Experiencing God in Sound:
Music and Meaning in Uyghur Sufism

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Abstract

Living in Xinjiang or Chinese Central Asia, the Uyghur people have developed a unique set of sounded Sufi practices in a largely isolated environment, although they have been historically connected to Sufism in other parts of Asia. The spectrum of such sounded Sufi practices range from the more basic vocalisation styles in *dhikr* recitation to the more musically sophisticated form of *muqam*/*mäshräp*, with their different functions in religious lives. Based on rare ethnographic data from a year's fieldwork in the region, this study tries to provide in-depth analysis of meanings of these sounds and their related behaviour, especially the relationship between sounds and altered state of consciousness in the Uyghur Sufi case.

Using musical, textual, and experiential analyses, this dissertation considers the meanings of Uyghur Sufi sounded practices and altered state of consciousness, drawing on previous research in ethnomusicology and approaches to Sufism. The study also looks at the mediation and transmission of Uyghur sounded Sufi practices in the context of the transnational flows, which connect this isolated region to wider trends, and ideological conflicts that are exacerbated by the development of media technologies. Finally, the dissertation analyses the political situation that is affecting Uyghur Sufi practices, especially through the author's personal experience of organising tours for Uyghur Sufi musicians, which provides insights into the contemporary political context of these practices, as well as providing a reflexive approach to ethnomusicological practice when working with a musical culture that faces suppression.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Notes on Transliteration and Place Names

For Uyghur language transliterations, I use the Romanisation system adopted in *Chuo-Yurashia wo shiru jiten* (An Encyclopaedia of Central Eurasia) edited by Komatsu, H. et al. (Komatsu et al. 2005). However, for Uyghur names, I use the Roman spellings of their own choices or those that appear on their publications.

For Chinese language terms, I use the Chinese *pinyin* transliteration system. For place names in Xinjiang, I use transliterations from the Uyghur language, except that in some cases I adopt the conventional English usage, like Khotan and Kashgar (rather than Khotän and Qäshqär). For some religious terms, I use international spelling conventions rather than transcriptions from the Uyghur language, like Naqshbandiyya (rather than Näqshbändiyyä).

Acknowledgement

My deepest gratitude goes to all the Uyghur Sufi friends I met during my fieldwork in Khotan in 2015-2016. They accommodated me, fed me, and taught me everything that I wanted to learn. There is no way that I can pay back their generosity and kindness, and unfortunately I can't even mention their names here, due to the harsh political situation in which the authorities may criminalise any of them because of his or her religious activities. I can only hope that this research will help people to know more about the marginal community of Uyghur Sufis.

I want to thank my PhD supervisor Rachel Harris, who has guided me to develop my ideas into a PhD dissertation, and who has taught me about both the discipline of ethnomusicology and the integrity of an intellectual.

I wouldn't have been able to carry out this research without the support of many Uyghur colleagues, especially Professor Rahile Dawut of Xinjiang University, who shared with me many insights into Uyghur culture and folklore. Aynur Kadir provided a great deal of valuable ideas. During many interviews I conducted in Khotan, Muqeddes Mukhter interpreted for me. During my writing, she also transcribed most Uyghur lyrics and translated many Uyghur-language texts that I quoted in this dissertation.

I have received support from many other friends too. Iskandar Ding translated most of the Uyghur lyrics I quoted in this dissertation into English. Joyce Du helped me to refer to some sources in French with her excellent French language ability. I also want to thank Flora Henderson, Antranig Basman, Ruard Absaroka, and Alex Dea for their editing and proofreading.
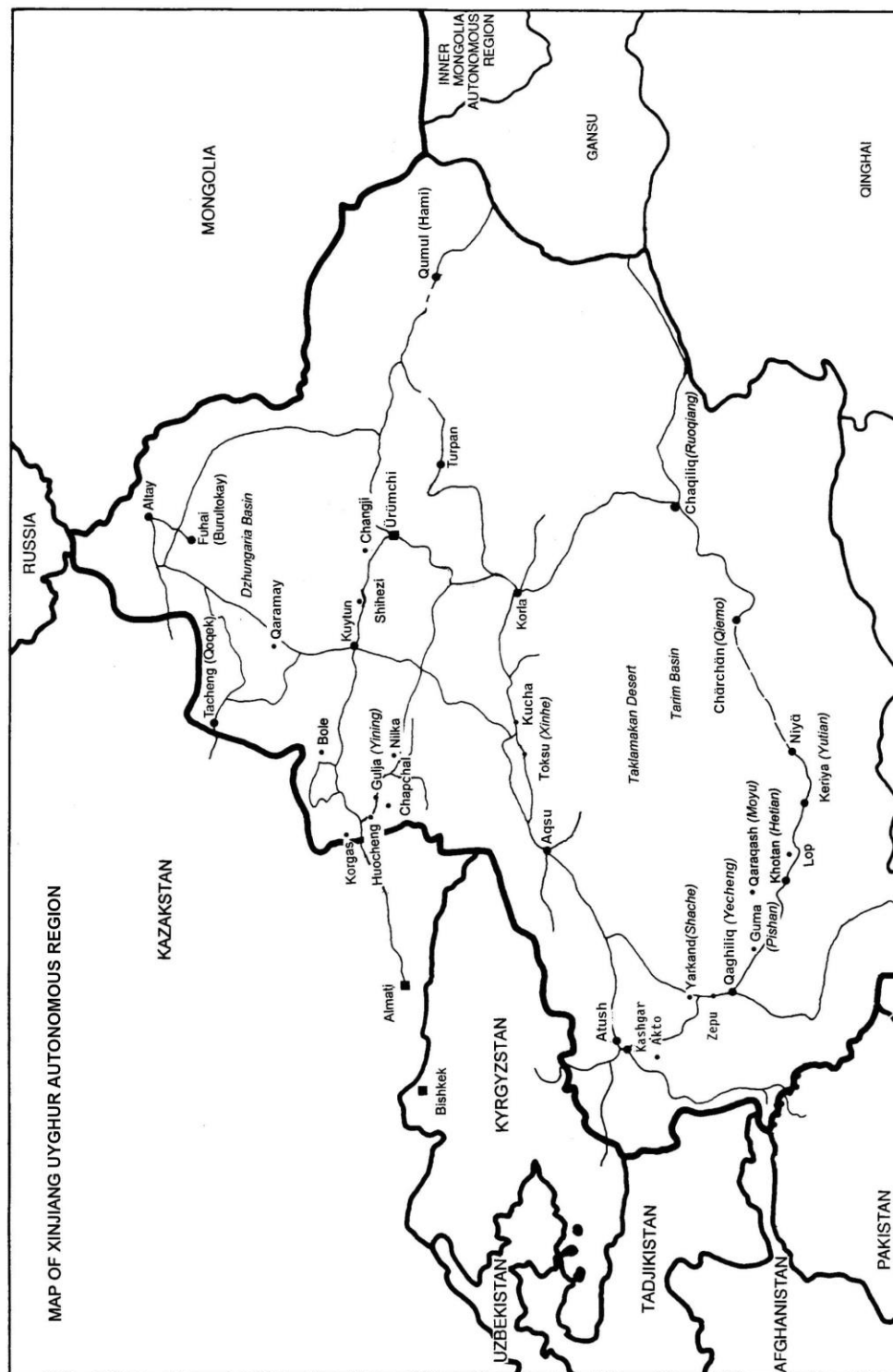
Figure 1. A map of Xinjiang[1]

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[1] Source: http://caccp.freedomsherald.org/guidebook/Etmap.jpg, with additional editing by Li Linxin.

Introduction

This research is about the meaning of musical sound in the religious practice of Sufi Muslims among the Uyghur, a Turkic-speaking people living in the remote desert area of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in northwestern China. I undertook fieldwork for this research from August 2015 to September 2016 in Khotan, an oasis town on the southern edge of the Taklamakan desert. Throughout the year, I immersed myself in sounds of the Uyghur Sufis, like *dhikr*[2], *muqam*[3], and *mäshräp*[4]. These sounds are so closely entwined with their religious practices and lives that it is impossible to understand what it means to be a Uyghur Sufi without understanding the sounds of Uyghur Sufism. The present study is an effort to explore the meanings of these sounds.

0.1 Socio-political background

My interest in the topic originated from a much earlier trip to Xinjiang. Shortly after the Beijing Olympic Games, I spent twenty days travelling in Xinjiang between December 2008 and January 2009. Xinjiang is a completely different world from the open and prosperous image of China that the summer Olympic Games in Beijing aimed to present. I visited Aqtam, a village in Qaraqash County, which was known for its weekly *dhikr* gatherings, and the Ordam Mazar, where the biggest shrine festival in Xinjiang used to be held annually. Both events had been

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[2] *Dhikr* (*zikir* in Uyghur language), which means "remembrance" in Arabic, is a ritual of reciting God's names.

[3] *Muqam* as played among the Sufis are free-metered songs based on Central Asian poetry, accompanied by plucked or bowed lutes. Canonised *muqam* performed by professional musicians, however, are suites based on the Sufi *muqam* tradition but also include other styles of music. See Chapter 3 for more discussion.

[4] *Mäshräp* are devotional songs based on the poetry of the prominent Central Asian Sufi mystic Shah Mashrab who lived in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See Chapter 3 for more discussion.

shut down by the government as illegal religious activities (*feifa zongjiao huodong*).

Fortunately, I was able to attend a secret *dhikr* ceremony given by a group of *büwi*

(woman ritual specialists) in the town of Turpan in eastern Xinjiang, in which the

participants chanted, danced and entered a state of trance. I also met a dervish

who had lived naked for more than twenty years, and whose practices, including

his playing of the *dutar* (two-stringed, long-necked plucked lute), are believed by

people to have a mystic power.

I was fascinated by these sounds of Uyghur Sufism but was saddened that

the sounds and the practices they embody were being suppressed. Before I could

make sense of what I had experienced during this trip, half a year later, I witnessed

the 5th July Riot, the worst ethnic riot in Xinjiang in decades, in which 197 people

were killed in the regional capital Ürümchi.[5] More civil unrest followed in

subsequent years. The government responded with stricter control of religious

activities, which it saw (and still sees) as hotbeds for separatism. However, some

Uyghurs consider the practice of these religious activities a very justifiable

reaction to increased political and cultural oppression (Smith Finley 2013:260).

Almost all religious activities outside of officially sanctioned mosques, including

praying in public, private teaching of the Qur'an, and *dhikr* ceremonies, have been

criminalised (Harris 2014a; see also Roberts 2018).

As a result, political factors have been unavoidable in my research, and

appear in almost every chapter of this dissertation, even if politics was not my

initial focus. Sufi ceremonies can only take place secretly, if at all; I myself was

questioned by the police because of staying with a local friend; many people whom

I know from Xinjiang have been arrested or detained in the last few years,

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[5] See Millward (2009) for a more detailed account and discussion of the riot.

including Sufi practitioners and fellow researchers…. I am fortunate to have not had much of a problem with my fieldwork, but I have personally experienced the social restrictions on my research informants—musicians—when they were unable to embark on the tours that I had arranged for them. This experience became, for better or for worse, the topic of my last chapter.

Figure 2. A poster in Khotan saying "Young men are forbidden to grow big beards", September 2015[6]

With a population of a little more than ten million (according to the 2010 national census, the most up-to-date statistics available at the time of writing),[7] Uyghur is the largest non-Sinophone Muslim ethnic group in China, and the fifth largest of the fifty-six officially recognised ethnic groups in the country. The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where most Uyghur people live, borders India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Mongolia. This part of the world has long been a historical meeting point for different cultures and religions.

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[6] All photos are by the author unless otherwise credited.
[7] http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/pcsj/rkpc/6rp/indexch.htm (accessed 28 March 2018).

Unlike the Sufi musical legacies of many other areas in the world, which have been produced as "world music" (Kapchan 2007, Shannon 2003, Frishkopf 2013), or are being preserved via non-commercial means, the sounded practices of Uyghur Sufis are facing multiple challenges. *Mazar*[8] festivals, with which much Sufi practice used to be associated, have almost disappeared since the festival of the Imam Asim Mazar of Khotan, the last of its kind, was banned in 2013 Dawut)

 Immediately before my fieldwork in 2014, the .(2016:412Xinjiang People's Congress (the regional parliament) passed a new regulation on religious affairs,[9] which Henryk Szadziewski, a senior researcher at the Washington-based Uyghur Human Rights Project, considers to be restricting customary aspects of Uyghur religious practice.[10]

Although similar crackdowns on religious practices outside of governmental confines have also happened in other Central Asian regions like Tajikistan (Gatling 2018), in early 2017, an incomparable securitisation programme was initiated in Xinjiang shortly after I had finished my fieldwork. The government has since increased its repression with cutting-edge technology (Millward 2018). Adrian Zenz, a researcher at the European School of Culture and Theology, estimates that at least several hundred thousand, and possibly over one million, of Xinjiang's Muslim population are, or have been, interned in political re-

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[8] *Mazar* is a shrine, the grave of a revered spiritual figure where people go to worship. See Dawut 2001, Thum 2014.

[9] http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-11/29/content_18996900.htm (accessed 3 April 2015).

[10] http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/religious-extremism-law-12102014160359.html (accessed 3 April 2015).

education facilities.[11] Among them are many Sufis whom I know, who are deemed dangerous by the authorities because of their involvement in religious activities.

On the other hand, the opening up of Xinjiang has led to increasing transnational linkages with Pakistan, the Central Asian states of former Soviet Union, and beyond. This has had important implications in paving the way for a broader range of Muslim ideologies to be disseminated in the Xinjiang region (Waite 2007:168). For example, reformist Muslims have begun to question local religious practices such as *näzir* (the organising of feasts in memory of the dead) and *barat* (the praying for the intercession of the dead in the Islamic month of *Sha'ban*) (Waite 2007:173).

In addition, when Uyghur folklorist Rahile Dawut visited the Imam Hasim Mazar in the late 1990s she encountered a woman who made a long speech about how *mazar* worship is against proper religious teaching (Harris and Dawut 2002:115). When Harris returned to Xinjiang after a break of three years in 2012, she noticed a striking Islamisation of the Uyghur quarter of Ürümchi, including young women in full veiling, and disappearance of cigarettes and alcohol from shops and restaurants (Harris 2014c:106).

Such an Islamic revival with reformist influences is happening not only in Xinjiang, but also in other parts of Central Asia as well as inner China. In Kyrgyzstan, there are people who have returned from studying in Pakistan and India to advocate for a more religious life, using the caliphate as a frame of reference (Montgomery 2016:95–96). In Tajikistan, the *daavat*, or Tablighi Jama'at, a Sunni Islamic missionary movement with roots in the Indian Deobandi

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[11] https://jamestown.org/program/evidence-for-chinas-political-re-education-campaign-in-xinjiang/ (accessed 22 August 2018).

movement, has gained prominence since the early 2000s. It has been seen by some locals as establishing a bridge between pre-Soviet holy men and contemporary Sunnis (Mostowlansky 2017:93). In Xinjiang's neighbouring Qinghai Province, the revivalist movements of Salafiyya, Yihewani, and Tabligh Jama'at exist side by side, with a similar goal of achieving what people believe to be more authentic and universal Islamic practices that have been purged of old-fashioned ethnic customs, but with different means of attaining this goal (Steward 2016:5, 17). In all of these areas, there is a perceived urgency to strengthen people's identities by referring to supposedly more authentic Islamic practices from abroad in order to be better Muslims. As a result, more syncretic local practices, including Sufi practices, are challenged.

Advancement in media technologies has changed the way that religious messages are shared in Xinjiang, as elsewhere in the world. Commenting on the popularity of recorded sermons in Mali, Schulz argues that broadcasting contributes to a process of "re-sacralizing" of some secular domains, contrary to the idea espoused by modernisation theory that profanisation and secularisation of the everyday has been propagated by mass media and commercial culture (Schulz 2003:163).

New media, especially social media such as the Chinese WeChat platform, have not only helped to disseminate such reformist ideologies that challenge local practices, but have also, to some extent, shaped the way that religious messages are received. For example, a recorded sermon in the Uyghur language that circulated on WeChat in 2013, used a heavy reverb that is typical of many similar recorded sermons worldwide and reminiscent of the echoing spaces of Saudi Arabia's huge mosques. This sermon attributed Uyghur subjugation under Chinese

rule to a range of Uyghur immoral behaviours, which included listening to music (Harris 2017a:44).

Facing these challenges, sounded Sufi practices, which had already been marginal in the Uyghur society, seemed to be verging on extinction. That was my impression before I started my fieldwork, and that was what I heard from many Uyghurs, especially those of higher socioeconomic classes in big cities like Ürümchi. However, the year I spent in Khotan changed my views on this, and showed me a subterranean but vibrant world of Uyghur Sufis, who persevere with their practices, applying creative resilience to limited resources. What is it that makes them hold on to their tradition, and what do their practices and related musical sounds mean to them in today's turbulent Xinjiang? These are the questions that have come to intrigue me the most in my research.

Sound is a medium through which Muslims get to know God, and it is a particularly important medium in Islam, since Islam in general accords the sense of hearing a higher position than the sense of seeing. Islam regards the former as more spiritually oriented while the latter is considered more physical (During 2010:552–553). This is especially true of the Sufi branch of Islam, in which the *samā'* (spiritual concert) has been an important form of cultivation. Among the Uyghurs, most people cannot read the Arabic language (the first Uyghur language translation of the Qur'an was only published in 1986), and rely on the oral teaching of knowledgeable religious people to guide their beliefs. For the Sufis, the teaching and learning of this spiritual content has often been conducted in rituals that involve recitation of the *dhikr* and dance. Without these sounded practices, Uyghur Sufis lose their religion, and their identities as Sufi Muslims.

Historically there has been much debate about the permissibility of music in Muslim societies, where the music of the Sufi brotherhoods has been regarded with suspicion because of its association with excesses and irrational behaviours, while secular music is considered to lead too easily to the sins of lust and fornication (Faruqi 1980:59). However, for many Sufis, music is a way of cultivating the meaning of Islam. For example, Amīr Khusraw (1253–1325), the foundational figure in the musical tradition of South Asian Muslims who is believed to have invented the musical genre of *qawwali* (a form of Sufi devotional songs from South Asia), argued that music is meaningful when rid of vulgar enticement (Ahmed 2016:425). With reference to a Qur'anic verse in his poetry "The strings of your ʿūd: O! sage-doctor of the lute—Are in dear-ness to the lovers as is the jugular vein!", Khusraw indicated that the Muslim can experience God, one of whose Ninety-Nine Names in the Qur'an is *al-Samīʿ* (the All-Hearing), in music (Ahmed 2016:426–429).

In Xinjiang, the famous Naqshbandi Sufi master Ahmad Kāsānī Dahbīdī (d. 1542)'s doctrines regarding musical practice have had great influence on the local Sufi soundscape and thought through missionary work of his descendants. Talking about the *samā'* spiritual concert, Ahmad Kāsānī wrote that listening to sweet voices, harmonious lyrics and exciting poetry can not only inflame mystical desire and remove lassitude in the Sufi's practice, but also produce the hidden qualities that put mystical love in motion (Papas 2014:34).

Reports from early twentieth-century Xinjiang present both voices against music—that the hair of the ass of the Antichrist is made from the strings of musical instruments and will entice people to follow him on the Day of Judgment, and those for it—that the prophet David (Dawut) was the inventor of music (Bellér-

Hann 2000:40). The debate over the permissibility of music among Uyghur Muslims continues today and contributes to my exploration of the sounded practices of Uyghur Sufis.

The key questions of my research are:

1. Who are the practitioners of musical sounds in Uyghur Sufism? What roles do they play in the Uyghur society?

2. What is the form of the Uyghur *dhikr* ritual, and how does sound function in it?

3. What are the repertoires of musical sounds in Uyghur Sufism? What are the relationships between this and other repertoires of the Uyghur people?

4. What is the meaning of musical sounds in Uyghur *dhikr* ritual, and what is the relationship between these sounds and altered states of consciousness?

5. How are the Uyghur Sufi sounds mediated and transmitted, and how are current ideological conflicts reflected in these processes?

6. How does the current socio-political situation of Xinjiang affect Uyghur Sufi practices?

In order to address these questions, first we need some knowledge about what constitutes Uyghur music.

0.2 Sounded Uyghur Sufi Practice and Uyghur music

The focus of my research is the sounded practices of a group of male followers of the Sufi path (*tärikät yol*) who lived in Khotan, although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to cover all the sounds used as means of religious practice by these Uyghur Sufis. I will focus on sounds that are parts of the *hälqä-sohbät* and *mäshräp*, two important Uyghur Sufi gatherings that I was able to

attend several times during my fieldwork. These sounds are *hikmät*[12], *dhikr*, *muqam*, and *mäshräp*. Qur'anic recitation and *adhan* (the call to prayer), which are also important sounds in Uyghur Sufis' religious lives and are forms shared with non-Sufi Muslims, are outside the parameters of this research.

Some Chinese scholars have discussed sounded practice of Uyghur Muslims, including Qur'anic recitation and *adhan*, as "Uyghur religious music" (*weiwuerzu zongjiao yinyue*) (Guan and Zhou 2001, Du 2002) or "Uyghur Islamic ritual music" (*weiwuerzu yisilanjiao liyi yinyue*) (Zhou 1999). The reason I use "sound" or "sounded Uyghur Sufi practice" instead of the above-mentioned terms is that Uyghur Sufis do not consider all the musical sounds that they use in religious practice to belong to the category of *muzika*, the Uyghur word borrowed from the Arabic term *mūsīqá*, which in turn was borrowed from ancient Greek.

Although sharing the same root with the English term "music", the Uyghur term *muzika* and the Arabic term *mūsīqá* are not equivalent to it. For example, Qur'anic recitation is, by definition, kept distinct from the Arabic concept of *mūsīqá* because of the divine nature of the text, although Qur'anic recitation does share much in common with *mūsīqá*, including pitch organization, ornamentation, and aesthetic standards (Nelson 2001:xiv–xv).

Influenced by the Arabic concept of *mūsīqá*, the Uyghur concept of *muzika* does not include religious chant such as Qur'anic recitation, *adhan*, *hikmät* and *dhikr*, and the term *muzika* usually refers to instrumental works or songs with instrumental accompaniment, especially those of a secular nature. According to some of my interlocutors, *muqam* and *mäshräp* can be *muzika* because of the use of

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[12] Literally "pieces of wisdom", the *hikmät* is a kind of song based on poetry attributed to the twelfth-century Central Asian poet Ahmad Yasawi (Harris 2014b:331–332).

instruments, but this is debatable. There is no umbrella term for all these sounds in the Uyghur language, except *awaz*, which means "sound". During my fieldwork, *awaz* was also the term I used when I asked my interlocutors to talk about these sounds in general, as when I used *muzika* or *yinyue* (the Chinese equivalent of the term music), they would find it inappropriate.

Although the followers of the Sufi path whom I worked with in Khotan did not deem some of their sounded practices to be *muzika*, it is more of an ideological categorisation, and these sounded Sufi practices actually share much in common with *muzika*. Different cultures in the world have different configurations of musical concepts, and considering some musical activities to be categorically different from others is common, for example, among the Hausa of Nigeria, Native Americans, and in India (Nettl 2005:22). However, it is the ethnomusicologist's job to take as his or her subject a broad purview of human sound communication outside the scope of spoken language, which includes both "nonmusical" events in local conceptualisations and those that Western ethnomusicologists do not recognise as music (Nettl 2005:22).

As is shown in studies of religion and music in Uyghur society (Light 2008; Harris 2014a; Zhou 2003) and in other Muslim societies (Nelson 2001; Baily 1988; Faruqi 1980), religious vocalisation, classical music and folk music are parts of a continuum, and it is in the context of this continuum that I name my dissertation "music and meaning in Uyghur Sufism". I use the English term "music" in the title to refer to a spectrum of sound that is broader than that covered by the Uyghur term *muzika*, although I use the term "sounded practice" more often in my writing, especially when referring to practices like *dhikr* which shares fewer elements in common with music of a secular sense.

Uyghur music developed on the basis of many regional styles in the oasis towns of the Xinjiang desert region. The Qarakhan Khanate of Kashgar (founded in the tenth century) and the Chagatay era (between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries) are important periods for the development of Uyghur music (Harris 2008:16).

Chinese musicologists generally divide traditional Uyghur music into folk music, classical music (*muqam*), and religious music (Guan and Zhou 2001:419). In his piece about Uyghur music for the Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, Du Yaxiong classifies Uyghur folk music based on Chinese rather than Uyghur concepts, a common practice of Chinese musicologists. For example, he divides Uyghur folk songs into *tuge* ("unaccompanied") songs and *xianghe* ("process") songs; *xianghe* songs further subdivided into *changdiao* ("long melody" songs with free rhythm) and *duandiao* ("short melody" songs with a quick tempo) (Du 2002:458–459). These Chinese terms are not used by Uyghurs themselves and are not very useful in delineating Uyghur music culture.

More problematic is Du's categorisation of "Uyghur religious music" into "songs, song-and-dance music, and *wahiz* [wayiz] 'speech-songs'": "The song *azan* [call to prayer], scripture chant and song, *qiraät*, and alms song all have a distinct chant character and free rhythm. The most important song-and-dance tune is *Bahshi* [*Bakhshi*], performed as a healing ritual by a shaman as part of the Sufi *erke-sama* [*hälqä-sama*]. *Wahiz* [*Wayiz*] speech-songs are mainly religious dramas and spiritual stories and are accompanied only by the percussion instruments *dap* and *sapaj* [*sapayi*]" (Du 2002:459). Without defining what "Uyghur religious music" is, Du makes his categorisation based on whether dance and speeches are involved in the performance. However, it is difficult to conceive of Qur'anic recitation as

songs, and it is incorrect to conflate the *bakhshi* healing ritual with the Sufi *hälqä-sama*.

It is not very helpful either to see the Uyghur *muqam* essentialised as classical music that "shapes the behavioural norms and rules that form the core of the folk tradition" (Du 2002:459), when the Twelve Muqam are actually professionalised suites based on the *muqam*, *dastan* (sung epic tales) and *mäshräp* that are still widely performed by folk musicians and Sufis in Xinjiang. In fact, there is a great deal of overlap between different repertoires of Uyghur music, and Uyghur culture as a whole is deeply influenced by Islam, especially Sufism. For example, the *muqam* contains lyrics with Sufi imagery and ideals from Central Asian poets like Nawayi [Navo'i], Mashrab, and Fuzuli (Harris 2008:17).

Aynur Kadir argues that Uyghur Sufis, especially of Jahriyya (Sufis who practice loud *dhikr*), have played an important role in preserving and transmitting the Twelve Muqam (Aynur Kadir 2010:96). This preservation and transmission also provides an example of the overlapping of Uyghur "religious music" and classical music.

Besides the Sufism-influenced lyrics of *muqam*, Harris points out the similarities between the melodic arc and gradual movement towards a climax (*awaj*) in the Qur'anic recitation of Uyghur *büwi* and a similar process in the Uyghur Twelve Muqam repertoire, where it is a device for heightening emotion (Harris 2014b:346). The *mäshräp* section of Twelve Muqam is based on songs of the Sufi dervishes called *ashiq*, and it was Turdi Akhun who collected these songs from the *ashiq* and made them part of the Twelve Muqam (Light 2008:111). Zhou also analyses the similarities between "*ashiq* tunes" and the *mäshräp* section of Twelve Muqam, and concludes that what he terms as "Uyghur Islamic ritual music"

is closely related to the Uyghur classical music of Twelve Muqam, and they form a relationship of mutual-influencing and mutual-penetrating (Zhou 2003:5).

Dastan is a form of narrative songs that have also been incorporated into the Twelve Muqam. The Khotan area in south Xinjiang, especially its subordinate Qaraqash County, has a rich *dastan* tradition. The late Shah Mämät, teacher of my interlocutor Abdurakhman[13], was a renowned *dastan* singer. Many pieces of Shah Mämät's repertoire were related to religion. For example, *Iptarnamä* is performed at night during Ramadan, while *Imam Husäyinim* [*Hüsäynim*] is often sung when people worship at a *mazar* shrine. Shah Mämät was careful about what pieces to perform and would only sing a certain piece at the appropriate place (Rayhan Kadir 2005:48–49).

Another *dastan* singer Abduhälil Barat used to study *pirikhun*[14] (ritual healer) dance, and he performs *Pire Das Tani Karkax Awahan* [pir dastani Qaraqash Awahan], a *dastan* combined with dance and serving the purpose of healing, and he would only sing it on Wednesday, which is the day for healing according to the local custom (Kadir, Rayhan 2005:50). I have not read about *dastan* with dance from other sources or heard about such a practice during my fieldwork. This might be a personalised combination due to the musician's own learning in both *dastan* and healing dance, which points to the complexities of music categorisation as well as the importance of individual processes in interpreting musical cultures (Rice 1987:476).

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[13] I have altered the names of my interlocutors in this dissertation to protect them from persecution for attending "illegal religious activities".

[14] A similar term *parixân* or *porxân* is used in Tajikistan, where it refers to those who devote themselves to different shamanic activities. See During and Khudoberdiev (2007:9). I am grateful to Joyce Du for guiding me in reading this source in French.

Dawut and Anderson contend that the Uyghur *dastan* tradition has been enriched by epic poems popular throughout Central Asia, the Middle East and India, a phenomenon that reflects the Uyghur people's historical, ethnic, cultural, and religious ties to surrounding regions (Dawut and Anderson 2016:409). This is especially obvious in religious *dastan* works, which sometimes has people and events related to Shi'a Islam as their foci. Dawut and Anderson attribute these influences to the presence of small communities of Shi'a Muslims in south Xinjiang (Dawut and Anderson 2016:408). It may also, however, result from the general history of mixed Islamic influences that the region has received (Bellér-Hann 2008:309–310). An example is Imam Hüsäynim, a *dastan* work I often heard in Khotan, especially at events held by Sufis, who do not identify with Shi'a Islam. This dastan will be discussed in Chapter 3.

The example of *dastan* shows that the meaning of music is far more complicated than what a rigid categorisation of music can tell us. Although *dastan* is often categorised as folk music, and in its incarnation in the Twelve Muqam as classical music, it is closely related to religion. As Guan and Zhou acknowledge, the repertoire of "Uyghur Islamic music" is close to other repertoires of traditional Uyghur music because of cross-usages and mutual influences (Guan and Zhou 2001:451). What is crucial in the category of Uyghur religious repertoire, if there is such a repertoire, is the context.

In the current socio-political context of China, religious influences have been played down in official discourses about Uyghur music. For example, the editors of the official version of Twelve Muqam had to tone down the Sufi ideas in the lyrics and avoid classical Turkic poetry, in order to deemphasise Uyghurs' historical ties with other Turkic peoples and Middle Eastern culture (Light

2008:224). There are hardly any Chinese language texts devoted to Uyghur Islam and music except Zhou's *Zhongguo xinjiang weiwuerzu yisilanjiao liyi yinyue* ("Islamic Ritual Music of the Uyghurs of Xinjiang, China")(Zhou 1999), which was published not in the PRC but in Taiwan, a fact itself indicative of the current political environment of China.

In general, it is difficult to understand Uyghur music without knowledge of Uyghur Islam, especially Uyghur Sufism, and it is difficult to understand Uyghur Islam without knowledge of Uyghur music. This research will try to address the question of the relationship between music and Uyghur Islam.

0.3 Uyghur Islam and Sufism

Situated on ancient trade routes between the East and the West, the area called Xinjiang today has been influenced by different religions since ancient times. Like other Central Asian peoples, Uyghur people had practiced various belief systems before they became Muslims, for example, Shamanism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Nestorianism, some of which are still influential in Uyghur cosmologies. Islam entered Xinjiang from Central Asia in the tenth century, and by the mid-fifteenth century Turkic language speakers of the Tarim basin oases had mostly converted to Islam (Fuller and Lipman 2004:326).

In her study of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Uyghur society and culture, Ildikó Bellér-Hann points out the importance of the domestic cult of ancestors in understanding Islam in Xinjiang. She suggests that,

> religious norms and practices had complex underpinnings drawn from a multiplicity of sources, in which pre-Islamic religions, animism, local and imported ideas of spirit possession, and various Islamic traditions, including the diverse mystical and text-based streams and other influences, all played a part. (Bellér-Hann 2008:309)

At the same time, the majority of the Sunni Uyghurs did not try to distinguish between Shi'ism and Sunnism, and the Shi'ite ideas that permeate rituals and oral tradition were regarded as intrinsic features of the local religious tradition (Bellér-Hann 2008:310). That is why *mazar* dedicated to nine of the twelve Shia Imams are found in Khotan and worshiped by locals. For the Sufis that I know in Khotan, visiting *mazar* is almost a daily activity, and *mazar* are the places where they carry out many of their sounded practices such as reciting *dhikr* and singing *hikmät*.

Shrines in Xinjiang have not only been influenced by Shi'ism; many of these shrines were transformations of earlier Buddhist religious sites (Thum 2014:125). Uyghur people decorate these shrines with flags reminiscent of those found in Tibet, a tradition that seems to be explainable by Tibet's conquest of Kucha and Turpan in the eighth century and Khotan in the ninth century (Samolin 1964:69). In the tenth century, the conversion of the Qarakhanid ruler Satuq Bughra (d. 955) to Islam marked the beginning of Islamisation of Xinjiang (Bellér-Hann 2008:304), but it was during the fourteenth century that mass conversion of much of the population of Xinjiang to Islam occurred (Bellér-Hann 2008:304).

Sufism played an important role in Xinjiang's Islamisation. Ahmad Yasawi, who was born in Yasï (today's Turkistan in southern Kazakhstan) and believed to have died c. 1166–1167, is seen as the earliest Sufi among the Turks of Central Asia and the founder of Yasawiyya, the Sufi order that most clearly reveals the assimilative processes of Islam's spread in Central Asia (Deweese 1996:180–181). The vocal *dhikr* that Yasawiyya practiced has been adopted by many Sufis in Central Asia, including Xinjiang, and is still practiced today, although as a Sufi order Yasawiyya disappeared in favour of Naqshbandiyya in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Zarcone 2012).

In the sixteenth century, Kashgar became one of the most active centres of Naqshbandiyya (Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985:7), which also acquired political power in the area. In 1680, Afaq Khwaja established a system of Naqshbandi political rule over the region, of which Kashgar was the primary centre. The hierarchy of the Naqshbandiyya brotherhood administered both the economy of the area and spiritual world of the people through the Naqshbandi *suhbat* ritual (Green 2012:162–163), which is still practiced by Uyghur Sufis today.

Naqshbandiyya is still dominant in today's Uyghur Sufism (see Änwär 2013, Zarcone 2002), although its religious practice has absorbed much of that of other Sufi orders. According to Zarcone, Naqshbandiyya lineages in contemporary Xinjiang consist primarily of the Naqshbandiyya-Khafiyya/Naqshbandiyya-Thaqibiyya, which used to perform exclusively the silent *dhikr*, and the Naqshbandiyya-Jahriyya/Naqshbandiyya-Qadiriyya, which used to perform both the silent and the oral *dhikr* (Zarcone 2002:534–535).

The Naqshbandiyya-Khafiyya, which is mainly based in the *madrasa* (religious school), traces its lineage to Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624) (Zarcone 2002:535), the Indian reformer of Naqshbandiyya who is better known in Xinjiang as Imam Rabbani (Han 2008: 144–149). The Naqshbandiyya-Jahriyya, on the other hand, is mainly based in the *khaniqa* (Sufi lodge) and traces its lineage to Majzub Namangani (d. c. 1849), a Sufi master of Ferghana valley (Zarcone 2002:536).

These days in Khotan, there are mainly four Sufi orders: the Naqshbandiyya, the Qadiriyya, the Chishtiyya and the Suhrawardiyya. However, the boundaries between the different orders are often blurred, and affiliation with more than one order is common. As Gatling writes of Sufis in Xinjiang's neighbouring Tajikistan, most people don't pay much attention to the distinctions between paths; instead

they perform rituals from, and absorb the teaching of, the different orders (Gatling 2018:29). The *hälqä-sohbät* and *mäshräp* rituals that I attended in Xinjiang mainly consisted of Uyghur Sufis who identified with the Naqshbandiyya and the Qadiriyya.

One of the reasons for Sufism's success in the Uyghur region is its fusion with local cultures (Han 2008:27). As a result, spirit-centred practices like domestic rites for the spirits of the deceased, rites at the tombs of Muslim saints, and dealings with non-human spirit kinds, are found among the Uyghurs. For the Uyghur people, their religion is a syncretic fusion of Islamic practices that are imagined as universal and their own cultural traditions that are understood as "Uyghur" (Schrode 2008:402–405). The latter is what reformist Uyghurs have recently been trying to purge in their pursuit of a more "pure" form of Islam.

For Bellér-Hann, there is an intrinsic mystical dimension to Uyghur people's Islamic experience, which is not separable from the "official Islam" or the scriptural tradition. Membership of Sufi brotherhoods and mainstream religious life do not exclude each other, while the mystical and the scriptural traditions are intertwined (Bellér-Hann 2008:308).

In his book about *tazkirah*, a kind of historical manuscript often related to hagiographies of Sufi masters, Thum discusses the local tradition of *mazar* veneration as an important way for the Uyghur people to experience religion as well as to make sense of history, through a number of sensory encounters including hearing:

> Pilgrims brought themselves into the very real presence of the saint, linking their own personal lives into the narratives of the past. The smells of oil lamps, the taste of food from the communal cooking pot, the sounds of songs and prayers, the sight of forests of flags, all of which are aspects of saint veneration mentioned in

important tazkirahs, made the past present for pilgrims in ways that texts alone could not. (Thum 2014:249–50)

Therefore, sound plays an important role in the lives of Uyghur people, for whom being Muslims is an inalienable part of their identities, and for whom the knowledge of Islam has been principally transmitted orally. Sound has been an even more vital part of the lives of Uyghur Sufis, since their practices involve daily engagement with musical sound, although they may not consider much of it to be music. The question of music and meaning in Uyghur Sufism is best epitomised in the phenomenon of altered states of consciousness that many of my interlocutors experience in relation to their practice of *dhikr*.

0.4 Music and altered states of consciousness

Much research has been done on music and altered states of consciousness in different parts of the world. For example, in his article about *dhikr* in Aleppo, Syria, Jonathan Shannon notes that two musical processes play key roles in *dhikr*: melodic modulation and rhythmic acceleration. He argues that these two processes contribute to the sense of spiritual transformation by altering the participants' perception and experience of temporality. Specifically, states of heightened emotional energy are experienced or expected with the gradual increase in the pitch and tempo of chanting, as well as the accompanying bodily movements (Shannon 2004:388). Friedson sees an even closer tie between the music and trance among the Tumbuka people of southwestern Africa, for whom he uses the term "mode" in both an ontological sense, to describe the trance-state, and a musical sense to describe the tonal/rhythmic structure since the sound structure

and trance-state-of-being are not separable in the trance dancing of the Tumbuka. (Friedson 1996:5).

In the context of Central Asia, based on the observation made by the Uzbek musicologist Alexander Djumaev about the connection between the "limping" (*aqsaq*) asymmetrical rhythms of Central Asian *maqām* traditions to the trance-inducing rhythms of Sufi *dhikr* rituals (Djumaev 2002), Harris argues that such asymmetrical rhythms are part of this area's unique musical—emotional vocabulary (Harris 2014b:353). Building on such literature and based on my fieldwork, I will discuss the relationship between rhythm and altered states of consciousness among the Uyghur Sufis in Chapters 3 and 4.

Qureshi interprets trance in Qawwali, which is a musical form of *dhikr* found in Pakistan and India, from the perspective of time because Qawwali may offer the listener a plurality of time experience (Qureshi 1994:499). For Muslims, Qureshi contends, time is not a universal measure but is something meted out by God and is ultimately relative, and therefore, a temporal union with God can be experienced in the ecstasy (*hāl, wajd*) generated by cognitive or ritual sensory processes as well as through verbal-musical invocation (Qureshi 1994:502–503). In comparison, rather than formulating the encounter with the divine in terms of time, Uyghur Sufis formulate the encounter in terms of space, which I will show in Chapter 4 with discussion of the moment for the encounter that is described as "pulled by God".

Jean During summarises three aspects at work on the mechanism of modified states of consciousness induced by music: the *corpus* aspect (sensorial and/or motor stimulation); the *spiritus* aspect (affects, imagination) which may also be known as the transpersonal or symbolic/religious aspect; and the *socius*

aspect, the "social me" (During 2008:377). Gilbert Rouget, in his encyclopaedic book on music and trance, distinguishes two types of altered states of consciousness: "trance" (obtained by means of noise, agitation, and in the presence of others) and "ecstasy" (attained in silence, immobility, and solitude) (Rouget 1985:7). He further subdivides trance into two types: "induced" trance (trance caused by an external action), and "conducted" trance (trance caused by one's own action) (Rouget 1985:286–290). These types of altered states of consciousness were derived from data from various global cultures. For Rouget, the Sufi collective *dhikr* involves conducted trance, because in order to enter trance the subject must recite the *dhikr*, sing, and dance, or rather, he has to be his own "musicant". On the other hand, in classical *samā'* Sufi spiritual concert, people are induced to trance because they are "musicated" rather than being the "musicant" (Rouget 1985:288).

However, the reality is not always so clear-cut. For example, in some Sufi ceremonies that I attended in Khotan, some participants were both musicated (when they listened to the performance of singers and instrument players) and musicants themselves (when they began to actively dance and recite *dhikr*). In addition, the explanation of Uyghur Sufis about people's different behaviours (some enter altered states of consciousness, others don't) relate to their practice of silent *dhikr* when they are alone, thus linking "ecstasy" with "trance". It is also noteworthy that the silent *dhikr*, categorised as "ecstasy" by Rouget because of its "immobility", is actually done with the movement of breathing, which does have an embodied dimension and physiological effect. It seems difficult to interpret the cultural-specific practices of altered states of consciousness of Uyghur Sufis with a universal generalised theory; instead, the meanings of different practices are embodied in their particular contexts.

Research into music and trance has seen increased efforts in recent years to interpret the meanings of trance through a more phenomenological approach. Through personally performing at *sṭambēlī* rituals of Tunisia and using the concept of ritual dynamics, Jankowsky proposes a way of knowing in which aesthetic sensations are crucial to that knowing, and argues that ritual per se is a means of generating meaning for those involved (Jankowsky 2010:197–198). In his book about musical experience in Tumbuka healing, Friedson argues that the essential question asks how this musical experience is possible, rather than focusing on what this musical experience is, and takes the view that the answer has to be found in an ethnography that is itself phenomenological (Friedson 1996:xvi).

During my fieldwork, I not only observed *dhikr* rituals but also participated in them, through playing the percussion instrument *sapayi*, reciting *dhikr*, and through dancing, all of which added to my experiential understanding of my research topic. I cannot say that I experienced the same state of consciousness as my interlocutors, as each of them has experience that is personalised and particular to each individual participant. As one interlocutor put it, a thousand people have a thousand feelings. However, a year of observation as well as participation certainly honed my understanding of the meanings of sound and altered states of consciousness from the perspective of my interlocutors.

Given the complexity of parameters in investigating the meanings of Uyghur Sufi sounded practices and altered states of consciousness, I will discuss the topic based on musical, textual, and experiential analyses. Through analysing the musical properties, the textual significance, and the subjectivities of Uyghur Sufis, I argue that these aspects all play their roles in constructing the meanings of sound in Uyghur Sufism, which can only be understood according to its particular context.

The literature on music and altered states of consciousness among the Uyghurs is rather thin, although there is more literature on music and altered states of consciousness in other Central Asian areas (Sultanova 2011; Pasilov and Ashirov 2007; Baily 1988; Doubleday 1988; Zeranska-Kominek 1992). There is even less audio/video documentation of Uyghur Sufi practices that is publicly available. Jean During made a rare recording of Uyghur *dhikr* in the 1980s, when Xinjiang was relatively open to outsiders. He observes that the group he recorded "was in fact an official brotherhood that perpetuated edified ancient practices" (During 1995:13–14). Another important documentation is Liu Xiangchen's film *Ashiq: The Last Troubador* [sic] (*Axike: zuihoude youyin*) (Axike 2010), which includes scenes of people getting into trance in group *dhikr*. However, neither source is publicly available in China.

