverbs and meanings of the word are given as follows: *Jaksımen birge jürsen, jaksı bolarıñ; Jamanmen birge jürsen, baksı bolarıñ* "If you walk with the good, you will be good. If you walk with the bad ones, you will become a *baksı* (shaman)"; *Bası avırğan baksığa baradı, Davlı kisi jaksığa baradı* "The one with a headache goes to the *baksı* (shaman), the one in trouble goes to the wise person" (Alpısbayeva et al. LXV, 2010, pp. 72, 272). In the first sentence where the word *baksı* is used, the negative connotation of the word draws attention. Here, in the expression 'If you act together with the wicked, you will become a *baksı* (shaman),' *baksı* (shamanism) is associated with negative situations such as being outside

the society, being distanced from reality, or being subjected to negative psychic influences (such as 'demon possession'). This situation suggests that within the instructive structure of proverbs, being a *baksı* is perceived as a situation that should be avoided or at least has a negative consequence. In particular, with the spread of Islam in Kazakh society, the *baksı* became figures that contradicted the Islamic understanding, which caused them to turn into a negative symbol over time. In other words, the tradition of *baksı*, which gained a respectable place as an important spiritual figure of the pre-Islamic period, could sometimes take on a negative meaning in the post-Islamic period, especially in didactic proverbs. In the second idiom, the word *baksı* is used in its literal and traditional meaning. *Baksı* here is a folk healer, a person who treats diseases and helps with traditional medical or spiritual methods. In this idiom, the word has a functional meaning, not a negative one. This diversity of the word between the two idioms well reflects the cultural layers of the Kazakh folk oral tradition and the processes of religious transformation. The fact that the same word conveys both a critical social message and neutral cultural information is a good example of the multi-layered structure of Kazakh proverbs.

Other proverbs in Kazakh that include the word *baksı* are as follows: *Baksı körinse dert kozadı; usta körinse tağa tozadı* "When the *baksı* appears, illness goes away; when the master appears, the horseshoe wears out"; *Jamansız jaksı bolmaydı, jınsız baksı bolmaydı* "There is no good without evil, there is no *baksı* without genie"; *Bası awırğan, baksı balgerge toymaydı* "One with a headache never gets enough of the *baksı* and the fortune-teller"; *Baydıñ tamağın jaksı jeydi, awruwdıñ tamağın baksı jeydi* "A rich person's food is eaten by a good person, a sick person's food is eaten by a *baksı*"; *Baksı baksını köre almaydı, Jaksı jaksını köre almaydı* "Pressure cannot see *baksı*; good cannot see good" etc. (Gürsu, 2009, pp. 90, 91, 270, 799). All these proverbs, as mentioned above, show the place of the *baksı* figure in the Kazakh folk consciousness in a multi-layered way. The person who is *baksı* is affirmed as a healer, and saviour. However, their closeness with jinns gives him naturalness on the one hand and eeriness on the other. Again, with his social aspect, it is reminded that he lives with the people's troubles. People's turning to traditional treatment methods in desperation is satirised. In all these proverbs, *baksı* is shown to be both a spiritual leader, a healer and a figure criticised by the society, and *baksı* is recorded as both a sacred and criticised profession with its healing aspect.