Zhou (1999) observed a *dhikr* ritual at the Ordam Mazar festival during which around a hundred *ashiq* moved from the free-rhythm section into the metered part of *dhikr*, and two or three of them did *sama* dance in the circle. He describes named rhythms of *dhikr*, but unfortunately only in Chinese characters which renders it difficult to link them to Sufi practices in other parts of the world. This is a typical issue in Uyghur Studies, whereby arbitrary international borders have created barriers for Uyghur research from Xinjiang to be integrated into Central Asian Studies, with which Uyghur Studies have much in common.

Bellér-Hann et al. argues that there is a perceived gap in the understanding of the Uyghur people, which falls between Central Asian Studies, with its focus on the post-Soviet Central Asian states, and Sinology (Bellér-Hann et al. 2007:1). Scholars in Central Asian Studies usually have backgrounds in Russian, while most researchers of Uyghur Studies enter the field from China Studies. The two groups

also have different foci; scholars working from the Central Asian perspectives are usually interested in social and cultural practices and processes, while those working on Uyghur Studies who have a sinological background are more concerned with territorial issues such as majority-minority configurations (Bellér-Hann et al. 2007:2). These divides have to be tackled if more informed Uyghur Studies are to appear.

In a more recent account of a Uyghur *dhikr* ceremony in the city of Ghulja in north Xinjiang, Mukaddas Mijit observes that leader of the *dhikr* sang different poems by such Sufi poets as Ahmed Yasawi and Shah Mashrab, and "some people in the circle seemed to be completely in another world" (Mijit 2016:403). Mijit analyses the relationship between the rhythms and breathing techniques in that *dhikr*, but she does not analyse the relationship between the sound and altered states of consciousness, except "as the rhythmic pulse quickened, the melody changed as well … the brothers appeared to have submitted completely to the power of the *zikr*[sic]" (Mijit 2016:402–403).

Harris and Dawut describe a musical event among the Uyghurs that involved trance, this time with a different repertoire. In 1995, at the Ordam Festival, once Xinjiang's largest *mazar* festival, a group of musicians played a piece called Tashway, with the *rawap* (plucked lute), *dap* (frame drum), and *sapayi* (percussion sticks). Tashway is not a particularly religious piece, except that it is said to be attributed to a nineteenth-century *ashiq* named Tash. During the performance, the percussionists were deeply in trance, while the *rawap* player was on the edge of trance although his playing remained precise (Harris and Dawut 2002:105).

Tashway is a classic piece of Uyghur instrumental music that is played not only by Sufis, but also by professional musicians in concert and TV settings[15], and has been even re-arranged as a symphonic piece.[16] Compared to the *dhikr* that Mijit observes, Tashway is a very different kind of musical work, although both seemed to have played a part in people's altered states of consciousness. Harris and Dawut also note a case of a *hikmät* having been adapted into a revolutionary song in praise of the communist party (Harris and Dawut 2002:108). This leads us to question whether there is a repertoire of Uyghur Sufi music that has certain effects on people, and to ponder the broader question of what constitutes a repertoire.

As pointed out by Nettl, to see each music as a stylistically compact system is dangerous (Nettl 2005:107–108), and a song may develop variants under the influence of outside forces, including popular and vernacular church music (Nettl 2005:115). In the present study, we may substitute "Sufi repertoire" for "vernacular church music" here. This is the case with the adaptation of the *hikmät* mentioned above, and, to a lesser extent with Tashway, a tune composed in the Sufi cultural environment.

A more typical example of repertoire crossover is Imam Hüsäynim, a *dastan* song that has been adapted into both a film song and a propaganda song; I will discuss these adaptations in Chapter 3. These three pieces mentioned above—the *hikmät*, Imam Hüsäynim, and Tashway—have different places in Uyghur Sufi practices, ranging from the more central to the more peripheral. If there is a Sufi

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[15] A version by *rawap* player Alimjan Tursun can be seen at
https://v.qq.com/x/page/l0638h1x4xz.html (accessed 15 August 2018).
[16] By Xinjiang Philharmonic Orchestra:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWckfSNmgl4 (accessed 15 August 2018).

repertoire to which they belong, it is a repertoire open to appropriation in the broader continuum of Uyghur music/sound of which these pieces are a part.

In the *Zhongguo minzu minjian yinyue Anthology* (the Anthology of Folk Music of the Chinese Peoples)—henceforth referred to as Anthology—which is a large-scale documentation of traditional music of China, "religious music" was at first supposed to be a category with its own volumes, but was eventually incorporated into the instrumental music volumes (Jones 2003:323). Despite this categorisation, it is not appropriate to consider many sub-genres, such as *hikmät* ("*hapizi diao*" or "*hapiz* tune" as it is called in the book) and *mäshräp* songs ("*axiuke xingqi ge*" or "*ashiq* begging song") as instrumental music. There may be political factors behind the decision of not presenting "religious music" in separate volumes, but it probably also has to do with the porous nature of the category.

As Stephen Jones points out, "ritual and ceremonial music maintain a tenacious presence throughout all the volumes" of the Anthology (Jones, Stephen 2003:324); genres are often interrelated; the same musical material may be differently classified according to its performing context (Jones, Stephen 2003:314). Although we may talk about a "Sufi repertoire", it is not an isolated category, but a porous body of musical sound-forms. As we can see in the cases of *muqam/mäshräp* or *sama* dance, there are renditions with completely different meanings, which all have to do with the context.

The importance of context is clearly shown in another example, a somewhat negative one, that of the Intangible Cultural Heritage system of China. Inspired by the UNESCO, the Chinese State Council has established a national list of intangible cultural heritage resources that has included Uyghur items since 2006, for example, the *muqam* music suite, the *mäshräp* communal gathering, the *dastan* narrative

song, and the *sama* dance, but only after they are deprived of their associations with Sufism, which is integral to these Uyghur cultural forms of expression. When they are performed outside of the original contexts, their meanings are very different, although some musicians are able to participate in both government-organised performances and "illegal" Sufi rituals, as is shown in Liu's film (Axike 2010). Presumably they can adjust to the context with a switch of their modes of behaviour, with an ability "to play several roles" similar to that of Moroccan Gnawa musicians who perform at world music concerts (Kapchan 2007:237).

Commenting on a *dhikr* ceremony of the Uyghur *büwi* ritual specialists, Harris argues that *dhikr* involves the body and the group in rhythmic entrainment, and calls upon us to take an active view of emotional engagement that places the participants at the heart of the analysis,

> Shifting the emphasis onto these ritual participants—who are both listeners and performers—helps us to hear how they are actively engaged in a form of physical, emotional and spiritual work, which draws on globalised culture and engages it in very local ways in the service of the village community". (Harris 2014b:356)

In Becker's effort to bring together the scientific and cultural approaches to the study of music and emotion, she suggests that music increases emotional excitement, which in turn results in certain chemical and neural activities that affect the entire body and facilitate trance, or rather, trancing, which is a term Becker uses to emphasise alternate states of consciousness as processes rather than static situations (Becker 2004:147–149). The importance of emotion in discussing the meaning of sound in Uyghur Sufism, especially in altered states of consciousness, requires one to pay more attention to the particular emotional states of individuals, which I was able to do during my fieldwork.

0.5 Fieldwork in Khotan

The site of my fieldwork is the Khotan prefecture in south Xinjiang, including Khotan's city proper and its surrounding counties. At the end of 2017, according to the official website of the local government, the prefecture had a population of 2.52 million, in which Uyghur people accounted for 97 percent,[17] thereby making Khotan prefecture the region with the highest rate of Uyghur population in Xinjiang (Li and Chang 2015:33). With a desert climate, Khotan has a mean annual total of only thirty-five millimetres of precipitation against 2,480 millimetres of evaporation. More than eighty-five percent of the residents of the county's population are rural and the average yearly income of this rural population was 6,098 yuan (US$ 884) per person in 2015, making it a "typical remote, poor, minority area of traditional farming".[18]

During my fieldwork between August 2015 and September 2016, I engaged in participant observation among my research informants, especially through attending Sufi gatherings and studying the music with a local musician. As John Baily says, music making provides opportunities for a kind of participation that is often not possible for anthropologists doing participant observation (Baily 2001:96). I started my fieldwork studying the *dutar* plucked lute and *dap* frame drum as well as Uyghur songs with local musician Abdurakhman (whom I will introduce in the first chapter). Through these activities I gained a deeper understanding of the structures of different styles of Uyghur music and their respective functions. I was also lucky to be able to stay with Abdurakhman (and

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[17] http://www.myx.gov.cn/Article/ArticleClass.aspx?ClassID=1019081 (accessed 3 April 2015).

[18] http://www.xjht.gov.cn/article/show.php?itemid=258216 (accessed 16 August 2018).

another host family) during part of my fieldwork, so that I could observe their music making in the context of their daily lives.

While in the field, I observed that the same musician often has different identities and plays different music, which calls upon us to pay more attention to the context in which religious, cultural and political elements are intertwined. Abdurakhman is primarily a *dastan* performer who makes his living by busking in public, however he is also invited to play instruments at Sufi gatherings. Studying with Abdurakhman and observing his musical activities enabled me to gain insights into his fluid musical identities, the overlapping of different repertoires, alongside looking at sounded Sufi practices against a continuum of Uyghur music to avoid arbitrary categorisation. Studying with Abdurakhman also gave me a role as an apprentice within the community, which helped me to explain who I am to both the common Khotan community and to the authorities. Given the political environment of Xinjiang, this was especially important.

I first met Abdurakhman during my trip to Khotan in 2008–2009, and later I had an opportunity to invite him to perform in Shanghai in 2013. Since we had already established some mutual trust, I started my fieldwork quite smoothly by studying with him, and through him I was able to meet many other people who led me further into the world of Sufi sounds. Some of them are common farmers or small traders; some are Sufis who double as imams at mosques; others cross over to more marginalised roles such as the *bakhshi* healer. Such phenomena reveal the fluidity of both identities and repertoires in the study of sounded practice of Uyghur Sufis. One identity that Abdurakhman crosses over into is as a recognised "bearer of intangible cultural heritage" (*feiwuzhi wenhua yichan chuanchengren*) because of his *dastan* performance. During my time in Khotan, I was able to

observe how he negotiates his identity in official and unofficial contexts, and how political discourses are shaping Uyghur intangible cultural heritage.

Spending time with and observing the lives of Abdurakhman and others enabled me to probe into my questions through biographical research. Biographical writing has been used more frequently in recent years in ethnomusicology, a discipline known in the past for writings that concentrate on what is "typical" of a music culture without addressing the individual (Stock 2001:7). Among the factors that stimulate the rise of ethnomusicological studies of the individual, Stock mentions a reappraisal of representational stances in ethnographic writing — the "voice of God" problem—and a re-conceptualisation of "culture" as a mosaic of individual decisions, evaluations, actions and interactions, with the aim of drawing attention to individual cultural agency (Stock: 2001:10).

After spending a year with my Uyghur Sufi friends, I found them to differ widely in terms of their background, their understanding of their vocation, and their agency. Thus, instead of generalising on the lives and musical activities of these individuals as members of the general Sufi community, I choose to present the variety of their experiences through biographies, in order to reach a more comprehensive understanding of the connotations of being a Uyghur Sufi.

Doubleday shows the benefit of biographical research in disclosing the rich details of individual lives, which are indicative of the cultural environment of which she or he is a part (Doubleday 1988). Such a method is especially useful for communities that are closed off to outsiders, like the women's world of Afghanistan that Doubleday researched. Likewise, biographical data of Uyghur Sufis can contribute to our understanding of the meanings of sounds in Uyghur Sufism through providing unique perspectives.

Although some short biographies of Uyghur musicians can be found in books such as the Anthology, they are often of musicians recognised by governmental discourses, while many grassroots musicians who are equally important in terms of their contribution to Uyghur music are omitted from these official discourses. Biographies of Uyghur Sufis are very rare in ethnomusicological literature (but see Harris 2009; Trebinjac 2000; Zhou et al. 1996), however the lives and stories of Uyghur Sufis that I heard from themselves or from others were some of the most interesting data that I collected during my fieldwork. I have to thank my host, whom I'll call Niyaz, for letting me stay in his guest room so that I could hear some of these stories from himself and his guests.

As a result of Niyaz's extraordinary hospitality, his home never lacked for interesting characters. I would often share my adobe bed with other guests, including musicians, beggars, and drug addicts (and when there was no one else I shared the bed with fleas). In Chapter 1, I present biographies of three of my interlocutors, which will hopefully contribute to our understanding of Uyghur musicians. As Stephen Jones argues, "research needs to integrate the lives of musicians with the history of society, including its conflicts, and documenting village as well as national perspectives" (Jones, Stephen 2003:312).

These biographies came from my many conversations with Sufis during the year I was in Khotan. Some of these conversations were in Chinese, or in Uyghur, some conversations were through formal interviews, but more came about through casual chatting. When I did interviews regarding serious and conceptual topics, I was helped in interpretation by colleagues from Xinjiang University, who have taught me much themselves, not only through their local knowledge but also through their difficulties in doing Uyghur studies in China.

In order to better understand the meaning of Uyghur Sufi sound, apart from interviewing research subjects, I personally participated in some of the *dhikr* rituals, during which I played the *sapayi*, and practiced breath *dhikr* and *sama* dance. Under the stimulation of loud sounds, entrained breathing, and some unbalancing whirling movements, I was able to get a feel of an altered state of consciousness. Although I had not been trained as a Sufi, nor had learned the "trancing" technique, such experience adds another layer to my participant observation, a state that Sarah Pink calls sensory ethnography which entails multisensorial embodied engagements with others (Pink 2009:25–26). As much of the meaning of Sufi sound is implicit and can only be realised and disclosed through embodied experiencing, one has to try to enter the complex schema of Uyghur experience of altered states of consciousness in order to gain some insight into it.

More often, though, I was observing, filming and recording during the ceremony. Thanks to my interlocutors' trust, I was able to document their activities in video and audio recordings, and so watch and listen to them repeatedly during my writing process. I have left a copy of these video and audio recordings with my field consultants, with the hope of helping the community to establish an archive of their music and their religious practice which will be useful for future generations to learn and pass on the local traditions. However, I am by no means the only one who documents their practices. Uyghur Sufis themselves have been doing so all the time, and their documentation includes mediation of the various media, which have become part of my research.

0.6 Mediated Sufi sounds

Uyghur Sufi practices have been passed down orally from generation to generation for centuries, but since the 1980s Uyghur Sufis have also been increasingly making use of technologies to disseminate their practices in various media forms. Although the geographical area where my research subjects live— south Xinjiang—is largely isolated from anywhere else, it is not outside of globalisation. This was clearly shown in the example of a small shop in Khotan that I visited in 2008, where Sufi sounds were copied onto remaindered cassettes of K-pop (Korean pop) and sold to interested buyers.

As I will discuss in Chapter 5, VCDs/DVDs, video-sharing websites, and mobile phones have also been utilised by Uyghur Sufis to share various contents in subsequent years, covering both musical sounds of *dhikr* rituals and the more discursive Sufi sermons. The cassettes I bought from the shop, the VCDs/DVDs I borrowed and copied from my Uyghur friends, and the videos that I downloaded from video-sharing websites, all therefore, constitute important data for my research and all generate questions and provide information that my own video and audio field recordings do not cover. For example, questions such as who made these documentations and for whom, what they intended to show through their choice and editing of content, and what narratives were developed through these documentations, provide valuable perspectives for thinking about the living conditions of sounded Uyghur Sufi practices.

There has been an increasing body of literature in the study of Islam through mediated sounds. In his book about the role of Islamic cassette recordings in Cairo, Hirschkind argues that the cassette, through its mixing of political, ethical and aesthetic strands, serves not only as a means of dissemination but also a force of configuration that speaks to the human sensorium and embodied aptitudes

(Hirschkind 2006:2–5). In other words, the cassette serves to fashion a new form of sermon and shapes a new way of ethical listening (Hirschkind 2006:13).

Speaking about a different society, that of Mali, Schulz also notes the new possibilities that recorded sermons provide in proselytism. For example, Haidara, leader of a Malian Muslim movement, would give a sermon that included references to individual devotees whom he met in different locations, and through the wide circulation of his taped sermons and his mobility, he has created a religious community that is both physical and virtual (Schulz 2003:156).

In his book about the devotional Urdu poetry form, *na't*, in Mauritius, Eisenlohr points out that religious media is not only an epiphenomenon but also a driving force of globalisation. While the spread of media infrastructures enables instant forms of interaction across the globe, practitioners of religions such as Christianity and Islam are also seeking instant and more immediate access to God or religious otherworlds, ironically through the use of media (Eisenlohr 2018:57–58).

In Xinjiang, media such as cassette and VCD/DVD have been used by the Sufi community to document its religious practices, in a way similar to the *tazkirah*, a hagiographic manuscript, which was copied, re-written and disseminated through the system of *mazar* shrines, and so has contributed to the making of a sense of history and identity (Thum 2014). Before the rise of electronic media, cassettes of local soundscapes (both religious and secular sounds) used to be sold in shops and markets of almost every town, and could be bought by visitors from other towns, facilitating exchanges of religious and musical practices and contributing to establishing general identities around oasis towns in Xinjiang.

With electronic media, such exchanges have been made much easier, with contents not only from around Xinjiang but also around the world being shared to people living in these oasis towns. As a result, recording content from other Muslim societies, often with reformist ideas, has spread among the Uyghur people through VCDs/DVDs and social media, which has served to challenge more local ways of practicing the religion, including sounded Sufi practices. At the same time, the circulation of videos of Sufi sermons that respond to reformist ideas have amplified their voices to a wider audience, as I will discuss in Chapter 5.

Historically, Sufism spread to Xinjiang through other parts of Central Asia, especially the Ferghana Valley to the west of Xinjiang. However, due to political restrictions, Uyghur people's connections with other Central Asian societies have largely been cut off, making Xinjiang an isolated area on the margin of the Islamic world. Nonetheless, Uyghur Sufis hold a more central place vis-à-vis Hui Sufis who live further east and who had been historically influenced by Uyghur Sufis. Making use of modern media, some Uyghur Sufis are trying to enhance this status. For example, a series of videos about the Yarkand Khaniqa with Chinese subtitles were still available on www.youku.com at the time of writing, making the Yarkand Khaniqa better known to Chinese-speaking Hui Muslims than other Uyghur Sufi brotherhoods. In this case, the mediation seems to present one Sufi group's efforts to expand its influence, which probably has to do with competitions between different brotherhoods in Yarkand.

These forms of mediation among Uyghur Sufis can provide more perspectives from which to look at in Uyghur Sufi practices, even though the circulation of religious media in Xinjiang has been greatly limited due to political restrictions. The Chinese state has been particularly watchful of the spread of

religious ideologies carried by digital media, which falls outside legal parameters (Harris 2014c:111). As a result, no homemade cassettes or VCDs/DVDs of Sufi sounds are sold in the market any more, which nonetheless comprises an aspect of my research of Uyghur Sufism.

0.7 Research and advocacy through organising tours

It was through organising concerts for Abdurakhman at a "world music" festival in Shanghai that I developed a close friendship with him. For the concerts, I invited not only Abdurakhman but also two of his students. One of them is a good musician whom I had previously met in Khotan. The other student is not as good a musician, but was chosen by Abdurakhman because of their closer relationship, something I later found to be typical of Abdurakhman as well as of many other Uyghur musicians. We were in Shanghai for ten days, and I spent a lot of time with the musicians, especially Abdurakhman who shared a room with me. I was able to observe his daily life—albeit away from home—including his *namaz* (daily prayers) and his music practice, activities which laid the foundation for my closer and longer observation of his life a few years later during my fieldwork in Khotan.

Before the concerts, we had some time to decide and rehearse the programme, which came into being through my interlocution with the musicians. As I had witnessed Abdurakhman and his students play music in Khotan, I had an idea of the way they do it at home—often in a medley of the repertoires of *muqam*, *mäshräp* and *dastan*. Thus, we came to agree on a programme of a similar structure.

Through the experience I learned that, somewhat ironically, such "world music" events are one of the only platforms in China to present traditional Uyghur

music, apart from the demonstrations of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) organised by the government, which is exactly what I want to counter through organising shows at "world music" events. There are two aspects of those ICH performances that I deem as deficiencies. First, ICH performances in China usually showcase musical traditions of different ethnic groups in the form of a variety show, with each act typically allocated very limited time for its performance before a totally different performance starts. This adds to the decontextualisation of Uyghur music such as *muqam* and *mäshräp* which have already been stripped of their religious associations in the ICH discourse.

Second, such performances tend to focus on the item, while the musicians, addressed as "bearers", are not accredited for their creative contribution to the music. Sometimes the musicians are not even named. While "world music" concerts also involve re-contextualisation, I can at least enjoy a certain degree of freedom in producing such a concert which allows me to present Uyghur music in a way closer to that in the original context rather than in the largely fixed form of an ICH demonstration.

In their book about the relationship between Tuvan music and its natural and social environment, Levin and Süzükei describe the popularisation of Tuvan music in the world market, which Levin partly started through working with Tuvan musicians since the 1980s when they were still unknown to the outside world (Levin and Süzükei 2006). Levin and Süzükei argue that these Tuvan musicians who travel internationally simultaneously inhabit two worlds, as their working lives constantly carry them back and forth between a traditional way of life and a postmodern one (Levin and Süzükei 2006: XII). While it is my dream to see Uyghur music as widespread as Tuvan music internationally, in reality I find

most Uyghur traditional musicians to be confined to a marginal place, without the ability to travel anywhere. And if some do inhabit two worlds, they are usually in the grassroots musical setting on the one hand, and at propaganda events arranged by the government on the other.

For me, the experience of producing the concerts with Abdurakhman was not only rewarding for myself as it enhanced a connection that would later prove fruitful for my future research, but it also provided an opportunity to promote Uyghur music, and also helped Uyghur musicians, whose rights to travel and perform are often compromised, to improve their social status. As a result, organising tours became part of my research methodology as well as advocacy for the music. During my fieldwork, I tried to organise three tours for the Uyghur musicians with whom I worked, as I will describe in Chapter 6. Although all of them failed due to sociopolitical reasons, the experience enabled me to gain insight into my research topic that I would not have had otherwise.

0.8 Structure of the thesis

The first chapter adopts a biographical approach to present the lives of three musicians/Sufi ritual practitioners—an *ishan* (leader of a Sufi brotherhood) and *hapiz* (lead reciter of a *dhikr* ritual); a *dhikr* practitioner who has much mystical experience; and a semi-professional musician who is on the periphery of the Sufi community. Through delineating their personal experience, I discuss what it means to be a Uyghur Sufi, and what kind of roles are open to what kind of people in the Uyghur society. I will also discuss how they learn and perform music. Becker proposes that "deep listeners and trancers have 'learned' to regulate or modify physiological systems of arousal that are generally believed to be *not* under

voluntary control" (Becker 2004:11). Biographical data of these musicians/ritual practitioners will hopefully help in revealing details of such "learning" processes.

The second chapter discusses the form of *hälqä-sohbät*. Literally meaning "circling and talking", *hälqä-sohbät* is a *dhikr* ritual of Uyghur Sufis that involves chanting Central Asian Sufi poetry and dance. On the basis of ethnographic data from *hälqä-sohbät* of the Naqshbandi/Qadiri order that I attended, I explain how the ritual is structured, and what musical sounds and movements (the *sama* dance) are found in each part. I show the characteristics of *hälqä-sohbät* by comparing it to Qawwali, a *dhikr* ceremony of Indo-Muslims. Apart from the structure of the ritual, I also analyse the roles that different people play in the ceremony—the *hapiz* lead reciter, the common participants, and the invited instrumentalist—to show how the hierarchy of the participants is enacted in the ritual.

The third chapter presents a musicological analysis of samples of musical sounds gathered from fieldwork, including *mäshräp*, *hikmät*, and *dastan*. This analysis identifies how the musical characteristics of these samples relate to their meaning. Based on these field data as well as on existing recordings and transcriptions of related classical Uyghur music, I propose general features which underlie the fluidity of the repertoire of Uyghur sounded Sufi practice. Through the case study of Imam Hüsäynim, a *dastan* song that has been appropriated as both a popular film song and a propaganda song, I demonstrate that the crossover happens within the wider scope of the contemporary era.

Chapter 4 analyses how altered states of consciousness happen in the *hälqä-sohbät* and what role sound plays in such states. Friedson argues that the physiological relationship between music and trance is too subtle to be explained by theories of gross causal determinations, but that does not mean there is no

physiological relationship between music and trance at all (Friedson 2009:205). Inspired by Leman's framework in studying music, gesture, and embodied meaning (Leman 2010), I look at the *hälqä-sohbät* from three perspectives: the practitioners' subjective experience, the ritual as a process of interaction and pedagogy of religious knowledge, and the meaning of sound and movement from the perspective of Sufi practices.

Chapter 5 discusses the spread of sounded Sufi practices through different media forms—cassettes, VCDs/DVDs, and the Internet/mobile phone, and their effects on the ideologies that they contain, especially in competition with reformist ideas. I suggest that Uyghur Sufis have been utilising various micro-media to document and disseminate their practices, as contemporary forms of writing their history collectively.

The last chapter discusses the political context in which the Uyghur Sufi practitioners have to operate, and the impact of this context upon them and the sounded practices they transmit. I discuss their political situations through my experience of trying to organise tours for the musicians with whom I work, which I see as a kind of reciprocity and advocacy. Through the experience, I have gained insights in regards to local people's ideas about performatised ritualistic music and dance, power dynamics within the society where they live, immobility of the Uyghur musicians, and political factors that affect Uyghur Sufism, such as the government's promotion of "intangible cultural heritage" and crackdown on "illegal religious gatherings". The experience also helps me to reflect on my own role in the local community.

Chapter 1: *Ashiq*, a Lover of God

In Khotan, an oasis town on the southern edge of the Taklamakan desert, I am looking for *ashiq*, the legendary singers who devote themselves to God. I have no idea where they are, and the anti-religious extremism posters in the street don't help either.

Luckily, I find Abdurakhman, a *dastanchi* (epic singer) whom I met a few years ago, and about the only person I know in this part of the world. In his home in a village some thirty kilometres from the city, we have some tea while he makes some phone calls. In one hour, six students of his arrive from various locations around Khotan, as if they have arranged this gathering a while ago. They have not. They put things aside and come at the call of Abdurakhman because of the guest— me, and because hospitality is of top priority in Uyghur culture, as was to be proved again and again during my stay. It is August, but many of them are in long coats, a common dress among pious men here. They all wear white caps or the Uyghur-style square caps, except a man named Niyaz who wears a baseball cap.

While sitting on a typical bed in rural Xinjiang that also functions as a platform to entertain guests, we eat some of the mung bean starch jelly that is popular in this area during the summer. Then, without me asking for anything they pick up their instruments and begin to sing and play. Abdurakhman starts singing solo, accompanying himself on a *rawap* lute. While he plays, a man with a long beard called Nurmämät begins to swing his arms and body to the beat, in a way not unlike Western audiences in a concert of popular music, but very uncommon among the Uyghurs except in some Sufi rituals that I saw in videos. Gradually, others join the singing. One of the participants, Mäkhsum, who later introduces

himself to me as an imam—a prayer leader in a mosque, plays a *dap* frame drum. Some others play *sapayi*, a rattle made of wooden sticks with clinking iron rings. I hear the *mäshräp* song "King of Beggars" (*Qäländär Shahi*):

> *Män qäländär shahimän, Alla*
> *Aläm manga wäyranidur, Alla*
> *Payi-täkhti gülkhenim, Alla*
> *Ordam qäländärkhanidur, Alla*
>
> I am the king of beggars, Allah
> The world is nothing to me, Allah
> My fire pit is like a home for me, Allah
> The beggars' gathering place is my throne, Allah[19]

It is a familiar melody that I heard some years ago from a recording made by a friend's friend on his phone, and it was through that recording that I found the singer—Abdurakhman—and entered the world of Uyghur Sufis.

Over about half an hour, they continuously play a combination of several songs. Some of the songs are more religious, like "King of Beggars" which contains "Allah" in almost every sentence; others are less so, like the folk song "Atush", which is about travelling to different towns in Xinjiang. The songs connect well, despite the differences in subject matter. Actually, it is difficult to distinguish religious songs and secular songs, as the reference to God is more or less in every song—it is more a matter of degree.

I am immersed in sounds of the men's unison singing and of the instruments, especially the *sapayi*, which seems to be closely associated with the *ashiq* mendicant singers that I have seen in some documentary films. Although these

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[19] Translation by Elise Anderson and Mutellip Yasin. Video not provided due to privacy and security concerns.

men are not mendicants, I feel the same kind of devotion in their songs as in those mendicant *ashiqs*' songs. Some of the songs that are being sung are included in the Mäshräp sections of the Uyghur Twelve Muqam, which Turdi Akhun learned and collected from the *ashiq* (Light 2008:286).

The *mäshräp* singing session ends with them reciting *dua* (supplication) together. They leave after a short while, but I am to see them again soon, and some of them will become the people that I spend the most time with during my stay in Xinjiang. Niyaz will be my host for most of my fieldwork and will share many of his mystical experiences with me. From Mäkhsum I will gain considerable knowledge about Uyghur Sufis, while Abdurakhman will become my *ustaz*, my master of music.

1.1 *Ashiq*

Due to their marginalised status in both the Islamic world and China, the world of the Uyghur Sufis is little known and researched, especially their sonic world which plays an important role in their religious practice. From my previous experience as a traveller in Xinjiang and the scarce ethnomusicological literature on and recordings of Uyghur Sufis (During 1995, Zhou 2003, Axike 2010, Harris 2013 and 2014, Mijit 2016), I have gained some preliminary knowledge of my research topic. However, it is impossible to understand the meanings of musical sound in Uyghur Sufism without an in-depth understanding of the performers, since meanings are deeply based on individual spiritual experiences.

The first question is whether those Uyghur Sufis who use sound to cultivate religion can be considered musicians. As is discussed in the introduction, the debate over music in Islamic societies is an ideological one, as there are often

negative connotations about music and the terms used to describe music are related to entertainment and excessive behaviour (Nelson 2001, Faruqi 1980). According to my field experience, there is also a distinction between those who practice musical sound as a form of devotion to God, and those who play music to make a living. The former, who are the research subjects here, usually refer to themselves as *ashiq*, and I am going to adopt this term to refer to them as well. The term *ashiq* is also used in other cultures: *aşîk* among the Turkish (Erdener 2002:801), *aşiq* among the Azerbaijani (Albright 2002:844), and *ashugh* among the Armenian (Manukian 2002:733), although in these contexts, the respective terms mostly refer to professional bards. In the Uyghur context, *ashiq* means something different.

Liu Xiangchen, a Chinese filmmaker based in Ürümchi, spent five years making his documentary film about *ashiq* (Axike 2010). The film shows the lives of some Uyghur *ashiq*, whom the film introduces as "wandering musicians living on the southern edge of the Taklamakan Desert" and "the most important bearers of, and means of dissemination for, Uyghur Muqam". The protagonists of the film include: a "beggar *ashiq*" (Ablimit), a "small merchant *ashiq*" (Mämätzunum), a "barber *ashiq*" (Barat Akhun), a "woman *ashiq*" (Mubaräk Äkbär), a "blacksmith *ashiq*" (Adil Abdukärim), a "gravedigger *ashiq*" (Tokhti Akhun), a "hermit *ashiq*" (Tursun Ashiq), and a "shaman *ashiq*" (Abduqadir). From the characters of the film it seems that *ashiq* covers a big spectrum of society. Some of them are outcasts of society, who do not work but live on alms, and behave in various ways that transgress social convention such as smoking hashish and going naked. Others are no different from commoners in everyday Uyghur society, and support themselves

through various jobs. The one thing they all have in common is that they all sing devotional songs.

The hermit *ashiq* Tursun is an orphan. He does not know where he was born, and people found him in the Chiltan Mazar of Yarkand when he was six months old. He says all the people in the world are his relatives. He eats whatever he finds on the road, not worrying about the evening when it is the morning. Tursun plays *sapayi* and sings songs about one's longing for Allah, and he used to smoke hashish. He represents the image of a classical *ashiq* in the film, who disregards material possessions and lives an itinerant life that seems transgressive in the eyes of common people and unusual for the modern age.

Harris defines the Uyghur *ashiq* as "a lover, or a mendicant who has devoted his life to music making for God" (Harris 2009:145), while Zhou describes *ashiq*s as:

> male beggars who sing ballads while playing the Uyghur idiophonic instrument *sapayi* found in Xinjiang where the Uyghur people concentrate, especially in oasis towns in south Xinjiang such as Kashgar and Khotan…. They forsake their properties and sleep in *mazar*, dressed in extremely humble clothes, living on alms and taking the promotion of Islam as their responsibility. That's why they are also called *qäländär* (meaning "beggars") (Zhou 2003:1).[20]

An *ashiq* often appears as a beggar, as is shown in the lyrics "I am the king of *qäländär*" from Shah Mashrab (c. 1657—1711). A poet and mystic born in Namangan (in today's Uzbekistan), Mashrab's works feature often in the sung poetry of Xinjiang, and his life has had a significant influence upon Uyghur Sufis. This is reflected in the fact that "*mäshräp*" became the name for the body of songs sung by Uyghur *ashiq*, on the basis of which the Mäshräp section of the Twelve Muqam was created.

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[20] Translated by the author.

A model for Uyghur *ashiq*, Mashrab went naked because "that was how he was born", left school and went into the desert, where he appeared to smoke hashish (but in fact the hashish went unburned), and played a *satar* bowed lute in state of ecstasy (Light 2008:112–114). Although some of the stories of Mashrab sound more like legends than facts, he represents a constructed model which is followed by Uyghur *ashiq* to this day. An *ashiq* lives a *qäländär*'s life for ascetic purposes, because, as Mashrab says in his poetry, "neither Mashrab nor other *'āshiq*s will see the beloved without suffering" (Lykoshin 1910:28–31, quoted from Light 2008:113).

Asceticism is an important part of the *ashiq*'s devotional life. There is much literature in early Islam about ascetics who ate little, wore little and slept little (Melchert 2007). The Arabic word for asceticism, *zuhd*, usually means renunciation of, or at least unconcern with, the world. Among the ascetics there is the *sā'iḥ*, "wanderer," which is mentioned in the Qur'an (9:112, 66:5), and who wanders from place to place as his service to God (Melchert 2007).

The image of the beggar (*qäländär*) appears in much of the sung poetry of Uyghur *ashiq*, some of which has also been compiled into the Twelve Muqam, canon of classical Uyghur music. At a gathering of *ashiq* in Liu's film, they sing about the "beggar" several times. For example:

> "*Alla aya där dimgä goya där man*
> *Alla nawa qilghan qäländär män*
> *Alla jamalingni körär män däp*
> *Alla nida qilghan qäländär män*
>
> I am a beggar for my beloved
> A beggar for my beloved
> In order to see your countenance

I am a beggar who has separated from the world" (Axike 2010).

The "beggar" here is clearly a metaphor for a man who longs for God, and not a literal description. Although an *ashiq* can live a *qäländär*'s life, a *qäländär* is not necessarily an *ashiq*. An *ashiq* wanders from place to place because he suffers from his longing for God and abstains from material living as far as possible so that he focus his attention on God, but a *qäländär* who begs to make a living is not an *ashiq*. Mäkhsum looks down upon those who adopt lifestyles oblivious to social convention (for example growing long hair and dressing in rags) and claim to be *ashiq*, especially those would-be *ashiq* who smoke hashish and drink alcohol. "They are not real *ashiq*. In our time, there are many fake *ashiq* who ask for money. They only care about this life. Real *ashiq* are those who love and long for God from their heart, and submit themselves to God" (interview, 17 May 2016).

The "shaman *ashiq*" Abdukadir in Liu's film, who is filmed drinking alcohol and smoking hashish, belongs to the type of "fake *ashiq*" to which Mäkhsum refers. When I showed him this part of the film Mäkhsum shook his head in disapproval. This "shaman *ashiq*" probably crosses over to become a *bakhshi* or ritual healer, an identity which is deviant in the eyes of Sufis, but the film does not show more about Abdukadir.

The term "*ashiq*" derives from Arabic and means "lover" (Soileau 2007). With regard to Sufi poetry, Light explains that the poet is "an intoxicated lover seeking union with God" and that his basic persona is "that of the *'āshiq*, one who wanders mad with love, hoping to find union, while singing ecstatic poetry to God" (Light 2008:60). It is interesting to note that the primary means for a poet to deliver his works here is singing, in much the same way that the works of Shah Mashrab and

Ahmed Yasawi are still widely sung among Uyghur Sufis and orally disseminated in Xinjiang today. It is recorded that Mashrab refused to present written copies of his poetry because he thought that "it is better not to leave a book behind, because in reading it, the *'āshiqs* lose its sense" (Light 2008:117).

"Love" and "madness" are two core elements of an *ashiq*. The madness derives from unfulfilled love. In this aspect an *ashiq* is comparable to a *mäjnun*, or a "madman". Harris suggests that a *mäjnun* is a type of musician akin to the dervish or *ashiq*: "The infatuation of these *mäjnun* is understood in the Sufi sense of longing for the divine…. The intoxication of the *mäjnun* borders on madness" (Harris 2009:151). Both *Mäjnun* and *ashiq* are close to madness, but an *ashiq* is mad in a more religious way than a *mäjnun*. Abdulla Mäjnun, the *mäjnun* musician that Harris writes about, is a *muqam* expert. His repertoire is related to that of *ashiq* who play at the shrines in the desert, and he can be quite mad in some ways in his lifestyle and in the way he plays music, but Abdulla Mäjnun is not an *ashiq* per se, because he is not mad for religious reasons, at least not as described in the article.

The madness in *ashiq* means that they are often known for transgressive behaviours, which are tolerated by society. For example, some *ashiq* go naked or dress themselves in very humble clothes; some smoke hashish; some wander around and live in *mazar* tomb shrines. In this aspect, the *ashiq* is similar to the *malang* of Punjab, a religious beggar "who drinks *bhang* or smokes *charas* in excess, wears nothing but a loin cloth" and grows long hair (Ewing 1984:358). The *malang* does not act according to the social code, but tries to fuse the sacred into everyday life and structures his entire life around direct communication with God.

In order to do so, he completely abandons the social and material world in order to concentrate on the inner, spiritual world (Ewing 1984:359-360).

Philosophically this is similar to the Uyghur *ashiq*, who does nothing but long for God and for whom material life is meaningless. However, there are different kinds of *ashiq*. The mendicant *ashiq* is close to the *malang*, while there are other people who do not live a mendicant life but keep moderate asceticism and consider themselves to be *ashiq* too. For example, Mäkhsum, who is an imam (prayer leader) and lives a normal life, says a real *ashiq* is someone who longs for God, who knows what benefactions and sins are, and who does benefactions and avoids sins. "An *ashiq* follows Sharia, and recites Allah's names. Sufis are *ashiq*" (interview, 17 May 2016).

"Dervish" is another related concept. With its roots from the Persian word *darvīsh* (literally "poor, needy"), dervish is a general term for various types of marginal mystics, and represents "a form of mysticism that promotes marginality with respect to society, religious institutions, and Ṣūfism itself" (Papas 2011). Some dervishes dropped out of society to protest against society's ills, while others did so because they did not fit into society for various reasons (Papas 2011). In Azerbaijan, dervishes are described as "wanderers, often dressed in ragged clothes, with long beards, walking, as late as the 1970s, the narrow streets of Baky [sic], murmuring soft mournful tunes. ... Having no possessions of their own, these dervishes refused to take money and accepted only the gifts necessary to their basic existence" (Naroditskaya 2004:312).

In Uyghur society, Zhou contends that dervishes are those *ashiq* who have reached a certain level through practice. Muhammad Sidiq, a mendicant *ashiq* from Lop county of Khotan, and whom I met in 2009, identifies himself as a dervish. At

that time, I was looking for *ashiq* and a local took me to Muhammad's place. It was January and he lived in a simple tarpaulin shed in the courtyard, and was naked. There was a fire in the shed which he tended by constantly putting in boughs. He had kept himself in chains for atonement for twenty-five years at the time I met him. I asked him what he was atoning for. He said that it was for bad things he did when he was young, like drinking alcohol. However, he was smoking hashish all the time, and didn't see that as a problem. When I asked him if he prays five times a day, he said he prays twenty-four hours a day. It is debateable to what degree such transgressive behaviours enable one to become a dervish or *ashiq*, and I have heard one moderate *ashiq* calling Muhammad Sidiq "shameless".

An East Turki (old Uyghur) text quoted by Gunnar Jarring, a Swedish diplomat and Turkologist who travelled to Kashgar in 1929, describes true dervishes as follows:

> They do not stay in the cities but live in caves. They are called devotees or ascetics. They do not beg anything from anybody. They are (always) content. They are content with whatsoever they get from God. They do not beg of anybody and do not appear (do not show themselves) to people but stroll about in the wilderness and worship (there). They do not covet things." (Jarring 1987:14)

This is close to what Niyaz tells me of real *ashiq*: "They just want to be alone, with Allah. An *ashiq* never take what is more than enough to live on for a few days" (interview, 25 September 2015). In Liu's film, when Tursun's student Sawut wants to invite the "hermit *ashiq*" to tour Ürümchi and Turpan, the *ashiq* tells Sawut "From childhood I didn't engage in worldly affairs. When your father was alive I was like this. Now it's like this, with death it won't change", and at another point the *ashiq* says "Controlling both the mouth and your desire can truly make you an

ashiq. Real *ashiq* set their mind on Allah" (Axike 2010). A more extreme *ashiq* in the film is Mämätimin, whom Liu was looking for throughout and eventually found, however Mämätimin refused to sing, talk or be filmed in any way.

While the *qäländär*, dervish and *malang* are clearly outcasts from society, *ashiq* among the Uyghurs is a wider concept that covers people of different lifestyles who see loving God as the essence of life, and practice asceticism of varying degrees. Among mendicant *ashiq*, there are also different levels of religiosity. On the one extreme is the *qäländär* who takes begging as a profession, but has little or no spiritual pursuit; on the other end is the true *ashiq* or dervish who lives on alms but does not beg, and lives such a life because of spiritual reasons.

Most ethnomusicological literature on Uyghur *ashiq* (Harris and Dawut 2002, Zhou 2003) has, understandably, focused on the musical components of their lives, but the definition of music in relation to the *ashiq* is problematic. Firstly, the concept of music itself merits discussion. As mentioned in the Introduction, while the Uyghur word *muzika* is similar to the English word "music" in form, its meaning in Uyghur culture is narrower. In the Uyghur context, *muzika* usually refers to instrumental music and songs with instrumental accompaniment, especially those of secular contents. There is no umbrella term like the English word "music" in the Uyghur language, and religious songs such as *mäshräp* and *hikmät* are often regarded as sung poetry, rather than *muzika*. Secondly, not every *ashiq* engages in musical activities. Niyaz tells me that real *ashiq* do not sing, and they do not even talk (interview, 25 September 2015). I met an *ashiq* in Chira County who only recites "*bi-smi llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm*" ("in the name of God, the

most gracious, the most merciful"). These differences lead to a question about the roles of the subjects of this study. Are they musicians?

In Liu's film, the "hermit *ashiq*" Tursun's three disciples introduced themselves as musicians (*sazchi*) when they looked for entertainers' work at restaurants in Ürümchi, but this was solely so that they could make a living. Later two of them became vendors and only one continued performing music as a busker in the street. Compared to the other *ashiq* in the film, these three people live more secular lives, but they have certainly been influenced by the culture of the *ashiq*. Before they went busking in the street, Sawut said to the other two, "We are *ashiq*, Allah's *ashiq*, not money-grabbing *ashiq*. We are musicians, not wobbling fools" (Axike 2010). This shows that they see no conflict in their being *ashiq* and musicians, in both of which they take pride, and at the same time they know the boundary of being an *ashiq*—not to seek material gain.

In terms of his profession, Abdurakhman is a musician. He is a *dastanchi*, a performer of *dastan* sung epics who accompanies himself on a *rawap* lute. Abdurakhman makes his living by busking in bazaars and *mazar*. Some of the works he performs are about religion, and some about history or legends, and he often plays some *muqam* or *mäshräp* songs before a *dastan*. However, he is not an *ashiq*, as he does not follow "*täriqät*" (the Sufi path) according to Niyaz (interview, 25 September 2015), and there is a difference between his musical activities and those of *ashiq*.