The word "baksı" is also found in Kazakh epics with the meaning of "minstrel, healer." In the folk epic *Şora Batır, Jını tüsken baksıday, Kóbızsız Esim sarnad* "Like a *baksı* possessed by a genie (in a trance, out of control, behaving as if in a spiritual state), *Esim* (proper name) moaned without a kopuz (traditional Kazakh stringed instrument) (in the sense that he sang a heartfelt song, sang a heartfelt lament, or sang a spiritual plea)." From this sentence, it can be seen that the person named *Esim* is in such a deep state of mind that, as if in a trance like a shaman, they sing a heartfelt lament or moans without playing the kopuz (i.e., without a musical instrument). This expresses a state of intense inspiration and ecstasy. In this expression, the *baksı* is seen as a minstrel who distributes healing by means of the jinns he believes to be present in him and accompanied by kopuz (Kallimci, 2010, p. 111). In one of the most famous classical love epics of Kazakh literature, *Bayan Sulu men Kosı Körpeş*, which has been told for centuries in oral tradition among the people, the concept of *baksı* is also seen. As given in the epic, *Karabay, onıñ Katını häm tuvsqandarı baksınıñ aytkanına nanıp, Kudalıqtan ayrılmakka oylağan edi. Jalğız-ak kart Äjibay baksınıñ aytkanına nanbay, Karabayğa «vädeden kaytpa» dedi*. "Karabay, his wife, and their relatives, believing in what the *baksı* had said, had considered breaking off the promised kinship (the arranged marriage agreement). Only the elder Äjibay did not believe the *baksı*'s words and told Karabay, Do not go back on your word." (Sadırbayulı II, 2020, p. 90) in the sentences, *baksı* is a figure whose word is trusted without question by a large part of the society, regardless of whether it is true or false, believing that he has news from the future.

The concept of *baksı* is also found in Kazakh fairy tales. It is possible to find sample sentences about the use of the word in the *Kazak Kahramanlık Masalları* (Kazakh Heroic Tales). In the fairy tale named *Deldaş Batır*, "The khan fell ill one day. The *baksı* who saw the khan's illness said, Sir, the meat of the deer will cure your illness. If you bring it, cook it, and eat it, you will be fine." "-While you were lying sick, when the *baksı* said that deer meat would cure your illness, three of us went hunting with your two mirza sons-in-law upon your order" and in the fairy tale named *Mamay Batırın Hayali*, "The white axe was shining on the top of the hut. I took it with me, and riding on my horse, I came back to my house. As soon as I arrived, I called the *baksı* who had told me not to go and said, Here, this is the hand of Jeztırnak, this is his axe. You were telling me not to go. I went and took revenge on my enemy who had killed my fathers. Then the *baksı* stopped and said, This köktırnak was cutting people into pieces, and there were two of them, husband and wife. It is true that you killed them. But you should not have taken the axe. This one has a husband. He said, Wherever this axe is lying, he will seek it out and destroy it along with the village. You took the axe in vain; if not in three months, then in three years he will find it wherever it is. You must wait at the threshold without sleeping until he finds it. If you don't realise he is coming, he will kill your village from head to toe. And nothing but his own axe can cut off his head. Thus, I was afraid of *baksı's* words, and I stayed awake at night and waited at the threshold with my white axe in my hand." In these sentences, *baksı* is both a healer and a person whose words and warnings are feared and whose advice is consulted (Yıldırım, 2017, pp. 210, 217, 450).

7. Baksı and the Shamanic Worldview: An Anthropological Perspective

The role of the *baksı* in Kazakh culture can only be fully understood when framed within broader anthropological insights on shamanism. Scholars from different traditions have emphasized the cosmological, ritual, ecological, and historical dimensions of the shamanic figure, providing essential context for understanding how the *baksı* embodies continuity and transformation. Mircea Eliade established ecstasy as the defining trait of the shaman: "the Yakut shaman's power and prestige derive exclusively from his capacity for ecstasy. He has taken the place of the priest in sacrifices offered to the Supreme Being; but just as in the case of the Altaic shamans, the substitution has brought about a change in the very structure of the rite: the offering has been transformed into a psychophoria, that is, into a dramatic ceremony based on an ecstatic experience" (Eliade, 1964, p. 236). For Eliade, myths themselves preserve the archetype of this role: "they tell of a First Shaman, sent to earth by the Supreme Being or his surrogate (the demiurge or the solarized god) to defend human beings against diseases and evil spirits" (Eliade, 1964, p. 506). These archetypes resonate strongly with the *baksı's* image in Kazakh oral tradition as a healer and protector. Eliade also emphasized the vertical cosmology of ascents and descents: "the symbolism of ascent plays an essential part in the shamanic ideology and techniques... the celestial ascent of the shaman... is regarded, and regards himself, as a privileged being" (Eliade, 1964, pp. 505, 506). The *baksı's* ability to traverse these realms directly echoes this archaic religious schema.