An *ashiq* is not supposed to ask for money, while as a *dastanchi*, Abdurakhman solicits payment in his performance. Payment is an indicator of professionalism for musicians, but it is also a denial of religiosity or the identity of an *ashiq*. Those who participate in the sounded Sufi ritual of *hälqä-söhbät* are not

paid, or if they do get money or gifts from the host it is not considered a payment, but rather a form of help that more affluent people offer to poorer people in the community.

Abdurakhman takes part in *hälqä-sohbät* sometimes, but he is usually invited to play an instrument professionally, not to seek spiritual enlightenment. When people sing *hikmät*, he may sing along, but he is not really religiously involved. Being on the periphery of the Sufi community, Abdurakhman is not considered to be an *ashiq* by those who identify themselves as *ashiq*, partly because of his work as a professional musician. Although the identities of an *ashiq* and a professional musician overlap, a distinction is made between the two vocations.

This study is mainly concerned with *ashiq* engaged in sounded practices of Sufism: those who don't play music to make money but use sound as a means of religious practice. However, in Uyghur society Sufism is not only a form of belief, but also a culture that permeates everyday lives. Professional musicians and musical *ashiq* share similar repertoires, and it is not always easy to decide who is an *ashiq* and who is not, so I will include those who are not typical *ashiq* but who nonetheless take part in related sounded practices, for example Abdurakhman, in this research.

1.2 Abdurakhman—a musician

I met Abdurakhman the first time in 2008 in Qaraqash, a county subordinate to Khotan and well-known for its *dastanchi*. At that time I was travelling around Xinjiang in search of traditional music. Before I set out, I had received a recording of a song made in Qaraqash by a friend of a friend which had immediately attracted my attention. The fervent singing of the song "King of

Beggars", and the deep sound of the *dap* gave me the feeling of a religious ritual. I didn't have any information about the musicians, but I wanted to find them.

From an article (Rayhan Kadir 2008) I got some names of *dastanchi* from Qaraqash, and from them I found out that the lead singer is Abdurakhman, who lives in a village near the town of Qaraqash. Once I was in the village it was not difficult to locate Abdurakhman, who welcomed me and played for me. Over the next few days, I spent most of my time with Abdurakhman, who took me to see some interesting people, including some mendicant *ashiq* and a *bakhshi* healer. It seemed to me that these people are integral to Uyghur society. Although Abdurakhman is neither an *ashiq* nor *bakhshi*, he has close relationships with them.

After I went back to Beijing, Abdurakhman often called me, saying he would like to travel and perform his music outside of Xinjiang. In 2013, I had the opportunity to invite him and two of his students to give four concerts in Shanghai. They played the *tämbur* (long-necked plucked lute), the *rawap* (a shorter-necked lute with several sympathetic strings) and the *sapayi* (percussion instrument made of sticks pierced with metal rings), and performed some *mäshräp* songs, including "King of Beggars", some folk songs, and a little *dastan*. Since neither Abdurakhman nor these songs are well-known in Shanghai, for part of the shows I arranged them to play together with a rock musician, who had travelled with me and met Abdurakhman in Xinjiang in 2008.

The shows were quite well received by the audience who probably came mainly for the rock musician but enjoyed the exoticism brought by the Uyghur musicians. Apart from playing his own music, Abdurakhman also improvised a little in the rock musician's works. A young Uyghur woman who was studying in Shanghai came up to the stage to dance during the show. Abdurakhman received

warm applause. He enjoyed the performance and the tour to Shanghai. After he went back to Qaraqash, he called me many times and invited me to go there again. Naturally, he was my most important contact when I returned to the Khotan area for my fieldwork in August 2015.

Abdurakhman's ID card shows that he was born in 1954, although he says he is actually three years younger. Mistakes in names and dates of birth on official documents are common in Xinjiang. His father was a *mäddah* (religious storyteller), and knew *dastan* but didn't play any instruments. Abdurakhman began to study *dastan* with his father when he was fourteen. At sixteen, he started to play *rawap*. After two years, he began to play *dutar* and violin. He also studied with a *dastanchi* named Abdukhalil Barat. At 18, he met his master Shah Mämät, and began to follow him and play the *tämbur*.

At that time, the government was going to persecute Abdurakhman because of his singing *dastan*. He ran into the mountains behind a *mazar* and hid there for a few days. If the dates that Abdurakhman told me are correct, this should be in 1975, when the Cultural Revolution was near its end. That means that although singing *dastan* (and possibly other activities related to religion) was banned at the time, the practice of singing *dastan* was still continuing. One day Abdurakhman saw Shah Mämät perform in the bazaar. Abdurakhman went to the bazaar and fell asleep.

At night, a man with a long beard came and told him to get up and sing. It is not clear whether the man came to him in a dream or in reality (as I repeatedly experienced in my fieldwork, dreams play an important role in people's lives in this region). In any case, Abdurakhman got up and saw his master. He took his master's *rawap* and began to play and sing. Many people came to listen to him,

even more than those who listened to Shah Mämät. Ever since then, Abdurakhman has been performing *dastan*.

Shah Mämät was one of the most renowned *dastanchi* in Xinjiang. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather were all *dastanchi*. Shah Mämät claimed he was born around 1923 (Rayhan Kadir 2008:150), although official sources put his year of birth at 1908.[21] When he was young, he studied in a Qur'anic school for two years, and he performed a lot of religious *dastan* works (Rayhan Kadir 2008:152).

Shah Mämät's original name was Muhämmätakhun Pasarakhun. He earned the title Shah (king) because of his excellence in *dastan* singing. He passed away on 9 December, 2009 (Dawut, personal communication, April 2017), less than a year after I first visited Qaraqash. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to see him that time, but I bought some homemade tape cassettes of his from the market. There seemed to have been many such recordings of his performances circulating among people in Khotan, although such unauthorised cassettes have since been banned by the local authorities (see Chapter 5 for more discussion on homemade cassettes) and I was unable to find any more of them during my fieldwork in 2015–2016.

Shah Mämät was a legendary figure in south Xinjiang. One of the things he was famous for was polygamy, often having two wives simultaneously. Abdurakhman says Shah Mämät's elder wife would look after the home, while he would take the younger wife out with him. From the many tape cassettes of Shah Mämät that I collected, I heard him perform with a son, but I never heard a female performer's voice, so his wives probably did not perform. That his wives seem not

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[21] http://www.ihchina.cn/6/15834.html (accessed 26 April 2017).

to have performed makes sense in the conservative atmosphere of south Xinjiang, where women performing music in public is seen as similar to exposing one's body (Harris 2013:238–240). Outside of urban settings of professional art troupes, I have seen very few woman performers in south Xinjiang.

One of the few exceptions was the woman of a couple who were both introduced to me as *ashiq* by Abdurakhman. They were very poor, and probably played *ashiq* songs in public as a means to make a living. The desperate need of living, together with society's tolerance of *ashiq*'s transgressive behaviours, made this an exceptional case. Liu interviewed a female *ashiq* in his film, but she only engaged in women's religious activities. Generally, performing in public seems to be improper behaviour for Uyghur women, although Abdurakhman has two female students, whose roles as musicians co-exist with their marginal roles other than their gender. At least one of them is blind.

Shah Mämät divorced so many wives that it is hard to know how many wives he had in total. He had a habit of marrying a new wife on the same day when he divorced a wife, no matter how. Even in the last three months of Shah Mämät's life, Abdurakhman helped him to marry a thirty-five year old wife. Once someone wanted to marry his daughter to Abdurakhman, but Abdurakhman married her to his master to show his respect. Shah Mämät's lifestyle was supported by the traditional custom in Xinjiang where a man could have as many as four wives, and a man could take a new wife immediately after divorce even though women had to wait for a certain period of time (Bellér-Hann 2008:262). Today, the social status of women in south Xinjiang is still very low, and I have met some men who have two wives, although this is not very common and certainly illegal.

Abdurakhman never had more than one wife at the same time, but he has married seven times, a variation of polygamy in the form of temporary marriage that is common in south Xinjiang (Bellér-Hann 2008:301). He divorced the previous six wives because of quarrels over family issues. As a *dastanchi*, Abdurakhman lives an unstable life. Sometimes he is away for two or three days, and sometimes for more than a week. Until less than ten years ago, he had always lived with his parents, and he would give all the money he earned to his parents except a little for his own expenses. When his ex-wives complained about that, he divorced them.

Among the Uyghur people, divorce and remarriage have been common (Bellér-Hann 2008:261). The rate of divorce in Xinjiang has always been the highest in China, due to factors such as early marriages and arranged marriages (Niejimu 2006). According to my observation, the rate of divorce is especially high among musicians, who live more unstable lives. Abdurakhman's current wife, whose father was also a *dastanchi*, doesn't complain, probably because she has already been used to the lifestyles and stigma (being seen as "beggars") of being *dastanchi*. They have been together for about thirty years.

Abdurakhman studied and busked with Shah Mämät for three years. They wandered from town to town, including Khotan, Qaraqash, Yarkand, Guma, and Kashgar. They performed at such *mazar* as Imam Asim, Kohmarim, and Ordam. When they travelled, they would stay with *dastanchi* whom they know. When those *dastanchi* come to Qaraqash, they would correspondingly stay with Shah Mämät and Abdurakhman. Travelling has always been a part of the lives of Uyghur folk musicians, like Turdi Akhun, who collected and edited the Twelve Muqam. In a way, musicians' travel is similar to that of *ashiq*, although the former travel to

expand the market and learn new songs, while the latter travel as a way of religious practice.

During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), Abdurakhman was once taken into custody for fifteen days and beaten up in Yarkand because of singing *dastan*. Again this shows that traditional musical activities did not totally stop in Xinjiang even during extreme political movements. In the 1990s he was taken into custody again, but was released after one day.

The Imam Asim Mazar festival was a big occasion for *dastanchi*, *mäddah* and *ashiq*, before it was banned in 2013 (Thum 2014:121). During the festival, there would be tens of thousands of people at the *mazar.* It was so crowded that there was no standing room in some areas. *Dastanchi* would line up to perform one by one. Each collected his money after his performance. Many people came to listen to the *dastan* sung by Abdurakhman and Shah Mämät. Each of them could make 1,000 to 1,500 yuan a day during the festival, which is a lot of money for Khotan, where the average yearly income of a local farmer/herdsman in 2011 was 3,443 yuan.[22] Abdurakhman would give half of the money he received to his master.

Although Abdurakhman is a good musician, he cannot compare to Shah Mämät in the eyes of Sufis like Niyaz, because Abdurakhman does not have "*täriqät*" (the Sufi path) as Shah Mämät did. Abdurakhman is a *dastanchi*, which is a profession not necessarily related to one's religious being. Abdurakhman has a student named Yasin, who is a long-haired *ashiq* and *shäykh* or guardian of a *mazar*. Later I learned that he is also a *bakhshi* who heals patients. It seems that he can be anything that helps him to make a living. This kind of versatility is something looked down upon by the more devoted *ashiq*.

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[22] http://www.xjdrc.gov.cn/info/11299/204610.htm (accessed 27 April 2017).

Abdurakhman is versatile too. He took me to a healing ritual by Yasin, and to make up the scarcity in drummers, Abdurakhman joined the drummers and singers. He is experienced in doubling as a drummer and singer in healing rituals, and at that time I seemed to understand why I felt a shamanic atmosphere when I listened to his recording before I met him. It was essentially the same form of performance, with similar repertoire and instrumentation.

Abdurakhman plays different genres. Some of the most memorable moments from my fieldwork were at night in Abdurakhman's home, when he played a *dutar* or *rawap* and sang some songs, partly for me, and perhaps more for himself. Singing has become such an important part of his life that he cannot stop it. In Khotan, most people know him because of his busking at bazaars and *mazar*.

When he busks he usually performs some *mäshräp* songs and *muqam* to gather the audience before starting singing *dastan*. Sometimes he performs by himself, sometimes with one or two students. They play *rawap*, *tämbur*, and *dap*. Abdurakhman knows fourteen *dastan* and the duration of these *dastan* ranges from forty minutes to three hours. Four of them are about history, while the other ten are related to Islam. The lyrics are usually fixed, but he improvises in the spoken sections, sometimes telling jokes, sometimes boasting about his trips to Beijing and Shanghai, which are out of the reach of most locals, whose mobility is usually confined to within Xinjiang due to economic, cultural and political factors (see Chapter 6 for more discussion on the immobility of Uyghur people). The imaginary places and times in Abdurakhman's performance help him to attract audiences and encourage people to donate money to him.

Abdurakhman usually solicits payment through leading the audience to say *dua* (supplication), as I have seen many times during my fieldwork. He says in

Kashgar, people give money when you sing, but in Khotan, they do not until you say *dua*. This is just one of the many differences (besides dialect, food, behaviour, and so on) between Kashgar and Khotan that people told me about in Khotan. As the traditional Uyghur name for south Xinjiang Altishahr ("six cities") indicates, the Uyghur people live in oases that spread along the edges of the Taklamakan desert. People of these oases have formed a general culture with local differences.

Abdurakhman has created a new *dastan* called Chintümür Batur, using lyrics he read from a book. Besides *dastan* he also performs some *mäshräp*, *muqam* and *qoshaq* (folk songs) and participates in the Sufi *hälqä-sohbät* rituals when invited.

Abdurakhman's performance of *dastan* enables people of less education to learn about history and religion in an easy way. However, there are people who oppose his performances, especially those who have been influenced by reformist thinking. Several times, a group of people, both men and women, came to disrupt his busking. They said what he sang was not in the Qur'an, and there is nobody that one should worship other than Allah. Some women would hold his clothes to stop him. Abdurakhman argued with them, saying that what he sings is about Muhammad and other prophets. Some among the audience were inclined towards the Wahhabi[23] view, but most of them supported Abdurakhman in singing *dastan*. That was some years ago, and now that Wahhabism has been banned by the government, no one dares to promulgate reformist thinking in public any longer. It is good for Abdurakhman, and the government requires weddings to have music

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[23] "Wahhabi" is a loose term used in Xinjiang and Central Asia, often with denotation of extremism, to refer to orthodox/reformist Muslims. The term is derived from the Wahhabi movement of Saudi Arabia (Harris and Dawut 2002: 115, Dillon 2004:12).

nowadays in order to fight "religious extremism", so he gets more invitations to perform at weddings.

Abdurakhman became a provincial-level bearer of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in 2010 and a national-level bearer in 2012, something that has brought significant changes to his life. Now he is an officially recognised folk musician and is entitled to 10,000 yuan of yearly allowance from the government. He has shown me his ICH certificates, among many other documents about his merit that he stores in a black briefcase. These include a membership card of the Xinjiang Folk Artists' Association, a certificate of his participation in a training workshop for *dastanchi* in Ürümchi, and an award from the local government for his performances in the Shanghai concert that I had arranged for him.

Abdurakhman cherishes these documents very much, and they are indeed important for him, a poor farmer and grassroots folk musician. They give him a semi-official status which affords some protection. For example, he is free to busk in public, but some other *dastanchi* are not allowed to do so, since the government tries to control the spread of unauthorised content. As a folk artist chosen by the government to perform at some official events, Abdurakhman has the power to choose which other folk musicians perform with him. He has appeared in a TV show, so many more people came to know of him through the show. He has also become a member of Qaraqash County branch of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Towards the end of my fieldwork, he was so busy with meetings and performances arranged by the government that I was hardly able to see him.

Abdurakhman has four daughters but no son. In a society with little social security and dominated by men, he has often to rely on help from others, and that

is why he is enthusiastic about having students. When I started my fieldwork he had more than twenty students. In many cases his students are only nominal, like Niyaz and Nurmämät, who don't really study with him, but would send him money and gifts, and help him with necessary labour. In return, Abdurakhman took them to the governmental *dastanchi*' workshops in Ürümchi which helped them to get the certificates. Neither Niyaz nor Nurmämät is a real *dastanchi*, but with the certificates they are in a better situation in regards to "illegal religious activities" such as *hälqä-sohbät*.

Certificates provide certain protection to people engaged in religious activities which might often bring them trouble in the current political environment. I have met several people who have been persecuted because of involvement in "illegal religious gatherings", and some of them are still in prison. This is also the reason why Mäkhsum became a student of Abdurakhman, although he hasn't got the *dastanchi*'s certificate yet. *Dastan*, which is a legitimate Intangible Cultural Heritage, can be used to cover *hälqä-sohbät*, which is a form of "illegal religious gathering". Capitalising on the government's recognition, Abdurakhman offers innovative forms of benefit to his students in a changing reciprocal *Ustaz-*(master-) *shagirt* (disciple) relationship.

Abdurakhman once took me to a *hälqä-sohbät* gathering at the house of another villager. Later someone reported to the *dadui* (local governmental structure that functions at a village level) that Abdurakhman had taken a "Han Chinese student" (by which they referred to me) to a *hälqä-sohbät*. Abdurakhman went to the *dadui* and explained that the student studied *dastan* and *muqam* with him, and that there had not been any *hälqä-sohbät*. He is used to the division between the officially sanctioned and forbidden traditions, which are actually

closely related to each other but are divided according to political necessity. As someone who dwells on the peripheries of both the Sufis and the governmental worlds, he can make use of his musical ability to be friendly with both, with an appropriate choice of repertoires and forms of performance.

In 2016, the government of Qaraqash County set up a classroom for Abdurakhman in his village and paid him a regular salary to teach *dastan* to students, some of whom are from the Vocational High School of Qaraqash, as well as other students who are villagers interested in *dastan*. Now Abdurakhman has many more students. The last time I saw him, he had not busked for more than a month, which had never happened before in his forty-year career as a *dastanchi*. "I wish I still had time to busk at the Grand Bazaar. Every Sunday some people go there to listen to my *dastan*. I don't want them to disappear," he told me.

1.3 Niyaz—a Sufi mystic

Hospitality is one of the most important customs of the Uyghur people, and an expression of generosity is expected from all those who can afford it (Bellér-Hann 2008:203). That said, Niyaz is still the most hospitable and generous person I have ever known, even among the Uyghurs. For most of the time during my fieldwork, I stayed in his house in Khotan. It is a big house with many rooms and a courtyard. He has more than eighty quilts, which means he can accommodate that many guests simultaneously. That has happened, for example, when his children got married and many friends of his, who were not local, visited.

During my time there, I saw a lot of people in his house. Some stayed for longer periods, others for a shorter time. He gave me a room (for free) where I could sleep and work. Sometimes I shared my bed, which was built on bricks and

covered two thirds of the room, with temporary visitors. Niyaz fed me (for free) every day, always with more food than I could eat. Once I asked him if I could leave the food that I could not eat for the next day. He replied that we do not know if we will wake up or not tomorrow, because that is for God to decide. There is a feast almost every day in his home to entertain his friends. During festival time, he gives many of his sheep away and he also constantly gives money to poorer people, some of whom are his students.

Niyaz says he has three or four thousand students in Xinjiang, about one thousand of whom are women, although I doubt the credibility of this number, as I doubt many other things that he tells me. In almost every *mazar* or mosque that he showed me, there is something donated by him, be it a tree, carpet or money. Niyaz drove me everywhere around Khotan to visit different *mazar*, and he kept saying *dua* on the way, whilst driving. He told me that he was saying *dua* because there was a graveyard here and there. Fortunately, he only used one hand to touch his face after saying *dua*, while his other hand was still on the steering wheel. He seems to know every single *mazar* in Xinjiang.

Niyaz was born in 1968. According to him, his father was an *ishan*, which is an honorific title of the leader of a Sufi brotherhood in Xinjiang and elsewhere in Central Asia, meaning a "master", "teacher", or "guide" (Wang, Jianping 2001:126). When Niyaz's father was alive, he used to host *dhikr* every week in the 1970s and 1980s. Every time there were seventy to eighty people, and they would do it throughout the night. The next morning, whatever food people got, be it corn porridge or meat, people shared together. Niyaz began to do *dhikr* at eight. He also studied with two famous Sufis in Khotan around that time.

Niyaz claims to be a member of the Mäkhfisuluq, literally "secret order", which, according to Mäkhsum, is a general term for people who do silent *dhikr*. Meaning the hidden one, the Mäkhfi usually stays at home and does not go out except to *mazar* by himself, and does not show his identity in public, according to Niyaz. The Mäkhfi only expresses himself through emotion and love. Niyaz says Mäkhfi can see that which they concentrate their attention on. For example, when they go to any *mazar*, they would know who is buried in the *mazar*, at what age they died, how tall they were, and so on.

Once he walked for nine hours to a place in the Gobi Desert, because he knew there was a *mazar* there where three women were buried. He also claims to be able to see what I do in Beijing when I am there, or a fire or war that is going on somewhere in the world, those who are starving, those who are doing bad things.... One can only enter Mäkhfisuluq when "one's heart is open", meaning being enlightened. The way to achieve that is by reciting *shahada* (profession of faith) and "*bi-smi llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm*" ("in the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful"), which are about the only things that the Mäkhfi recites. I found that Niyaz actually cannot recite much else from the Qur'an. He has been reciting "*bi-smi llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm*" for forty years, and his "heart opened" after he had been practicing this recitation for about twenty-two years.

According to Niyaz, the Mäkhfi doesn't sing or dance. He goes to places where there is nobody, to say what is in his heart. That is what Niyaz often does — leaving early in the morning to go to *mazar* and recite *shahada* and "*bi-smi llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm*". Although the Mäkhfi does not do vocal *dhikr* as part of his practice, he does it when he is with people of other orders. Niyaz organises *dhikr* in his place (and has been caught and fined for doing so). He also has a big collection

of musical instruments in his home, and plays them both at *mäshräp* and when he is alone, although he is not particularly good at playing them.

Followers of Mäkhfisuluq are supposed to keep a secret of their beneficial deeds, which only Allah and they themselves know. Such an attitude is similar to early ascetics in Islam who engaged themselves in austerity for moral reasons and often tried to conceal their austerities from public view (Melchert 2007). Once we were in Nurmämät's home with some other people. When prayer time came, the others did ablution and prayed together. Niyaz said it was too late now for us to do the ablution and took me outside the room to sit in the courtyard. He said that his late master told him not to pray in public, but to pray when he is alone, and if people criticise him because he does not pray on time, that will be good for him.

Niyaz's late master was a certain Qasim Ashiq, whom he met in Khotan after he came back from Qaramay, where he served in the army from 1980 to 1986. While he was in the army, one night he had a dream, in which an *ashiq* gave him three certificates and brought him from Qaramay back to Khotan. Then he decided to discharge himself from the army. Again the dream seems important here, and as is common in many other Islamic societies, it offers "a way to metaphysical and divinatory knowledge, to be a practical, alternative, and potentially accessible source of imaginative inspiration and guidance and to offer ethical clarity concerning action in this world" (Edgar 2011:1).

Soon after he returned to Khotan, he went to the Käbälum Mazar in Chongkha village one day, and saw Qasim Ashiq by the river. He dared not talk to Qasim, who had long hair and wore hardly any clothing, but Qasim talked to him and asked when he had returned. At that moment, Niyaz realised that Qasim was the *ashiq* who brought him back to Khotan in his dream, so Niyaz became his

student. Qasim did not have a home but slept everywhere. He was always in thin clothes throughout the year.

Once, Niyaz recited *dhikr* and danced for nine days without eating anything. On the ninth day, Qasim called Niyaz to come to him. He brought out a *nan* bread and divided it into four pieces, as is the custom among the Uyghurs. Qasim ate one piece, and gave the rest to Niyaz and two other students. That was all Niyaz had eaten in nine days but he felt full. Nowadays, Niyaz still often eats very little when he is on pilgrimages to *mazar* and recites *dhikr*.

One Friday in 1991, Qasim came to Niyaz's home to say goodbye. Niyaz asked him where he was going. Qasim said he was going to die, on Monday. He told Niyaz not to travel far from home. Niyaz did not believe him, and went to Chira County on Sunday. When he came back to Khotan on Monday, his master had already died. Nobody knew how old Qasim was when he died. Some said he was in his 130s. Some older people said that when they were still children, Qasim had already looked like that, and he did not seem to change throughout all those years. In the same way that Qasim had been able to bring Niyaz back to Khotan in a dream, he had also had the ability to foresee his own death. Such supernatural powers, Niyaz believes, can be obtained only by studying with a master and practicing *dhikr*.

Niyaz studied healing with Qasim. Qasim cured many people's diseases by blowing air over them and saying "*bi-smi llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm*". Today, Niyaz still treats people that way. I have seen Niyaz treat a woman's heart disease. He asked her to eat date pit powder, and recite "*bi-smi llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm*" 500,000 times. Once Niyaz had a dream, in which he was in a *mazar* where three people taught him to set fire to a piece of newspaper and do cupping on a woman.

The next day, that woman actually came to him for treatment. He did the cupping on her and cured her disease. The woman offered him 20,000 yuan, but he only accepted 1,000 yuan, as an *ashiq* should not be greedy.

Niyaz had nineteen masters. Qasim was the final one. After Qasim had passed away, Niyaz travelled throughout Xinjiang, but was unable to find another master like Qasim. Even though it is quite common for Sufis in Khotan to have more than one master, Niyaz has had more masters than anybody else I met. It is an interesting comparison with Abdurakhman, who tries to have more students who can help his material needs. Niyaz tries to have more masters that can help his spiritual needs. It is also worth noting that among Niyaz's masters there were people who belonged to particular Sufi orders and wandering dervishes like Qasim who did not have specific religious affiliation, and that both those who are affiliated with specific orders and those who are unaffiliated dervishes are part of the Sufi community.

After Qasim died, Niyaz became an itinerant *ashiq* himself, growing long hair, sleeping in *mazar* and living on alms. He told me he was a beggar for two years, only coming back home to see his wife and children occasionally. Some people looked down upon him during that period of time, including some of his brothers and sisters. He has not spoken to them since then.

Niyaz came back to live a normal life after two years, but he still goes to *mazar* almost every day. Before he had a car, he used to wander from *mazar* to *mazar* on foot for months. For Niyaz as well as for other *ashiq*, such wandering symbolises a search for God, and provides a physical and geographical link to the past (Thum 2014:96). However, in recent years such religious mendicancy has been made more difficult as the authorities try to prevent people from travelling

between towns and villages to worship at shrines. Niyaz says he does not like to go to crowded places like bazaars, but instead prefers quiet places like *mazar*.

In his past, Niyaz had used to drink alcohol. Once, when he was drunk, he cycled to Qasim's tomb in the Imam Asim Mazar which is more than twenty kilometres away. He slept there overnight, and had nightmares. Since then he has stopped drinking. Niyaz has also worked at a carpet factory, guesthouse, police station, sub-district office, and Civil Service Bureau. Apart from the two years when he lived as a mendicant *ashiq*, he maintains a commoner's lifestyle and social network, but compared to common people he spends more time on spiritual practice.

Niyaz said that he recites 100,000 repetitions of "*bi-smi llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm*" every day, which does not leave him much time to sleep. Every day he gets up around 3 am to do *dhikr*. Sometimes he doesn't sleep at all. It bothered me that he would still drive during the day. When he felt too tired, he would just take a nap of ten minutes or so in the car.

Niyaz told me that he has had a lot of mystical experiences. For example, Shah Mashrab (the seventeenth century *ashiq*) once came to his house and left without saying anything. He also claims to have had visitations from other dead religious figures, like Imam Jafar Sadiq, the sixth Shi'a Imam, who was believed by locals to be buried in Niyä County. Sometimes even a *mazar* comes to him, like the Ordam Mazar. As with his other, previous mystical experiences, many of these are related to dreams, which is a medium by which many Uyghurs can maintain communication with the deceased (Thum 2014:67).

Once I showed him two pictures of *qäländär* in Khotan taken by Swedish explorer Nils Ambolt in 1933. The next morning Niyaz told me he dreamed of them

last night. There were eighteen of them, coming to him in two carriages, and Niyaz treated them to watermelon. That afternoon, we visited Mäkhsum's home, and Niyaz fell asleep for a while. He told me later that those *qäländär* in the photos came to him again, and he dreamed of them harvesting wheat for Mäkhsum. Sometimes I am not sure whether what he says really happened or is from a dream. Maybe for him there is no clear boundary.

Niyaz has also claimed to have special powers. When he was a mendicant *ashiq*, he went with another *ashiq* to Imam Asim Mazar. They offered a cow to people there. The *shäykh* (guardian of a *mazar*) asked for a leg of the cow, but they didn't give it to him. Feeling offended, the *shäykh* reported to the police that two suspicious people were there. The police arrived and asked Niyaz and the other *ashiq* why they were there. Niyaz, who had long hair at that time, said he came to drink alcohol, while the other *ashiq*, who had a big belly, said he came to give birth to his child. The police thought they were lunatics and left. Not long after this, that *shäykh* died.

Such a result seems to have happened many times to people who tried to do harm to Niyaz. In Niyaz's house in Khotan, he built a big room for *dhikr*. Sometimes so many people came that he had to kill four or five sheep to feed the visitors. Once a neighbour reported to the sub-district office that Niyaz had gathered many people to do *dhikr* at home. The director of the office told Niyaz to be careful. Niyaz was very angry, and recited half a million times "*bi-smi llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm*". He said to God, "If I am right, you see it; if he is right, you also see it. If he is right, I am not doing it anymore. If I am right, I will continue to do it. Let him go where he belongs. I ask you to handle the matter." Twelve days later, the neighbour died, at

the age of thirty-two, without any children. Later his wife sold the house and moved away.

After that, another neighbour who lived behind Niyaz's house reported Niyaz's *dhikr* gathering to the sub-district office again. Niyaz was angry again, and recited "*bi-smi llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm*" 800,000 times, and said the same thing to God. That woman's two sons died. One was six, the other two and a half. She also died within the month. Similar things happened in Niyaz's houses in Jamda and Jiya townships. In Jamda, a man reported Niyaz's *dhikr* to the police. Within six months, that man's wife became ill and went to hospital in Ürümchi, which cost them more than three million yuan. On their return home, his son was arrested because of something sensitive written in his notebook which had been reported to the authorities, and was later sentenced to eighteen years in jail. In Jiya, the person who had betrayed Niyaz to the police was hit by a motorcycle and was paralysed as a result.

Niyaz always wears US army uniforms and a baseball cap, which makes him look very different from other Sufis in Khotan. It was his late master, Qasim, who gave him a baseball cap and taught him that Sufis regard inner feelings as more important than external actions, and those who look pious are not necessarily so. I remember once Niyaz asked me to take off my white cap after we prayed at the Imam Äptäh Mazar on a Jümä (Friday), and asked me to shave my beard when it grew longer. I only began to understand why he did that later.

Qasim wore a baseball cap himself, and he cut off the edge of the hat before giving it to Niyaz. After Qasim died, Niyaz did not wear the hat for two years, but he wore it one day in 1997 when he went to a *mazar* in Yarkand, where he gathered with about eighty people. Niyaz was wearing his hat askew and using

dust to clean his body, sitting there reciting Allah's name. At that time, the police came to arrest people. When they saw that Niyaz was in rags, his hat askew, and his face covered in dust, they thought he was a madman and went away. So Niyaz stayed there while all others were arrested. The cap from Qasim saved Niyaz. Since then, he has always worn a baseball cap.

Apparently Niyaz believes in some mystic power that enables him to avoid ill fortunes, heal patients, and inflict harm to those who obstruct *ashiq*'s paths. While Niyaz attributes such supernatural powers to God, he believes his practice, through both silent and vocal *dhikr*, has endowed him with the ability to incite these powers to help him. It seems to me that for Uyghurs like Niyaz who do not really understand the Arabic language, the unintelligibility of Qur'anic verses adds to their mystic powers.

1.4 Mäkhsum—a knowledgeable *ashiq*

Mäkhsum's ID card shows that he was born in 1970, although he once told me that he was born in 1971. Uyghur people seem to have a hazy concept of time and age, at least in rural Xinjiang. Many people do not know their exact age, and their birth dates on ID cards are often not correct either.

The first time I saw Mäkhsum was at Abdurakhman's home, when he joined the *mäshräp* gathering I described at the beginning of this chapter. He played a *dap* and sang. After the gathering, he introduced himself to me and showed me his imam's certificate that had been issued by the authorities. He was nice and friendly. We exchanged our phone numbers, and he saved mine in his phone under the name of "*adash*"(friend).

The next day, Niyaz drove me and Abdurakhman to visit Mäkhsum's home, which is located in a village in the outskirts of Khotan. Although not far from a market, Mäkhsum's house was in a quiet corner. We walked into the innermost room, which was about fifty square meters big. It was carpeted, without any furniture. My first impression of the room was that it looked like a mosque. It turned out to be a *khaniqa* (Sufi lodge), where people gather to do *hälqä-sohbät*, a Uyghur *dhikr* ritual. Just when I was imagining how the ritual would look, Mäkhsum gathered a group of people and started a *hälqä-sohbät* right before my eyes. Later I learned, this *khaniqa* was re-constructed on the site of the old *khaniqa* where Mäkhsum's grandfather used to host *dhikr*.

Mäkhsum is a third-generation *ishan* of his family. His grandfather Rashdin Akhunum Häzirtim died sometime in the 1980s, at the age of a hundred and five. Again this age is questionable, like the ages of many senior people I met in Khotan who claimed to be ninety something or a hundred and something but were actually younger.

Mäkhsum has shown me an *irshad*, something like a diploma which displays the *silsilä* or spiritual genealogy of his family. It is a copy, as the original one was burnt together with the Qur'an during the political movements of the 1960s. Mäkhsum's grandfather Rashdin got the original *irshad* when he was in his forties or fifties, from Qaghiliq, a town between Khotan and Kashgar, in the *khaniqa* of Atawullakhan Khojam Ishan, Rashdin's master.
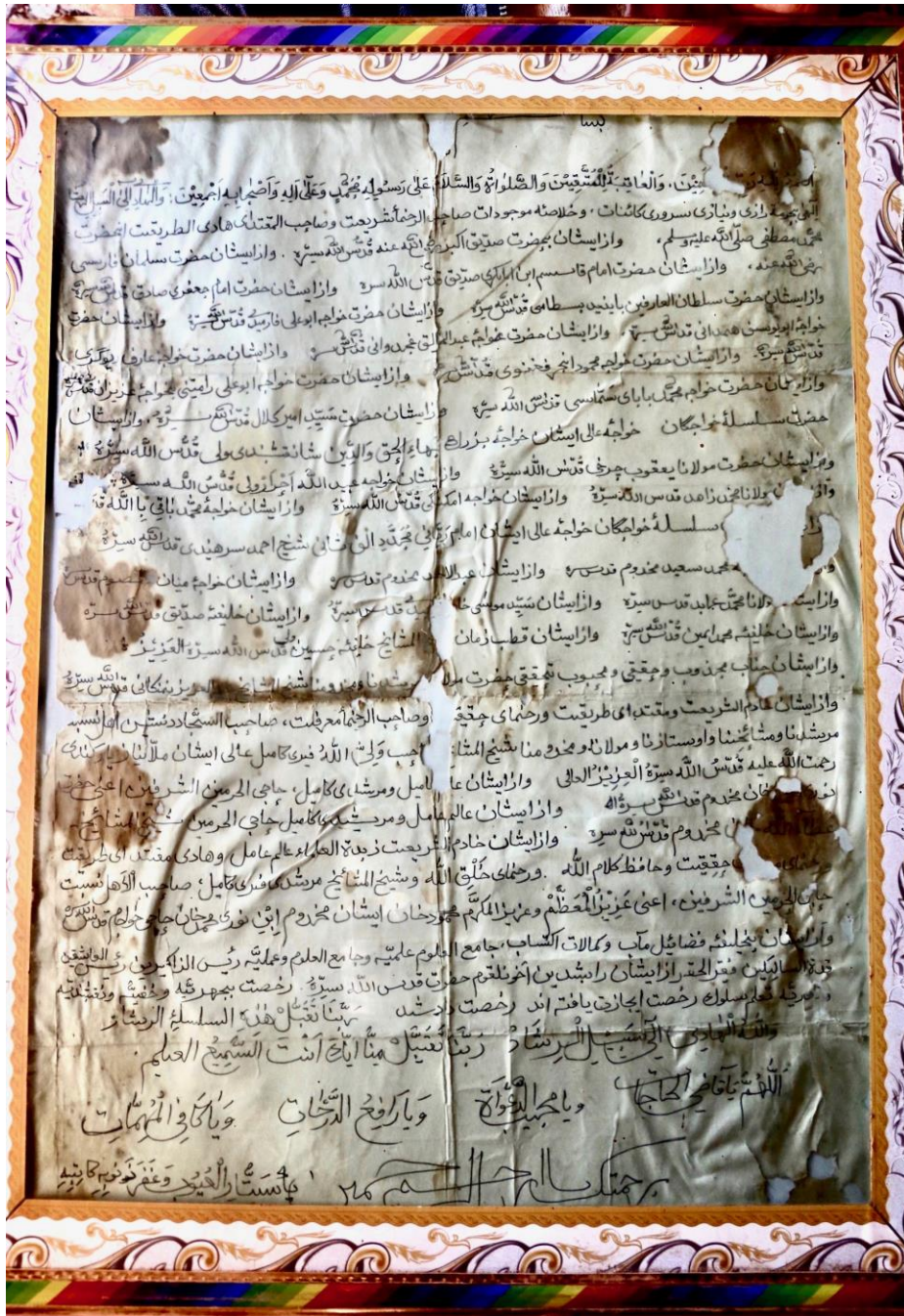
Figure 3. Mäkhsum's *irshad* which shows the religious genealogy of his family

Atawullakhan Khojam Ishan's *khaniqa* in Qaghiliq was a branch of the Tiräkbagh *Khaniqa* in Yarkand, which belongs to the Naqshbandiyya-Jahriyya (Änwär 2013:36), the sect that practices oral *dhikr*. Atawullankhan was a grandson of Molla Niyaz Ishanim, the *ishan* of Tiräkbagh Khaniqa, a Yarkandi who went to Namangan to be initiated at the Naqshbandiyya by Majdhub Namangani and died in 1889 in Yarkand (Zarcone 2001:127). In addition, Molla Niyaz Ishanim's father

traced his origin up to Afaq Khwaja, one of the most prominent figures in Uyghur Sufism. Thus, his *silsilä* is probably a mixture of a Ferghanese Sufi line and a traditional Eastern Turkistani Sufi lineage (Zarcone 2001:127). Actually, the Naqshbandi of Xinjiang had extended networks in and beyond Xinjiang and maintained close ties with the Naqshbandi of western Turkestan (Bellér-Hann 2008:320–21).

Mäkhsum's grandfather Rashdin studied with Atawullakhan for nine years. After Atawullakhan passed away, Rashdin began to serve Atawullakhan's brother Mamutkhan Khojam. Mamutkhan Khojam was later killed by Sheng Shicai (a Chinese warlord who ruled Xinjiang from 1933 to 1944), together with fifteen other knowledgeable people. The history of Sufism in Xinjiang has been intertwined with politics, from its inception to this day.

After Mamutkhan Khojam died, Mäkhsum's father, and later Mäkhsum himself, became students of Hamutkhan Khojam, son of Mamutkhan Khojam. The *irshad* mentions all the four Sufi orders in Khotan: the Naqshbandiyya, Qadiriyya, Chishtiyya and Suhwardiyya, thereby indicating that Mäkhsum's family is affiliated with all four orders, although Mäkhsum says that they are specifically affiliated with the Binuri, a sub-group of Naqshbandiyya which practices silent *dhikr*. The term Binuri is probably a corruption of al-Banūrī, a disciple of Sirhindi who died in 1643 (Bazmee Ansari 2012).

Mäkhsum said although he is Binuri, what he recites in the morning and evening is from Mujaddidiyya, another sub-group of Naqshbandiyya. He teaches students to be Mujaddidi, because that is the easiest and quickest way to reach a high level, but at the same time he also practices vocal *dhikr* and encourages his students to engage in *hälqä-sohbät*. This kind of engagement in practices of

different orders is something that I found to be common during my fieldwork among Uyghur Sufis.

After Rashdin obtained his *irshad* and became an *ishan*, he came back to Khotan and built a *khaniqa* which, after reconstruction, became the *khaniqa* in Mäkhsum's home now. It is a branch of the Tiräkbagh Khaniqa in Yarkand. When Mäkhsum was ten or eleven, his father Wiliyulla sent Mäkhsum to study the Qur'an with Ibrahim Qarim Hajim, a good friend of Wiliyulla, because he was afraid that Mäkhsum would not be able to concentrate on studying the Qur'an at home. Mäkhsum first learned the Arabic alphabet, then learned to recite the Qur'an, and after that, learned to match tunes to the Qur'an. He studied with Ibrahim for about two years, following which he studied religious texts with Muhammad Imin, who was like Wiliyulla's teacher.

When Rashdin was alive, every Friday he would hold a *khätmä* (recitation of the Qur'an) or *hälqä-sohbät* at the *khaniqa*. Mäkhsum grew up seeing it, and learned to sing *hikmät* with his father Wiliyulla. There were many books of *hikmät* in their home, both printed and hand-written. Wiliyulla used to point to one or two paragraphs in a book, mostly works of Yasawi and Mäjzup, and told Mäkhsum to learn the words by heart. When Mäkhsum memorised them, he would practice them in *hälqä-sohbät*. Mäkhsum learned *hikmät* that way, and by the age of fifteen he became a *hapiz* himself. Mäkhsum had also been taught to sing *muqam*, from childhood, by his father.

Wiliyulla was an *ishan*, having received an *irshad* from Rashdin. Before Wiliyulla died in about 2005, he gave an *irshad* to Mäkhsum and made him an *ishan*. In order to become an *ishan*, one has to learn Sharia, know how to recite the Qur'an, be familar with Arabic, Persian and Turki languages, and work for an *ishan* for

some years and get his recognition. The *silsilä* of Mäkhsum can be traced all the way back to Prophet Muhammad. As pointed out by Thum, the recognition of a line of descendants into the present was extremely important for the Naqshbandi (Thum 2014:137).

From when Mäkhsum was fifteen, he began to practice silent *dhikr*, at least 5,000 times a day. He recites either Allah's names or the *shahada*, using beads to count the number of repetitions. Mäkhsum became an imam in the mosque of his village in 1993, making him both an official imam and *ashiq*, a common crossover among Uyghur Sufis. He was nominated by villagers, and then approved by the government. There are altogether five people in the mosque. His brother Abdulla is also in the mosque. If Mäkhsum is not there, his brother can lead the prayer. If neither of them is there, the muezzin can lead the prayers, but only Mäkhsum has an official imam's certificate.

Like most mosques in Khotan, Mäkhsum's mosque has been chanting the *azan* (*adhan* in Arabic, call to prayer) in a local style, in contrast to a Middle Eastern style that some mosques have adopted since the 1990s. The latter has been banned by the authorities who are wary of influences from abroad. Mäkhsum prefers the local style he grew up listening to, which he believes to have come from Ferghana Valley, like his religious lineage, although he has never been there himself. He has never been to the Middle East either, but he has learned that style as well from VCDs (see Chapter 5 for more discussion on VCDs and DVDs).

Mäkhsum usually gets up around four thirty a.m. to do the *namaz bamdat* (morning prayer). Sometimes a baby is born and he goes to name the baby. Sometimes there is *näzir* (a feast to commemorate the dead). If somebody dies, he goes to say *dua* at burial. If nothing else happens, he goes to the mosque at one pm

to lead the *namaz peshin* (midday prayer). After that around four or five p.m. he goes to the mosque again to do the *namaz digär* (afternoon prayer). In between he does his own farming or house maintenance work.

Mäkhsum has a car, but he does not have a driving license. I have seen him drive a few times to the city to take part in some gatherings, usually in the evening when it is less likely that his driving license will be checked. At first I thought it was quite funny, but later I found out the reason why he does not have a driving license—nowadays you cannot use a photo showing a long beard on the driving license, and Mäkhsum does not want to shave his beard.

A long beard, which is seen by the authorities as a symbol of religious extremism, is virtually banned among all young men. The interpretation of the age of a "young man" is not clear and often varies from case to case. Nurmämät, who is seven years older than Mäkhsum, was caught a few years ago and had his beard shaved. Mäkhsum can pass the long beard check because of his religious identity as an officially recognised imam, but he cannot pass for his driving license. Like many other activities of his, his driving has to lie in a grey area.