Åke Hultkrantz provided a functional definition of shamanism: "I consider trance, direct contact with spiritual beings and guardian spirits, together with the mediating role played by the shaman in a ritual setting, to constitute the minimum requirement for a case of shamanism" (Hultkrantz, 1993/2007, p. 12). He further described the practical and social roles: "the shaman is also a psychopomp, and a guide to the other world for people ignorant in eschatological matters. He is, furthermore, a diviner, and the middleman between man and the powers, the one responsible for bringing on hunting luck" (Hultkrantz, 1993/2007, p. 10). In the Kazakh steppe, the *baksı* likewise acts as mediator, healer, and guarantor of balance between human society and the invisible world.

Juha Pentikäinen introduced ecological and cosmographic dimensions into the analysis. He observed: "The Saami drum is particularly complex in its structure, representing in its microcosm the seasonal variation of universe as a macrocosm. Containing much mythical information, it is a kind of a cognitive map for the trip of the shaman's ego-soul between the three levels of the universe" (Pentikäinen, 1996, p. 9 → also cf. Pentikäinen, 1987). Such descriptions illuminate the baksı's use of the kobyz (or kopuz), which functions not only as a musical instrument but as a cosmological tool, resonating with the rhythms of the universe. As Pentikäinen suggested, the drum and its equivalents are "a star chart including such astral phenomena as the twelve star constellation of the Zodiac and the Milky Way" (Pentikäinen, 1996, p. 10 → also cf. Sommarström, 1991).

Historical transformations in Central Asia complicate the picture of the baksı. Devin DeWeese has shown how Sufi practices became absorbed into shamanic forms: "A significant body of Muslim religious rites, with roots in Sufi devotional practice, continued to be conducted in Central Asia well into the Soviet era... Reflecting communal adaptations of the Sufi dhikr, or 'remembrance' of God, as part of healing or funerary ceremonies, these rites were reclassified, in Soviet ethnographic literature, as vestiges of 'shamanism'" (DeWeese, 2014, p. 326). This fusion demonstrates how the baksı was never displaced by Islam but rather adapted, with Islamic invocations coexisting with older techniques of ecstasy and healing.

In modern times, Andrea Znamenski emphasized how shamanism was recast by the Western imagination: "people became convinced of the redemptive power of primal peoples, who were expected to offer curative remedies for modern civilization. Nature spiritual practices that earlier had been stamped as superstition were recast into super-perception, and shamans were viewed as tribal analogues of Western psychiatrists" (Znamenski, 2007, p. 169). He further highlighted Eliade's phenomenological stance: "his goal was not to ground shamanism in a particular culture, history, or place but to capture its universal nature, 'le côté spiritual, the symbolism and inner coherence of [it as a] religious ethnological phenomenon'" (Znamenski, 2007, p. 171). Such revaluations not only reflect Western projections but also reinforce the enduring relevance of the baksı as a figure whose significance transcends cultural and temporal boundaries.

In this context, evaluating the baksı figure not only within linguistic and historical contexts but also in light of shamanic worldviews and anthropological perspectives reinforces the integrity of the study. Eliade's emphasis on ecstatic experience and cosmic verticality, Hultkrantz's functional definition and observations on social roles, Pentikäinen's ecological and cosmographic interpretations, DeWeese's studies on Islamic-Sufi influences, and Znamenski's analyses of modern Western imaginations, the multi-layered identity of the baksı becomes more clearly apparent. This synthesis shows that baksı is not merely a healer or folk poet in Kazakh culture, but also a figure representing historical continuity and transformation, mediating between humans and nature, society and the spirit world. Thus, the reflections of ancient Turkic belief systems in the present day, emphasized at the beginning of the article, are supported by anthropological and ethnographic discussions; the place of the baksı tradition within cultural identity, social order, and collective memory is clarified in a more comprehensive manner.

8. The Place and Importance of the Concept of "Baksı" in Kazakh Society

Baksı, which has an important place in the ancient belief system and social structure of the Kazakh people, has a deep meaning in Kazakh society not only as a healing method but also as spiritual guidance and cultural heritage. In this context, in the work titled

Kazaqtıñ Etnografıyalıq Kategoriyalar, Uğımdar Men Atawlarınıñ Dästürli Jüyesi (Traditional System of Ethnographic Categories, Concepts, and Names of the Kazakh People), the word is used in the ancient ethno-cultural understanding of "levitation" (the arrival of spiritual inspiration), which brings the human world together with the world of spirits and jinn. It is also defined as a term used in relation to a person who undertakes the task of "playing" (organising rituals), making prophecies, and healing the sick by playing kopuz (a Kazakh stringed instrument). *Baksı* healed the confused and mentally ill, snake bites, and women with difficult childbirth. In the same work, it is stated that the arrival of the divine power to the *baksı* takes place against the will of the person. This divine power sometimes comes early to one person and late to another. Sometimes it can also come to someone temporarily or coincidentally. The occurrence of the divine power in a person is known by the term *Baksılıqtıñ Konuvı* (The Bestowal of Baksılık)³. The ancestors of people with *baksı* ability who lived in the past entered their dreams, and as a result of the divine warning they received from their ancestors, these people turned towards the path of becoming a *baksı*. The belief that a person turns towards *baksı* in this way is widespread in Kazakh society. Although it is not known exactly when *baksı* was formed, *baksı* did not remain unaffected after the introduction of Islam into Kazakh society. People began to believe that the healing of a person or the fulfilment of prophecies was possible with the spiritual support of God, then saints and prophets and ancestors (Älimbay I, 2011, p. 366).

In order for a person to become a *baksı*, it is also very important that he/she is related to the *baksı* who lived before and that he/she passes through certain ranks. Çobanoğlu says that in the process of becoming a *baksı*, first and foremost, lineage is a very important factor. The fact that the person's mother's or father's side has *baksı* who lived in the past, in some cases in both directions, is effective in receiving the "first call" that starts the process of becoming a *baksı*. The spirits and spiritual powers of the deceased ancestors appear in the life of the person, sometimes from a young age of 13-15 or even 7, during various severe illnesses or "returning from death" states and moments. They force the person to become a *baksı*. Since those who refuse to become *baksı* will die as a result of the relentless illness and similar conditions they face, many people in this situation accept the call made to them through dreams and become ready for the task by completing their physical and spiritual purification, such as visiting certain places of visitation, sacrificing sacrifices, and spending a night there, according to the way and method notified through dreams. Again, according to the information given by Çobanoğlu, after the person is purified with the help of ancestor spirits and becomes ready for duty, he usually enters a forty-day "çille" process under the guidance of a mullah or a knowledgeable person. In this process, the Qur'an is read to him, prayers are offered, the way and method are taught, and he is matured under the supervision of an "ustaz." At the end of the training, the *ustaz*, who is the most competent person in the community -this person is usually a well-known *baksı* or *emçi*- "bata vermek" that is, by being blessed and approved, receives permission to work as an *emçi* or *baksı* and is now considered to have reached the competence to serve the community (Çobanoğlu, 2018, pp. 3, 4).

The clothing of the *baksı*, who are ready for duty by going through this difficult process mentioned above, is also different from normal people, and their treatment methods and duties also vary. In the work titled *Edebiyettanuv Terimlerinin Sözdigi* (Dictionary of Literary Science Terms), these issues are explained as follows: *Baksı*'s clothing is also quite different⁴. In some people, the clothes of *baksı* evoke the figure of a deer; in others, the shape of a bird. As soon as the *baksı* put on the auspicious outfit called "alabajak," which was embroidered with various irons and embroideries, he changed his nature and

assumed the identity of "jinn" or "jinn exorcist." While performing his duty, *baksı* would perform various magical melodies accompanied by musical instruments such as *kalkopuz* (kopuz), *dombra*, and *asa-değnek*⁵. Sometimes he produced the melodies and lyrics himself; sometimes he made extensive use of folk poetry and music. One of the most basic duties of the *baksı* was to heal the sick. During the treatment, the *baksı* also acted as an intermediary between evil spirits and people, expelling and curing the harmful spirits that haunted the sick person. While treating the patient, *baksı* would also show that he could do things that an ordinary person could not do, such as stepping barefoot on the ember fire, making the tongs red-hot in the fire and licking them, climbing the pillars of the house, singing like a bird, disguising himself as an animal, etc. In the work, it is also stated that *baksı* were also clairvoyants who could foresee the future (Ahmetov & Şanbayev, 1996, pp. 60, 61).