I have been to *hälqä-sohbät* at Mäkhsum's home three times. The participants include his elder son Muhämmät, his sisters' two sons who are around ten years old, his friends, and some of his students. Apparently, he has quite a few students, but when I ask him how many students he has, he says he has only one— his son Muhämmät. Niyaz reminds me that he does not want to talk about it. That is different from Niyaz, who claims to have thousands of students. Maybe Mäkhsum is showing modesty, or maybe it is something that he does not want to talk about to an outsider, like many other aspects of his religious practice.

Since those three occasions when I attended *hälqä-sohbät* at Hurmutlla's home, I have not been invited to attend again, probably because state controls on religion have become more stringent, but I know Mäkhsum has continued to practice *hälqä-sohbät*. He has to be more careful. He has to inform the *dadui* that he will have some guests visiting in advance, so the authorities do not become suspicious of people gathering in his home. When Mäkhsum's father was alive, they used to do a full *hälqä-sohbät* that consists of twenty-one *hälqä*s ("circle", meaning a round of sung poetry, *dhikr* and movements) and lasts a whole day. Now they usually sing three *hälqä*s in a *hälqä-sohbät*, and they have to be quieter. Mäkhsum laments to me that nobody today is as good at religious rituals as his father's generation.

On YouTube, there is a short video of Mäkhsum and some others reciting *munajat* (supplication often recited with crying), and another video of Mäkhsum singing *hikmät* on the way to a *mazar* with a group of people[24] (discussed in more detail in Chapter 5). Mäkhsum says they started in the evening and left in the early morning, to avoid attention.

In 2013, Mäkhsum gathered a child of his younger sister, a child of a relative and one of his children to stay together in his home, and he taught them Qur'an. Such informal Qur'anic education at home used to be tolerated by the authorities until the mid-1990s, but has been outlawed since 1996 following increased government restrictions (Waite 2006:258–259).

A man from Mäkhsum's village was arrested, and in order to be released, he reported to the police that Mäkhsum taught children to read the Qur'an at home. The police came and took the children away. They told Mäkhsum to pay a fine of

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[24] Videos not provided due to privacy and safety concerns.

30,000 yuan. He said he didn't have 30,000, and paid 10,000. They agreed to release the children and to not record the case. The next day, the children were released, but the policemen argued over how to divide the money, and that exposed the matter. Since then, Mäkhsum has a record with the authorities and became a "key person for inspection".

In 2016, Mäkhsum managed to get a passport, but like everybody else's, it was soon confiscated and retained by the police—after the new party chief of Xinjiang came into power. Mäkhsum wants to go to hajj, but when he applied, the authorities said he was too young and told him to wait till he is over fifty.

Once I showed Mäkhsum a video of an Indian Sufi *shaykh* visiting a *mazar* and delivering a speech. When he watched it, his tears fell. He understood the Arabic terms in the *shaykh*'s speech, and said that he was a true Muslim, a true man. He said when he saw that Sufis in other countries were holding on to their faith, he felt OK with all the hardships in Xinjiang.

1.5 Conclusion

Sound is an important part of the religious practice of Uyghur Sufis. To understand the meanings of these sounds, we have to understand the practitioners of these historically constructed sounded practices, who inherit, maintain and modify them (Rice 1987). From one perspective, they can be seen as musicians, because they are the people who make these sounds; however, they are considered to be different from professional musicians, just as their sounds are considered to be different from those sounds in performance settings.

The subjects of this research are *ashiq* ("lovers of God"), people who don't primarily play music for leisure or practical reasons, but rather, use vocals and

instruments to express their longing for God. The Uyghur *ashiq* is different from those who are called by similar terms in Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran and Armenia, who are professional bards. The Uyghur *ashiq* is a religious ascetic, who often seems abnormal in society, although the degree of asceticism can vary considerably from individual to individual.

An extreme *ashiq* lives a mendicant life as a way of religious devotion, rather than to make a living. The contrast of the spiritual and the material is reflected in various aspects of the dichotomy of *ashiq*/musician. Some *ashiq* wander around and live in *mazar*, and are similar to the *malang* in Punjab, but there are also *ashiq* who live normal lives and practice moderate asceticism. The *ashiq* is also related to the dervish and *mäjnun*, which are similar terms with different nuances.

Although the Uyghur *ashiq* is different from the musician, the boundary between the two is not absolute. In south Xinjiang where Islam, especially Sufism has influenced people's thinking and lifestyles, there are overlaps in the repertoires of *ashiq* and musicians, and people can be both *ashiq* and musicians. *Ashiq* and musicians also share similarities in their marginalised status in society and society's relative tolerance of their transgressive behaviours.

Travelling is an important part of the lives of both Uyghur *ashiq* and musicians. For the former it is a kind of spiritual pilgrimage; for the latter it is a way of expanding the market. Therefore, geography is a constant theme in the lives and practices of both groups. Both *ashiq* and musicians learn and pass on their knowledge through master-disciple systems, sometimes with overlaps. The current political environment is challenging the lifestyles of both groups of people, especially the *ashiq*, whose mobility is restricted and whose rituals are banned.

Facing the challenges of their heritage, *ashiq* and musicians are developing new strategies including new models of reciprocity and appropriation of the official discourse of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

I have presented in this chapter the biographies of three people I met during my fieldwork: Abdurakhman, a semi-professional musician who participates in some Sufi activities; Niyaz, a common Uyghur engaged in sounded Sufi practices; and Mäkhsum, a more learned Sufi with the titles of *ishan* and imam, and who is a leading figure in the organisation of Sufi rituals. Throughout history, Uyghur Sufis have been influenced by Sufism of other regions in Central Asia but developed their own characteristics (Zarcone 2001, Zhou 2003). From these biographies we gain a general understanding of the living conditions of Uyghur *ashiq*, as well as the context of the sounded practices of Uyghur Sufis.

The biographies of these three people, who can be seen as *ashiq*/musicians of various degrees and in different ways, display the largely traditional lifestyles of people living in south Xinjiang, although these lifestyles are experiencing considerable changes. Mysticism, as exemplified in beliefs in dreams and in the ability of inciting supernatural power to heal or punish people, is deeply rooted in the society of south Xinjiang, and is foundation of many social, religious and musical behaviours. *Ashiq* and musicians are often hereditary, denoting their existence as marginal social groups, as coming from families of *ashiq* and musicians often means having no other choice than to continue these vocations. Like in most aspects of Uyghur society, women have marginal status even within these marginalised groups. Woman *ashiq* are usually spouses of male *ashiq* and may crossover to the *büwi* women ritual specialists (Axike 2010, Harris 2014b). Women who take up music are usually already marginal in other ways, like those

with disabilities or those who are desperately poor, since performing in public as well as the mobility of a musician go against the moral behaviour expected of a woman. For practical reasons, this research focuses on male *ashiq*.

Chapter 2: *Hälqä-sohbät* - Ritual of Love

If the *ashiq* is a lover of God, *hälqä-sohbät*, a Uyghur ceremony of *samāʿ* and *dhikr*, is an expression of their love for God in a ritualistic form. This chapter will describe the form of *hälqä-sohbät*, and interpret the meanings of this ritual as well as its musical sound and body movement.

In his book about the musical life of the Suyá people, Seeger observes that not only are central parts of their social life constituted through ceremonies and musical performances, but that they also define themselves as a group through certain song genres (Seeger 1987:xiv). *Hälqä-sohbät*, a ritual with musical sound and body movement, also plays an important role in constructing the identities of the subjects of this research as both Sufis and as members of a particular Sufi order. The different roles of the various participants also play out in the *hälqä-sohbät* that I experienced—organiser versus participants, master versus apprentices, and devotees versus a guest instrumentalist.

There are similarities and dissimilarities between *hälqä-sohbät* and Qawwali, a *samāʿ* ceremony of Indo-Muslims. In her book about Qawwali, Qureshi argues that the two terms *mahfil-e-sama'* ("gathering for listening") and *darbār-e-auliyā* ("royal court of saints"), which focus on the listener's relationship to the music and to the total audience respectively, suggest a conceptual structural framework centred on the listener which relegates the performer to less important roles (Qureshi 2006:106–107). However, although the performer takes the role of service professional in the Qawwali and is peripheral to the setting of the assembly, he shapes the musical form of these ceremonies:

... using his knowledge of the Qawwali performance idiom and of the Qawwali occasion of performance, [he] takes cues from the occasion to select the musical variables for his performance. ... Thus he makes particular choices based on general principles of strategy, which reflect both ideological and socio-economic commitments. (Qureshi 2006:140)

Although the performer is of a marginal status in the spiritual hierarchy of the participants of a Qawwali event, he is by contrast central in Qawwali music, and is a vital point in the author's analysis of the interaction between musical and contextual variables of the ceremony. In the Uyghur *hälqä-sohbät* ritual, although there is not necessarily a division between the "audience" and the "performer", a similar interaction between the musical sound and context exists.

2.1 First *dhikr* gathering at Mäkhsum's *khaniqa*

The day after I walked into a *mäshräp* gathering at Abdurakhman's home, I walked into a *dhikr* ceremony at Mäkhsum's home. I am visiting him together with Niyaz and Abdurakhman. Sitting in the innermost room of Mäkhsum's home, which also functions as a *khaniqa*, we are served with *nan* bread, tea, and fruit, while other people keep arriving, until there are more than twenty participants. They sit (or rather, kneel on the floor as if in the position of prayer) along the four walls of the room. Abdurakhman plays his *rawap* lute and sings Imam Hüsäynim, a song he often plays during his performance of *dastan* (this song will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3).

A man who sits between Abdurakhman and me plays the *dutar* lute. Another man plays *tash* (two stones struck together in each hand). Some others play *dap* frame drum and *sapayi* rattle. The atmosphere is like a *mäshräp*, and to participate in the music I begin to play a *sapayi* too, which seems to be appreciated

by most people. Some begin to sing along and sway their bodies, like in the *mäshräp* party the previous day, but here in a more serious way. At this point a man begins to sob, while a few others are on the edge.

Abdurakhman ends his song with a *dua*, like in his performance in the bazaar. Niyaz tells me that they are going to do *dhikr*. It seems that they are doing this at least partly for me, because I have told Abdurakhman and Niyaz about my interest in *dhikr*, but on the other hand, our visit is spontaneous, and they did not plan it in advance. The quick organisation of the event indicates that they probably do this quite often.

Dhikr, or *zikir* in Uyghur language, is "ritual invocation and remembrance of God through prayer, incantation of sacred texts, song, and bodily motions that form a dance-practices[sic] generally associated with Sufis" (Shannon 2004:381). Before I came to Xinjiang I heard that *dhikr* ceremonies had been banned by the authorities as "illegal religious gatherings", and I was not sure if I would be able to attend one during my stay in Xinjiang. Now I am right in it, only a few days into my fieldwork. I am excited, but my brain is blank as I find my video camera is running out of battery. The *tash* player now plays the *dutar* and sings a song. When he says a *dua*, several people sob. Up until now it all seems to be quite casual, and the real ceremony has not started yet.

Someone brings Mäkhsum's *sällä* turban cap. He puts it on and looks more solemn. Now the ceremony begins. The instruments are the same as earlier. Mäkhsum, who plays a *dap*, leads the singing. To his left are Muhämmät and Mäkhsum's younger brother Abdulla, who both play the *sapayi*. To Abdulla's left is the *tash* player. To Mäkhsum's right is Abdurakhman, who is playing the *rawap*. To his right are some others who play *dap* and *sapayi*. The ten or so people who sit on

this inner, longer side of the room are those in charge of the sound, playing instruments and singing *hikmät*, which is the core repertoire in this ceremony.

Literally meaning "pieces of wisdom", *hikmät* is the musical recitation of verses attributed to the twelfth Century Sufi mystic Ahmed Yasawi, who is also thought to have promoted the practice of breath *dhikr* (Rouget 1985:271–272). At the end of each poem, the poet gives his name, but some were obviously written by followers as they are panegyrics (Yesevî and Azmun 1994:58). There have been different manuscripts of *hikmät* in circulation since the seventeenth century. I saw one such manuscript during my fieldwork, and heard that many more people have their own, although they were reluctant to show me these manuscripts, afraid of being caught by the authorities owning illegal religious material.
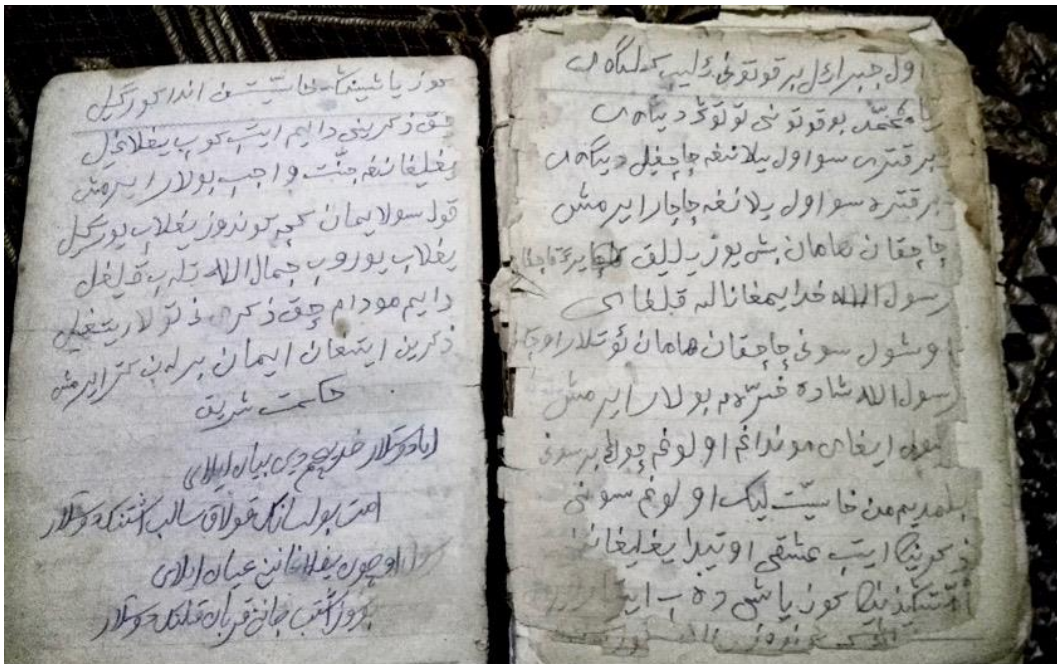
Figure 4. A manuscript of *hikmät*

Hikmät is mainly transmitted orally, and also appears in the *mäshräp* repertoire. Yasawi emphasised gnosis (*ma'rifa*), which his poetry renders "more paradoxical and cryptic than explicitly didactic", and "many of the proverb-like oral sayings attributed to Yasavī and his followers needed explanation if they were

to be used as guides on the mystical path" (Light 2008:72). That is why the *hapiz* (lead reciter) are respected among the Uyghurs because they are usually people of higher religious knowledge, unlike the Qawwals of the Indo-Muslims who are only service professionals and therefore have marginal roles. Mäkhsum tells me that because the language of *hikmät* is a mixture of Turki (old Uyghur), Arabic and Persian, one has to have knowledge of all three languages in order to understand it.

Those who don't play instruments are no lesser participants, as they rock their bodies and stretch out their arms to the beat, showing the effect of listening. Some, who are more physically active than others, seem to be entranced. After a couple of songs, the tempo accelerates, and Mäkhsum leads people to stand. Soon they begin to dance. It is a kind of rapid swirling, much faster than that of the Mevlevi and Qadiri-Rifai *dhikr* ceremonies that I saw in London when I was preparing for the fieldwork. Niyaz is also dancing now. The dance goes on for about four minutes, until Mäkhsum concludes the chanting. The man who sobbed earlier cannot stop swirling, but has to be stopped by others. He is crying loudly after being helped to sit down.

Some other people are sobbing too, including three women who stay outside the room. In Xinjiang, Uyghur women and men are segregated in many situations, especially for religious activities. Women do not go to mosques but only pray at home. I have seen several times a few women reciting *dhikr* outside a room where a group of men gather to do *dhikr*. Mijit mentions similar situations in Ghulja, a town in north Xinjiang, where women do not participate in men's *dhikr*, but can take part by standing outside a door or window (Mijit 2016:400). Mijit does not consider this to be discriminatory as there are also *dhikr* gatherings for

women. I witnessed a Uyghur women's *dhikr* ceremony led by women ritual specialists called *büwi* when I travelled in Xinjiang in 2008–2009. Furthermore, In Liu's film there is also a "woman *ashiq*" who seems to cross over to *büwi* (Axike 2010), but generally, women's *dhikr* ceremonies are probably less common than men's.

Another piece is played, in the "limping beat" that is typical of Uyghur *mäshräp*, which Harris believes plays a role in the unique musical-emotional vocabulary of Central Asia (Harris 2014b:353). It seems that this rhythm is working, as the listeners, who are sitting down now, rock their bodies again.

I have transcribed four different beats played on *sapayi* during the ritual as follows:

Sapayi Beat 1
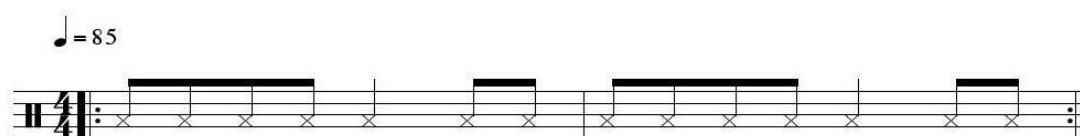
Sapayi Beat 2
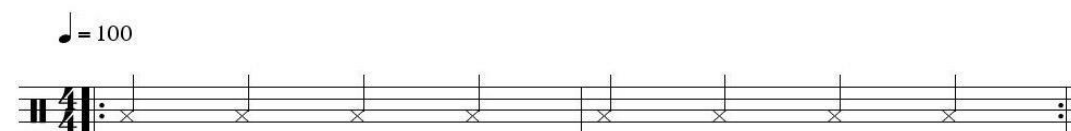
Sapayi Beat 3 ("limping beat")
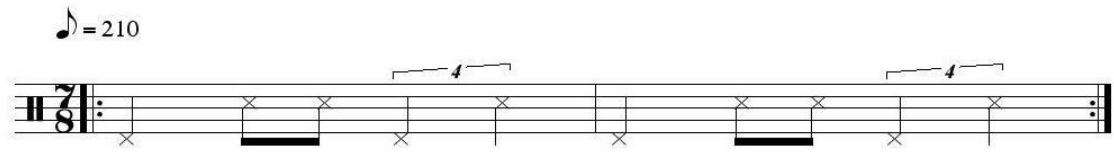
Sapayi Beat 4
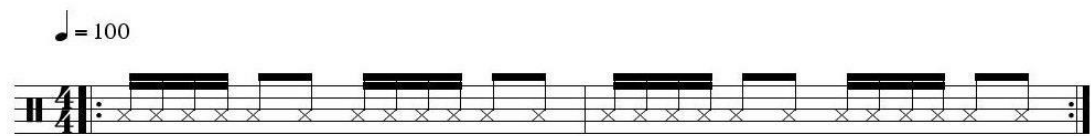
Figure 5. Four rhythmic patterns of *sapayi*

The third rhythmic pattern, the "limping beat", stands out because it is the only non-duple meter here. However, I am not sure if it is unique in inducing trance, as it seems that people react to other beats more or less in the same way. I will discuss the "limping beat" in more detail in Chapter 3; suffice to say at the moment that when the "limping beat" appears among duple beats, it changes the general feel from a musical perspective.

Mäkhsum leads all the people to sing a *munajat*, a kind of supplicatory *hikmät*, with both palms facing upward and later touching their faces as in a *dua*. After that they say a *dua*, which concludes the session. The whole ceremony, excluding the *mäshräp*-like intro, lasts about half an hour. Niyaz tells me that this is not a full ceremony, as they did not start from the very beginning to work their way through every part. I notice too, that the rhythmic breathing that I heard in a recording of Uyghur *dhikr* (During 1995) is missing in this ceremony, but I am already overwhelmed by the aural and visual impact of the event.

After the ceremony, we are served *chüchürä* dumplings. Mäkhsum says some words to thank Abdurakhman, and puts twenty yuan in front of him. Other people also contribute some money, mostly ten each, while Niyaz and I put one hundred each. Nobody else receives money but Abdurakhman, indicating his status as a special guest. I am also a guest, but Abdurakhman is a musician, who plays music to make a living. At the same time, Abdurakhman is also master (*ustaz*) of Niyaz and Mäkhsum, although only nominally. Mäkhsum brings belts to Abdurakhman, Niyaz and Nurmämät (another student of Abdurakhman) as gifts. He also sends me a long coat which is a typical dress of Uyghur Sufis. Feeling unentitled to the gift, I at the same time appreciate deeply his hospitality.

Before we leave the inner room, a man takes a young boy in and asks Abdurakhman, Niyaz and some others to blow air over his face. Harris notes similar actions by a group of Uyghur women to blow into a bowl of water after a *dhikr* ceremony, which would supposedly transfer the blessings earned by their recitation into the water and help a sick woman who by drinking the water would recover from a major operation (Harris 2014c:119). Later Niyaz tells me that the boy is a little slow and by blowing air over his face people are trying to help him. Apparently this is a practice related to local popular Sufism.

2.2 Collective *dhikr* of Uyghur Sufis—*hälqä-sohbät*

As with Sufis elsewhere, Uyghur Sufis practice both silent (*khufi*) *dhikr* and loud (*jähri*) *dhikr*. Zarcone contends that it was prominent Naqshbandi Sufis from Ferghana and their successors who have succeeded in setting up networks of *khaniqa*s and followers (*murid*s) in Xinjiang since the first decades of the twentieth century. Uyghur Sufis who practice silent *dhikr* are known as followers of

Naqshbandiyya-Khafiyya, which is mainly based in *madrasa* or religious schools; those who practice loud *dhikr* are known as followers of Naqshbandiyya-Jahriyya, which is mainly based in *khaniqa*. The Naqshbandiyya-Jahriyya sometimes also presents itself as Qadiriyya (Zarcone 2002:536).

Mäkhsum's grandfather studied in Yarkand with Atawullakhan Khojam Ishan, grandson of Molla Niyaz Ishanim who went to Namangan to be initiated, which means that he belongs to one of the three branches of the *khaniqa*-based Naqshbandiyya in Xinjiang (Zarcone 2001:125–128). Indeed, Mäkhsum says he is both Naqshbandi and Qadiri, the distinction referring to doing silent and loud *dhikr* respectively. One of the disagreements between the *khaniqa*-based Naqshbandiyya, which is closer to the practices of popular Islam and to traditional Sufism, and the *madrasa*-based Naqshbandiyya, which belongs to the very orthodox Sufi tradition of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya and rejects popular traditions such as tomb cults, is the practice of the *dhikr* (Zarcone 2001:131). The disagreement between the practice of silent and loud *dhikr* also exists among Hui Muslims in China, and has historically caused rebellions and the loss of many lives (Lipman 2014:54).

Mäkhsum seems to be maintaining a balance between the silent and loud *dhikr*—doing silent *dhikr* when he is alone, and hosting loud *dhikr* every week with his disciples and friends. Mäkhsum says that silent *dhikr* is the base and something one must do every day. He tells me that loud *dhikr* develops because when one does silent *dhikr*, sometimes one is distracted or may fall asleep, so some prophets encouraged people to gather and recite *dhikr* aloud (interview, 16 May 2016).

The ceremony I saw at Mäkhsum's *khaniqa*, which includes loud *dhikr*, *hikmät* and dance, is called *hälqä-sohbät*. In their article about Uyghur *mazar*

festivals, Harris and Dawut write that *hälqä-sohbät* (spelled "*hälqä-suhibät*" in the article) literally means circling and talking, and that what people sing in it expresses mourning, often for the founder and former leaders of their Sufi lodge (Harris and Dawut 2002:108). Because of the sensitivity of *dhikr* in China, little research has been done on the *dhikr* of Uyghur Sufis. In one rare article on the subject from China, Zhou describes the *dhikr* of the Qadiriyya order among the Uyghurs as follows:

> The followers gather in a *khaniqa* to do *dhikr* led by *ishan* of various levels or their designated "*khälipä*". At first the "*hapiz*" (meaning singer) leads others to chant the unaccompanied, free-metered *hikmät*, while the others pray, repent and cry in the singing. When the tune of rhythmic "*dhikr*" (or "*tälqin*") begins, the host leads the group to chant onomatopoeia like *a*, *he*, *mu*, *heng* rhythmically.... (Zhou 1999:26)[25]

This is in accordance with the *hälqä-sohbät* led by Mäkhsum.

The four different Sufi orders in Khotan each have different practices of *dhikr*, which serve as a kind of marker of their religious identities. Mäkhsum belongs to a Naqshbandi group which primarily practices silent *dhikr*, but he also does loud *dhikr*, in the Qadiri way. The Qadiris do *hälqä-sohbät* without musical instruments, while the Chishtis use musical instruments. The last order, Suhwardiyya, who are very few in number, do not do *hälqä-sohbät*, but they sing *mäwlud*, a repertoire dedicated to the Prophet Muhhamad. However, it seems that these differences are not strict, and people often share each other's repertoire and forms of *dhikr*. For example, I have seen my non-Suhwardi friends chant *mäwlud* together.

The Uyghur word *hälqä* comes from the Arabic word for circle, *halqa*, while the Uyghur word *sohbät* comes from the Persian word *sohbat* which means talking.

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[25] Translated by the author.

Mäkhsum says the term "*hälqä-sohbät*" arose because people began to practice a form of *dhikr* that involved sitting in a circle and talking. Gradually, it became a ritual for people to gather together and use sound to discipline and focus their minds.

Dhikr is not exclusively a Sufi tradition. For example, many of the people who attend *dhikr* in Aleppo, Syria, do not consider themselves to be Sufis, but attend *dhikr* as a form of spiritual practice inherent to Islam's orthodox obligations (Shannon 2006:107). However, Sufis in Aleppo believe that practicing *dhikr* can bring them to a kind of "union" or states of proximity to the divine, a claim that most orthodox Muslims would reject (Shannon 2006:113–114). Overall, participants of *dhikr* "fulfill a Qur'anic obligation to invoke God and at the same time they may seek to attain physical and emotional states that promote spiritual transformation" (Shannon 2004:381). Uyghur Sufis have told me similar things.

2.3 Second *dhikr* gathering at Mäkhsum's *khaniqa*

Mäkhsum holds *hälqä-sohbät* in his home every week. Four days after I experienced the first *hälqä-sohbät* in his home, I was able to attend a longer one at the same place.[26] Like the first time, I did not know we were going to a *hälqä-sohbät*. I was visiting Mäkhsum's home with Niyaz and Abdurakhman again. For the Uyghur Sufis with whom I spent the most time, it is almost a daily event to entertain friends at home or to be entertained at friends' homes (while it is always their wives who cook in the kitchen).

When we get to Mäkhsum's home, people keep arriving, and soon the *hälqä-sohbät* began. There are fewer people than last time. They start with only ten

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[26] Video not provided due to privacy and security concerns.

people, including two children who are sons of Mäkhsum's younger sister. Abdulla, Mäkhsum's younger brother, sits to his left. Abdurakhman and Niyaz sit to his right, and to Niyaz's right is Mäkhsum's son Muhämmät. The rest are Mäkhsum's students. Later, six more people join one by one. They mostly live in the same village and can come on short notice.

This time the form is different from the first one. Before the ceremony begins, Abdurakhman holds his *tämbur* and is ready to play, but Mäkhsum talks with him for a little while and Abdurakhman puts his instrument down on the floor. They start without any instruments. At the beginning, Mäkhsum recites Fateha, the first *sura* of the Qur'an. At the end of Fateha, the participants respond by whispering "*amin*", which is the custom of most Uyghur people in the five daily prayers. Fateha is followed by a few other *sura*s. Then they say a *dua*, for parents and masters who passed away, Mäkhsum tells me later. This part takes about four minutes.

Then Mäkhsum begins to sing a *munajat* which expresses praise to God and promises to believe in God only. Mäkhsum sings with a loose beat, and the others join in unison singing. The *hikmät* develops into the first part of *shahada* or proclamation of faith, *"lā 'ilāha 'illā-llāh"* ("there is no god but God"), which everybody recites rhythmically while rocking their bodies forward and backward. According to Djumaev's writing on the *dhikr* of the Tajik-Uzbek Naqshbandiyya, this form of chanting is called *charzarb* or "four strokes," because the formula consists of four syllables within one breath (Djumaev 2016:391). However, in this *hälqä-sohbät* of the Uyghur Sufis, they recite "*lā 'ilāha 'il*" loudly but the last two syllables "*lā-llāh*" silently, thus combining the loud and silent *dhikr*.

Given Mäkhsum's identity as both a Naqshbandi who practises silent *dhikr* and a Qadiri who does loud *dhikr*, the combination of loud and silent *dhikr* here may serve as a marker of the Naqshbandi identity in a Qadiri *hälqä-sohbät*, and more broadly the fusion of different *dhikr* practices in Xinjiang. In her description of a Uyghur *dhikr* ceremony in Ghulja in north Xinjiang, Mijit mentions that silent and loud *dhikr*s were conducted in turn (Mijit 2016:401), as opposed to the combined form here. While people recite *dhikr*, Abdulla begins to sing a *tälqin* (*hikmät* sung against collective *dhikr*). According to Djumaev, *tälqin* usually consists of a strophe drawn from the spiritual poetry of Yassawi and requires a high level of artistry from the singer (Djumaev 2016:391). This part lasts for about five minutes, and Mäkhsum concludes the first *hälqä* (circle).

In the second *hälqä*, Mäkhsum leads in the singing of a third *hikmät*, while others chant the first part of the *shahada*, this time "*lā ʾilāha*" silently but "*ʾillā-llāh*" loudly. They sway their bodies to the beat: forward and backward, and also leftward and rightward. Abdurakhman seems to have fallen asleep, although one of the reasons for loud *dhikr* is to prevent one from sleeping. Niyaz nudges him to remind him that he is being videoed. Abdurakhman tries to wake up, but for most of the duration of the ceremony he does not look very awake. The tempo accelerates, until Mäkhsum ends the second *hälqä*. This part takes about six minutes.

In the third *hälqä*, Mäkhsum begins by leading others in chanting the *dhikr*, and like in the second *hälqä*, "*lā ʾilāha*" is silent while "*ʾillā-llāh*" is loud. They also sway their bodies like in the last *hälqä*. Mäkhsum sings a fourth *hikmät*. Abdulla leads others in moving his hands as in the action of rowing a boat, and they are bowing forward more deeply now so that people's heads almost touch each other

in the centre of the circle. The tempo accelerates, and the *dhikr* becomes louder. People begin to breathe with the rhythm of the *dhikr*.

Abdulla now leads people in rocking their bodies and hands leftward and rightward. Abdurakhman still moves forward and backward, probably because he is too sleepy or he is not familiar with the movements. Now Abdulla induces the others to wave their hands faster and more strongly, in time with their chanting. Mäkhsum may have changed the *tälqin* a few times, but it is not easy to distinguish between them. He concludes the third *hälqä*, which is the longest of the three and lasts about twelve minutes.

After three *hälqä*, they sing a separate *munajat*, called *yäkkhollaq* or "individual song", during which some people sob. *Yäkkhollaq* is known as *yakkakhoni* in Tajik and *yakkakhonlik* in Uzbek, which, as a constituent part of the *dhikr*, used to be performed between different sections or at the end of the *dhikr* ceremony, but later became an independent practice with its own style of singing (Djumaev 2016:392). Among the Uyghur people, however, the *yäkkhollaq* is still performed between different *hälqä* in a gathering rather than as an independent practice, according to my field research. This *yäkkhollaq* lasts about three minutes.

After the *yäkkhollaq* they begin the *däm zikiri*, or breath *dhikr*, in which "the words are half-chanted, half-shouted to a very pronounced rhythm, which the men obtain by strongly exaggerating their movements as they breathe in and then out" (Rouget 1985:271–272). They are chanting "*höm*", which is one of the many ways by which Allah is called. The *däm zikiri* starts with *sih zärip*, which means "three beats", as they chant "*höm*" on three consecutive beats, before pausing on the fourth beat and then beginning a new cycle. They do this while bowing to the

centre of the circle. After two phrases they add "Allah" before the "*höm*". Mäkhsum

sings a new *tälqin*.

Abdulla leads people in adding hand movements and in bowing more

deeply, like in the previous *hälqä*. The tempo accelerates, and Muhämmät is now

swinging his arms as if he is running, while his knees are also up in the air from

time to time. This part takes about ten minutes, and then comes the *du zärip*, the

"two beats", in which people chant *höm* twice in a cycle. They do the body

movements as before, from slow to fast, until Mäkhsum slows down and ends this

part, which takes about eleven minutes. This is followed by the *yäk zärip*, saying

höm only once in every cycle. Terms like *Sih zärip*, *du zärip* and *yäk zärip* all have

Persian roots, which signifies the Persian-speaking areas' influence on the local

practice of Sufism.

Yäk zärip is the last form of breath *dhikr* in the ceremony, which seems to

be symbolising the oneness of God. In comparison, a *dhikr* ceremony in Ghulja

adopted "*do zerp*" ("two beats"), "*se zerp*" ("three beats") and "*chahar zerp*" ("four

beats"), while the "*yek zerp*" ("one beat") is no longer practiced (Mijit 2016:403–

404). Interestingly, in an article that documents the process of a *hälqä-sohbät* held

in 1995 in the Tiräkbagh Khaniqa of Yarkand, of which Mäkhsum's *khaniqa* is a

branch, Zhou observes that it included not only *chahar zärip*, *sih zärip*, *du zärip* and

yäk zärip, but a *panj zärip* (five beats) section (Zhou 1999:31–34). These may be

regional variations or represent a kind of simplification in some areas.

I have transcribed the rhythms of the breath *dhikr* as follows:

Sihzärip (3-beats)   X=60–220

X||: X • X | X • X | X - | - X X | X • X | X • X | X - | - X X:||
ah hom ah hom ah hom   Al-lah hom ah hom   ah hom   Al-lah

***Duzärip* (2-beats)**   X=55-140

X ||: X.   X | X̄ - | X.   X | X.   X | X̄ - | X.   X : ||
Ah höm ah höm   ah höm ah höm   ah

***Yäkzärip* (1-beat)**   X=60-150

X ||: X̄ - - X X | X̄ - - X X : ||
Ah höm   ah höm   ah

Figure 6. Three rhythms of breath *dhikr*

Mäkhsum asks Niyaz to bring Abdurakhman's *tämbur*, and Abdurakhman starts to play. Later Mäkhsum tells me that here he chooses a *hikmät* of the Chishtiyya for Abdurakhman to play on his instrument, in order to show his respect for Abdurakhman. In Qadiri *hälqä-sohbät* people do not use instruments, but in Chishti *hälqä-sohbät* people do. In the Khotan area, people of Chishtiyya live in Qaraqash. Abdurakhman comes from Qaraqash, so Mäkhsum asks him to play his instrument, although Abdurakhman is not a Chishti per se. Muhämmät brings six *sapayi* (he, Niyaz and Abdulla each play a pair) and a *dap* for Mäkhsum. The sound becomes richer.

Now I realise that the first *hälqä-sohbät* I saw was at least in part of the Chishti style, as people played quite a few instruments. Zhou writes that the *dhikr* ceremony of the Chishtiyya in Xinjiang is similar to that of the Qadiriyya, except that they play various instruments, including *dutar*, *satar* (long-necked bowed lute), *rawap*, *tämbur*, *dap*, *näy* (transverse flute), *sunäy* (double-reed shawm), *sapayi*, and *tash* (Zhou 1999:26). I saw many of these instruments on that day.

Structure of the *hälqä-sohbät*:

Qur'anic recitation

dua

1st *hälqä* (Bash Qadiriyyä) { *munajät*
  tälqin (*dhikr*, bowing) }

2nd *hälqä* (Näfi Isibat)   *tälqin* (*dhikr*, bowing)

3rd *hälqä* (Ayagh Qadiriyyä)   *tälqin* (*dhikr*, deep bowing)

yäkkhollaq (separate *munajat*)

däm zikiri (breath *dhikr*) { *tälqin* (*sihzärip*)
  tälqin (*duzärip*)
  tälqin (*yäkzärip*) }

Chisti *tälqin* with instruments, *sama* dance

munajat

(Abdurakhman performs two songs, followed by a few other *mäshräp* songs by others)

Qur'anic recitation

dua

Figure 7. Structure of *hälqä-sohbät*

The Chishtis are also known for their musical activities in India, where a chain of five great Chishti masters during the Delhi Sultanate of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries valued a love of poetry and music as central to their spiritual activities (Aquil 2012:17). Their musical practices caused major tension between the Chishti Sufis and the *ulama* (religious scholars) in the Delhi Sultanate (Aquil 2012:23). There is little literature on the spread of Chishtiyya among the Uyghurs, but according to Zarcone's fieldwork in Khotan in 2000, the order was introduced

to Xinjiang in the nineteenth century, probably through Afghan or Indian merchants who lived in south Xinjiang at that time, especially in Khotan and Yarkand (Zarcone 2002:537).

During my fieldwork, I did not have a chance to attend a Chishti *hälqä-sohbät* in Qaraqash which is the base of Chishtiyya in the Khotan area. Although I tried several times to approach them through my Sufi friends of other orders, they never invited me for a visit. Mäkhsum told me that the Chishtis in Qaraqash no longer hold *hälqä-sohbät* with instruments nowadays.

Fortunately, I was able to experience at least part of a Chishti-style *hälqä-sohbät* in Mäkhsum's *khaniqa*. During this Chishti *hikmät* with Abdurakhman's playing on the *tämbur*, Mäkhsum leads others in standing up. They begin with the movement called *säyri sama*, in which they turn to the left and then right. One of them only turns in one direction, and Mäkhsum later tells me that he is a neophyte.

Figure 8. *Säyri sama*

The circle moves counter-clockwise. After a few tunes people begin a second *sama* movement, the *chärikh sama*, in which they whirl. Mäkhsum changes

the tune and rhythm, and for a while people are not sure how to dance, until they change to the third movement, *däwri sama*, moving to the centre and then back, their arms up and down, while keeping the circle in counter-clockwise direction. Muhämmät, who is a great dancer, stops playing the *sapayi* and joins the *sama*.

Figure 9. *Chärikh sama*

Figure 10. *Däwri sama*

The *hikmät* changes and Muhämmät leads people in whirling again. Abdulla is singing the *tälqin*, while Mäkhsum chants "*höm*" at every strong beat. The tempo becomes faster and faster, and everybody spins faster, including the neophyte who dances rather clumsily. Muhämmät whirls incredibly lightly and beautifully. People bump into each other, and Muhämmät bumps into my tripod. Niyaz also joins the *sama*. Now only Abdulla plays the *sapayi*. Abdurakhman is also singing while he plays the *rawap*. Mäkhsum sometimes sings the *tälqin*, sometimes chants "*höm*". The fast *sama* goes on for about five minutes. When Mäkhsum ends the *tälqin*, everybody is exhausted, and Niyaz has to prop himself up against the wall.

Now they sit down. Mäkhsum sings a *munajat*, and some participants wail. Wailing seems to be a necessary part of *hälqä-sohbät*, especially during *munajat*. When I ask Mäkhsum later what *munajat* is, he says it is the *hikmät* during which people cry like this. As for the reason of the crying, he says "because it is easier for crying supplications to be accepted. There are many things that we cannot do without the help of God. Because we don't have the power to realise our wishes, we cry and ask God to help us" (interview, 16 May 2016).

After the *munajat*, Mäkhsum asks Abdurakhman to sing something, again to show his respect. Abdurakhman sings Imam Husäynim, a tune especially popular in Khotan which appears in both *dastan* and *hälqä-sohbät*. Abdurakhman is more adept at this song than at *hikmät*. Some people keep crying during this song. Mäkhsum asks Abdurakhman to sing more. He sings a *mäshräp* song. Those who were playing instruments during the *hikmät* continue to play, and they join the singing. They continue to sing some other *mäshräp* songs, and others chant "*höm*" and rock their bodies.

Abdurakhman ends his songs. Mäkhsum leads the other participants in reciting the Qur'an. Everybody shakes hands with everybody else. They say a *dua*, and the *hälqä-sohbät* comes to an end. The whole event lasts about an hour and fifty minutes.

The general structure of *hälqä-sohbät* is fixed, but as the *hapiz*, Mäkhsum decides the particular form of a *hälqä-sohbät*, including the number of *hälqä*, the number of songs in each *hälqä*, the choice of songs, the tempo, and the time to start and end the *sama*. This second *hälqä-sohbät* that I attended is of typical duration for those that Mäkhsum now hosts weekly in his *khaniqa*. By contrast, in the past his father used to host *hälqä-sohbät*s that consisted of as many as twenty-one *hälqä*s and would last a whole day.

The number twenty-one seems to have special meanings for the Naqshbandi/Qadiri Sufis in Khotan, as Mäkhsum once told me that one of the ways to practice silent *dhikr* is to recite "*lā ʾilāha ʾillā-llāh*" in one's mind twenty-one times without breathing, before then taking a breath and reciting "*muḥammadur-rasūlu-llāh*" ("Muhammad is the messenger of God"). In comparison, a *hälqä-sohbät* at the Tiräkbagh Khaniqa of Yarkand usually consists of seventeen parts, according to Yasin Qari, the *khaniqa*'s *hapiz* that Zhou interviewed. Yasin Qari says that all seventeen parts have to be completed for a *hälqä-sohbät* at the Tiräkbagh Khaniqa. For a ceremony at a private home, people should also try to finish all the seventeen parts if time permits; if not, they have to finish at least nine parts, and they should finish the rest if another ceremony is held within two weeks (Zhou 1999:34).

Like Qawwali, the time and duration for *hälqä-sohbät* vary, but must be determined with the time of prayer taken into consideration (Qureshi 2006:112). Niyaz's father used to host *hälqä-sohbät* throughout the night and end the

gathering with the morning prayer. During my stay in the Khotan area, people gather most Friday afternoons at the shrine of Imam Äptäh to do *hälqä-sohbät*, between the midday prayer (*namaz peshin*) and the late afternoon prayer (*namaz digär*).

Hälqä-sohbät is also often held in the morning, between the morning prayer (*namaz bamdat*) and the midday prayer. The second *hälqä-sohbät* I attended at Mäkhsum's *khaniqa* was in this morning time slot. If a very long *hälqä-sohbät* is held in the daytime, people will sometimes take a break from the *hälqä-sohbät* to pray, before resuming the ceremony. According to Mäkhsum, the duration of *hälqä-sohbät* depends on the number of participants. If there are few people, they get tired after a period of *sama*, and the event won't last long. If there are more people, they can dance in turn, and the *hapiz* will sing more and the event will last longer.

During my fieldwork I obtained a video of a larger-scale *hälqä-sohbät*. It was held at the courtyard of a Sufi's home in Khotan, and there were around one hundred people taking part. Some Sufis were visiting Khotan from Yarkand, and there may have been a competitive aspect to the *hälqä-sohbät* proceedings. *Hapiz* from Yarkand and Khotan sang in turn, and it seems that the event lasted a long time. People estimated that this event was held about five years before I came, which means around 2010. I will discuss this videoed *hälqä-sohbät* in more detail in Chapter 5.

Hälqä-sohbät consists mainly of *hikmät*, but Mäkhsum sometimes also sings *mäshräp*, *muqam* and *dastan*. Chapter 3 will focus on the repertoires of Uyghur Sufis, but at the moment, suffice to say that the repertoires of different Uyghur Sufi ceremonies are fluid. As a general principle, Mäkhsum selects songs with lyrics

appropriate for the atmosphere of the occasion, and adjusts the tempo to provide a frame of reference for the participants to dance. However, it is not Mäkhsum's whims that decide the form of a *hälqä-sohbät*, as he says he has to do it according to the state of the participants. For example, if they can dance fast, he will sing fast. If they cannot dance fast, he will sing slowly (interview, 15 May 2016).