Baksı has been encountered in various rituals in Kazakh customs and traditions, and in the past, in the Kazakh society, in the practice of *til kestiruv* (tongue cutting), *baksı* have undertaken the duty of healer and physician. In the *Kazak Salt Dästürleri* (Kazakh Traditions and Customs), the following information is given about these practices: "In the past, the types of diseases were very few in Kazakhs. The beauties and braves of the steppe, who constantly soared like ducks in wide plateaus, vast lakes, and green meadows, did not easily catch simple diseases. What they ate, drank, and even the air they breathed would be a cure for life. If it weren't for centuries of wars and great disasters, these Kazakh people would have been a nation that filled the earth. In the past, diseases such as cancer, high blood pressure, and drowning were not known as they are today. Nevertheless, when someone got sick, certain prohibitions and rules were applied. For example, Kazakhs were advised to ask how the patient was before dusk. It was frowned upon to visit the sick after the footsteps of animals had ceased (at night). Secondly, if the disease was severe, the patient's house was not allowed to receive many visitors, saying that "one's feet are heavy" (i.e., with the idea that the visitor might carry bad luck). In some cases, *baksı*, or folk physicians, would treat the patient secretly. In such cases, those who came to see the patient were not allowed inside. Even guests were not allowed in the house until the treatment process was completed. This practice was called *til kestiruv* (Tavulı, 2017, p. 324).

In conclusion, *baksı* is not only a healing practice in the belief world of the Kazakh people but also a multi-layered structure with its social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. *Baksı*, which has been shaped by the influence of both ancient Turkic belief systems and Islam in the historical process, is located at the intersection of the individual's relations with fate, nature, spiritual beings, and social traditions. The divine power that the *baksı* receives through "being put into the air" shows that he was chosen for this role against his will and gained a different, sacred status in the eyes of the society. In this respect, *baksı* is a figure that emerged as a result of a spiritual assignment rather than an individual choice. *Baksı* has assumed a central role not only in the fight against diseases but also in moments of social crisis, ritual practices, and interpretation of the future. Drawing a profile that is far from ordinary in every aspect, from his clothing to his musical instruments to his physical performance in rituals, the *baksı* has been a figure both feared and respected in the society. The symbolic clothes, mystical melodies, and behaviours associated with supernatural powers have kept the connection of the *baksı* with the "other world" alive and enabled him to respond to the spiritual needs of the society. In addition, the example of *til kestiruv*, which reveals the place of *baksı* in traditional practices, is remarkable in terms of showing the sensitive ritual understanding of Kazakh society shaped around sick individuals and the hidden but effective role of *baksı* in this process. Rituals

such as silence, limited visits, and staying away at night are not only related to health but also practices aimed at maintaining spiritual balance. This shows that the culture of *baksı* is not only focused on the healing of the individual but is also a part of social order, spiritual purity, and the general peace of society. When all these elements come together, *baksı* is both a bridge between the past and the future in Kazakh culture and a representative of a spiritual mission that transcends the boundaries between nature and man. Therefore, *baksı* is considered not only a historical tradition but also a living cultural structure that shapes the identity of the Kazakh people and the way they perceive the world.