2.4 Sound and dance in *hälqä-sohbät*

Harris points out that *hälqä-sohbät* derived from the Sufi tradition of *samāʿ* and engages it in very local ways (Harris 2014b:356). Signifying "hearing" and by extension "that which is heard", the Arabic word *samāʿ* generally denotes the hearing of music, and particularly the Sufi tradition of spiritual concert in a more or less ritualised form (During and Sellheim 2012). The term *samāʿ* indicates that the action of listening is of utmost importance in this form of "concert". For example, in Qawwali, a form of *samāʿ* of Indo-Muslims, the focus is on the listener and on his ability to draw spiritual benefits from the sound, rather than on the sound itself (Qureshi 2006:108).

Although *samāʿ* means listening or audition, the word also implies dance (Shannon 2004:384). Such is the case with the Uyghur word of *sama*, which refers to the dance movements in *hälqä-sohbät* and some other occasions. *Hälqä-sohbät* can also be called *hälqä-sama*, pointing to the importance of dance in the ritual. Zhou describes in his observation of *hälqä-sama* that "As the rhythm accelerates, people who sway their bodies according to the rhythm gradually come together, until they stand up to dance '*sama*'" (Zhou 1999:26).

Qureshi describes dance as a natural result of the adherents' listening process in Qawwali: "As for the listeners' outward responses, it is assumed that

mystical emotion, though spiritual in nature, will express itself physically, and strong emotional arousal, being an inner movement, needs to find outward expression in physical movement" (Qureshi 2006:120). Qawwali is different from *hälqä-sohbät*, in that the former is a more performatised event with the performer playing a special role in it, while in the latter there is no audience and everyone is actively involved in the event.

In Qawwali, most of the audience restrict their actions to listening with few bodily movements, and only those deeply moved by the music, dance. In comparison, in the Uyghur *hälqä-sohbät*, *sama* is a component of the event for everybody involved, except those who cannot dance because they are singing and playing instruments. In both cases, dance is both a result and cause of an altered state of consciousness, but in *hälqä-sohbät* it is a more actively sought-after means.

Such is also the case with the musical sound. In Qawwali, the audience rely on the music provided by the professional musicians—Qawwals—for their listening, which is supposed to be the most important aspect of the ceremony, while in Uyghur *hälqä-sohbät* the musical sound is made by every participant, whether by chanting, singing, rhythmic breathing, or playing instruments. Rather than relying on the agency of "musicians" to obtain spiritual stimulation, the Uyghur Sufis seek such stimulation through their own sound-making.

In a way, Abdurakhman played a somewhat similar role in this ceremony to that of a Qawwal, as he was invited to play his instrument not because of his religious merit, but to add the sound of an instrument that others cannot play. However, such a role is not a necessary component of the *hälqä-sohbät*, which does not normally involve musical instruments. Every week, Mäkhsum gathers his

disciples to do *hälqä-sohbät* without any musical instruments, and consequently, no instrumentalist is involved.

In Uyghur *hälqä-sohbät*, which is a smaller and less performatised ceremony than Qawwali, every participant takes part in the making of sound for the purpose of his own listening medium for spiritual stimulation, rendering it unnecessary to depend on the separate agency of "musicians". The work of producing sound of the Qawwal is shared by all the participants of Uyghur *hälqä-sohbät*, but the other work of the Qawwal, making decisions in regard to the concrete form of the ceremony, is taken by the *hapiz*. Mäkhsum, who organises the event, provides the venue, and acts as the "conductor" by his choice of the sequence, time, songs, texts and ways of dance, is the most crucial person in this ceremony. He plays a role which combines that of the spiritual leader and the musician in a Qawwali event.

With his religious knowledge, hereditary title of *ishan*, and government-recognised title of imam of the local mosque, Mäkhsum is the indisputable religious leader of his sub-order. His influence is the strongest in his village, where people rely on him to lead the five daily prayers at the local mosque, and to validate various events by reciting the Qur'an, such as at weddings or funerals. However, Mäkhsum's influence is not limited to his village, as anybody outside of his village can become a disciple, and a member of the sanctuary of his *khaniqa*.

The *knaniqa*, built by his grandfather, is a branch of the Tiräkbagh Khaniqa in Yarkand, a connection which bestows upon it a certain additional legitimacy. At the same time, it is located in Mäkhsum's home, and thus the space is both public and private in nature, which endows the family itself with religious authority. The weekly *dhikr* held here is a confirmation of Mäkhsum's status as a religious leader.

2.5 Conclusion

Hälqä-sohbät, which means "circling and talking", is a form of *samāʿ* and *dhikr* of the Uyghur Sufis. On the basis of similar rituals of Sufis from Central Asia, and probably India, who have had important historical influences on the spread of Islam and Sufism in Xinjiang, the Uyghur Sufis have developed their own form of ritual. Among the four Sufi orders found in Khotan, the Qadiriyya performs *hälqä-sohbät* without musical instruments, while the Chishtiyya do use instruments. The other two orders do not have their own forms of *hälqä-sohbät*, but their followers may cross over to other orders and join other orders' rituals.

The *hälqä-sohbät* of the Qadiriyya, analysed in this chapter, begins and ends with Qur'anic recitation, and consists of a number of *hälqä* (circles) of devotional singing, and dancing. These range from three to twenty-one. The *hapiz* sings a number of *hikmät* (poems attributed to the twelfth century Central Asian mystic Ahmed Yasawi) in each *hälqä*, while the other participants focus on reciting the ostinato of *dhikr*, either the four-syllable *shahada* or the names of Allah. They combine to create a multi-part sound effect. The *däm zikiri*, or breath *dhikr*, is an embodied form of reciting the names of Allah, as the people exaggerate their breathing and emit the sound from deep in the throat.

In Khotan, the *däm zikiri* goes through *sih zärip* ("three beats"), *du zärip* ("two beats") and *yäk zärip* ("one beat") phases. These Persian names point to the Persian roots of these practices. As the *hälqä-sohbät* goes on, the tempo accelerates, and the participants begin their bodily movements—the *sama* dance. The fast *dhikr* and *sama* bring the ritual to its climax, before the *hapiz* sings *munajat* while some cry in the hope that their supplication will be accepted.

The *hälqä-sohbät* is the Uyghur tradition of *samāʿ* and *dhikr*, an embodied form of religious practice, and at the same time it is an acting-out of the hierarchy of the community as well as of people's identities of Sufis and followers of a particular order.

Chapter 3: Singing Love—Repertoire of Uyghur Sufis

The importance of sound for Muslims is manifested in the recitation of the Qur'an, the preeminent text of Islam and one which exists primarily for oral recitation rather than to be silently read. For Sufi Muslims, who are engaged in a number of sounded spiritual practices, sound seems even more important. In the *hälqä-sohbät* and *muqam-mäshräp* gatherings that I attended, and on many other occasions with Uyghur Sufis, musical sounds of various forms are essential. However, many of these forms are not clearly defined, either by the practitioners or by ethnomusicological literature.

In this chapter, I want to ask the following questions. What musical sounds are adopted by Uyghur Sufis as part of their religious practice? What are the interrelationships between these different sounds, and between the overall corpus of these musical sounds and other musical sounds that are not part of Uyghur Sufi religious practice? What can these relationships tell us about the nature of repertoire, the issue of musical boundary crossing, and the problem of categorisation? How is the religious meaning in these sounds constructed?

3.1 *Muqam* and *mäshräp*

During my time in Khotan, I attended several *muqam-mäshräp* gatherings, which are mostly, but not entirely, based on the repertoire of *muqam-mäshräp*, as I will explain later. At these gatherings, sometimes people danced and went into trance, as with the event that I will depict in the next chapter; sometimes people remained in a normal state of consciousness. In both cases, however, *muqam* and *mäshräp* seemed to contain religious meaning for the Sufis, of which I had not been aware in the past.

The *muqam* and *mäshräp* I knew in the past were from the recordings of the Twelve Muqam by the governmental Xinjiang Muqam Art Ensemble. These included numerous pieces, with grand structures, performed by professionally trained singers (both male and female) and instrumentalists, in unison with carefully-tuned instruments. The overall status of this work is comparable to that of Western symphonies. In comparison, the "folk" versions of *muqam* and *mäshräp* that I heard in Khotan are simpler in structure, with flexible pieces, usually performed only by men, and with fewer instruments.

The lyrics of the Ensemble's *mäshräp* have also been altered from those sung by the *ashiq* of south Xinjiang, from whom Turdi Akhun collected the *mäshräp* songs (Light 2008:286). What changes have *muqam* and *mäshräp* gone through in their process of canonisation from songs of the *ashiq* to staged art music representing the Uyghur nation? How can those changes inform us about the aspects of the *ashiq*'s version that are crucial to their Sufi practice? These are the questions I want to ask in this section.

3.2 A grassroots performance

I was lucky to have been able to attend the wedding of Niyaz's third son Mukhpul, in October 2015. It was a big party, with about a hundred people gathering in Niyaz's home. Many of them had travelled here from other towns and were staying at Niyaz's home. Among them were Tursuntokhti and Mämätimin, two *muqamchi* (players of *muqam*) from Yarkand. They arrived a few days before the wedding, and had been playing music every day since. My experiences of the musical aspect of the wedding are as follows:

Outside the house, people are playing *naghra* drum and *sunay* shawm, which is common for celebrative occasions. In the innermost and biggest room, Tursuntokhti and Mämätimin are playing *muqam* and *mäshräp*, together with some local musicians. Tursuntokhti plays the *satar* bowed lute and leads the singing. Mämätimin plays the *tämbur* long-necked lute. Abdurakhman and Ikhlim both play the *rawap* lute. Mäkhsum, his son Muhämmät, and Yüsüp play the *dap* frame drum, while four or five people play the *sapayi* rattle. There are about twenty people playing together, including those who are not playing instruments but are singing. This is the biggest singing party I have seen in Khotan.

Tursuntokhti leads the participants in playing a number of *muqam*, including Nawa, Chäbiyyat and Chahargah. Each is followed by a number of *mäshräp* songs that are related to that *muqam*. Tursuntokhti sings the *muqam* by himself, accompanied by his own *satar* and others' string instruments. Occasionally the other singers would reply to his singing with a shout in unison, as if answering a question. Each *muqam* lasts only a few minutes. Near the end of a *muqam*, Tursuntokhti sometimes talks to Ikhlim who sits beside him, apparently discussing what *mäshräp* songs to sing next.

The others join in once Tursuntokhti starts the *mäshräp* part. It seems that the particular songs to sing in this part can be variable, although they always start with a song in the *aqsaq* (limping) rhythm characteristic of sections of the Twelve Muqam and some Uyghur folk songs (Harris 2016:351). Then they switch to a four-beat pattern in the following *mäshräp* songs, a progression preserved in the Mäshräp sections of the Twelve Muqam performed by professional musicians. The playing of *sapayi* and *dap* switch accordingly. Once again, I feel the power of group

singing that I experienced at Abdurakhman's home when I had first arrived, but now to an even greater extent.

After one *muqam*, Tursuntokhti begins to play Shadiyana, an instrumental piece that is not part of any *muqam* but is frequently played together with *muqam*. A piece of the same name but played by *naghra* and *sunay* is associated with the shrine of the Ordam Mazar near Kashgar and is believed to help people to re-live a great battle that happened there between the Qarakhanid and the then Buddhist Khotan.[27] However, the piece called Shadiyana that is played in Khotan, not with *naghra* and *sunay* but with *rawap*, *satar*, *dap* and *sapayi*, seems to be a different tune of the same name—something that happens very often between tunes and genres among the Uyghur Sufis.

This Shadiyana is in a fast four beat, and people start to sway their bodies from side to side to the beat, as they do when they recite *dhikr*. They often recite *dua* after one *muqam* ends, making their performance more ritualistic. During another instrumental piece, known as the *birinchi dastan märghuli* of Chäbiyyat Muqam in the Twelve Muqam, Mäkhsum and Yüsüp do *sama* dance. Later Nurmämät also joins them. It is a fast and joyful tune. The three dancers, who are in their forties and fifties, whirl neatly in their long coats, although they sometimes bump into each other. They utter the sound of "*khu~*" from their chest and throat, with heavy breathing, like in the collective *dhikr* of *hälqä-sohbät*. The movements are also similar to what they did in the *hälqä-sohbät* at Mäkhsum's *khaniqa*. However, with the accompaniment of the light-hearted tune, the *sama* seems more this-worldly now.

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[27] http://www.soundislamchina.org/?p=1521 (accessed 22 April 2018).

3.3 *Muqam* and *mäshräp* in official and unofficial contexts

This gathering was an example of *muqam* and *mäshräp* in their original context in contrast to the highly-staged renditions by professional artists, and it changed my understanding of the repertoires. When dealing with the *muqam* and *mäshräp*, there often seem to be two (or more) different definitions at work, the first being the more officially or nationally designated usage, and the other (or others) being a more locally understood one.

The official definitions of *muqam* and *mäshräp* are provided by the texts about them as Intangible Cultural Heritage. UNESCO's introduction to *muqam*, which is based on a text submitted by the Chinese government, says:

> Xinjiang Uyghur Muqam includes songs, dances, folk and classical music and is characterised by diversity of content, choreography, musical styles and instruments used. ... The lyrics contain not only folk ballads but also poems written by classical Uyghur masters. Thus, the songs reflect a wide range of styles such as poetry, proverbs, and folk narrative, bearing witness to the history and contemporary life of the Uyghur society.[28]

Here, the definition does not mention the religious connotations of *muqam*, although the video on UNESCO's webpage of *muqam* does include a brief scene of *sama* dance, which is often a part of a *muqam-mäshräp* gathering. Indeed, many *muqam* lyrics are drawn from classical Central Asian poets, with a strong flavour of Sufi imagery and ideals (Harris 2016:344).

Shah Mashrab, introduced in Chapter 1, may have served as a model for some *muqam* performers, as he is said to have played in an ecstatic state a *satar*, an instrument that is often associated with *muqam* (Light 2008:114). Mashrab also

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[28] https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/uyghur-muqam-of-xinjiang-00109 (accessed 24 February 2018).

sang a song in which he mentioned the names of different *muqam*s (Light 2008:119). Today, Mashrab still has great influence over Uyghur Sufis, and many Sufis I met in Khotan see him as the prototype of all *ashiq*. One of Mashrab's behaviours that they follow is his playing of *muqam* and *mäshräp* songs as part of an *ashiq*'s life.

Muqam is especially important for the Chishtiyya, who are the only Sufi order among the Uyghur Sufis that use musical instruments as well as play *muqam* in their *hälqä-sohbät*. Tursuntokhti, who comes from Yarkand and identifies himself with Qadiriyya and Chishtiyya, says that he is the tenth generation *ishan* of his family, and the tenth generation *muqamchi* too (interview, 1 June 2016). The overlap, in his family, of the hereditary roles as *ishan* and *muqamchi* seems to reveal the close relationship between the two, since one of the responsibilities of the *ishan* is to organise *hälqä-sohbät*, and for the Chishtiyya such gatherings always involve *muqam*. Tursuntokhti started to learn *muqam* when he was twelve, with two masters—Rahmutulla from Yarkand, who is his father's younger brother, and Ghulam from Qaghiliq, who is his mother's elder brother. He plays all the string instruments in *muqam* as well as *sapayi*, and can perform eight of the twelve *muqam* (interview, 1 June 2016).

Today there are small communities of Chishtiyya in Yarkand and Khotan, probably because of Indian and Afghan merchants' activities in the nineteenth century (Zarcone 2002:537). Yarkand is a base for the Kashgar-Yarkand Twelve Muqam tradition that became an important source for the canonised Twelve Muqam. Khotan, the place which Mashrab mentioned in his poetry more than any other place where he lived (Light 2008:120), has a rich tradition of *mäshräp*. It

seems natural that the Chishtis of these two places adopt *muqam* and *mäshräp* songs in their *samāʿ* rituals.

By comparison, the Naqshbandiyya/Qadiriyya, which spread to Xinjiang earlier, distinguish the repertoires of their *samāʿ* rituals from those of *muqam* and *mäshräp*, as is shown in the *hälqä-sohbät* at Mäkhsum's home that I described in Chapter 2. On the other hand, another gathering I attended at Mäkhsum's home, which I will discuss in Chapter 4, is explained by Mäkhsum as both Chishti *hälqä-sohbät* and *muqam-mäshräp*. It suggests that the Chishtiyya may have absorbed into its *hälqä-sohbät* the repertoire of *muqam-mäshräp*, which probably existed in separate gatherings before the nineteenth century. Similar absorption also happened with the Uzbek/Tajik tradition of *maqom* which began to appear in Sufi rituals, as official and popular forms of Islam continued to meld between the sixteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century (Djumaev 2016:381-382).

Unlike the structure of the staged version of Twelve Muqam which consists of the three parts of *chong näghmä*, *dastan*, *and mäshräp*, traditionally the *muqam* played by the *muqamchi* in south Xinjiang consists of only the *muqäddimä*, the unmetered first section of the *chong näghmä*. The *muqam* from south Xinjiang is usually followed by *mäshräp* songs.

Mäshräp, which was inscribed by UNESCO on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in 2010, is an event that includes "a rich collection of traditions and performance arts, such as music, dance, drama, folk arts, acrobatics, oral literature, foodways and games"[29]. The *mäshräp* event is transmitted "by hosts who understand its customs and cultural connotations, by

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[29] https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/meshrep-00304 (accessed 25 February 2018).

the virtuoso performers who participate, and by all the Uygur people who attend".[30] Throughout Xinjiang, there are different kinds of *mäshräp* gatherings. In the Ili area in north Xinjiang, the local version of *mäshräp* called *olturush* is more of a community gathering of young people with the aim of moral education (Dautcher 2009:143–147). In their book on Uyghur *mäshräp* culture, Dawut and Mukhpul introduce various forms of *mäshräp* gatherings in different areas of Xinjiang, but mostly focus on recreational *mäshräp* such as those dedicated to weddings, harvests, and the first snow of a year (Dawut and Mukhpul 2012)[31].

In the UNESCO text on *mäshräp* (provided by the Chinese government), the religious elements of *mäshräp* are missing, which is the norm in China where religion is a sensitive topic. Dawut and Mukhpul also avoid discussing *mäshräp* as a Sufi gathering in their book, although they touch briefly on some aspects of *mäshräp* in Khotan that are related to Sufi practices, including performance of *muqam* and *dastan* during *mäshräp* held at the Imam Asim Mazar (Dawut and Mukhpul 2012:278).

The *mäshräp* that I attended in Khotan were more like musical gatherings of members of the Sufi circle, with hospitality from the host, and, more importantly, group performance of *mäshräp* songs, which are based on the poems of Shah Mashrab (and, to a lesser extent, other Sufi ascetics) circulated orally among local Sufis. The social aspects of *mäshräp* songs are closely related to the popular image of Mashrab, whose name originally meant "place for drinking" and by extension "wellspring", particularly for Sufi inspiration (Light 2008:111).

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[30] https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/meshrep-00304 (accessed 25 February 2018).
[31] I am grateful to Muqeddes Muxter for guiding me in reading this book.

As evidence of the direct influence of Mashrab on the *mäshräpchi* (singers of *mäshräp* songs), Turdi Akhun's apprentice described Mashrab as "one of the dervishes who would play the *sapayi* off his shoulder until blood ran" (Light 2008:120). Here, playing *sapayi* serves as a form of asceticism, as a part of performing Sufi poetry in musical forms. Indeed, *sapayi* is the most common instrument among the Sufis I met in Khotan, and is usually played by more people than any other instrument in a *mäshräp* gathering.

In addition, *mäshräp* songs are sometimes played together with *dhikr*, making them an important part of Uyghur Sufis' sounded practice. A Sufi *muqam-mäshräp* gathering in Khotan usually starts with a solo performance of the free-rhythm *muqäddimä* of *muqam*, followed by group singing of *mäshräp* songs, which would sometimes lead to collective *dhikr* and *sama* dance. The *mäshräp* gathering's section of collective *dhikr* and *sama* dance overlaps with that of the *hälqä-sohbät* of the Naqshbandiyya/Qadiriyya, although in the latter the tunes are different and no musical instruments are involved. On the other hand, the *mäshräp* gathering is closer to the *hälqä-sohbät* of the Chishtiyya, which does use *muqam* and musical instruments.

According to Zhou, the Chishtiyya use various string, percussion and blown instruments in their *hälqä-sohbät* (Zhou 1999:26). In 2008 I acquired a homemade tape cassette of a *hälqä-sohbät* by the Chishtis in Aqtam village of Qaraqash. I could not hear those instruments on this cassette, but I could hear the sound of a *balaman* vertical reed pipe, which was apparently the only instrument used in that ritual. This indicates that the choice of instruments used in both *muqam* and *hälqä-sohbät* is flexible.

In a 2008 interview by Wang Jianchao, who was then a Master's student of Xinjiang Normal University, a Qaraqash *muqamchi* named Imin Qari described the Sufi ritual of the Chishtiyya order in Aqtam village as follows: first there is *muqäddimä* (without instruments), during which the *hapiz* sings lyrics about God; then comes singing of the *mäshräp* songs of Khotan's Twelve Muqam, together with *sama* dance and the playing of various instruments; this is followed by *tälqin* (blessing of God); and finally, *du'a* (thanking God) (Wang, Jianchao 2008:102). According to Imin Qari's description, performances of *muqam* and *mäshräp* are inherent parts of the *hälqä-sohbät* gathering of the Chishtiyya.

During my fieldwork I have found many overlaps among the different repertoires. For example, when Abdurakhman performs *dastan* in the bazaar, he often starts his performance with a *muqam* or *mäshräp*, and after the *dastan* he would also perform some *mäshräp* songs. Another example is Imam Hüsäynim, which is a *dastan* song, but is often played together with *mäshräp* songs in Sufi gatherings. Some *muqamchi* in Khotan also perform a *muqam* titled Imam Hüsäynim, with its own *muqäddimä* and *mäshräp* sections (Wang, Jianchao 2008:101).

It seems that *muqam*, *dastan*, and *mäshräp*, which form the canonised Twelve Muqam, were originally separate but interlinked repertoires of a general repository of Sufism-influenced music popular among the Uyghurs. Their use in practice was, and is still, quite flexible. These repertoires are employed for both religious rituals and at secular events, and the Islamic components embedded in these repertoires penetrate every aspect of people's lives.

3.4 Musical characteristics

During Mukhpul's wedding, Tursuntokhti sings three *mäshräp* songs after the *muqäddimä* of Chäbiyyat Muqam. These are the same songs as those in the recording of the Xinjiang Muqam Art Ensemble, but their rendition is quite different. These three *mäshräp* songs are not fixed in Sufi gatherings. I have experienced performances of Chäbiyyat Muqam with different numbers of *mäshräp* songs, for example in the event I will depict in the next chapter. What is fixed is that the first *mäshräp* song is always in the "limping beat", a beat that is common in Xinjiang and other parts of Central Asia.

The first *mäshräp* song of Chäbiyyat Muqam was transcribed by Wan Tongshu in a 7/8 beat in the 1950s, based on the performance of Turdi Akhun, a *muqam* and *mäshräp* musician of the Kashgar-Yarkand tradition introduced in Chapter 1. However, the transcription of Wan, who was "hitherto unacquainted with Central Asian traditions" (Harris 2008:33), does not represent the *muqam* and *mäshräp* in a faithful way, especially with regard to the beat. Playing according to this score, one does not feel the real pulse of the first *mäshräp* of Chäbiyyat Muqam. Part of Wan's transcription is given on the next page.

Figure 11. Wan Tongshu's transcription of the first *mäshräp* of Chäbiyyat Muqam (Xinjiang 1960:103)

To grasp the pulse of this song, it is useful to look at the playing of percussion instruments in it. Below are the waveforms of a part of the song I

recorded at the wedding in Khotan. The figure shows two cycles, divided by a black vertical line[32]. Because of the loud volume of percussion instruments, it clearly shows that a cycle consists of five strokes, with different durations between them. Every sound wave represents a stroke of the *sapayi*, while those sound waves in elliptic circles are where both the *sapayi* and *dap* sound, and hence highlight the more important beats:
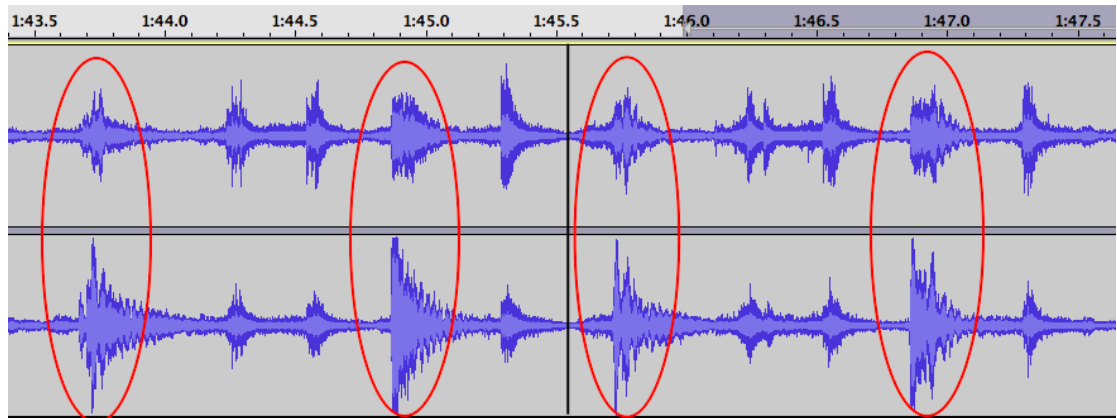
Figure 12. Waveforms of Sufi version of Chäbiyyat first *mäshräp*

To illustrate the cycles more clearly, I have divided the above figure into two parts showing a cycle each:
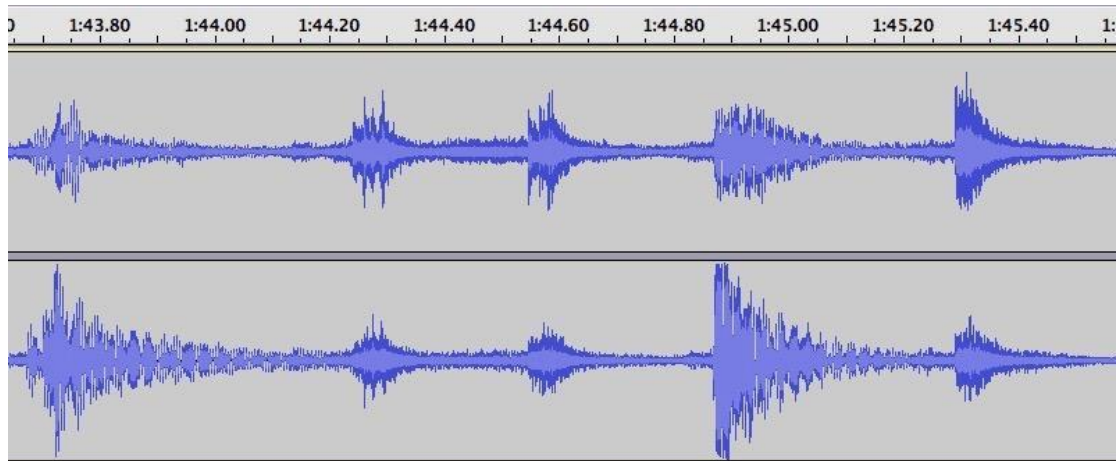
Figure 13. Waveforms of the first cycle

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[32] I used Audacity 2.0.6 to analyse the waveforms.
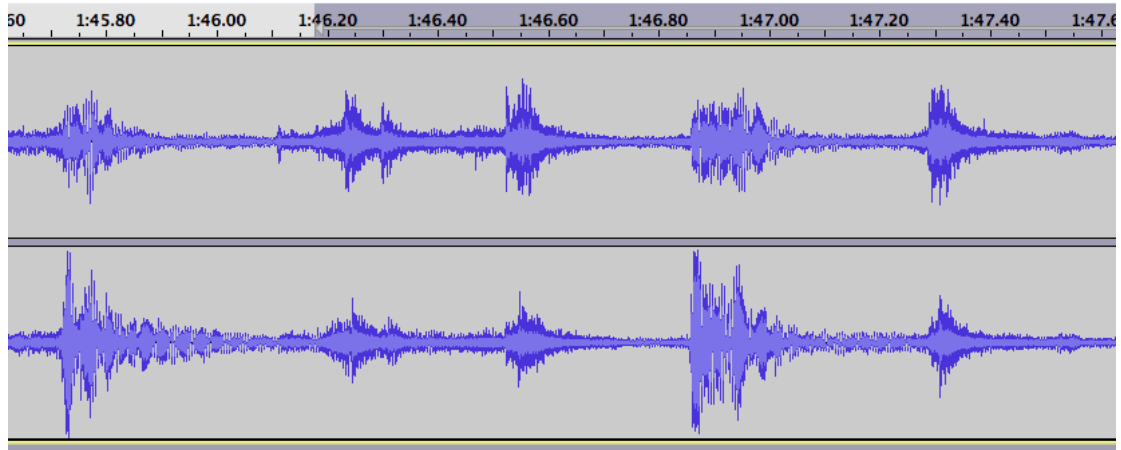
Figure 14. Waveforms of the second cycle

In what follows, I use "D" to designate the stroke of the *dap* (there is also a stroke of the *sapayi* on the same beat), and "S" to designate the stroke of the *sapayi* when the dap does not beat. In each figure, I mainly refer to the lower lines of waveforms which were recorded through a stereo microphone pointed towards the *dap* at that moment and which show the dynamics more clearly. I refer to the upper lines of waveforms when the lower ones do not show the points of highest volume as clearly. For these two cycles, I have obtained the duration between every two strokes of the *sapayi* (given in seconds and shown in brackets) from each waveform peak minus the previous one.

D(0.54) S(0.30) S(0.30) D(0.43) S(0.42) D(0.51) S(0.30) S(0.33) D(0.44) S(0.45)D

Considering that the performers' strokes may not be totally stable and of precise duration, I have calculated the average duration between each stroke of the *sapayi* from the two cycles:

D (0.525) S (0.30) S (0.315) D (0.435) S (0.435)

The overall duration of this average measure is 2.01 seconds, the first three strokes comprise 1.14 seconds, and the last two strokes lasts 0.87 seconds. The ratio of these two parts of the cycle, divided by the *dap*, is 1.14:0.87=1.31:1, very close to 4:3=1.33:1. That is why musicologists have transcribed the music in seven

beats. However, a seven beat meter is useful only in determining the 4:3 ratio of the two parts of a cycle, but does not adequately describe the notes within each cycle.

Divide 2.01 by 7, and each beat is 0.287 seconds long. To transcribe the music in seven beats is to use 0.287 seconds as one duration unit. Divide the above duration of each stroke by 0.287, and I get the number of beats of each stroke as follows:

D (1.83) S (1.05) S (1.10) D (1.52) S (1.52)

While the first three strokes account for four beats (1.83+1.05+1.10=3.98), and the last two strokes for three beats (1.52+1.52=3.04) (the added-up number of beats of the cycle equal 7.02 because of roundups), each stroke is hardly transcribable with this time signature. To use staff notation with an even pulse will make the representation of this rhythmic pattern either over-complicated, or over-simplified, as in the case of Wan's transcription. It is thus more natural to conceive of this rhythmic pattern as consisting of two parts with different tempos. One beat in the latter part is about one and a half times the duration of one beat in the former part.

In Zhou's transcription published in 1993, the problem is partly solved by the use of hemiola, i.e., the part of 2 x 1.5 beats in duple form is represented as being equal in duration to three beats.

Figure 15. Zhou Ji's transcription of Chäbiyyat first *mäshräp* (Shinjang 1993:96)

I have used the same solution for my transcription of this *mäshräp* song—from the wedding I attended—although I transcribe it in the form of 4+3 rather than the 3+4 of Zhou's transcription. That is because when I learned to play this rhythmic pattern on *sapayi*, people always taught me to start with the longer part, and the first stroke of the longer part, which is also the longest of the whole cycle, is played with an emphatic beat on the shoulder. In the percussion part of the score, I use the lower notes to designate the strokes of the *sapayi* on the shoulder (it is also where the *dap* beats occur), and the higher notes to designate strokes of the *sapayi* off the shoulder.

Chäbiyyat Muqami Birinchi Mäshräp

Score

138

Figure 16. Sufi version of Chäbiyyat first *mäshräp*[33]

[33] https://soundcloud.com/musicqian/chebiyyat-muqam-birinchi-meshrep.

Upon my request, Mäkhsum told me the lyrics of this *mäshräp* song, although I later found that what he told me did not match exactly what they sang at the wedding:

Alla yäy Alla yänä bändäm déding Alla
Ya bändäm démisäng ajiz bicharä qulung
Ya nakhshiwän ya bala gärdan shahu nakhshiwän Alla
Alla yäy Alla yänä bändäm dégin Alla Allahu

Yänä pirlär bilidu méning tatqan älimimni Alla älimimni
Yänä pirlär kéchisi tokhumu päryad éytidu Alla
Ya nakhshiwän ya bala gärdan shahu nakhshiwän
Alla yäy Alla yänä bändaäm dégin Alla Allahu

Aamazgha tang qopsam sähärlärdä rawadur
Yänä dowzakh otidin ozini halas étidu
Ya nakhshiwän ya bala gärdan shahu nakhshiwän
Alla yäy alla yänä bändäm dégin Alla Allahu[34]

...

Allah, oh Allah, you have made me your servant
If you don't make me your servant, at least let me be your weak and poor slave
Oh Naqshiband, oh Naqshiband, the King of Beggars, oh Allah
Allah, oh Allah, make me your servant

The *pir*s know the sufferings I have been through, oh Allah, the sufferings
On the night of the *pir*s, the rooster crows, oh Allah
Oh Naqshiband, oh Naqshiband, the King of Beggars, oh Allah

Allah, oh Allah, make me your servant

I wake up at dawn for prayer, and he wanders in the early morning
He makes himself perish in hell fire
Oh Naqshiband, oh Naqshiband, the King of Beggars, oh Allah
Allah, oh Allah, make me your servant[35]

...

These lyrics are completely different from the lyrics that the Xinjiang Muqam Art Ensemble uses for this *mäshräp* song. The Ensemble's lyrics are a poem by the classical Central Asian poet Nawayi (1441-1501), and is devoted to the theme of love (Taklimakaniy 2005:68)[36]. In comparison, the lyrics that these Sufis in Khotan used are obviously religious and related to Naqshbandiyya. Their lyrics are also more colloquial[37].

While using hemiola to transcribe this *mäshräp* song solves the problem of the ratio of 4:3 between the two parts of one rhythmic cycle, it still does not represent each stroke in the longer part precisely. As can be seen above, the ratio of the three strokes of *sapayi* in the longer part of the rhythmic cycle is 1.83 : 1.05 : 1.10, which means the first stroke is shorter than double the duration of each of the other two strokes. To reduce them to the ratio of 2:1:1 in the seven beat transcription is only a rough representation.

Because this music actually alternates between two different tempos, it can feel as if it is in an in-between state, floating between two worlds. Harris suggests that limping rhythms are believed to help listeners enter a trance state during Sufi

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[35] Translated by Iskandar Ding.
[36] I am grateful to Muqeddes Muxter for guiding me in reading this book.
[37] Iskandar Ding, translator of these lyrics, pointed this out to me.

rituals (Harris 2016:351). The data presented here goes into further detail. I argue that the in-between state created by the alternation of two tempos and the subtlety of the uneven three strokes in the longer part of the rhythmic cycle may contribute to an altered state in the listener, as it provides a blurred feel. However, in the rendition of the Xinjiang Muqam Art Ensemble, there is hardly any of this feel because the uneven beats have been evened up, and the whole music is played in a faster tempo of ♩.♩ = 36 which equals ♪=252.

In order to analyse the rhythm of the version of the Xinjiang Muqam Art Ensemble, I used the Audacity software to slow down the tempo and play the recording at 125% of the original duration, from which I obtained the following waveforms.
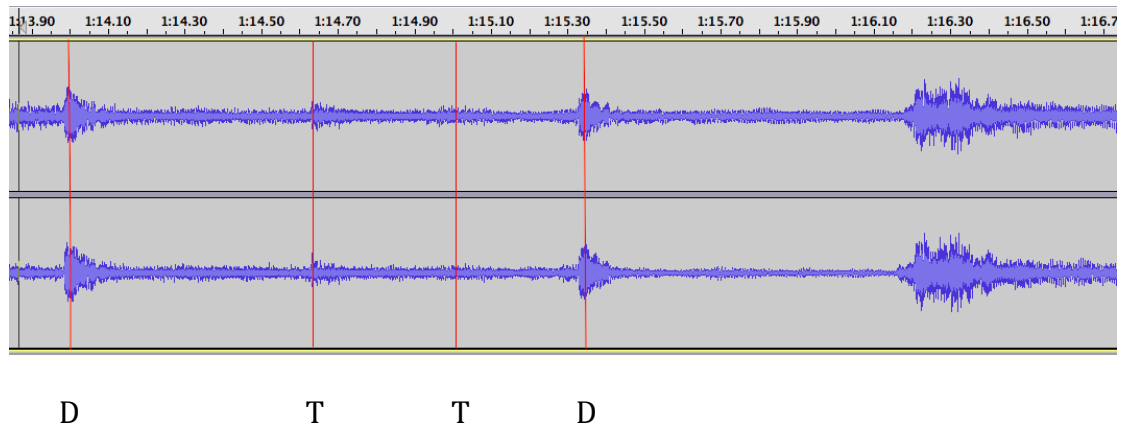
Figure 17. Waveforms of the Chäbiyyat first *mäshräp* by Xinjiang Muqam Art Ensemble

There is no *sapayi* played here (although the music video of this song does show a group of dancers playing *sapayi* as a reference to the *ashiq* origin of *mäshräp* songs), but I have tried to locate the strokes of the *dap*, which are not as obvious as in the figure of the recording from the wedding. The red lines signify the strokes on the *dap*. D signifies a beat in the centre of the *dap*, while T signifies a beat on the rim of the *dap*. The durations between each stroke are:

D (0.68)   T (0.33)   T (0.33)   D

142

The ratio between the three strokes, 0.68:0.33:0.33, is very close to 2:1:1, as in Zhou's transcription. As most performers of Xinjiang Muqam Art Ensemble are professionals trained in conservatories and music schools, they probably learned to play *muqam* and *mäshräp* from the score. That is why their performance is of a different temperament, and without the blurred feel of the Sufi version.

The difference in the structures of the Twelve Muqam and the *muqam-mäshräp* played by the Uyghur Sufis also changes the meaning of this rhythm. In the Sufi version, the *muqäddimä* is followed immediately by a number of *mäshräp* songs. The limping beat of the first *mäshräp* song thus seems to serve as a transitional phase between the more spiritual-sounding free rhythm of *muqäddimä* and the more worldly-sounding even-number beat of the other *mäshräp* songs. The sequence of "free rhythm-limping beat-regular four beat", which accords with the sequence of "solo singing-chorus singing-*sama* dance" of a Sufi *mäshräp* gathering, seems to contain a particular logic and meaning that are closely related to the Sufi nature of this gathering. In the Twelve Muqam, however, *mäshräp* songs and *muqäddimä* are far apart from each other and are divided by a number of sections of the Chong Näghmä and the Dastan part. The result is a suite of a more sophisticated structure, but the meaning of the limping beat in the original context is lost, and *mäshräp* songs in Twelve Muqam are basically seen as dance songs.

3.5 *Hikmät*

In the previous chapter, I described two *hälqä-sohbät* rituals in which the participants recited God's names and the *shahada* while the *hapiz* Mäkhsum sang *hikmät* for most of the ritual. However, neither my interlocutors nor the literature

provided much information about *hikmät*. What is *hikmät*? What is its relationship to other repertoires like the *mäshräp*? These are the questions I want to ask in this section.

Zhou describes *hikmät* as a free-rhythm intonation of lyrics about missing and praising God, bemoaning one's sufferings, expressing world-weariness and sadness, and longing for the happiness and brightness of the next life, sung by the *hapiz* at the beginning of the *hälqä-sohbät* (Zhou 2001:446). Zhou's description covers both the musical form and content of *hikmät*, yet there are two problems with his account. First, not all *hikmät* are of free rhythm. *Tälqin*, the metered songs performed by the *hapiz* while others recite the *dhikr* during *hälqä-sohbät*, is also a kind of *hikmät*. Second, Zhou does not mention that *hikmät* is a special collection of poetry attributed to the Central Asian Sufi mystic Ahmed Yasawi, who probably lived in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries (Deweese 1996:183). This is why *tälqin*, whose lyrics are also from the Yasawi tradition, is a part of *hikmät*.

The association of the lyrics of *hikmät* with Yasawi has particular significance, because unlike most of the other Central Asian poets whose works have been transmitted to this day, Yasawi was not only a poet but also believed to be the earliest Sufi among the Turks of Central Asia, and founder of the Yasawiyya Sufi order that was named after him (Deweese 1996:180–181). Harris suggests that singing *hikmät* is an important part of Uyghur community life, especially in rituals of mourning, healing, and in regular spiritual gatherings, as part of what practitioners term "*tärikät yol*" or "the way of the Sufi orders" (Harris forthcoming b).

Mäkhsum tells me that *hikmät* is a form of admonition (*näsihät*), and the term *hikmät* refers essentially to the lyrics rather than the tunes (interview, 17

May 2016). Here he emphasises not its musical form but it content. However, since this poetry is disseminated largely by oral means, the text is closely related to its sound forms, as is the case with the Qur'an. Although *hikmät* does exist in written forms too, as many *hapiz* have their own notebooks of the lyrics of *hikmät* and the collection titled Divan-i Hikmät has been published throughout the Turkic-speaking world including Xinjiang, it is through its oral delivery that most Sufis receive it.

Loud recitation is important with the Qur'an, *dhikr* and *hikmät*, because when one reads aloud, not only oneself but also those who hear the recitation of the texts will be edified, or at least urged to think about Allah. That is why reciting aloud is a more beneficial form of *hikmät*, which means "edification" (Mäkhsum, interview, 17 May 2016).

From a musical perspective, there are two kinds of *hikmät*. One is the *tälqin*, which is sung in metered form together with the group chanting of *dhikr*. The other is the free-rhythm *hikmät* chanted often in a solo vocal form. There does not seem to be a specific term for the latter in the local taxonomy, except when it is a *munajat*. Originating in the Persian term *monājāt*, which means "chanted notably during the nights of *Ramadan*" (During et al. 1991:22), the Uyghur *munajat* is a kind of supplication whose content is similar to *dua*, but which is in a sung form as opposed to *dua* which is usually said in silence. A *munajat* can be a *hikmät*, but is not always a *hikmät*. In other words, in a *munajat* one can sing the poetry of Yasawi, but one can also include lyrics from other sources, as long as they express one's supplication towards God.