The tradition of *baksı*, which has existed in Kazakh culture since ancient times and is a multifaceted institution that carries out religious, medical, and artistic functions together, has not been perceived positively by some segments of society; especially with the modernisation process, *baksı* have also been criticised as figures that affect the people with magic and create fear and obscurity. In the *Kazak Halık Edebiyeti* (Kazakh Folk Literature), it is said that in ancient times, the *baksı* among the people saw themselves as people who provided and organised communication between the creator and man. In the work, it is stated that the *baksı* dressed in colourful clothes in order to look scary and mysterious to the eyes of the people, walked around the sick person and played the kopuz, recited poetry in a terrible voice, and started chanting by changing their facial expressions, and with these behaviours, they aroused anxiety in the house. The work also includes the testimonies of people who have encountered the rituals of *baksı*. Adolf Januszkiewicz, who came to the Middle Jüz region on a private trip from Russia in the forties of the last century, describes his impression when he came face to face with a *baksı* among the people as follows: "The *baksı* had a kopuz in his hand, sang poetry in a rough voice, quickly, invoked the names of the saints, summoned jinn-demons, struck his body with a red-hot knife, and walked around the felt tent. That night I couldn't sleep; it was as if the music of a demon in a red cap with a wild voice was playing in front of my eyes." Similarly, the famous Russian traveller A. E. Alektorov, who collected Kazakh folklore, met a *baksı* named Suyimenbay in 1899 in Karatorgay district of Torgay region. Alektorov also describes in detail a ritual performed by Suyimenbay, which he witnessed. Süyimenbay performed a ritual to cure a young woman who fell ill because the young man she loved had died. However, at the end of the ritual, the young girl died a week later. Based on all these events in the work, it is determined that *baksı* deceive ordinary people, deceive them with magic, spread empty beliefs, spread fear with their rude behaviour, and make people unhappy (Sadırbayulı I, 2020, pp. 6, 7, 8).

9. Conclusion

The concept of *baksı* is a concrete reflection of a multi-layered cultural, religious, and linguistic transformation that extends from ancient Turkish belief systems to today's Kazakh society. This study has revealed the traces of this transformation in both etymological and socio-cultural aspects and analysed in detail the meaning changes of the word *baksı* throughout history, its reflections in folk memory, and its functions in contemporary Kazakh culture.

Although the word *baksı* is etymologically based on Old Chinese *po-shih* (博瓜 "scholar, master"), it gained widespread usage in Turkic dialects from Uyghur Turkish with meanings such as "teacher," "sage," and "religious guide"; over time, this set of meanings expanded and evolved to cover different social roles such as "shaman," "bard," "physician," "scribe," and "seer." The word continued to exist in various forms in Chagatai; it was also used as a title denoting scribes, Buddhist monks, and scholars, especially those who knew the Uyghur alphabet.

In modern Kazakh, the *baksı* is defined as a mystical figure associated with spiritual powers who performs rituals accompanied by the *kopuz*, treats the sick, and predicts the future. In Kazakh oral literature -in fairy tales, epics, proverbs, and idioms- *baksı* are characters who are both respected and treated with suspicion and fear. This dual perception reflects a hybrid structure of consciousness that combines religious values formed under the influence of Islam and traces of the ancient Turkish belief system. Especially in the post-Islamic period, the fact that the *baksı* figure is "associated with jinns," "deceiving people" or "instilling fear" also comes to the fore, showing a cultural reinterpretation process.

Another important point identified in the study is that being a *baksı* is not an individual choice but a status that emerges as a result of a metaphysical call. This process, which starts with supernatural signs such as dreams, illnesses, and the guidance of ancestors, is completed with a social and spiritual transformation of the individual. From this point of view, *baksı* is not only a profession; it also functions as a sacred duty, a symbolic structure representing the spiritual aspect of the social order.

The figure of *baksı* in Kazakh proverbs and idioms is identified with wisdom, intuition, and healing on the one hand; on the other hand, he is satirised as a deceiving, magical, unstable, or dangerous figure. This contrast clearly reflects the different approaches to *baksı* in the Kazakh folk mind. The fact that the same word appears in both affirmative and critical contexts shows the multi-layered structure of Kazakh oral culture and that it is an area where cultural meanings are constantly negotiated.

In conclusion, the concept of *baksı* is not only a historical heritage in Kazakh culture but also a dynamic cultural practice and identity marker that continues to have an impact today. *Baksı* functions as a bridge that crosses the boundaries between the individual and nature, humans and spirits, and past and future. This multidimensional structure constitutes one of the cornerstones of the Kazakh people's worldview, belief system, and social organisation; despite the modernisation process, it continues to exist in the collective consciousness.