Discussing the *munajat* as practiced generally in Russian and Soviet Central Asia, Erkinov suggests that *munajat* is a secret, mystical prayer to God which can

be done in any form or language (Erkinov 2007:87). Similarly, Mäkhsum tells me that *munajat* do not have their own tunes, but can be sung in any tune. Thus *hikmät* and *munajat* are two different concepts with an overlapping part that is both *hikmät* and *munajat*. Their relationship can be shown in the following figure:
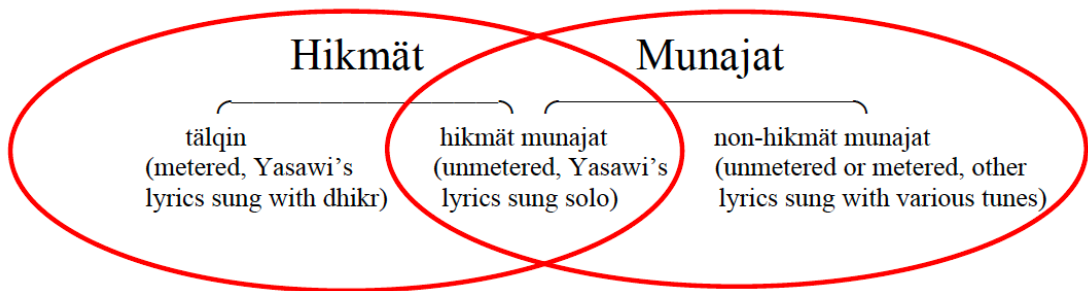
Figure 18. Relationship between *hikmät* and *munajat*

A *munajat* can be in one's own words. It can also be a *mäshräp* song. At the end of the third *hälqä-sohbät* I attended at Mäkhsum's *khaniqa*, described in Chapter 4, Nurmämät sang a *mäshräp* song which served as a *munajat* because it expressed supplication, although Mäkhsum later told me that Nurmämät chose a wrong one about leaving home and missing one's mother, which would be more appropriate when one's mother passes away. So *mäshräp* and *munajat* also have an overlapping part. If we include *mäshräp* in the figure, it will look like this:
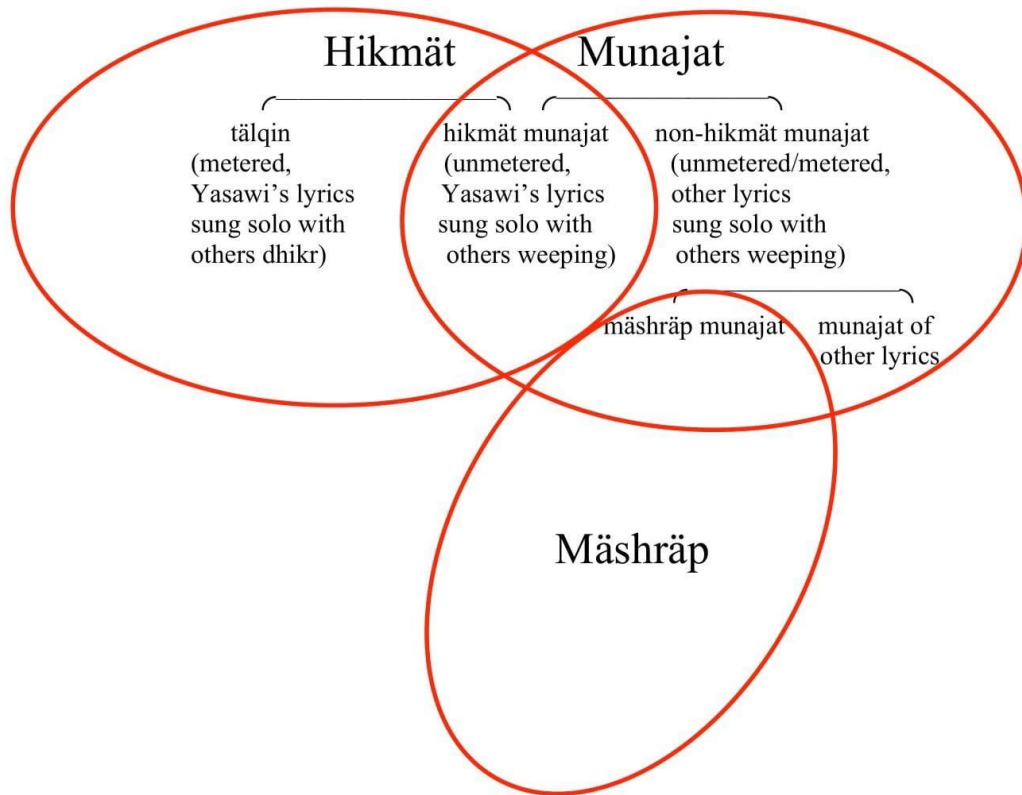
Figure 19. Relationship between *hikmät*, *munajat* and *mäshräp*

Hikmät is a group of sung poetry. *Munajat* is a set of sung prayers. *Mäshräp*, which can be both an event and a repertoire of songs, takes its latter meaning in the above figure. If we employ a broader meaning of the word "repertoire", and focus primarily on a musical perspective, then all three of these terms represent repertoires in this figure. The ellipse of *hikmät* and the ellipse of *mäshräp* do not overlap because they do not share the same tunes. However, they do sometimes share the same lyrics.

Both *hikmät* and *mäshräp* are based on Sufi poetry, *hikmät* mostly on Yasawi's poetry, and *mäshräp* mostly on Mashrab's poetry. Some of Yasawi's poetry also appears in *mäshräp* songs and then became a part of the Twelve Muqam (Light 2008:75). On the other hand, among the fifty-two *hikmät* songs collected in Qumul of east Xinjiang by Rena Yüsüp, then a Master's student at

Xinjiang Normal University, most are attributed to Yasawi, but there were also a few dedicated to Shah Mashrab (Yüsüp 2013:14). Upon my request, Nurmämät demonstrated a *hikmät* and a *mäshräp* using the same lyrics.

Score

Hikmät by Nurmämät

♩ = 100

Qa - di - rim qud - rät bi - län biz - ni - Äziz - jan - äy - li di,

Shükri ila___ jan bä - rip nurini iman äy - li - di. Bir - gä bär - di ma - lu mül - ku sa - hibi däw - lät qilip___

Bir - ni kha - ru bir - ni za - ru bir ni wäy - ran___ äy - li - di.

Figure 20. *Hikmät* by Nurmämät[38]

Translation of lyrics: "My Almighty endeared us with His power. Thanks be to Him. He gave us life, and made his Divine Light our faith. He gave us wealth, and made us the owner of riches. [At the same time], He made some suffer in wretchedness and ruins."[39]

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[38] Recorded by the author on 15 May 2016 in Khotan. Transposed up one semitone from actual pitch. Lyrics transcribed by Muqeddes Muxter. Video not provided due to privacy and security concerns.

[39] Translated by Iskandar Ding.

Score

Yasawi's Mäshräp by Nurmämät

♪ = 200

Qa - di - rim qud - ret bi - län biz - ni 4 Äziz - jan äy 4 li - di,

Shü - kri ila jan 4 bä - rip nu - ri 4 ni i - man äy - li - di - , i - man - äy 4 li -

di - yä, bän - däm - dä 4 gin Al - lah Al - lah hu.

Figure 21. Yasawi's *hikmät* by Nurmämät[40]

These two examples use the same lyrics, although in the *mäshräp* version Nurmämät didn't sing all the lyrics that he did in the *hikmät*. Instead he ended with the line of "and made his Divine Light our faith", and then added "Oh God, say that I am your servant, oh God!" In *mäshräp*, it is common to sing the same lyrics in different tunes (and to sing different lyrics in the same tune as well). The above two examples show that such sharing of lyrics also happens across the genres of *mäshräp* and *hikmät*.

This *mäshräp* is in the limping beat, typical of the first *mäshräp* sung after the *muqädimmä*. When Nurmämät demonstrated it to me in Niyaz's home, he asked for a *sapayi* with which he is used to singing *mäshräp*. Niyaz didn't want to get a *sapayi* from another room, and asked him to pretend that he had one. So Nurmämät sang the *mäshräp* with the movements of playing a *sapayi*, which

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[40] Recorded by the author on 15 May 2016 in Khotan. Transposed up one semitone from actual pitch. Lyrics transcribed by Muqeddes Muxter. Video not provided due to privacy and security concerns.

probably helped him to keep up with the beat, and it also helped me to transcribe the piece when I looked back at the video of my interview.

Nurmämät says *mäshräp* is faster than *hikmät* and is suitable for *sapayi* accompaniment (interview, 15 May 2016). It is true that *mäshräp* songs, which Turdi Akhun collected from the "*sapayi*-playing" *ashiq*s, seem to have always been associated with this percussion instrument (Light 2008:291). Playing the *sapayi* has become part of the embodied way of performing the *mäshräp*. At the same time, the association of *sapayi* with *mäshräp* means that the *mäshräp* is always metered.

In comparison, Nurmämät used free rhythm in the *hikmät* version of the poem, which is characteristic of the *hikmät munajat*. The lyrics also seem suitable as supplication. The two examples given by Nurmämät represent the musical characteristics of *hikmät munajat* and *mäshräp* respectively: one is performed in free rhythm, without any instruments; the other is performed in a fixed rhythmic pattern, and usually with the *sapayi*. One thing they have in common is that both *hikmät* and *mäshräp* are not usually sung as freestanding pieces, but as part of a bigger structure that comprises a number of songs. In his analysis of the repertoire of Uyghur Sufi rituals, Zhou discusses "suite-isation" (*taoqu hua*) as a characteristic:

> *Mäwlud* are mostly suites of recitation in a rondo form; some *büwi* sing one *büwi* tune after another continuously[, and] some "*ashiq* tunes" are similar to the Mäshräp sections of the Twelve Muqam, in that they are song and dance suites based on development of themes; "Sufi tunes" and "*bakhshi* tunes" are mostly song and dance suites in the medley form or based on a development of themes; the *naghra* and *sunay* music performed during *mazar* veneration or for religious festivals are medleys of instrumental pieces (Zhou 1999:97–98).[41]

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[41] Translated by the author.

Zhou is summarising a general characteristic of what he calls "Uyghur Islamic ritual music", and pointing out that many styles of this repertoire are in some kind of suite form, except for tunes of a smaller scale such as the *adhan* and *wayiz* melodies, which are for use in very particular contexts. As far as this chapter is concerned, the *mäshräp* songs, which Zhou sees as a part of "*ashiq* tunes", and the *hikmät*, which Zhou sees as a part of "Sufi tunes", are both performed in the medley form.

This seems natural as both the *muqam-mäshräp* and *hälqä-sohbät* are rituals that last for at least an hour, and require multiple tunes to fill up the duration. That is why Nurmämät seemed not to be used to demonstrating an individual *hikmät* or *mäshräp*, and he told me that doing so made him think about something that he did not pay attention to in the past, namely the use of the same lyrics in both *hikmät* and *mäshräp*.

So, in comparing *hikmät* and *mäshräp* it is important to look at them as part of bigger structures. Zhou notes that those suites he lists all begin with free-rhythm sections of long verses (Zhou 1999:97–98). Indeed, *muqam-mäshräp* begins with the unmetered *muqäddimä*, while *hälqä-sohbät* begins with the unmetered *hikmät*, or, with the unmetered recitation of the Qur'an, if we take that into consideration. Qur'anic recitation may be the model for other unmetered chanting of the Uyghur people, as Faruqi argues that in Islamic societies, Qur'anic recitation or *qirā'ah* (reading) is at the top of the Muslim hierarchy of *handasah al ṣawt* (artistic engineering of sound), a term that Faruqi uses to refer to all categories of sound art in Muslim societies, whether it is considered music or not (Faruqi 1985:8). Faruqi argues that "the more a genre or type of musical

expression draws for its musical, poetic, and religious inspiration from Qur'ānic chant, the more it has been appreciated and 'legitimized' by Islamic society" (Faruqi 1985:13).

According to Faruqi, religious chants such as *adhan* are on a level right under the Qur'anic chant, while "chanted poetry with noble themes (shi'r)" is on the third level in the hierarchy. If there is a similar hierarchy in Uyghur society, non-metered *hikmät* is probably a style that corresponds with the *shi'r* in the hierarchy proposed by Faruqi, for it is chanted solo in free rhythm, with some improvisation, similar to the Qur'an, and at the same time it is based on religious poetry. In comparison, the *tälqin*, which is also chanted poetry attributed to Yasawi, is in metered form and farther away from Qur'anic recitation. Even farther away is *mäshräp*, which is not only metered but is also accompanied by musical instruments.

Hikmät is usually performed without any instruments, especially in the *hälqä-sohbät* of the Naqshbandiyya/Qadiriyya order. However, in the *hälqä-sohbät* of the Chishtiyya order, *hikmät* can be performed with instruments, including *sapayi*. For example, during the *yäkzärip* ("one-beat") part of the second *hälqä-sohbät* that I attended in Mäkhsum's home (depicted in Chapter 2), Mäkhsum led people to sing a *hikmät* while some played the *sapayi* and Abdurakhman played the *tämbur*. It was a Chishti *hikmät*, as Mäkhsum later told me, and he sang this to show respect to Abdurakhman, because on the one hand, Abdurakhman is a *tämbur* player, and on the other hand, Abdurakhman is from Qaraqash where the influence of the Chishtiyya is obvious. Yüsüp also notes that in Qumul, *hikmät* is sometimes performed with *sapayi*, especially when it is a poem not by Yasawi but by Mashrab (Yüsüp 2013:46).

A *tälqin* is also played with *sapayi* in another case. Prior to my PhD research, when I travelled in Khotan in 2009 and met Abdurakhman for the first time, he introduced me to a couple, both of whom were mendicant *ashiq* who made their living by busking in the street. I asked them if they would sing some songs for me, which I was able to record. After nine years, when I listened back to the recordings, I realised that they had performed a *tälqin* that I had also heard at the *hälqä-sohbät* at Mäkhsum's home which I mentioned above. In the latter case, the *tälqin* was played after the *hikmät* I described in the previous paragraph, when people were doing the *sama* dance, while the *tämbur*, *dap* and *sapayi* were being played, so I assume it is also a Chishti *tälqin*.

Actually, the musical form of the Chishti *hikmät* seems not to be restricted to that Sufi order, but is instead known to and shared by all Uyghur Sufis. For example, at the Imam Äptäh Mazar in Qaraqash, there is usually an open *hälqä-sohbät* outside the attached *khaniqa* after the Jümä congregational prayer of every Friday. Mäkhsum tells me that the gathering was started by people of the Chishtiyya order who live in Qaraqash and who do use instruments sometimes, but the gathering is attended by people of all the Sufi orders (interview, 8 June 2016). It is through such events that people of other Sufi orders come to know the *hikmät* of the Chishtiyya, and it has become natural for Mäkhsum to sing them in the *hälqä-sohbät* that he sometimes organises for the Naqshbandi/Qadiri followers.

It seems those mendicant *ashiq* might also perform this Chishti *tälqin* in the street, the same way they would perform a *mäshräp*. A street performance is less ritualistic than the *hälqä-sohbät*, and from a musical perspective a *mäshräp* and a Chishti *tälqin* can sound quite similar to each other. This *tälqin* is in a four-beat pattern, like most *mäshräp* songs except the first one to be played after each

muqam, which is in the limping beat. The playing of the *sapayi* in this *tälqin* is in one of the basic rhythmic patterns that is also found in most *mäshräp* songs, which I or anybody else who participates in such Uyghur Sufi musical gatherings are soon taught:

♩=110
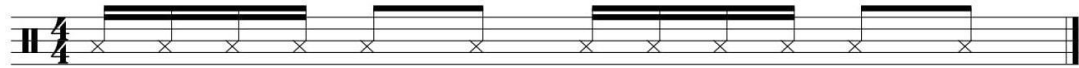
Figure 22. A basic *sapayi* rhythmic pattern

  Given its beat and *sapayi* accompaniment, a Chishti *tälqin* sounds closer to a *mäshräp* song than to a Qadiri *hikmät*, which is unaccompanied by any instrument, and is sometimes unmetered. I have heard Mäkhsum's group sing a Chishti *hikmät* about Äysa (Isa, or Jesus), with *sapayi*, *dap* and *tämbur*. The *sapayi* was played in another four-beat rhythmic pattern, which is also played in *mäshräp*:

♩=85
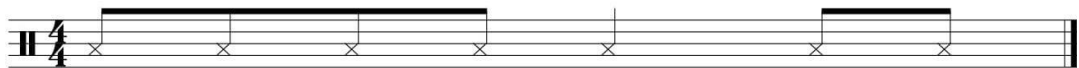
Figure 23. Another *sapayi* four-beat rhythmic pattern

I have transcribed the piece as follows:

Figure 24. Chishti *hikmät* about Äysa performed by Mäkhsum[42]

Later, Mäkhsum also demonstrated to me a Qadiri *hikmät* with the same

lyrics, which he identifies as from the third *hälqä* of the *hälqä-sohbät* of the Qadiri

order. I have transcribed it as follows:[43]

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[42] Recorded by the author on 25 November 2015 in Khotan. Lyrics transcribed by
Muqeddes Muxter. Video not provided due to privacy and security concerns.

Score

Qadiriyyä Hikmät about Äysa

Figure 25. Qadiri *hikmät* about Äysa, performed by Mäkhsum

The Chishti version is accompanied by the *sapayi*, while the Qadiri version

is a *tälqin* that is not accompanied by any instrument but is accompanied by the

vocal *dhikr*. Although Mäkhsum demonstrated it to me by himself, he tried to sing

both the *tälqin* and the *dhikr* parts. As Nurmämät is used to singing *mäshräp* with a

sapayi, Mäkhsum is used to singing *tälqin* with *dhikr*. As I have heard Mäkhsum and

others sing this tune with other lyrics, I know how it sounds when the two parts

are combined. Then Mäkhsum also demonstrated a free-rhythm *hikmät,* again with

the same lyrics:

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[43] Recorded by the author on 25 November 2015 in Khotan. Lyrics transcribed by
Muqeddes Muxter. Video not provided due to privacy and security concerns.

Qadiriyyä Free-Rhythm Hikmät about Äysa

Figure 26. Qadiriyya free-rhythm *hikmät* about Äysa.[44]

Mäkhsum identifies this one as a *yäkkhollaq*, or "free-standing song" that is not part of any *hälqä*. These three pieces, all based on the same lyrics, demonstrate the three basic styles or compositional techniques, if we may say so, that are found in Uyghur Sufi musical gatherings—singing (group or solo) with *sapayi*, solo singing with *dhikr*, and solo singing in free rhythm. At the same time, they show that the same lyrics may be set to different musical styles, like Turdi Akhun who sang the same poem of Nawayi not only in the *mäshräp* sections of Chargah, Pänjigah, Özhal, and Äjäm *muqam*s, but also in more than one song from the same *mäshräp* section, which means he sang it to different rhythms (Light 2008:290).

Tälqin, whether of the Chishtiyya or of the Qadiriyya, has another thing in common with *mäshräp* songs—both can be performed with the *sama* dance. They are both metered, and come after an unmetered part that is performed without the *sama* dance. In the case of *hälqä-sohbät* that part is the unmetered *hikmät*, while in

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[44] Recorded by the author on 17 May 2016 in Khotan. Lyrics transcribed by Muqeddes Muxter. Video not provided due to privacy and security concerns.

the case of *muqam-mäshräp* it is the *muqäddimä*. The musical sounds of *hälqä-sohbät* and *muqam-mäshräp*, as well as the *naghra* and *sunay* suites, are all based on a structure of free rhythm—metered rhythm. The chanted poetry in the *hälqä-sohbät* of the Qadiriyya is on the upper side of the hierarchy Faruqi proposes, while *naghra* and *sunay* suites fall on a lower level, as they are more musical. The *muqam-mäshräp* seems to lie between them, as it is neither purely chanting nor purely instrumental.

The following figure shows the repertoires of Qadiri *hälqä-sohbät*, Chishti *hälqä-sohbät*, and *muqam-mäshräp*, and the relationships between them. The parts linked by dotted lines are similar in musical characteristics. Moving from the top towards the bottom of this diagram, generally each group of sounds becomes more "musical", in the sense that they move further away from Qur'anic recitation and closer to secular music in form.
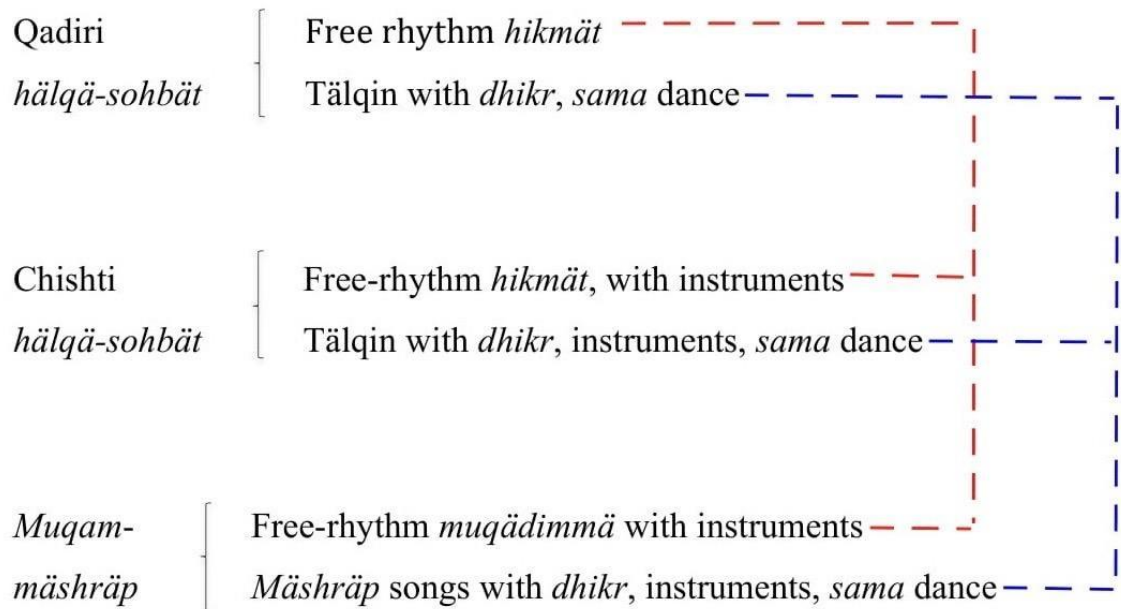
Figure 27. Relationship between Qadiri *hälqä-sohbät*, Chishti *hälqä-sohbät*, and *muqam-mäshräp*

We could add other suites under *muqam-mäshräp*, such as the *naghra* and *sunay* suite. The similarity in the structures of these different works must have

resulted from mutual influences. No matter whether in more religious or more secular contexts, the variation of the rhythm between the unmetered parts and the metered parts creates more expressivity.

3.6 Incarnation and appropriation — *Imam Hüsäynim*

3.6.1 Sufi chant

During the second *hälqä-sohbät* that I attended at Mäkhsum's home, after Mäkhsum finished singing the last *hikmät*, he invited Abdurakhman to perform something:

People are now sitting in a circle. Abdurakhman takes his *tämbur* and starts playing. He played the *tämbur* earlier, during the *yäkzärip* ("one-stroke") part, when the beat became faster and faster and people began to dance. It was Niyaz who brought him the *tämbur* and asked him to play at the time, but he was just duplicating the vocal line of the *hikmät* on one string, without plucking the sympathetic strings, which resulted in a quite dull-sounding accompaniment. It seemed that Abdurakhman was trying to play along with a repertoire that was not his own. Now he is apparently playing something he is familiar with and good at, with all the ornamentation and plucking of sympathetic strings. In sharp contrast to the *hikmät* that Mäkhsum just sang, this tune is very rhythmic.

As soon as Abdurakhman starts playing, some of the *sama* dancers begin to rock their bodies according to the beat, while Niyaz, Mäkhsum's son Muhämmät, and Mäkhsum's brother Abdulla start playing *sapayi* and Mäkhsum starts playing the *dap*. This is a song that I have heard Abdurakhman sing in a *dastan* a few days ago when he busked in the bazaar, and it is a song that I will hear many more times during my time in Khotan. Compared to when Abdurakhman played this song solo

159

in the market, now it is obviously more of a collective experience, with not only the additional rhythmic instruments from the four people, but also bodily movements from the rest of the circle, and the crying of some of them.

Figure 28. Abdurakhman's solo version of Imam Hüsäynim while busking in the bazaar [45]

English translation of the first verse:

The Lord of the World fell. Put down the legend to the moon with the pious woman. My soul made a nest from rough cotton at that time. They were non-believers, and Karbala became deserted[46].

It is a simple but beautiful melody in a minor scale. Sung in a solemn mood with the lyrics about the martyrdom of Imam Hussain in Karbala, it has a touching

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[45] Recorded by the author on 10 October 2015 in Khotan. Lyrics transcribed by Muqeddes Muxter. Video not provided due to privacy and security concerns.
[46] Translated by Iskandar Ding.

power that arouses people's deep emotions, even though they are far from the time and place depicted in the song. Thum contends that *mazar* pilgrims' weeping during their personal prayers is "a conventional form of devotion, wherein the pilgrims expressed their sadness over the passing of the saint from this world", and at the same time is "an expression of grief over a difficult personal situation" (Thum 2014:98). The crying during the *hälqä-sohbät* probably expresses similar emotions, especially at the influence of a song about Imam Hussain's martyrdom.

> "In his dreams, the Prophet of God appeared
> He cried, and embraced him
> 'You have been left alone, my child, and become exiled,'
> 'Be patient, and become a martyr.' — didn't he say that?
>
> 'I really missed you, my dear child.'
> 'I await you always.'
> 'Your father Ali and your mother Fatima have passed away.'
> Didn't the Prophet give the prophecy?"[47]

It may seem odd that this Shi'a tradition of Imam Hussain is found in a song of the predominantly Sunni Uyghurs (the Uyghur Sufis I know also identify themselves as Sunnis). In her book on the community of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Uyghur society, Bellér-Hann contends that the martyrdom of Hasan and Husayn in Uyghur popular tradition are symbols of Islam in general rather than of Shi'ism specifically (Bellér-Hann 2008:236). Indeed, from my communications with the Uyghurs in Khotan, they do not see the song of Imam Hüsäynim as something related to Shi'a Islam. Nor do people think of worshipping

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[47] Translated by Iskandar Ding.

mazar of the fourth to twelfth of the Twelve Shi'a Imams in Khotan as having anything to do with Shi'a Islam.

About a month and a half later, I heard the song again, at a *muqam-mäshräp* at the home of Mäkhsum (I will describe this gathering in detail in Chapter 4). This time Ikhlim played the *tämbur* and led the singing. Again Mäkhsum played the *dap* and some others playede *sapayi*. They started with Chäbiyyat Muqam. As the music went from the unmetered *muqäddimä* to the metered *mäshräp* songs, the people who were sitting opposite the musicians, who were mostly Mäkhsum's students, began to move their bodies according to the beat.

As the tempo increased, they also moved faster and faster, eventually forming a circle which they moved around, while still kneeling. The musicians sang a number of *mäshräp* songs, while the dancers chanted *dhikr*. Imam Hüsäynim, although not a *mäshräp* but a *dastan* song, connected perfectly well with the other songs. During Imam Hüsäynim, the ritual reached its climax. The tempo reached its fastest. The dancers moved the most. Some people cried. This turned out to be the last song before the *sama* came to an end.

Imam Hüsäynim with Dhikr

Figure 29. Imam Hüsäynim performed with *dhikr*.[48]

The complete *dastan* of Imam Hüsäynim consists of three parts. The first

tells about Imam Hüsäynim's mother mourning for him after his death. The second

part deals with his life from birth to death. The third part is about his sacrifice. The

second part is in *naglä*, a spoken form of *dastan* performance without instrumental

accompaniment. The two other parts are in *näzmä*, a sung form of *dastan*

performance with instrumental accompaniment, which for Abdurakhman was the

rawap (Abdurakhman, interview, 21 May 2016).

The song transcribed above is a "*munajat*", a kind of *dastan* song

subordinate to *näzmä*, from the third part of the *dastan*. The term *munajat* here is

not to be confused with the *hikmät munajat* in the Qadiri *hälqä-sohbät*, which is

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[48] Recorded by the author on 10 October 2015 in Khotan. Video not provided due to
privacy and security concerns.

free-rhythm solo singing without instrumental accompaniment. This *dastan munajat* is the opposite—a metered song played with instruments, similar to *mäshräp* songs, with which it was performed at the *muqam-mäshräp* that I attended at Mäkhsum's home. The use of the same term for two different forms of repertoire indicates that *munajat* is not a musical genre per se, but rather, that *munajat* refers to its function.

Coming from the verbal noun of the Arabic verb *nājā*, "to whisper to, talk confidentially with someone", *munajat* indicates a kind of personal, and even mystical voluntary prayer to God, in any words and language (Erkinov 2007:85-87). Erkinov's study of *munajat* was part of a project on Russian colonialism in Central Asia and the Caucasus and included *munajat* of Uyghurs living in Russian Central Asia.

According to A. Nizamov, *maddāḥ*s of Central Asia, who are similar in nature to Uyghur *dastanchi*s, were responsible for transforming *munajat* from religious prayerful canticles into lyric-philosophic, musical-poetic cycles through their work (Erkinov 2007:92). *Munajat* is thus not a genre as such, but a thematic feature of a work, its most distinctive feature being repetitive invocations to God throughout the text (Erkinov 2007:86). As a result, the Uyghur *munajat* has been featured in both *hikmät* and *dastan*.

Although Imam Hüsäynim is a *dastan munajat*, it is performed at both *hälqä-sohbät* and *muqam-mäshräp* gatherings, as I described above. In the former case, it is not so much an intrinsic component of the structure of *hälqä-sohbät*, but rather an "encore" performed after the main body of the event. In the latter, the song is performed together with *mäshräp* songs and is the climax of the event. Here a further distinction needs to be made between *muqam-mäshräp* as an event

and as a repertoire. Imam Hüsäynim is not part of the *muqam-mäshräp* repertoire, but is played at the event of *muqam-mäshräp*, which indicates that the event covers more than the repertoire, and that the performance of *dastan* and the Sufi gathering of *muqam-mäshräp* overlap with each other. That is probably the reason why Nurmämät tells me that Imam Hüsäynim is also called the thirteenth *muqam* in Khotan, and indeed there is a muqam called Imam Hüsäynim found in some townships of Khotan, with its own *muqäddimä* and *mäshräp* songs (Wang, Jianchao 2008:101), presumably including the song under discussion.

Classification seems difficult, as boundaries between different repertoires are blurred, and repertoires are related to contexts. In addition, although there are distinctions between sounds that are regarded as *muzika* and those that are not, both are often found interlocking with each other. As Stephen Jones puts it, speaking of the classification of Chinese folksongs, "boundaries are fluid, and Chinese and Western scholars are equally aware of the pitfalls. One might study songs by criteria of mood, social function, or musical form, but no simple system will be watertight" (Jones, Stephen 2003:316).

It is difficult to come to a classification of the repertoires of Uyghur Sufis in musical terms alone, as most are not considered *muzika* in the first place, and vernacular classification is often based on ideological criteria. Taking a look at the repertoires we have mentioned, one finds that overlapping is common, while a piece's category often depends on the context. It may be helpful here if we bring in the context governing the musical sounds in order to gain a general view of the repertoires. If we include such contexts as *hälqä-sohbät* and *muqam-mäshräp*, as well as musical sounds such as *dastan* in the diagram, it will look like this (items in yellow colour refer to an event or context rather than a repertoire):
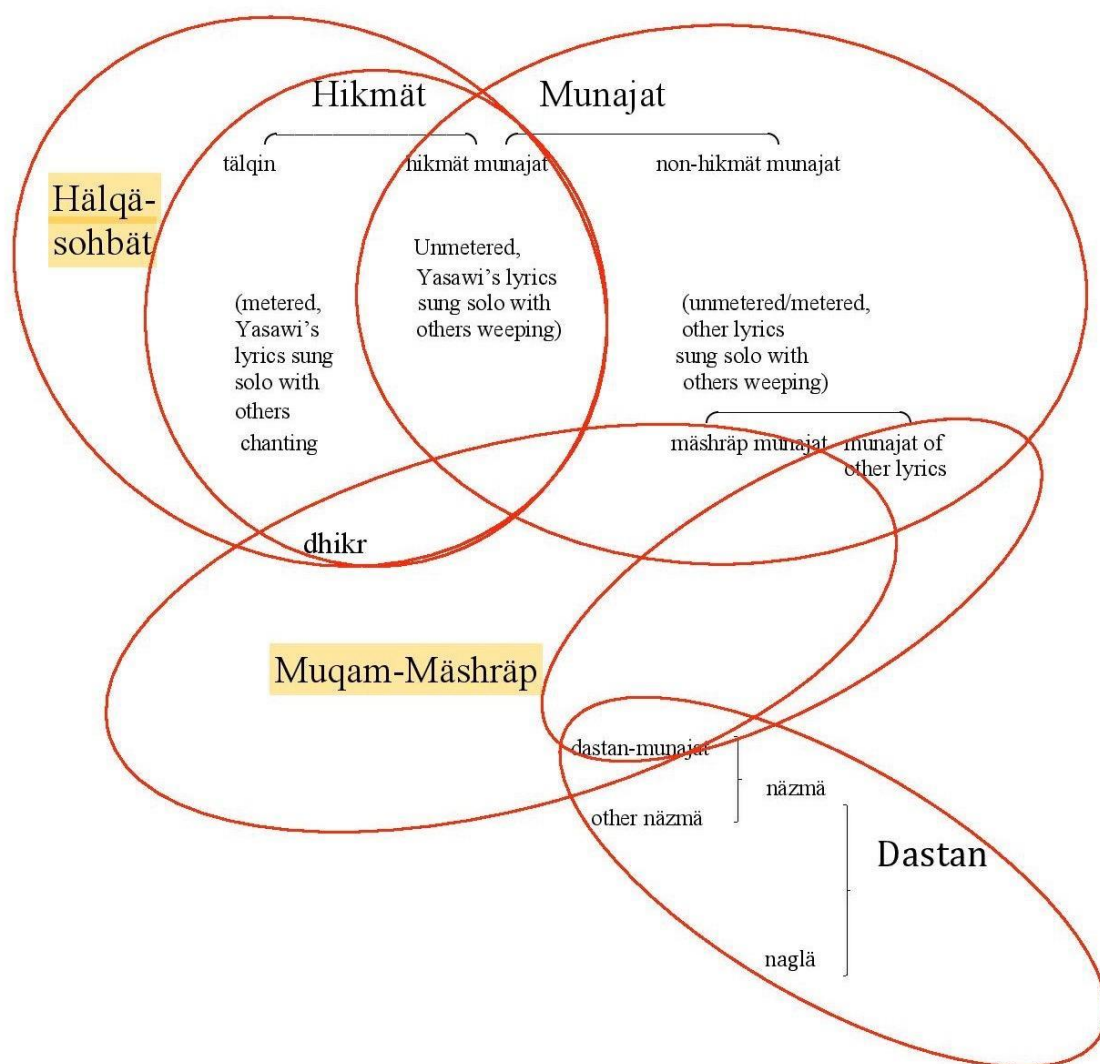
Figure 30. Relationship between *hikmät, munajat, dhikr, dastan, muqam-mäshräp*, and *hälqä-sohbät*

We can still include more elements into the figure, until we have almost every kind of musical sound found among the Uyghurs in south Xinjiang, as they seem to be all interrelated and to overlap with each other to some extent.

The *dastan munajat* Imam Hüsäynim is a very popular tune in Khotan, and as with *muqam-mäshräp* or *hälqä-sohbät*, it is performed at the climax of a *dastan* performance. Although people in the bazaar do not usually cry when they hear it as people do in *hälqä-sohbät*, the song seems to have a touching power that helps Abdurakhman to collect money from the audience after he sings it. Besides in *hälqä-sohbät*, *muqam-mäshräp*, and *dastan*, I have also heard Mäkhsum and some

167

of his friends sing "Imam Hüsäynim" when they sacrifice a cow at the Imam Asim Mazar. What has made this song about a Shi'a imam so popular among Uyghur Sufis?

As mentioned earlier, Khotan has *mazar* of the fourth to twelfth of the Twelve Imams of Shi'a Islam. Of course these imams were never in Xinjiang, let alone buried there. These *mazar* were built by people in Khotan and their associations with Khotan were invented (Dawut 2001:23). These *mazar* perhaps represent efforts by Uyghur Muslims who live on the periphery of the Islamic world to strengthen their legitimacy and to increase people's piety by making more intimate what is beyond the reach of most locals.

A similar example is the Al-Sahab Kahfi Mazar of Toyuq, near the town of Turpan in east Xinjiang, which is believed by many Uyghurs to be the site of the story told in the eighteenth surah of the Qur'an, Surah Al Kahf, of a group of young men seeking refuge in a cave as they fled the pagans. It is interesting to note that Imam Hussain, as well as the first two of the Twelve Imams, Ali and Hasan, are not included in the *mazar* in Khotan, perhaps because that would sound too unbelievable, especially Imam Hussain, who is known to have died in Karbala.

Although there is no *mazar* of Imam Hussain in Xinjiang, the Ordam Mazar near Kashgar represents a localised version of Imam Hussain—Ali Arslankhan (d. 998) of the Qarakhanid, who was killed by Buddhists of Khotan during the war between Qarakhanid and Khotan. The supposed date of the death of Arslankhan is the same as that of Imam Hussain—the tenth of the month of Muharram—and around this day Uyghur people used to gather at the Ordam Mazar for a festival commemorating the martyrdom of Arslankhan, before the festival was shut down by the government in the late 1990s.

It is also interesting to note that in Khotan, people sing the *dastan* about Imam Hussain, rather than the localised version of Arslankhan. Mättursun tells me that Imam Hüsäynim is a Khotan song, which people in Kashgar and Yarkand do not really know. This is corroborated by the fact that when Tursuntokhti came from Yarkand to Khotan to rehearse with the others, he was not as involved as other musicians when playing Imam Hüsäynim, which indeed seems to be a song related to the identity of people from Khotan.

For people in Kashgar, Arslankhan, the localised version of Imam Hussain, represents martyrdom in the spread of Islam in Xinjiang and the conquest of non-Islamic Khotan by the Qarakhanid Dynasty centred in Kashgar, which is something to be proud of. The legend of the martyrdom of Arslankhan based on the prototype of Imam Hussain makes the area's Islam more legitimate. On the other hand, with regards to the identity of the Khotan Sufis, it would be embarrassing to sing about the story of Arslankhan being killed by Khotan people. That is probably the reason why people in Khotan choose to sing the original story of Imam Hussain rather than that of Arslankhan.

There has been hardly any research on the song and *dastan* work Imam Hüsäynim. In Uyghur scholar Keremu's anthology of Uyghur folk *dastan* works, a synopsis of two versions of the *dastan* works are included, titled "Imam Hüsäyinniŋ Wapati", and "Kärbala Qessisi", but they consist of no more information than summaries of one short paragraph each (Keremu 2014:48–49). The absence of academic research may have to do with the religious nature of its content which makes it a taboo in Chinese academia.

Abdurakhman told me that when he is asked to perform *dastan* at governmental events, he would choose works about love and history, but not

dastan with religious themes such as Imam Hüsäynim. It may also have to do with nationalistic thinking that emphasises Uyghur rather than foreign-born figures, which happens in both *muqam* editing (Light 2008) and novel writing (Thum 2014). Although Imam Hüsäynim frequently features in both Abdurakhman's street busking and Khotan Sufis' gatherings, its spread seems to be confined to a fairly small circle. However, I soon found that the song has crossed over to other spheres, albeit in very different forms, as the next two sections will demonstrate.

3.6.2 Film song

In *Qirliq Istakan* ("Glass with Edges"), a dark comedy film in the Uyghur language made in 1993, the melody of Imam Hüsäynim was used as the theme song, with a totally different rendition.[49] Adapted from a novel by well-known Uyghur writer Mämtimin Hoshur and directed by Dilmurat Muhammad, the film tells a rather absurd story about drinking alcohol. The film is set in the late 1980s, since a manuscript of the story written by "Clod" Osman, one of the protagonists of the film, is dated 1989.

Four friends gather together at the home of one of them to eat, drink, and tell jokes: "Hide" Abdul who is a hide dealer and amateur poet, "Calf" Räjäb who is a coal furnace maker and the host of the party, "Goat" Tursun who is a tailor and dance aficionado, and "Clod" Osman who writes a series of absurd stories about people he knows and gets himself the pen-name of Sarang ("crazy").

After drinking an excessive amount of alcohol, two of them become abnormal. "Hide" Abdul can't recognise his mother and keeps speaking strange

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[49] The film is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dy6edxdxuSw&t=2631s, with the theme song appearing from 40:01 (accessed 15 August 2018).

verses, while "Goat" Tursun can't stop dancing whenever he hears some rhythm. However, after being treated in a hospital for a period of time, they recover and are able to not only live normally but also to realise their dreams. "Hide" Abdul becomes a famous poet and marries the girl he loved in university but with whom he lost touch after he quit his studies. "Goat" Tursun becomes an acclaimed dancer with a unique style of his own.

While illustrating the harm of alcoholism, which was a social problem among the Uyghurs in the 1980s and 1990s, the film's happy ending indicates that it is not just an anti-drinking film but that it addresses the larger issue of social restrictions. Because of their families' expectations, "Hide" Abdul and "Goat" Tursun originally went into more realistic professions than poetry and dance. The stimulation of alcohol, however, has opened up their creativity, as a comment on "Goat" Tursun's dance by a critic in the film implies—it is a "revelation of the soul of human beings" and "an explosion of inner emotions that were all pent up inside".

"Goat" Tursun begins to dance at the party when "Calf" Räjäb plays a song from his tape recorder and when they are all drunk. The song is on the melody of Imam Hüsäynim, but with different lyrics: "I offered wine in double cups. Drink it without fake politeness. One's life doesn't prosper all the time. Let's drink with great joyfulness. The liquor is in our cups every day. Let's have harmonious life every day. Let's drink folks. Let's keep drinking. The sound of cheers explodes the ceiling".[50]

I transcribe the song as follows:

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[50] Lyrics translated by Kurban Niyaz, as shown on
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dy6edxdxuSw&t=176s (accessed 19 June 2017).

Qirliq Istakan

Figure 31. Qirliq Istakan[51]

A group of male singers sings these lyrics in chorus in a key lower than that of Imam Hüsäynim in *dastan* or *muqam-mäshräp*. The sloppy manner of their singing is in sharp contrast to the solemn and mournful way in which Imam Hüsäynim is sung in *dastan* or *muqam-mäshräp*. The syncopation added to the original melody sounds like the staggering of the drunkards and adds to the light-heartedness of the song. The synthesiser accompaniment contributes the sounds of a saxophone, keyboard and drum. In a way, the arrangement sounds like some

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[51] Transposed up an octave from actual pitch. Lyrics transcribed by Muqeddes Muxter.

Russian or Soviet pop songs, probably because the arranger Abdusalam Abdusopur (whose credit is given in the film as the composer) specialises in performing Russian and Soviet songs himself.[52]

Qirliq Istakan is a popular film, and its theme song has become so widespread that, when I played my field recording of Imam Hüsäynim to some Uyghur friends in Ürümchi, their first reaction was that this was a cover of the film song. I once also heard it performed live in a medley of pop songs in a rather touristy restaurant in Khotan. Abdurakhman, however, is quite indignant about the appropriation of the religious song of Imam Husäynim for use as a film song about alcohol.

Nevertheless, there have not been any formal disputes over the use of the song, as occurred in the case of Wang Luobin claiming credit for songs he adapted from Uyghur folk songs (Harris 2005), or any lawsuits over copyright, as occurred in the case of *Wusuli Chuange*, which is adapted from traditional music of the Hezhe people by singer Guo Song.[53] One of the reasons may be that the appropriation happens within Uyghur society, so unlike with Wang or Guo, there was no issue of nationalism involved in the case of Imam Hüsäynim. In addition, consciousness of intellectual property rights is generally low in Xinjiang, and it is unlikely that Uyghur peasants would be able to bring a composer to court.

3.6.3 Propaganda song

Although Abdurakhman was not happy with the appropriation of Imam Hüsäynim in the film, he himself participated in another appropriation of the song,

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[52] I learn this from a friend of mine who is a friend of the arranger.
[53] http://www.chinanews.com/2002-12-29/26/258358.html (accessed 10 January 2018).

this time a propaganda song made in 2015 titled Qaraqash Grand Bazar Welcomes You, which eulogises the "harmonious society" and the "developing economy" through the big bazaar of Qaraqash county.

In the music video,[54] Abdurakhman is seen leading a group of men walking through the Grand Bazaar, playing his *rawap* and singing. The lyrics are shown in the video in three languages—Uyghur, Chinese and English, something unusual in Xinjiang except in government organised productions for propaganda purposes. The song begins with Abdurakhman singing the melody of Imam Hüsäynim, with the lyrics of "Qaraqash bazaar is prosperous. Arts and crafts are harmonious. The big bazaar in Qaraqash opens the way to our happiness."

I transcribe the song as follows:

Figure 32. Qaraqash Grand Bazaar Welcomes You[55]

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[54] http://www.112seo.com/cityarticle-1765498.html (accessed 19 June 19 2017).
[55] Transposed down a semitone from actual pitch. Lyrics transcribed by Muqeddes Muxter.

The key of this version is the highest among all the versions discussed here. The music is obviously made from MIDI, with string sounds reminiscent of some Egyptian pop. Some artificial reverb is used on Abdurakhman's voice to create the effect of grandeur. The structure of this version is the most complicated, as Abdurakhman's part is followed by three parts that are not found in previous versions, sung by three different singers, sometimes in a style close to rap.

The second singer sings: "At Qaraqash bazaar there is generosity. At Qaraqash bazaar there are real strong men. They add melody with songs, boys and girls with their love. For their hometown, Qaraqash with the promises of our forefathers." Then a third and a fourth singer sing similar lyrics depicting the prosperity of the bazaar, before at last all the four singers sing: "Add me to your pitch-black eyebrows. If not, sell me at the Qaraqash bazaar. If no one buys me, my sweetheart, shoot me using your eyebrows as a needle. Life is livened up at Qaraqash bazaar. Music and eloquence echo everywhere." The music video shows a busy bazaar full of food, crafts, and games in a carnivalesque atmosphere.

The appropriation of folk songs for propagandic purposes has been happening in China since at least the early 1940s, in Yan'an[56], where the Communist Party formed a committee on folk-song collection and research to "collect suitable popular cultural products, which were then to be remolded as means for winning over the hearts of the people" (Wong 1991:46).

Compared to most of the well-known examples of minority songs adapted by professional musicians in the past, Qaraqash Grand Bazar Welcomes You represents a more up-to-date method of rearrangement within a pop musical

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[56] Yan'an is a city in northwestern China's Shaanxi Province, and was the headquarters of the Communist Party of China from 1935 to 1948.

idiom, just as Harris argues that music of the contemporary song-and-dance troupes in China is radically different from the revolutionary music of the 1950s and 1960s in terms of packaging, and is "more closely resembling the soft end of the pop industry of Western capitalist countries" (Harris 2004:11). The credit of the arranger of Qaraqash Grand Bazar is not given in the music video, but it is probably an independent professional producer or a studio, who is commissioned by governmental organisations to produce music to suit their needs. There are many such producers or studios nowadays in China, Xinjiang included.

Although Imam Hüsäynim is popular among the Sufis in Khotan, it is hard to tell the origin of the tune. Possibly it was originally an independent song, and then incorporated to *dastan*, *muqam-mäshräp*, and *hälqä-sohbät*. In her book about the making of the Twelve Muqam, Harris contends that *muqam* suites "have existed less as an actual body of music and more as a kind of idealised framework surrounding a much more fluid oral tradition, from which individual musicians would learn and perform different parts, and into which musicians might slot their own local repertoires and compositions" (Harris 2008:78). The Imam Hüsäynim Muqam preserved in some townships of Khotan may represent just such efforts by local musicians. This fluid oral tradition is also true of the materials used by Uyghur Sufis in their rituals of *hälqä-sohbät* and *muqam-mäshräp*. Mäkhsum tells me that the melody of Imam Hüsäynim can also be sung with some poems of Mashrab, rendering it as a *mäshräp* song.

In his guidelines for Chinese folk music research, Lü Ji proposes eight types of folk music for collection and research, including religious music, which he contends is often borrowed from other folk music, or has become folk music after a long period of time of dissemination among the people (Lü 1982:47). Imam

Hüsäynim is a good example of a tune that crosses boundaries. As Nettl points out, variants of a tune appear not only because of the interpretation of individual performers, but because they also develop under outside influences (Nettl 2005:115).

Compared to other appropriated Xinjiang folk songs, Imam Hüsäynim is less well known, because its consumption is limited to Uyghur society as the adapted versions are still in the Uyghur language. However, with the development of "world music" and electronic dance music, it is possible that the song will be recreated and sampled in yet more forms.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the difference between *muqam/mäshräp* performed at Sufi gatherings and by professional musicians. The meanings and functions of these pieces have changed when they have been adapted by the Xinjiang Muqam Art Ensemble. Not only have the lyrics been altered, but also the original unique musical characteristics such as the limping beat, which are important components of Uyghur Sufi's musical vocabulary, have disappeared in the professional rendition.

I have also discussed three genres in the repertoire used by Uyghur Sufis at their musical gatherings, namely *hikmät*, *mäshräp*, and *dastan munajat* (exemplified by the piece Imam Hüsäynim). The three genres are not exclusive of each other, but often have blurred boundaries and some degree of overlap. This is because of the exchange between different Sufi orders, as well as the Sufi practices of both the more rigid ritual *hälqä-sohbät* and the more popular gathering of

muqam-mäshräp which has the elements of both *dhikr* and *muzika*, as manifest by its use of musical instruments.

The Qadiri *hälqä-sohbät*, Chishti *hälqä-sohbät*, and *muqam-mäshräp*, are three forms of Sufi gatherings, whose sounds are in generally descending order in the hierarchy of Sufi sounded practice. Their positions in the hierarchy are decided by their degree of resemblance to the prototype of Islamic sound—Qur'anic recitation—on the one hand, and to the popular sounds of *muzika* on the other hand. However, their positions are not absolute, as their sub-genres are often interlocking. For example, vocal *dhikr* is found in all three of them, and the Chishti *tälqin* is similar to *mäshräp* in form.

The repertoires of all these rituals, as well as of a number of other repertoires such as the *naghra-sunay*, are in suite forms that generally develop from a free-rhythm section to a metered section. The unmetered *hikmät* of the Qadiriyya seems to be closest to Qur'anic recitation, and is thus more religious-sounding than the others. Faruqi suggests that the "religious", for Muslims, concentrates on nonphenomenal and transcendent aspects of divinity, which cannot be expressed in musical terms resembling the physical world (Faruqi 1983:28). The unmetered solo chanting of *hikmät* is the closest in form to Qur'anic recitation, and thus the most "religious".

However, as I will describe in the next chapter, in a Sufi gathering such as *mäshräp*, the free-rhythm part is often for the practitioners to contemplate, while it is in the following metered section when some Sufis enter a state of trance, which they believe to happen because of being "pulled by God". The transcendent musical sound of the Uyghur Sufis is deeply embodied, and can lead to physical changes that provide access to the experience of the Divine presence.

There are different layers of the "religious", corresponding with different forms of musical sounds, which results in a continuum of rich musical sounds. In the process of the formation of this continuum, there has been and continues to be mutual influence between different layers and genres of musical sounds. Such mutual influence is not confined to the repertoires of the Uyghur Sufis, but happens in a much wider sphere. The acquisition of *mäshräp* songs in the Twelve Muqam, and the appropriation of Imam Hüsäynim by the popular music industry for commercial reasons and by the government for propaganda reasons are parts of this process. The Uyghur Sufis don't live in a secluded world but interact with society at large all the time. So too do their sounded practices.

Chapter 4: Pulled by God—Sound and Altered State of Consciousness

4.1 Experiencing trance

Having received a call from Mäkhsum to say that he is holding another gathering at home, I take a taxi to his village, some twenty kilometres from the town. When I arrive, a group of men are already singing *mäshräp* songs. I am asked to sit (or rather, kneel) beside Mäkhsum, at the end of a long table (floor) cloth, on which food, tea, and fruit have been placed. On the left-hand side of us are eight musicians, who sit by the wall and mostly play the *sapayi* rattle, except Ikhlim who plays the *tämbur* lute. On the right-hand side are a group of listeners who sway their bodies to the beat. While Mäkhsum plays a *dap* frame drum, he and other participants sing the *mäshräp* songs.

A string breaks on Ikhlim's *tämbur* and they stop for a while. When Ikhlim has changed the string, he starts a solo on the *tämbur* and sings the unmetered Chong Näghmä part of Chäbiyyat Muqam with his eyes closed, while the others listen attentively.[57] Nurmämät seems immersed in the music, his head swaying gently.

After Chong Näghmä comes to an end, Ikhlim starts the *mäshräp* songs of Chäbiyyat Muqam. The musicians play the *sapayi* and join him in singing. These are the same songs that Tursuntokhti and others performed at Mukhpul's wedding, which I described in the last chapter, but now these songs are being played in a faster tempo. The first song is in the "limping beat", and then the musicians change to songs in a regular four beat pattern. The eight or nine participants who sit on

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[57] Video not provided due to privacy and security concerns.

the right-hand side are becoming more involved. They are beginning to move to the music.

They rock their hands, heads and torsos with the beat, although not in unison. One man who sits in the middle seems the most deeply immersed. Eyes closed, he shakes his head and waves his hands to and fro, up, down, left and right, like a conductor of symphonic music. As the singing speeds up, his whole body swings more and more; he seems entranced. The others are also beginning to sway more, although there is one man who seems wholly unaffected by it all, sitting there motionless.

Figure 33. Starting scene of the *muqam-mäshräp/hälqä-sohbät* gathering

The entranced man is dancing now, despite still kneeling on the floor. His movements change a little so that he is swinging his hands back and forth like a runner, with his knees moving backward little by little until he is out of line. His knees are up in the air when he moves, and his hands point upward. Suddenly, he falls into a backward roll. He thrashes around and rolls on the floor. The others do

not seem surprised by his actions, and another man moves to take his place in the line.

The man in trance rolls back into line and stretches his legs uncontrollably. Some people prevent him from rolling on the table, lest he break cups and hurt the others. He rolls to the empty space of the room. The others follow, moving on their knees from the table to the far side of the room, where they form a circle. The unaffected man quietly moves to a corner of the room, as if this is not his party.

The dancers, now kneeling in the circle, are chanting—nay, shouting— *dhikr*, "*höm*, *höm*, *höm*…", which is one of the many ways Allah is called. They move anti-clockwise. The entranced man is first in the centre, but is replaced by another man after a while. Tursunturäm, who has been filming the ritual with his mobile phone, now joins the dance. Among these participants, the entranced man and the unaffected man seem to be the two extremes, with everyone else somewhere in between. The man in the circle centre cavorts in a frenzy with an agitated expression. The man who replaced the one in trance in the line just now, by contrast looks quite calm and is dancing in a restrained manner.

The musicians sing a few different songs, led by Ikhlim the *tämbur* player. Mämätmin and Mäkhsum's son Muhämmät stop playing *sapayi* and join the circle of dancers. They bring a new energy to the dance, especially Muhämmät, who is an excellent dancer. The dancers' breath *dhikr* is now a part of the soundscape.

Now they are singing Imam Husäynim. Although I have heard the song many times, this is the first time that I hear it sung with *dhikr* and *sama* dance. When Imam Husäynim ends, the dance stops. Ikhlim sings a *munajat*, while many of the dancers wail, some beating their chests. Mäkhsum leads the group in singing another *munajat*. The dancers, who are wailing, stand as the singers make

supplications on their behalf. At the invitation of Tursunturäm, Nurmämät sings one more *munajat*. This round comes to an end, and we go out to the sitting room to do the *namaz digär* (afternoon prayer).

Figure 34. *Sama*—bodily movements during the gathering

After the prayer, people begin to play again, in the same way as they had before. As the music becomes more rhythmic, people on the right-hand side begin to breathe heavily and swing their arms to the beat again. Soon they break the line and form a circle to dance again. When the music dies out, there is only the heavy breathing of the dancers, which sounds loud and powerful in the silence. Two dancers remain entranced and cannot stop dancing, including Muhämmät, who has to be pressed down by the others. Some people cannot stop rhythmic breathing, even as Mäkhsum leads the other musicians to sing a *munajat*. The dancer in the centre of the circle continues to breathe in rhythm and rock to and fro on his knees long after every one else has stopped, like a lonely watch hand. Most people are wailing. We end the afternoon's gathering by shaking hands, everybody with everybody else.

It seems that this assembly is totally different from the one I attended before at this same *khaniqa*. It consists of mostly *muqam* and *mäshräp* rather than the *hikmät* of *hälqä-sohbät* that I attended previously. Furthermore, last time, no instrument was used except once when Mäkhsum invited Abdurakhman to play the *tämbur*, but that was not compulsory, only to show respect to Abdurakhman. This time, Ikhlim played the *tämbur* throughout the event, and the instrument is an important part of the overall soundscape. When I asked Mäkhsum about the difference, he told me that this gathering starts as a *mäshräp*, and then develops into a *hälqä-sohbät* of the Chishtiyya, which is the only Sufi order that uses musical instruments in *hälqä-sohbät*. The fact that Mäkhsum and his disciples, who identify with Naqshbandiyya and Qadiriyya, can do *hälqä-sohbät* in the Chishtiyya way, indicates that the different Uyghur Sufi orders in Khotan are well integrated into the same community.

The most obvious difference between this ritual and the last one at Mäkhsum's *khaniqa* was the extent of trance involved. Although last time people stood up to dance and whirled at a high speed, nobody appeared to be so much in trance as Tokhtibakä, the man who rolled on the floor this time. I did not expect such an extraordinary scene before I came and I am shocked by the sight. The singing of *mäshräp* songs, the rhythmic breathing and shouting of *dhikr*, the plucking of *tämbur* and the clinking of *sapayi* rattle, the entrained collective *sama* dance, the crying… all these create an experience of a threshold between this and another world.

4.2 Three perspectives to look at the ritual

Two years after the encounter, I am still trying to make sense of it. I want to know how the altered state of consciousness happens, and what its relationships with the sound and movement are. There is so much information in this experience that even where to start seems difficult.

In his research on "Music, Gesture and the Formation of Embodied Meaning", Leman proposes a framework to study the subject from three perspectives: a first-person perspective based on self-observation and interpretation of experiences, a second-person perspective based on how gestures function as social cues, and a third-person perspective based on the measurement of body parts and sonic forms (Leman 2010:127). Leman argues that such a framework can connect subjective experiences and physical/biological mechanisms to interpret musical meanings in an empirical way, which complements the traditional narrative approach to musical meanings.

Although Leman's framework is applied to a different musical context, it can be applied to the study of sounded practice of Uyghur Sufis, which involves so much embodiment. Using Leman's framework, I will try to look at the ritual from three perspectives: subjective descriptions of altered state of consciousness, from a first-person perspective; the passing of knowledge, often in clandestine forms, from a second-person or "me-to-you" perspective; and the meaning and function of sound and movement from a third-person perspective.

4.3 First-person perspective—what does *hälqä-sohbät* mean to Uyghur Sufis?

I did not have a chance to talk to Tokhtibakä, the man who rolled on the floor, but I interviewed Mäkhsum, who is the master of Tokhtibakä and host of the gathering. I also talked to Nurmämät, one of the singers that day, and Niyaz, who

did not participate in that gathering but has experienced many such events. Their opinions that I quote below are based on my interviews with them between 13 and 18 May 2016.

4.3.1 *Jäzba*—pulled by God

When I asked Mäkhsum what happened to Tokhtibakä during the ritual, Mäkhsum replied that he was in *jäzba* (plural form *jäzibat*), or was being "pulled" (*tartilish*) by God, during which he could not control himself and did not know what was happening. People had to prevent Tokhtibakä from breaking things or hurting the other participants. Niyaz says while in *jäzba* himself once, he broke two of someone's teeth without knowing it, and had to compensate him afterwards.

"*Jäzba*" comes from the Arabic word "*jadhba*" which means "attraction". According to Annemarie Schimmel,

> The mystical path has sometimes been described as a ladder, a staircase that leads to heaven, on which the *salik* slowly and patiently climbs toward higher levels of experience. But the Muslim mystics knew that there is another way of reaching higher experiences: it is the *jadhba*, "attraction," by which a person can be exalted, in one single spiritual experience, into a state of ecstasy and of perfect union. However, it seems typical that the name of *majdhūb*, "the attracted one," was usually given to people who were mentally deranged and who were, in a sense, thrown out of the way of normal behavior by the overwhelming shock of an "unveiling" (Schimmel 1975:105).

For Sufis, the behaviour of Tokhtibakä during the gathering were representations of getting closer to God, which is the aim of *hälqä-sohbät*. Niyaz compared the state of someone in *jäzba* to that of a man who falls in love with a girl but cannot see her. When someone becomes mad through longing for Allah, he

does not care if people stab or kill him; those in *jäzba* are unaware of themselves and what is happening around them. Mäkhsum used the metaphors of a bird and cage to explain Tokhtibakä's behaviour: a man's body is like a cage, and his soul a bird in the cage. When the soul is agitated, it tries to break out of the cage like the bird. That is why people do things like rolling on the floor.

Ahmad Kāsānī Dahbīdī (d. 1542) was a famous Naqshbandi Sufi who had had great influence on Islamic practices and ideology in the area that is now known as Xinjiang. He wrote in his *Risāla dar samā'* (Treatise on audition) that "In *samā'* the Sufi is deprived of power and is perturbed; he may scream as he feels as if he is hearing the covenant, and the voice of the singer permeates the Sufi's soul" (Papas 2014:35). Kāsānī also used the metaphor of a cage: "When his soul starts to take off, the cage of existence is closed; so he yells and cries; he wants to return to his origin but cannot. Several times, as a matter of prudence and wisdom, God has to close the cage of body" (Papas 2014:35). It seems that screaming or rolling on the floor happens quite often during *samā'* because of the incongruence of the body and mind, and have been passed down as a tradition related to the *samā'* ritual.

In Harris' article on Uyghur *büwi* woman ritual specialists, one *büwi* is quoted as saying "The oil is sizzling in the pot [*qazan kizip ketti*].... Allah's passion (*ishqi*) is like the hot oil in the pot, their passion for Allah is so strong" (Harris 2014:354). Mäkhsum opined that the state of sizzling is the beginning of *jäzba*, when you feel like boiling but you still know what you are doing. If it goes on, the water is not only boiling but is also spilling, and you lose control of the rhythm of your movements. That is when *jäzba* happens. Compared to the women *büwi* who do not have access to formal religious training, Mäkhsum has specialised knowledge and vocabulary to talk about the altered state of consciousness as part

of Sufi practice. He has acquired this knowledge through the education he received from his family lineage, which he can trace back to Yarkand and further to the Ferghana Valley, as discussed in Chapter 1.

Mäkhsum also observed that Tokhtibakä's behaviour (rolling on the floor) represents an elementary level of *jäzba*, called *dawajit*, apparently from *tawajud*, which Zarradi, a disciple of the foremost Chishti saint of Delhi Awliya (d. 1325), defines in his treatise *Usul as-sama'* as "graceful movement that voluntarily emanates from the listener when he is overcome by *sama'*" (Lawrence 1983:97).

Mäkhsum says *dawajit* is like a messenger who gives some news of *jäzba*, while when a man is in real *jäzba*, his soul is separated from his body. As a result, he may lose consciousness (*bihosh bolush*) for one or two hours, and even die. It is similar to the people recorded by Mojizī in his *Tawārīkh-i mūsīqīyūn* ("Histories of musicians"), a rare treatise about musicians from the nineteenth century Xinjiang, who have died in extreme emotional states in music (Sumits 2016: 152, 153), although Mäkhsum would deny that death in *jäzba* is caused by the sound. Mäkhsum says he has witnessed the death of several people in *jäzba*, and that death in *jäzba* is considered to be the most elevated kind of death: to die with one's true feelings and *iman* (faith).

Mäkhsum has experienced losing consciousness during *hälqä-sohbät*, but he cannot recount the details because he lost his consciousness. That happened when he was dancing. When he is the *hapiz*, the lead singer, he has to control the ritual by singing *hikmät* and cannot engage himself in dance or totally lose his consciousness, although sometimes he cannot help crying while leading others singing *hikmät*.

For Mäkhsum, dance movements help one to enter *jäzba*, because when one's body suffers, one's soul will be released. The more intensely one moves one's body, the freer and happier one's soul will be. On the contrary, musical sound does not affect *jäzba*, except through the implications of the lyrics of *hikmät*, *muqam* or *mäshräp* songs. The *hapiz* can choose any piece from these repertoires to sing, as long as he can "match it well". Whatever the *hapiz* sings, it does not make a difference to the state of consciousness. Mäkhsum says no particular piece makes people more excited, although people certainly react to musical sound, as "even a bird reacts to a sound", but that these are not important in *hälqä-sohbät*. What is important is *dhikr*.

4.3.2 Loud and silent *dhikr*

Hälqä-sohbät contains collective loud *dhikr*, but one must practice silent *dhikr* (*zikiri khufi*) on one's own in order to achieve *jäzba*. Mäkhsum practices silent *dhikr* every day when he is alone. His master taught him to recite God's names or the *shahada* at least five thousand times a day. He started when he was fifteen, and has been doing it for more than thirty years.

Mäkhsum considers that while it seems people reach *jäzba* through singing and dancing, silent *dhikr* is the base. People must recite as much silent *dhikr* as possible, or they will not get the knowledge of Sufism, and will not reach *jäzba*, as was the case of the person who sat stiffly during this ritual.

Although occasionally someone who has not done much silent *dhikr* can reach *jäzba* in *hälqä-sohbät*, usually one has to recite silent *dhikr* for years before he can enter *jäzba*. It is not easy, and among one hundred people who do *dhikr*, only five or six get God's favour and reach *jäzba*. On the other hand, one can reach

jäzba through silent *dhikr*, without singing or dancing at all. Therefore, if you can reach *jäzba*, it is because of the silent *dhikr* you have done, not the instruments, tunes or movements in *hälqä-sohbät*. If you have not recited silent *dhikr* enough, you will not be able to reach *jäzba* in *hälqä-söhbät* even if you sing and dance. Tokhtibakä has reached *jäzba* because he has done a lot of silent *dhikr*.

Loud *dhikr* developed out of the challenges of practicing silent *dhikr*. When people practiced silent *dhikr*, they would sometimes be distracted or even fall asleep, so some saints encouraged people to gather together and practice *dhikr* with sound in a circle. The term "*hälqä-sohbät*" ("circling and talking") evolved because people began to practice *dhikr* by sitting in a circle and talking. Mäkhsum, a knowledgeable and well-read Sufi, referred me to two texts about *dhikr*. First, in the Qur'an, Sura 33:41 says "*yā-ʾayyuhā lladhīna ʾāmanū dhkurū llāha dhikran kathīra*", "O you who believe, remember God often" (Jones, Alan 2007:681). Second, according to the Hadith, Ibn Umar reported that the Prophet said:

> "When you pass by the gardens of Paradise, avail yourselves of them." The Companions asked: "What are the gardens of Paradise, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied: "The circles of *dhikr*. There are roaming angels of Allah who go about looking for the circles of *dhikr*, and when they find them they surround them closely.[58]

Over time, people would come together and practice vocal *dhikr* as a way of disciplining and focusing the mind. Using this group approach, they would not get distracted. The more one longed for (*seghinish*) Allah, the more agitated one became in loud *dhikr*, and consequently, the more expressive one became. Therefore, when an individual practiced loud *dhikr* together with other people, the

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[58] http://www.themodernreligion.com/basic/pray/dhikr.html (accessed 7 September 2017).

individual felt delight (*huzurlinish*) and excitement (*ishtiyaqi örläsh*), and could express his emotion more thoroughly. When people gathered together to practice *dhikr*, the *hapiz* sang about heaven, hell, Allah and Prophet Muhammad, to preach or edify people. Their attention was focused on such contents, and they could better discipline their minds in loud *dhikr*.

So, in Makhsum's view, the individual obtained more knowledge of God through reciting *dhikr*. When he had acquired enough knowledge and joined a *hälqä-sohbät*, the musical sound (vocalisations—loud *dhikr*, *hikmät*, *muqam*, *mäshräp* songs—and musical instruments sounds if any are involved) helped him to concentrate on God and made his longing for God stronger. When doing *dhikr*, the individual's soul becomes agitated and wants to break away from the body, so he begins to dance. Bodily movements intensify his emotion, until it is boiling and spilling, and he cannot control his behaviour any more. At that moment, he will not be able to move his body to the rhythm, and may lose his consciousness. Mäkhsum considers *jäzba* to be decided by God. The individual is not able to enter *jäzba* simply because they desire to, neither can the individual refuse *jäzba* if they are in it. During *hälqä-sohbät*, whichever part of the body God's light falls upon, that part moves the most. If God's light falls on one's eyes, one cries. If God's light falls on one's mouth, one recites God's names the most. If God's light falls on one's legs or arms, those parts move the most.

Mäkhsum, Nurmämät and Niyaz have all experienced *jäzba* and have lost their consciousness in it several times, but overall, *jäzba* is rare. Most of the time Mäkhsum does not reach it, although every time he practices *hälqä-sohbät*, he feels strong emotions in it, and after one or two hours of *hälqä-söhbät*, he is in a good mood for several days and does not feel distracted by worldly affairs.

In explaining the reason why people cry in *hälqä-sohbät*, Niyaz uses the metaphor of falling in love with a girl again: one cries because of longing for Allah. In Mäkhsum's view crying supplications are more likely to be accepted by God. There are many things that people cannot do without the help of God. Because people do not have the power to realise their wishes, they cry and ask God for help.

4.4 Second-person perspective—the passing of knowledge from me to you

In Leman's methodology of research on music, gesture and the formation of embodied meaning, the second-person perspective tries to look at gesture in terms of other people's engagement with music. In this aspect,

> gesture appears as a mediator for music-driven social interaction or as the vehicle through which a 'me-to-you' relationship is established in space and time, through musical engagement. Thus, gesture is seen as the expression of a communicative act, rather than an expression of 'my own' personal experience. (Leman 2010:142)

This suggests a helpful perspective on the social interaction that happens in the process of *hälqä-sohbät*.

4.4.1 Learning and social interaction in *hälqä-sohbät*

During this gathering in Mäkhsum's *khaniqa*, musicians sat on one side, while dancers sat on the other side. According to Niyaz's division, they were "those who know how to sing" and "those who don't" respectively. It is true that those dancers did not participate in the singing, and in the first part of the ritual they were listening to the musicians' singing in silence. I am not sure whether they know how to sing those songs, however it seems that most of them, if not all, are Mäkhsum's students. As such, they are in a lower position in the hierarchy compared to the musicians who are mostly Mäkhsum's friends, like Ikhlim and

Nurmämät. Although Mäkhsum's son Muhämmät, who is also his student, sat among the musicians, it is understandable that Muhämmät's status is higher than other students', as he is a member of the *ishan*'s family and is going to become the future *ishan*.

The dancers' relatively low status is also shown by the fact that they did not stand up to dance because the singers did not stand up to dance. That is the rule: if the musicians do not stand up, the dancers cannot stand up either. I remember that during the second *hälqä-sohbät* I attended at Mäkhsum's *khaniqa*, it was Mäkhsum who first stood up at one point, then the others followed suit to stand up and dance. In the several gatherings that I attended, there were always adepts and neophytes among the dancers. It seems that for the neophytes, the most direct and accessible way to learn about Sufi practice is to imitate others' actions at *hälqä-sohbät*, including reciting *dhikr*, dancing, crying, and possibly, trancing.

Thus, each *hälqä-sohbät* is also a learning session for the student, about how to behave, how to recite vocal *dhikr*, and how to do the *sama* dance. The student is often given some cues about what to do during the gathering. For example, the student should follow the *hapiz*'s physical position. When Mäkhsum stands up, it means that the student should also stand up, or when Mäkhsum does not stand up, the student should remain seated. The rhythm can be another cue for the student's bodily movement. During the unmetered *muqam*, he should remain quiet with some gentle bodily movements, while the four-beat *mäshräp* songs are a cue for more obvious bodily movements and *sama*. The end of *mäshräp* songs indicates the end of the *sama* dance, while the subsequent singing of *munajat* means that crying is a proper behaviour at this point.

Sometimes the cues come directly from the master of the *hälqä-sohbät*, sometimes they may come from people associated with the master. For example, after Tokhtibakä went into trance, it was Mäkhsum's friend Tursunturäm who indicated that the others should move away from their original line and form a circle to dance together. During the first *hälqä-sohbät* I attended at Mäkhsum's *khaniqa*, Niyaz told the dancers how to move. Such a cue may also come from other students. For example, when Tokhtibakä went into trance, that could be taken as a cue for other participants that *jäzba* was a permissible reaction to the ritual at this stage, although that was not necessarily everybody's reaction. At other points there were no obvious cues, but the participants would probably be acting according to past teachings from the *ishan*, for example, when preventing people in trance from hurting themselves or others, or helping those still in strong emotional states at the end of the ritual.

The *hälqä-sohbät* is also a process of social interaction from the perspective of coordinating sound and movement. While the dancers' movements largely depend on the *hapiz*'s singing, the *hapiz* also decides his singing according to the state of the dancers. Mäkhsum observed that if he sees that dancers can dance fast, he will sing fast, and if not, he will sing more slowly, as togetherness is important for Sufis. From the perspective of social interaction, *hälqä-sohbät* provides the opportunity for these Sufis to enhance the solidarity of their community.

Hälqä-sohbät is a way for the student to learn the knowledge of Sufism. It is also an acting out of the hierarchy of the Sufi community, which was formed in the earliest period of Sufism and depends on "the idea of friendship with God that allowed for differentiated proximity with the divine in conjunction with one's spiritual achievements" (Bashir 2011:79).

Rituals are not the only way for the student to learn knowledge. As Mäkhsum says, what is more important is the daily practice of *dhikr*, and one has to practice it every day, under the guidance of the master. A lot of such knowledge is clandestine and only shared between the master and his disciples. I am very grateful to Mäkhsum for having shared some of his knowledge with me.

4.4.2 The barrier in my learning

Mäkhsum primarily belongs to the Naqshbandiyya but has studied the practices of all the four Sufi orders. This makes him particularly knowledgeable about *dhikr*. According to him, there are three kinds of *dhikr*: *zikiri jähri*, the loud one; *zikiri khufi*, the silent one; and *zikiri sir* or the "secret *dhikr*", which is considered to be the highest level of *zikiri khufi*. When one does *zikiri khufi*, one should remain quiet and not even move the tongue, but use the mind to do *dhikr*. This kind of *dhikr* is called *lisanihal*, a term from Arabic which means language of the mind. In *zikiri khufi* of Naqshbandiyya, one can recite either Allah's names or the *shahada* in the mind. In the latter, one says "lā ʾilāha ʾillā-llāh" ("there is no god but God") for twenty-one times without breathing, then exhales and says "muḥammadur-rasūlu-llāh" ("Muhammad is the messenger of God"), then inhales. This part is called *näfi isbat*. Although this is a practice of silent *dhikr*, I still find it to be embodied as it involves breathing. In addition, it also involves conceptual embodiment.

To reach *zikiri sir*, one should recite Allah's name in *lisanihal* (the mind language) and use it to fill eleven parts of the body. This is the first step, called *khätmä sir*. Then one says Allah. This step is called *säyri ilällah*. Then one does *näfi isbat*. From this step onwards, one is in *zikiri sir*. When I wanted to ask more

questions about *dhikr*, Mäkhsum considered that he had said too much and that very few people knew about these practices.

This situation happened to me several times with Mäkhsum, Nurmämät and Niyaz, that they did not want to answer my questions. Sometimes it might have been because of the ineffability of the subject. Sometimes I probably touched upon some knowledge that is not shared with outsiders. It is common that Naqshbandi masters do not talk about issues of spiritual practice openly. For example, Kāsānī considered that Sufi teachings are not appropriate or even helpful for all disciples, and he often did not describe the spiritual states of Sufism during his conversations with his disciples (Papas 2014:32).

Niyaz is a follower of the Mäkhfisuluq, or the "secret order", and as such considers that losing consciousness in *jäzba* is caused by the concentration of all the practitioner's attention on Allah. When I asked him if he could see Allah when he loses consciousness, he replied that he could not tell me whether or not he sees Allah, even if he does, because that knowledge is a secret. That is why the order is called Mäkhfisuluq. Followers of Mäkhfisuluq are supposed to keep a secret of their beneficial deeds, which only Allah and themselves know.

Similarly, when I asked Mäkhsum to tell me more about his experience of being in *jäzba*, he replied that this was something very deep, something that only he himself knows. That is a dialogue between him and God, and he cannot express what it is like. On another occasion, when I asked him about *jäzba*, he told me to recite *dhikr* for forty days and then come back to him.

When I ask why Tokhtibakä danced more intensely than others, Nurmämät, who was singing at the time, said, "only he himself knows". And when I asked

Nurmämät if he was in a similar kind of state, he replied, "one thousand people have one thousand feelings".

These Uyghur Sufis have been very generous in sharing with me their knowledge, but it must be difficult for them to express their mystical experiences in words, especially to someone who is not a practising Sufi. Abū Saʿīd b. al-ʿArābī viewed discussion of *wajd* (a state of ecstasy, see the next section for more) as problematic, "How can one describe something which has no description other than itself, and to which no witness can testify other than itself?" (quoted in Avery 2011:28). Sufi knowledge must be achieved through everyday practice of *dhikr*, the master's guidance, and one's observation, imitation and experience from rituals like *hälqä-sohbät* and *mäshräp*.

4.5 Third-person perspective—how does this all happen?

At the start of the chapter, I described the ritual from a first-person self-observed description according to perspectives from the participant Sufis. Next, I will analyse the ritual from a third person perspective of me as an observer, with a focus on the sound and movement signifiers.

4.5.1 Sound and audition

People like Mäkhsum tend to relegate the impact of musical sound in Sufi rituals to a minimal degree, saying that *jäzba* does not have anything to do with musical sound, instead *jäzba* results from one's practice of silent *dhikr*. However, it is hard to imagine *dhikr* that exists without any sound, even when recited in the mind. *Dhikr*, whether of Allah's names or of the *shahada*, is based on the most important practices of Islam: Qur'an and *salah* (the five daily prayers), which have

always existed foremost in sounded forms. The Qur'an, meaning "recitation", was initially transmitted orally from the Prophet Muhammad to his disciples. Much of the Muslim's religious life is spent in sounded practices, which enjoy a higher status than vision. As During writes:

> Vision particularly refers to the 'imaginative' world and is hardly taken into account as part of the world of the senses, since in the Islamic gnosis there is no meditation on icons, mandalas or plastic forms. Contrary to this, hearing, which is the other fundamental axis to Revelation, was privileged as a kind of contemplation, particularly in relation to the Sufi practice of the *samâ'*, the spiritual concert" (During 2010:552).

The meaning of *dhikr*, as well as *hikmät* and *mäshräp* songs, has been embedded in sound. It is probably particularly because of the close ties between these texts and sound that Sufis tend to take the factor of sound for granted and overlook its impact. The daily practice of silent *dhikr* (which is recited internally but is still "recited" with imagined sound) has moulded the practitioner's acceptance of God, intensified his longing for God, and laid the foundation for an altered state of consciousness. During the *hälqä-sohbät*, collective musical sounds and bodily movements constitute important sensual stimuli that magnify the sound factor and the embodiment that have always existed in Sufi practice of *dhikr*, thereby magnifying the original stimuli. As Kāsānī wrote, "men's hearts are like flints for fire, which have to be struck by fine sounds (*alhān-i tībat*) since these fine sounds are the sounds of Truth" (Papas 2014:35). Like striking flints for fire, musical sounds and bodily movements catalyse the altered state of consciousness.

Signifying "hearing", and by extension, "that which is heard" (During and Sellheim 2012), the Arabic term *samāʿ* refers to "all forms of sacred concerts and particularly the mystical concert in which listening attracts a state of grace or

ecstasy and takes a more or less ritualized form" (During 2010:555). The term "*samāʿ*" indicates that the action of listening is of utmost importance in the ceremony, because it is a means of revelation.

That is the reason why in Qawwali, the South Asian form of *samāʿ*, Qawwals or singers of Qawwali are of a lower status, as they are considered to be paid service professionals, who are only a medium through which the listener gains spiritual benefit (Qureshi 2006:108). It is similar to the status of Abdurakhman, who is sometimes invited to play at religious gatherings. However, in this *hälqä-sohbät*, the musicians are of higher status in the hierarchy, not because of their music, but because the musicians are led by the religious leader/ritual organiser and his associates.

4.5.2 *Sama*—bodily movement in *hälqä-sohbät*

In *hälqä-sohbät*, the dance movement is called *sama*, which sounds very similar to the Arabic term *samāʿ*. In the gathering under discussion, people did *sama* while kneeling on the floor, but in most other gatherings that I witnessed they also stood to whirl. In addition, I have also seen people do *sama* at weddings. *Sama* is essentially a form of dance, but the way people talk about it indicates that a distinction is made between *sama* and common dance.

In the Uyghur language, *ussul* is the common word for dance, but it is not used to describe *sama*. Sometimes Mäkhsum uses the term *räqs* to describe *sama* (*räqs* is borrowed from the Arabic word for dance, *raqs*) but most of the time he simply uses *sama* as if it is self-explanatory. *Räqs* is not commonly used in the Uyghur language, and may sound more solemn because of its Arabic root, although

the Arabic *raqs* does not have any religious association[59]. Likewise, *selish*, the Uyghur verb for *sama*, differs from the common Uyghur verb for dance, *oynash*, which means to "play". By contrast *selish* means to put, to place into. Although *sama* has the form of dance, it is not regarded as dance per se because of the ideological distinction between bodily movements for religious reasons and dance as entertainment. Similarly, the musical sound in *hälqä-sohbät* is not considered to be music per se.

There are two core opinions about the origin of the Uyghur term *sama*. One is that *sama* as a dance developed as part of the spread of Islam to Kashgar, and is based on the movements used in the rituals of the Yasawiyya order, an order that was prominent in Central Asia and Xinjiang. The movements in the ritual imitated birds in flight (Zhongguo 1998:100). The second view is that the *sama* dance emerged from the dance movements of the shamanism that was practiced by the ancestors of Uyghur people (Djumaev 2002:973, Wang Yongge 1996:81).

I see the first opinion as more credible, as *sama* is still practiced in *hälqä-sohbät* and *mäshräp*, which is highly indicative of its ties with Sufi rituals. Most Chinese scholars who take the view that the *sama* dance is related to shamanism do so primarily because of similarities of the terms "*sama*" and "*saman*" (the Chinese transliteration of "shaman") (Zhou et al. 1983, Wang Yongge 1996). However, the Tungusic term "shaman" is not used in the Uyghur language. The kind of spirit medium among the Uyghurs that is closest to a shaman is called a *bakhshi* or *pir*, and the dance they do in healing ceremonies is called *pir* rather than *sama*.

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[59] I am grateful to Iskandar Ding who pointed this out to me.

It is interesting to note that according to my fieldwork, the word "*sama*" is used by Uyghur Sufis to designate only the bodily movements, rather than the listening or sound element that is associated with the Arabic word *samāʿ*. Given the ties of *sama* with Sufism and its similarity in pronunciation to *samāʿ*, one may wonder why *sama* has acquired a meaning different to *samāʿ*.

In Kashgar, a variation of the *sama* dance has developed into a large-scale group dance performed on festival days outside the famous Heyitgah mosque, and has been recognised by the Chinese government as a national-level Intangible Cultural Heritage (without the religious association of *sama* being mentioned).[60]

Harris depicts one of a series of pieces performed on the *naghra* (paired kettle drums) and *sunay* (shawm) to accompany the circling *sama* dance outside the Heyitgah Mosque by large groups of local men on festival days. According to Mämät Tokhti, a musician Harris interviewed, whose family has been playing music for the *sama* dance outside the Heyitgah mosque for over a hundred years, the Kashgar *sama* tradition started with a Sufi mendicant called Täykhan Khojam from Namangan in the Ferghana valley who performed the *sama* dance outside the Heyitgah Mosque after Friday prayers.[61]

The musician did not mention the music that was played with the *sama* dance at that time. Given the fact that Sufism spread to Xinjiang from the Central Asian regions to the west of Xinjiang, it is possible that Uyghur Sufis adapted the *samāʿ* ritual to local music, creating the localised *hälqä-sohbät* ritual, in which only the dance from the original ritual was kept, together with the name "*sama*". Subsequently, perhaps, the dance also developed into a large-scale public outdoor

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[60] http://www.ihchina.cn/55/51070.html (accessed 31 January 2018).
[61] "Kashgar Shadiyanisi (Sama music and dance)"
http://www.soundislamchina.org/?p=289 (accessed 31 January 2018).

practice for festivals. More comparative study between Uyghur and other Central Asian Sufi rituals needs to be done to shed light on this question.

Besides the movements in Sufi rituals and large-scale dance outside the Heyitgah Mosque, *sama* can also refer the dance that Sufis do at weddings, like the dance of Mäkhsum and his friends at Mukhpul's wedding, which I described in Chapter 3. Mäkhsum says they are similar movements with different meanings— the *sama* of *hälqä-sohbät* functions to activate an altered state of consciousness, while the *sama* at celebratory occasions such as Eid al-Adha and weddings do not function in this way. As with the meanings of music, here the meanings of dance are also closely associated with the context. The *sama* dances in *hälqä-sohbät* and weddings seem to be religious and secular renditions of the same bodily movements, with different meanings signified by them in different contexts.

Dance seems to have often been a part of *samāʻ*, although not always in a prescribed way. Rouget refers to *samāʻ* as a particular Sufi ceremony which is "made up of prayer, music, and dance that brings dervishes together for the purpose of adoring God and practicing trance" (Rouget 1985:255). Here dance is listed as a component of *samāʻ*, albeit in a descriptive rather than a prescriptive way.

Among the elements that the great twelfth-century Muslim scholar Ghazālī lists, regarding the etiquette for listeners, is the need for stillness and that one should not, "look at others, clear the throat, yawn, clap, dance or talk. If one is overcome by *wajd* resulting in involuntary movements, one should return to a quiet state as soon as this passes" (Avery 2011:46). Likewise, Ghazālī's brother Majd al-Dīn recommended that when a listener comes into ecstasy he should refrain from rising until he is overpowered (Avery 2011:189). Here dance is only

permitted when it is an involuntary act, which means that if dance occurs, it is the result of an altered state of consciousness rather than the cause. Of course when one is already in an altered state of consciousness, it is very possible that dance will intensify the state.

In the case of Qawwali, "conspicuous or unrestrained self-expression on the part of the uninitiated or spiritually less committed is frowned upon" (Qureshi 2006:121). Qureshi lists three categories of expressive responses of Indo-Muslims. The first category, manifestations that symbolise the Sufi attitude, consists of five actions, from bowing the head to rubbing the face and touching the eyes. The second category, standard manifestations of enthusiasm or mild arousal, consists of seven actions from moving the head to involuntary movement such as twitching.

The third category, standard manifestations of strong arousal, consists of nine actions, which are, in order of increasing intensity, "sudden, uncontrolled movement, twitching, jumping", "weeping", "arms raised—both", "shout", "stand up", "dance", "walk", "fall down", and "die" (Qureshi 2006:121). As can be seen from the last category, dance is one of the most intense manifestations of strong arousals, only before "walk", "fall down", and "die". Thus, it has to be dealt with very carefully. That is probably the reason why dancing at a *hälqä-sohbät* usually happens under some kind of direction from the *hapiz* and his associates.

If *samāʿ* is primarily devoted to listening and does not inherently involve dance, bodily movements seem to be more legitimate in the *dhikr*, a ritual of remembering God through reciting his names. During argues that *samāʿ* and *dhikr* are different "in relation to the participation of the subject: passive in listening but active in remembering, with its litanies, movements, respiration and rhythms" (During 2010:555). Thus, *dhikr* involves actions more active than listening,

especially in collective *dhikr* rituals when a group of people recite God's names in coordinated ways which leads naturally to bodily movements.

The ritual of collective *dhikr* probably appeared a few centuries after *samāʿ*, and the two have often been combined with each other in various forms (During and Sellheim 2012). The gathering under discussion here is an example of such a combination: in the first section the musicians sing and play instruments while the "audience" are relatively passive listeners, however in the second section the "audience" not only listen to the sound but also actively recite *dhikr* and dance. However, it is not easy to divide the *samāʿ* and *dhikr* in a combined ritual, as During suggests that *samāʿ* and *dhikr* complement each other, and "in ritual practice, hearing is also remembrance and active invocation that frequently incites to movement and dance, just as *dhikr* also is the hearing of invocation" (During 2010:555).

4.5.3 Sound and altered states of consciousness in *hälqä-sohbät*

Since the early period of Sufism, altered states of consciousness have been sought after by Sufis because these were seen as signposts or waystations on the mystic's path towards divine unitary experience (Avery 2011:3). Accordingly, *jäzba* is what Uyghur Sufis hope to achieve through *hälqä-sohbät*. The term *jäzba* has taken a local set of meanings compared to its Arabic root, *jadhba*. Among Uyghur Sufis, *jäzba* is used to describe not only the action of "attraction" but also a state of consciousness caused by that attraction, which is referred to in Arabic as *wajd*, an euphoric state of trance resulted from the *samāʿ* ritual (Lucas 2012:111). "*Wajd*" is not used by Uyghur Sufis, except in the form of *dawajit*, which comes from *tawajud*, an inflected form of *wajd* with the meaning of "expression of *wajd*".

Tokhtibakä's rolling on the floor is a form of *dawajit*, showing that he has received some message of *jäzba*.