Furthermore, as emphasized in Chapter 7, an anthropological perspective deepens this understanding. Eliade's focus on ascension through ecstasy, Hultkrantz's definition of the shaman as a mediator and spirit guide, Pentikäinen's cosmographic interpretations of ritual tools, DeWeese's insights into Islamic-Sufi integrations, and Znamenski's modern reinterpretations demonstrate that the *baksı* is not merely a healer or poet but also a cosmological actor. This synthesis reinforces that the *baksı* embodies continuity and transformation; it brings people together with spirits, society with nature, and past traditions with today's realities, thus preserving its vitality as one of the cornerstones of Kazakh cultural identity.

Abbreviations

Uyg.: Old Uyghur Turkic

Kip.: Kipchak Turkic

Chag.: Chagatai Turkic

Notes

¹ It is an administrative region in the east of Kazakhstan with the capital city of *Semey*.

² *Subartav* is a district in the East Kazakhstan Region, specifically in Abay oblast.

³ In her work, Ashirkhanova says that in some selected people the sacredness of *baksı* is manifested as a child. For this reason, in different regions of the Kazakh lands there lived many *baksı* who were known as "bala *baksı*". In the same work, it is also stated that in most cases the sacredness of *baksı* is manifested in a person at the age of 30 to 45. Usually, the person who is under the influence of the sacredness of *baksı* suffers from ailments. Symptoms such as seeing surreal beings, frequent dizziness, spasms of the limbs,

mental and physical pain, irritability, isolation from people, avoiding crowded places, and a constantly thoughtful attitude are the behavioural patterns observed in baksı candidates. As for the manifestation of the sacredness of baksı according to age, in the world ethnographic literature it is claimed that it takes place between the ages of 6 and 50, sometimes at an earlier age (Ashirkhanova, 2021, pp. 112, 113, 114).

⁴ It is possible to find detailed information on the clothing of baksı in the work entitled *Kazaqtıñ Etnografıyalıq Kategoriyalar, Uğımdar Men Ataıların Dästürli Jüyesi*. In the work, the baksı costume is defined as "a ceremonial outfit specially made from whole skins of animals and birds". Baksı regarded his clothes and belongings as both living and sacred creatures in a symbolic sense. Especially wearing a headdress made of swan skin and making their kopuz similar to a swan had a symbolic meaning. Baksı wore mottled (yellowish) clothes, rode yellow horses and carried mottled whips. They usually wore a short caftan with short sleeves and a plain long caftan over it. The appearance of Kazakh baksı in later periods was not much different from the people. The work also informs that baksı wore short white striped shirts, some baksı wore ordinary long shirts, while others wore completely shabby, tattered and torn clothes. Many ornaments made of bone, stone and various metals were called *asay-müsey* (staff and tools). Baksı used to carry a staff decorated with owl feathers. There is also information that some Kazakh baksı temporarily wore women's clothes when they were first haunted by a jinn and got used to this work by "playing" (trance state) (Älimbay I, 2011, p. 370).

⁵ In the work titled *Kazak Edebi Tiliniñ Sözdigi* (Dictionary of Kazakh Literary Language), during the rituals performed by the baksı, the melody /melody performed by adding the sounds of instruments such as kopuz etc. is expressed as *baksı sarını*. The person who performs baksı sarını (Baksı melody) becomes both a minstrel, a dancer and a composer. Baksı sarını is structured in the metre of 7-8 syllable koşuk (lyrical poem in old Turkic oral tradition) or 11 syllable koşma (aşık-style folk poem in Turkish oral literature) specific to folk poetry and performed in a special musical makam (Kaliyev et al. II, 2011, p. 631). In the *Kazakh Fol'klortanuv Ğılımı* (Kazakh Folklore Research Science), it is stated that when singing the baksı melody, the baksı sings by calling his own jinn (helper spirit) and each baksı has a unique "poetry jinn" (jır jını). However, it is also stated that the words in the baksı melody are dominant and exaggerated in terms of emphasis, the inner meaning of the words, the stanzas are not in harmony with each other and are not closely connected (Jüsinov, 2007, p. 326) → For an example of Baksı Sarını also cf. Sadırbayulı I, 2020, p. 66).

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