Although some people enter *jäzba* while chanting *dhikr* and dancing in *hälqä-sohbät*, Mäkhsum denies that musical sound has any impact on the state except through semantic meanings of the lyrics. I continued to ask Mäkhsum that since musical sound is related to the *sama* dance, and *sama* dance is related to *jäzba*, isn't musical sound related to *jäzba*? At last he admitted, somewhat reluctantly, that musical sound makes one's longing for God stronger and makes one more excited, by helping one to get rid of distractions and concentrate on God.

Mäkhsum's denial of the impact of musical sound may have been based on Muslim societies' often ambivalent attitudes towards music, which range from absolute prohibition to adoration. As Ghazzali asserts,

> It is forbidden to the most of mankind, consisting of youths and those whom the lust of this world controls so that Music and Singing arouse in them only that which has control of their hearts, consisting of blameworthy qualities. And it is disliked with reference to him who, it is true, does not apply it to the form of created things, but in whose case a habit which he has leads him on most occasions on the path of vain sport. And it is allowed with reference to him who has no delight in it except the taking pleasure in beautiful sounds. And it is loved with reference to him whom the love of God Most High controls and in whom Music and Singing arouse only praiseworthy qualities. (MacDonald 1902:13)

As a knowledgeable *ishan*, trained imam, and one of the more "sober" Sufis, Mäkhsum is certainly aware of the orthodox Islamic thinking on music, and he does not usually engage in musical activities except when they are for religious reasons. For him *muzika* means the sound of musical instruments, which is often profane in nature and thus not to be encouraged. Vocalisations in *hälqä-sohbät*, on the other hand, are mostly religious and thus not *muzika*. *Hikmät*, for example, is

sung poetry, while *dhikr*, recitation of God's names, is even further away from *muzika*. However, Mäkhsum does not object to the use of musical instruments in Sufi gatherings, and he often plays the *dap* himself in the *mäshräp*.

Although the regular Naqshbandi/Qadiri *hälqä-sohbät* that Mäkhsum hosts does not involve musical instruments, as described in Chapter 2, he also hosts *mäshräp* gatherings, which do involve musical instruments. The *mäshräp* gatherings overlap in repertoire with the *hälqä-sohbät* of the Chishtiyya order, who have no problem with using musical instruments in their rituals. According to Mäkhsum, the story of how Chishtiyya followers came to play instruments is as follows: there was a time when everybody liked to play instruments and sing songs, and they stopped reciting Allah's names. A saint of Chishtiyya saw this and wanted to do something about it. He taught people to play instruments to praise Allah and recite *dhikr*. Gradually they became enlightened, and reciting *dhikr* with instruments became their tradition (interview, 17 May 2016).

Mäkhsum didn't mention the name of the Chishti saint, but it was probably Amīr Khusraw (1253–1325), referred to in the Introduction, who was a disciple of the Chishti saint Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā (Hardy 2012) and is often credited with inventing two of North India's two best-known musical instruments, *ṭablā* and *sitār*, and also the musical genre of *qawwali* (Ahmed 2016:425). The story told by Mäkhsum reveals an attitude towards music which is different from that held by Ghazzali as quoted earlier. Rather than being associated with profanity, playing instruments has instead come to be a part of *dhikr* and a medium by which people can consolidate their faith. Living in Khotan where Chishtiyya not only exists but also is well connected with Sufis of other orders, Mäkhsum is used to the performance of musical instruments as part of Sufi rituals, and it is natural for him

to play the *dap* at, and invite instrumentalists to participate in, *mäshräp* gatherings that he hosts.

It is no coincidence that Qawwali, one of the most popular "Sufi music" genres in the world today, is played among followers of the Chishtiyya order in India and Pakistan, and that the virtuosity of professional Qawwals (Qawwali musicians) is beyond the level found in most other Sufi rituals. However, it is worth noting that Qawwals occupy a marginal position ideologically and socio-economically within the Sufi community. In fact, a Qawwal is not considered a Sufi, rather a Qawwal is viewed as a service professional (Qureshi 2006:128). The reason for the incongruity of the Qawwal's important musical roles and marginal ideological status is that Sufism admits music into the *samā'* assembly only as a medium for spiritual advancement, to be achieved strictly through listening, while making music per se is considered against Islamic tenets (Qureshi 2006:96). Uyghur professional or semi-professional musicians, like Abdurakhman, whose incomes depend on their performance, have a similar status within the Uyghur Sufi community. Abdurakhman is not considered a Sufi, but is sometimes invited to *dhikr* assemblies as a musician, and is usually paid for his service through donations, either in the form of money or gifts.

Mäkhsum tends to neglect the importance of musical sounds in religious assemblies except with regard to their semantic meanings. Lyrics of *hikmät*, *muqam*, and *mäshräp* songs are certainly important in helping to concentrate the participant's mind on religious thinking. At the same time, *hälqä-söhbät* is a way for Uyghur Sufis to both recollect God and to recollect their past, in the verses of Central Asian poets such as Ahmed Yasawi and Shah Mashrab. However, does

musical sound really have nothing to do with the altered state of consciousness in
hälqä-sohbät?

Avery proposes that the quality of voice or the purely rhetorical element of
the reciter's delivery of the verse might be a causal factor, as the qualities of a voice
such as resonance and sonority can have dramatic emotional effects on the listener
(Avery 2004:93–94). He illustrates his point with a story about a man who fell
unconscious upon hearing a Qur'anic verse subsequently regaining his
consciousness through hearing a recitation of the same verse. Although Mäkhsum
does not refer directly to the impact of the voice, he does say that a good voice is
important for a *hapiz*: "My voice is so so, but God has given Osman Haji and Niyaz
Qarim Haji (two famous *hapiz* of Khotan) perfect voices to be *hapiz*. Some *hapiz*
don't have great voices, but it is certainly an advantage for a *hapiz* to have a good
voice. The books of Rumi say that longing for Allah lies somewhere between thick
and thin voices. Some say a good voice comes from the breathing of God."
(interview, 17 May 2016).

Mäkhsum does not link the quality of voice directly with altered state of
consciousness, but I assume he is not talking about voice in an aesthetic sense, as
that is not what he or a *hälqä-sohbät* is concerned with. Rather, he is talking about
the voice as a means to deliver the religious message, so the quality of the voice
matters in *hälqä-sohbät*, whose aim, in Mäkhsum's view, is to express one's longing
for God and get closer to God. A voice "between thick and thin" seems to him
suitable to deliver the message of God, so that in a way, it is like "the breathing of
God". Mäkhsum's voice may be not perfect, but his resonance and sonority, which
must have been tempered by decades of practice in reciting the Qur'an and *himkät*,
makes him a good *hapiz*.

The second aspect of the musical sound in *hälqä-sobät* that I propose to discuss in relation to the altered state of consciousness is rhythm. This gathering under discussion was divided into several rounds of singing and dancing. The round I described at the beginning of this chapter started with the unmetered Chong Näghmä of Muqam, which continued for about six and a half minutes, and developed into metered *mäshräp* songs. The first *mäshräp* song was in the "limping beat" which can be transcribed into seven-eight-beat in Western metrical notation. This song lasted about five minutes. The ensuing songs were in the four-beat, with accelerating tempo and reached the climax during the song Imam Husäynim, which marked the end of the *mäshräp* songs and collective *dhikr*. These four-beat songs lasted about twenty-four minutes, and were followed by *munajat* of about eight minutes.

Tokhtibakä lost control of himself and started rolling on the floor during the third *mäshräp* song, about seven and a half minutes into the four-beat songs. I did not observe any obvious cue for Tokhtibakä to go into trance, and the fact that he was the only one that went into trance at this moment suggests this was due to his particular subjectivity.

However, the timing of his paroxysm was not random. He had been dancing throughout the duple beat and his dancing had gradually become more intense. He went into his paroxysm at the point when the beat had consolidated into a stably accelerating four-beat. He had been moving his body since the unmetered *muqam*, but his movements became more regular once the metered *mäshräp* songs began, especially in the four-beat part, which became the most effective rhythmic stimulus. This is easily explainable as the four-beat is easier to coordinate regular

movements with than the free rhythm of *muqam* and limping beat of the first *mäshräp* song.

This stable four-beat is similar to that of *dhikr*, whether in the form of repeating "Allah" or of the four-syllable *shahada* "*lā ʾilāha ʾillā-llāh*", and can probably help to induce the mentality of Tokhtibakä from when he was reciting silent *dhikr*. As this beat went on, Tokhtibakä waved his one hand and then both hands, back and forth. Listening to the religious verses sung and played on monotonous beats apparently helped him to concentrate his mind on the transcendent and created religious arousal in him, resulting in his bodily movement, which in turn intensified the arousal. The first four-beat song was at the tempo of about eighty beats per minute, which rose to about ninety-five beats per minute when Tokhtibakä fell into trance and began to roll on the floor. As people formed a circle to dance in a group, the *mäshräp* songs continued to increase in speed, until the last song, Imam Husäynim, reached about a hundred and twenty-five beats per minute, after which this round of singing ended.

The acceleration of music tempo is a triggering factor in trance in many music cultures around the world (Rouget 1985:81–84). It also happens in *dhikr* in Aleppo, Syria, where Shannon notes that rhythmic acceleration contributes to the sense of spiritual transformation by altering the participants' perception and experience of temporality (Shannon 2004:388). There is no universal meaning of a musical process, but that does not mean that music plays no role in trance in a particular setting. In each cultural context, music provides a system of meanings upon which people whose thinking has been shaped by that culture can draw interpretations of musical processes, which are then taken as cues for body movements and state of consciousness.

As analysed earlier, for the dancers, this ritual is a combination of *samāʿ* of more passive listening and *dhikr* of active reciting in a very embodied way. This embodiment refers to their dance, and to the very act of recitation: *däm zikiri* or breath *dhikr*, in which God's names are vocalised in a guttural way, with exaggerated breathing. Rouget sees breath *dhikr* as "a very particular form of autoexcitation, since it makes use of breathing, a certain overstimulation of the vocal cords, a very accentuated rotary movement of the neck and head, and a whole variety of physical movements that must certainly consume (or liberate?) a great deal of energy" (Rouget 1985:317).

To this very physical process of recitation I will add another overstimulation that may contribute to the altered state of consciousness in the *hälqä-sohbät*: the playing of the *sapayi*, which is an instrument favoured by Uyghur Sufis and played at almost all of their musical activities, except those instrument-free *hälqä-söhbät*. In the ritual under discussion, every musician played a pair of *sapayi*, except Ikhlim who played *tämbur* and Mäkhsum who played *dap*. *Sapayi* is loud, and played close to the players' ears. In a ritual that may last a few hours, it is very possible that the deafening volume of *sapayi* will have physiological effects on people's state of consciousness, especially for the players of the instrument.

Figure 35. *Sapayi*, a popular instrument among Uyghur Sufis

4.6 Conclusion

The *jäzba*, an altered state of consciousness in which one feels the attraction of God, is sought after in the *hälqä-sohbät*, a Uyghur Sufi ritual that is a combination of *samāʿ* and collective *dhikr*. From a first-person perspective interpretation of the mechanism of *jäzba*, and from the point of view of the practitioners, it is years of practice of silent *dhikr* which prepares one for *jäzba*. In *hälqä-sohbät*, the collective recitation of loud *dhikr* and *sama* movements help one to get rid of distractions from worldly affairs, and to concentrate the mind on God, which enables some participants to enter the state of *jäzba*.

From a second-person perspective, the *hälqä-sohbät* is a way of social interaction in a "me to you" way, a means for both the master to impart knowledge to the disciple and for fellow Sufis to support each other. It presents a kind of social embodiment that strengthens the hierarchy and solidarity of the Sufi community.

From a third-person perspective, there are various factors at work in the hälqä-sohbät in triggering the altered state of consciousness. Uyghur Sufis tend to deemphasise the role of sound in reaching *jäzba* because sound is not an end in itself, but a means of getting closer to God. This points to the difference between sound as a Sufi practice and as music. However, besides the semantic meanings of lyrics, musical elements such as timbre and rhythm can be transformed into metaphors and have psychological and physiological impacts on the participants. The timbre of the *hapiz*'s voice is an important vehicle in conveying the religious message. The acceleration of tempo may intensify expectations, while people's physical movements when reciting the *dhikr* and dancing, alongside the loud volume of the *sapayi* rattle, are sonic cues that can all have physiological impacts on the practitioners.

Overall, *hälqä-sohbät* is a ritual that combines local musical culture and influences from regions to the west of Xinjiang from where Uyghur people received Islam. It represents a means by which the Uyghur Sufis, who live on the margins of the Islamic society, can make sense of their religion through a localised practice of the *samāʿ* ritual.

Chapter 5. Saying *Dhikr* More Loudly—Mediation and Transmission of the Sufis

5.1 Introduction

The sounded practices of Uyghur Sufis have primarily been transmitted orally, however these practices have been documented over the years, via media sources such as cassettes, VCDs/DVDs, and video and audio files shared through the Internet. Although the overall number of such sources is limited, mostly due to governmental restrictions, they constitute a collection which has certainly played a role in the transmission of sounded practices of Uyghur Sufis, and are important sources for research of this topic.

Among modern media, the cassette has been a popular topic of discussion for its role in disseminating messages in different parts of the world. In his book about cassettes and popular music in North India, Manuel discusses how certain styles of music have been conditioned by the cassette technology, which has served to decentralise the production of recordings (Manuel 1993:xiii). Manuel describes cassettes as a form of "micro media", as an alternative to mass media that is characterised by "democratic, participatory, grassroots control, a lack of social distance between producers and consumers, and a decentralised structure affording a responsiveness to community values and aesthetics" (Manuel 1993:xv). Manuel's observation of cassettes in India is useful in analysis of the cassette in Xinjiang, although the latter's situation differs from the former in that the situation in Xinjiang is subject to a higher degree of governmental control, which has limited its potential as a form of media expression.

Hirschkind discusses cassettes in a different context; cassette sermons in Egypt as part of the Islamic Revival. He argues that cassettes not only disseminate religious ideologies but also contribute to the process by affecting the sensibilities and perceptual habits of the audience (Hirschkind 2006:2). Another example of the role that the media plays in contemporary religious life is given by Schulz in her discussion of mass-mediated forms of spirituality in urban Mali. She contends that there is "something particular" about aural media that lends credibility to Sharif Haidara, leader of the urban Malian Muslim movement Ansar Dine, by highlighting certain charismatic qualities of his voice (Schulz 2003:161).

Bohlman and McMurray note a case in which tapes were involved in social changes in a more direct way. During the Islamic Revolution in Iran in the late 1970s, tapes of Ayatollah Hömeini's speeches were duplicated through international telephone lines and disseminated in various cities, and were considered "heavy artillery" of revolution. These tapes not only bore witness to history, but history was made and relayed through them (Bohlman and McMurray 2017:19).

Like anywhere else, media in Xinjiang are not only a means to convey messages, but can also shape messages to some degree. Whilst social media in China is strictly monitored, the decentralised structure of these social media platforms leaves space for Uyghur Sufis, who have been denied an outlet in state-controlled media, to promote their practices.

In this chapter, I will discuss the mediation and transmission of Sufi sounds through cassettes, VCDs/DVDs, online videos, and mobile phones, and how these multimedia platforms have had an impact upon the meanings of the content. In contrast to the examples of India, Egypt and Mali mentioned above, a popular mass

media disseminating the sounded practices of Uyghur Sufis has yet to develop. Instead, they have been documented and transmitted in ways that are more marginal than the "micro-media" of cassettes in North India that Manuel describes, as these media often face crackdown.

5.2 Local soundscapes in cassettes

In December 2008, I travelled to Khotan for the first time. Not knowing anybody, I hung out at the Grand Bazaar, which is the most popular destination in the city, but is not as touristy as the International Bazaar of Ürümchi. Hardly any tourists come to Khotan, and the Grand Bazaar mostly serves local people. I was soon attracted to the three audio and video shops that were just outside the Grand Bazaar. Two of them sold pirated published productions of popular music, and "folk" music with synthesiser-produced accompaniment, which is common in Xinjiang. The third one, however, was special, in that it sold homemade recordings of traditional musical sounds.

The owner of that shop was a crippled man in his twenties, named Yüsüpjan. He had some of these published cassettes and VCDs on display on the wall, but more interesting were the hundreds of cassettes on his desk. They were not formally released, but "bootlegs". On the cassettes were hand-written names of the performers, like "Häsänjan", "Torgun" and "Hälil Tawuz", or genres like "*muqam*", "*dastan*" and "*dhikr*". The music had been recorded onto cassettes that originally held albums of Seotaiji and Boys, a best-selling K-pop group of the 1990s, as shown in both Korean and English languages printed on the side labels. They must have been remaindered cassettes in Korea that were imported as trash to China, making them cheap materials to recycle as blank cassettes. Although without cases, the

cassettes were new, and of long durations, as I later found them to be of more than thirty-five minutes on each side.

In the 1990s, when I was a university student in the city of Nanjing in east China, I used to buy similar cassettes with duplicated contents, though both the "blank" cassettes and their newly recorded contents were of Western rock music. Those were *dakou* cassettes, or illegally imported cassettes (CDs as well) punched with a cut and traded in the black market, which played an important role in stimulating the development of popular music in China (De Kloet 2010:16).

Harris gives an outline of cassette culture and the growth of the independent music industry in Xinjiang, from the early 1980s onwards. In the early days, recordings were made on basic equipment in backrooms and were copied, five at a time in producers' homes. More sophisticated production developed later with more advanced recording technology and professionally duplicated cassettes in big factories (Harris 2002:269). Because cassettes were cheap, easily duplicable, and less censored (at least for a period of time), they helped to give voice to genres and works that could not be disseminated through media that was more government-controlled like TV or radio. Some of those cassettes recorded with basic equipment were never formerly released, but were traded in a small, underground market, like Yüsüpjan's shop.

Although I had long stopped listening to cassettes, in 2008 when I listened to them again, hearing them was an intimate and nostalgic experience, since cassettes were the most important medium of music for my generation, growing up in the 1980s and 1990s. I first owned a CD player in the late 1990s; before that I received my music education mainly through cassettes, often via duplication from the original to blank cassettes with a double-deck cassette player.

There was no real record industry in contemporary China before the arrival of cassettes, as available vinyls were very limited in number and owned by few people, particularly in Xinjiang, where the development of the music industry and the transition of music media lagged–and still lags–behind east China. In 2005, after I had already switched to CDs, a friend brought me quite a few cassettes of traditional music from Ürümchi; cassettes were the only media by which most of these recordings were available. In the last few days of 2008, when I visited Khotan, cassettes still seemed to be a popular medium, although VCDs (rather than CDs, which were still rare) were competing with cassettes.

In this shop, there was a cassette player for customers to try a cassette before deciding whether to buy it or not. I didn't know much about what was recorded on the cassettes, so I tried them one by one and picked what sounded good to my ears. After spending quite a long time listening, I finally selected about forty out of hundreds. Yüsüpjan was happy to see that I was a heavy buyer. He didn't give those cassettes to me, because they were "masters". Instead he started duplicating them for me, with a used professional duplicator of a Japanese brand, which he had probably got from some state-owned company. He put one cassette into one deck of a duplicator, and then a "blank" cassette (the same kind of K-pop cassette) into the other. In one or two minutes, one side was ready, and he would turn them over to duplicate the other side. After duplicating one cassette, he would use a marker pen to write down the title on the side label for me.

Since there were so many, it took some time for him to do the job, while we had a little chat. It seemed that he was quite enthusiastic about these traditional musical sounds, especially those with Sufi content, and he recommended some cassettes to me. Although he might not be a core person in the Sufi circle, it is very

likely that he has been influenced by such sounds. The fact that Yüsüpjan's collection included both more religious recordings like *dhikr* and more secular content like folk songs indicates that they are both parts of the local soundscape.

Yüsüpjan charged me four *koy* (*kuai* in Chinese) per cassette (about US$ 0.6). He probably overcharged me, as I had bought even cheaper cassettes a few years earlier in Kashgar, but I didn't care about the difference which was negligible. I was happy that he made a little more money to keep this business running. It was the only shop I could find in Khotan that sold these cassettes of Sufi sounds and local music. The fact that these cassettes of Sufi sounds were on offer in Yüsüpjan's shop means that there was a market for it, however niche the market was.

Figure 36. Cassettes of Sufi sounds from Khotan

Later, I found the collection of cassettes to be a treasure trove, not least because they included recordings of *dastan* by Abdurakhman and his master Shahmämät, as well as *hikmät* and *dhikr* both with and without instrumental accompaniment, folk songs accompanied by *dutar* and *tämbur*, covers of pop songs, and *täbligh* (sermons and proselytising). Some of these recordings were made as

far back as 1987, indicated by the announcement at the beginning: "the person who plays this is from Yarkand, recorded in Heijiashan of Ürümchi, with Khotan friends Mämättokhti Akhun and Ärkinjan, on 28 March 1987" [62] . Such announcements can be found at the beginning of many of the folk and pop music recordings, and they provide very useful information in denoting the time, place and people of the recordings.

On one cassette, the announcer says, "20 December 1989, Wednesday, about one o'clock. The *dutar* is played by Mämättokhti from Khotan. The *dap* is played by the tailor Abdurakhman". Likewise, in another cassette, details of the performers and their neighbourhood were also provided: "22 May 1989, Sunday night. The speaker is Turghunjan from Ghujambagh of Khotan. The recordist is Mämättokhti Akhun from Khotan." Most of the recordings were made in Khotan, except the recording of a performance by people from Khotan that was made in Ürümchi. This suggests that most of the cassettes sold in Yüsüpjan's shop probably came through personal connections within a social circle.

On one cassette, the announcer identifies the occasion as a gathering on 22 September 1991, and notes that they had invited Mämättokhti Akhun to sing songs by Äkhmätjan, who had passed away. Äkhmätjan Mämätimin was a famous pop singer who had died earlier that year in June, at the age of twenty-two. Interestingly, in this recording the musician uses a *tämbur* to play the songs of Äkhmätjan, which were originally played on an electric guitar. Äkhmätjan was from Qaraqash, and had naturally been influenced by the Sufi musical practice, especially that of the Chishtiyyä that is based in Qaraqash. This was corroborated by Niyaz who told me that Äkhmätjan was "a man with *täriqät* (Sufi path)". Niyaz is

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[62] All announcements from cassettes were translated by Muqeddes Muxter.

about the age of Äkhmätjan and had met him in person. Äkhmätjan was well-known for his performance of Özhal Muqam on his electric guitar, which was documented in video and is available online[63]. From this example, it is apparent that the Uyghur pop music world and the traditional music world exert a mutual influence over each other, as people cover Äkhmätjan's songs in the style of a folk song. Such mutual influences are likely to have been facilitated by cassettes.

The popularisation of the cheap medium of cassettes in the 1980s helped Äkhmätjan to become popular. In 1996, a released cassette was sold in Xinjiang for six to seven *koy*, while a bootlegged cassette could be bought at half that price (Harris 2002:269). Even in 2005, I was able to buy some cassettes in the Grand Bazaar of Kashgar at the price of one *koy* each. A friend from Mäkit, a county not far from Kashgar, tells me that there used to be an old man selling bootleg cassettes in her hometown too. It seems that for a period of time, such shops of homemade cassettes were common throughout Xinjiang, and their contents constitute an important part of Uyghur people's musical lives and heritage.

Harris argues that cassettes are less censored than the medium of television (Harris 2002:270), and that these cassettes reflect the musical tastes and social preoccupations of Uyghur audiences that state media fail to accommodate (Harris 2002:280). Rather than a medium that disseminated the music that society had to offer, cassettes helped to spread and establish music that would not have otherwise been so widely available, whether of the professional studio recordings or homemade recordings. The rather standardised announcements of the date, place and performers at the beginning of many cassettes suggests that it was the

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[63] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gty11ET-nGg (accessed 15 May 2018).

norm for people in Xinjiang to record private sessions with the idea that the cassettes might be circulated in a wider sphere.

Among the *dastan* recordings, one cassette of my interlocutor Abdurakhman was also dated, as the recordist announced, "27 May 1992, Wednesday, Abdurakhman from Qaraqash is going to sing Qurbannamä. The recordist is Zinnätkhan from Khotan." Most other recordings of *dastan*, however, seem to have been made during busking of the performers, especially at *mazar* festivals, and are not dated. Among them are quite a few by Abdurakhman's master Shah Mämät, who passed away in 2009. In some of the recorded performances, Shah Mämät was performing with one of his sons who was very young at the time, which means that those recordings were probably made a while ago, most likely in the 1980s.

While the recordings of folk music at private parties seem to have been made more for personal memories, these recordings of *dastan* from *mazar* festivals seem to have been made at least in part for documenting the music and for use in education. Ärkin, a *dastanchi* who used to study with Shah Mämät and is now a student of Abdurakhman, owns several such cassettes of Shah Mämät. Given the length of *dastan* works and the various techniques of engaging the audience, such cassettes are very valuable in educating later *dastanchi*s. Ärkin has listened to them many times and learned a lot from Shah Mämät's recorded performance, especially after he passed away (interview, 10 November 2015). The Folklore Research Centre of Xinjiang University has borrowed those cassettes from him and made copies for the centre's collection. The cassette recordings of *hälqä-sohbät* also serve an educational function, as Mäkhsum told me that some people would learn to sing *hikmät* from such cassettes (interview, 16 May 2016).

Among the recordings of *hikmät* and *dhikr*, there were several cassettes with "Aqtäm" written on them, presumably recorded in Aqtäm village, which is the centre of the Chishtiyyä in the Khotan area. In Chapter 3, I mentioned that one of these cassettes documented a *hälqä-sohbät* gathering in which a *balaman* reed pipe was played. It is not clear who made these recordings of *hälqä-sohbät*, but on some of the cassettes there were also announcements of the details like "the man who records this *hikmät* is Näjimakhun from Khotan". This announcement was apparently added afterwards, as it breaks the original recording of the *hälqä-sohbät*. By doing so, the announcer was probably trying to order his collections or add his credit as the collector.

In another cassette, the announcer says "Thank you Yasin Qarim. The recordist is Zinnätkhan from Khotan". This was recorded in Yasin Qarim's presence, indicating that his recording is known to, and has been approved by, the *hapiz*. By documenting information about the occasions of the folk songs and *hälqä-sohbät* on these recordings, the recordists preserved and organised the data for their personal collections. Now, when these cassettes ended up in Yüsüpjan's shop, they present a detailed archive of local soundscapes.

These cassettes were usually recorded with non-professional equipment, and have typically been copied many times. The sound quality of most cassettes is not good. Some have been recorded at the wrong speed for the music resulting in pitches on the recording that are lower than the pitches performed by the musicians. Distortion and extraneous noise are common. Some cassettes can only play through one speaker. However, these cassettes nevertheless document lived musical soundscapes of the Uyghur people, rather than being polished music performed by professional musicians and released on government-sanctioned

cassettes. If cassettes provided a less-censored channel for the spread of pop songs with nationalistic themes that were problematic to show on mainstream media like TV (Harris 2002:270–281), cassettes also created a channel for these religious recordings that would not have been otherwise disseminated.

Unfortunately, when I visited Khotan again in 2015, Yüsüpjan's shop had disappeared, and I was told that he had died. I was unable to find any more homemade cassettes of local recordings. That is partly the result of cassettes becoming obsolete as a recording medium, but is also because of stricter controls imposed by the government on recording content. Niyaz told me that I could now sell each of the cassettes I have for two hundred *koy*, due to their rarity. When I asked Mäkhsum where I could collect more homemade cassettes, he said that I now had the most cassettes of anyone he knew and people would have to come to me. He might have been be dodging my question, but it is also true that many people have dumped their cassettes for fear of governmental reprisals.

The cassette can be a subversive force from the perspective of the government, due to its easy duplicability and dissemination. This is shown in the Telex's COPYETTE 1&3, a machine that can simultaneously produce up to three copies of a master at sixteen times the original speed, which Maciej Kołaczkowski, a technical assistant of Warsaw University of Technology, used to help the university's 1968 student movement (Bohlman 2017:129). The machine that Yüsüpjan used to duplicate cassettes in his shop was similar in function. Although the cassette duplications were not intended to oppose the state, the decentralised and uncensored contents contained in those cassettes, whether religious or secular, could conflict with state ideology. Given that cassettes were an easy medium to duplicate, it can be expected that the state does not have much toleration of

unlicensed cassette dissemination, especially in Xinjiang which is deemed a restive area.

5.3 Sufi gatherings documented in VCDs/DVDs

When Niyaz's youngest son Mukhpul got married, I made a video of the wedding for him. Thinking that the general public in China would be interested in a film about Uyghur culture, I asked him if I could post the video online. He firmly rejected my idea, because the authorities are watchful of Uyghur people's gatherings, and to put such videos online could create trouble for him.

After we had known each other for longer, one day Mukhpul shared with me two VCDs and one DVD of local Sufi gatherings. They were shot and edited unprofessionally and sold in the market, in much the same way as the cassettes. When Mukhpul showed me the videos in the courtyard of their home, he closed the house's big gate in order not to let other people see or hear the video's contents. On the surface of the DVD was written "14 *kisim* [*qisim*] *helqe* [*hälqä*] *hokmet* [*hikmät*]" or fourteen parts of *hälqä hikmät*. It contains two hundred and seven minutes of videos, much longer than the two VCDs, which contain fifty-three and fifty-five minutes of videos respectively. In the DVD, most of the fourteen video files are shots from the same *hälqä-sohbät*, ranging from four to twenty-eight minutes. It was a big and long gathering, with about a hundred participants. Most Sufis in Khotan I know, like Niyaz, Nurmämät, Japar, and Osman Haji were in it. Mäkhsum, however, was missing. He later told me that he was occupied by something else that day so could not make it to the gathering.

When Niyaz was back home we watched some parts of the DVD together. He told me that the *hälqä-sohbät* in that video happened around 2010. He had said

to me several times that if I had come to Khotan five or six years earlier, I would have been able to see much more. It is true that I have never seen a gathering of such a scale during my time in Khotan. It was both bigger and longer than the gatherings that I experienced. This gathering started around nine am, and lasted till dusk, which is similar to the length of past *hälqä-sohbät* that Mäkhsum told me about: that *hälqäs* would last five or six hours and when other events were added, like *muqam-mäshräp* and *täbligh*, and breaks for *namaz* (the five daily prayers), the gathering would last a whole day (interview, 16 May 2016).

According to Niyaz, this *hälqä-sohbät* took place at the home of someone named Mamut, an imam of a mosque in Khotan, and it was probably a *shagirt* (disciple) of Mamut who videoed the event. Since it was a big gathering, several *hapiz* took turn to sing *hikmät*. Among them were *hapiz* from Yarkand and Khotan. It was because some *hapiz* from Yarkand were visiting Khotan that they were holding this big gathering.

Apparently the video didn't catch the very beginning of the *hälqä-sohbät*, as it doesn't show the recitation of Qur'an and the *munajat* which are supposed to happen before the *tälqin*, which was the procedure observed in the event I discussed in the second chapter. When the video started, people were already chanting the *tälqin*. Mätniyaz, an elderly *hapiz* from Yarkand who passed away a few years after this gathering, was leading this opening chant. He was seated and was singing *tälqin*, while the people around him, who were variously sitting or standing, were all swaying their bodies. Soon they all stood and congregated in the centre of the room, which was a large light venue with skylights, making it much brighter than the guest room of Niyaz's home.

Three or four women with veiled faces, stood outside the gate, watching the men's gathering and emulating their body movements. Then the men began dancing and the dust they stir up reflected the sunlight. The closer the men were to the centre of the circle, the more actively they danced, while those on the periphery of the circle only moved their bodies lightly to the beat.

In what seems to be another *hälqä*, in a different video file, the *hapiz* was Jümä, a man probably in his thirties, who has a bright, high-pitched voice. Jümä is also from Yarkand, and was probably visiting *mazar* in Khotan together with the other people from Yarkand. Making pilgrimages to *mazar* in different places is a common activity among Uyghur Sufis. Niyaz spends a great deal of his time doing this. When he is in other towns, he would be invited to join local gatherings too.

The video shots were mainly focused on the dancers in the centre, but would sometimes focus on an individual face, like that of Osman Haji, whom I met when I first arrived in Khotan and who passed away a few months later. In the recording, Osman Haji stood at the periphery of the circle, reciting *dhikr*, his eyes closed and his head swaying with the beat. The video also caught at least two men videoing the event with their phones, so there must have been more than one version of video documentation of this gathering.

Jümä sped up the *tälqin*, and the participants correspondingly danced faster. Jappar, whom I met once at a gathering in Abdurakhman's village, was whirling very fast. When he became tired, he rested by standing on the periphery, then after a while, he would rejoin the dancers in the circle. Most people did the same. Jümä chanted *munajat* after *tälqin*, while some people wept.

Osman Haji then became the *hapiz*. The person who videoed the *hälqä-sohbät* had been standing on the periphery so that he could shoot the whole scene,

but in a later video he seemed to have joined the central dance, since the view became shaky and with close ups to the dancers and clear sounds of the breath metre of the *dhikr.* Far from the beautiful and professionally made shots of *hälqä-sohbät* in Liu's film (discussed in Chapter 1), this blurry homemade video presents a more immediate viewpoint, that of a first person participant, which almost situates the viewer among the dancers. Osman Haji recites both *tälqin* and *munajat*. It seems that each *hapiz* has hosted one *hälqä*.

After Mätniyaz, Jümä and Osman Haji have each led a *hälqä*, the next video clip shows people sitting to listen to *muqam*. There is one *satar* player and one *tämbur* player, who I didn't meet. Later, when *muqam* ends and *mäshräp* starts, they are joined by a group of *sapayi* players, including Niyaz. Nurmämät plays a *dap*, and a boy plays *tash*. Again, two people are shown videoing the event. While the cinematographer of this recording held his camera (or phone) towards the musicians, the other two cinematographers were shooting other people in the crowd, and panning their phones around the dancing circles. These three cinematographers each have different foci, and so have documented the event from different angles.

I remember Mäkhsum's friend Tursunturäm also videoed the *muqam-mäshräp* at Mäkhsum's place with his phone, as he did many other times. Thanks to the popularisation of affordable smart phones since the late 2000s, more people can participate in the process of documenting these Sufi rituals and thereby write their own history. The compiler of the VCDs/DVD worked as an editor and assembled selected videos to narrate a history through his own perspective as well as that of the other selected cinematographers; the result was then disseminated

through sellers like Yüsüpjan. The whole process is a history of the people, by the people, for the people.

Thum argues that the *tazkirah*, a kind of manuscript of local history that emerged in the nineteenth century, helped to form a shared view of the past and a shared identity among the Uyghur people (Thum 2014:134). Such a shared sense was enabled by the flexibilities of manuscript technology, as the *tazkirah* was copied and circulated among the people. Similarly, the cassette and VCD/DVD serve as a contemporary form of documentation, pedagogy, and means of history-making for the Uyghur Sufis. Given that *mazar* festivals, which were an important occasion for *tazkirah* recitation and consumption, began to be banned from the late 1990s onward, documenting and circulating VCD/DVD and cassette recordings of Sufi gatherings (of religious singing and dancing, and sermons) has helped maintain a shared culture among the Uyghur Sufi community.

More and more people joined in the singing now, including boys whose voices are much sharper and more easily distinguishable. Some participants began to cry. The *mäshräp* song changed, and the musicians stood up. People began to recite *dhikr* and sway their bodies with the beat. Just as people were starting to dance, an elderly man stopped them and asked them to sit down. According to Niyaz, he said that people should listen to the singing instead of dancing, since if they were dancing they would not really be able to give their full attention to the singing. Apparently, there are differing opinions with regard to dancing in *mäshräp*. Niyaz told me that the elderly man could not even recite the Qur'an, and nobody in Khotan liked him. Now more and more people could not stop themselves from dancing, and the elderly man was unable to prevent them from doing so. Jappar was whirling fast again. Now people were singing Imam Hüsäynim, like in the

muqam-mäshräp in Mäkhsum's *khaniqa*. Many people were weeping by the end of this section.

Another *hälqä* was documented in the next video, this time with Ablät from Khotan as the *hapiz*. Mäkhsum says this should have happened before the *muqam*. Like Jümä, Ablät held a notebook containing the *hikmät* lyrics. Many participants were dancing, including boys, who have been officially forbidden by the government to participate religious activities. A junior dancer was whirling in the wrong direction, and was corrected by a more senior man. Some people were supporting the host Mamut, as if afraid that he would fall down. Many were crying. In the *yäk zärip* (one beat) part, people clustered together and moved as one. A young man was unable to bear his strong emotions, fell down, and was supported by others. Many people were wailing.

In the last video, the *hälqä* was taking place in another, smaller room, so there were fewer people. Jümä was the *hapiz*. This is the fourth and last *hälqä* in the videos, but it is unclear whether this *hälqä* was the last one of the day. Niyaz said that food was cooked that day, but people had been concentrating on the *hälqä-sohbät*, so did not really eat. It was a big gathering, not only in terms of the number of participants, but also because the gathering included *hälqä-sohbät*, *muqam-mäshräp*, and *täbligh*. If this event did take place in 2010, as I was told by Niyaz, it was probably one of the last videoed *hälqä-sohbät* on this kind of scale; since it then became difficult to hold gatherings of this size. After the 5th July riot in Ürümchi in 2009, control over religious activities became tighter and tighter.

In addition, there are other recordings of *hälqä-sohbät* on this DVD. One recording took place in someone's home; however none of the participants were known to me and were, in any case, difficult to identify since the cinematographer

was dancing and the shots were very shaky. According to Niyaz, two of the other recordings were from a gathering in Osman Haji's home, in which the participants chanted *mäwlud*. The fourth recording, interestingly, was a gathering of not Uyghurs but Hui Muslims, who spoke a northwestern Chinese dialect. Although this dialect could be from anywhere in northwest China, I assume that they are from Xinjiang, as some words seem to be specifically used in Xinjiang. The form of group *dhikr* of the Hui in this video differed from that of the Uyghurs. The DVD editor seems to have wanted to present diversity on the DVD, either to promote cultural exchange or to attract customers, or both.

Compared to the DVD, the two VCDs that Mukhpul shared with me contain earlier videos. One of them has a watermark of "2001", and in it I saw a much younger Mäkhsum. The video starts with people dancing and doing *dhikr* with some participants playing the *sapayi* and *tash*. Osman Haji was the *hapiz*. The *dhikr* seems to be taking place in someone's home and the room was quite crowded when people danced. I had heard the *tälqin* before, at Mäkhsum's home *khaniqa*, when Abdurakhman was playing the *rawap*. The video seems to have been digitised from an analogue videotape, given that the grainy images suggest the quality of the recording had already deteriorated.

The other video was probably shot sometime between 1993 and 1995, as suggested by a lady who visited Niyaz's home. She saw her father, who had died in 1997, in that video. This is the earliest video from the collection. Mäkhsum identified the location of the recording as taking place in a mosque near the Grand Bazaar. People were chanting *mäwlud*, texts about the birth, death and life stories of the Prophet Muhammad (Zhou 1999:21). Such texts are performed widely across Islamic Asia, and here the Uyghur Sufis were performing a local variant,

which is mainly from the repertoire of the Suhwardi Sufi order, who don't practice *hälqä-sohbät* or play instruments but would gather to do this chant devoted to Prophet Muhammad (Mäkhsum, interview, 16 May 2016).

However, in this video, following the *mäwlud*, people did perform *hälqä-sohbät* with instruments, which implies syncretism between the musical practices of different Sufi orders in this gathering, and suggests that these musical practices are a communal heritage shared by all Uyghur Sufis in Khotan. Tentatively, it would seem that the spread of cassettes and VCDs/DVDs, which are easily duplicated, has contributed to the transmission of different genres.

Among the people in the gathering, I saw two men recording the sound. So, this was the origin of the local cassette recordings that I bought in 2008. They were not hiding their equipment; the double-deck cassette recorders they were using were too big to hide. No one seemed to object to their recording. One of them was quite close to the *hapiz* in order to catch a clear sound, and he was rocking his body together with the other participants while he recorded the sound. At one point he even used one hand to hold the cassette recorder and held the other hand up to recite *dua*. Apparently, he was not just a record dealer who came here to make a bootleg recording but was also a practicing Sufi. Such tape cassettes, as well as videos, may have been created for personal memory, as discussed earlier in this chapter (when Mäkhsum watched the video, he would often sigh and point at those who have passed away). At the same time, such videos show an effort by community members to document their own culture, which has not been properly represented by government-sanctioned media.

Despite the possibility that people videoed this event for personal memory somehow the video ended up in the market. One day Niyaz was walking past a stall

of cassettes and VCDs, when he saw that the owner was watching a video of this gathering on TV. Niyaz asked the owner where he got the recording. The owner asked him why he asked about the provenance of the recording. Niyaz said because he was in the video. The owner didn't tell Niyaz where he got it but gave him a copy of the video, and Niyaz did not enquire further.

Subsequently, Niyaz inadvertently lost the video he had been given, but his son Mukhpul later bought it again from someone else. In south Xinjiang where the concept of copyright has not really been developed, disputes over the use of videos are not likely to happen. Nowadays these kinds of VCD/DVDs are not found in the market, because the dealer will face persecution. Even owning such videos can cause trouble for people. Niyaz used to have more than ten of these VCDs, but threw them away into the Yorungkash River.

5.4 *Täbligh* and the ideological battle

While most of the fourteen recordings on the DVD show singing and dancing, one recording presents people sitting and listening to the *täbligh* of a man called Säydiämär, who had been a medical doctor but has now passed away, according to Niyaz. While Säydiämär was speaking, one listener had placed his phone near Säydiämär to record his discourse. Initially, Säydiämär outlined the history and lineage of the Sufi orders in Xinjiang, listing the four masters of Naqshband (local pronounciation: Näkhshiwän), founder of the Naqshbandiyya, including Häzräti Qäshämshärqi (Ḵuṯham Ŝhayḵh) and Khälilata Rahmitulla Äbäy (Ḵhalīl Atā) who were *khälipä* of Yasawi (Algar 2012). He also listed the four *khälipä* of Naqshband, including Alattin Ata (Ḵhʷāḏja ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār) who

spread Khufisuluq, and Sultani Chärkhi Rähmitulla Äbäy (Mawlānā Yaʻḳūb Čarḵẖī) who spread Chishtiyya to Yarkand and Khotan.

DeWeese argues that sources about the lineages of the Naqshbandi and Yasawi Sufi orders were often circulated to convey specific messages, "whether didactic and exemplary—to serve in the training of adepts or in the edification of a broader constituency—or tactical and 'political'—to serve in negotiating competitive rivalries among Sufi communities" (DeWeese 1996:190). The *täbligh* in the video seems to underline the interweaving relationship between not only the two orders, but also Khufisuluq and Chishtiyya.

This underlies the point made by Säydiämär regarding the division between *khufi* and *jähri dhikr*, which he says only happened in the last 150 to 200 years, and before that the two were practiced by the same people "If you don't know this you can't even recognise your relatives, so I want to say that *jähri* and *khufi* are not enemies but friends."[64]

This point is supported by Papas, who argues that the common categorisation of vocalised and silent *dhikr* as representing the two conflicting Naqshbandiyya factions, the Jahriyya and the Khufiyya respectively, is an oversimplification. Instead, Papas considers that the practices of vocalised and silent *dhikr* among Uyghur Sufis can be traced to the teachings of Ahmad Kāsānī, who was spiritual master of both Jahriyya and the Khufiyya (Papas 2014:26–27). Based on Kāsānī's writing, Papas concludes that although *khufi dhikr* is preferable to *jahri dhikr*, the practice is not really a choice between sound and silence, but a choice of the appropriate technique for a particular Sufi according to his abilities

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[64] Quotes from the *täbligh* are translated by Muqeddes Muxter.

and along his spiritual progress, with regard to the possibilities of the teaching of, and the divulging or concealment of, Sufi mystical experiences (Papas 2014:32).

Säydiämär's *täbligh* also touches on the use of musical instruments, that according to the Central Asian Sufi poet Huwäyda, "a *hälqä* cannot reach its climax without *dap*, *tämbur* and *näy*". Again, his point is corroborated by Kāsānī's writing, which claims that Junayd admitted certain musical instruments within his circle, and members of the circle benefitted from discussing the mode (*wajh*) of the instruments (Papas 2014:35). Säydiämär's remarks suggest that he may have learned from the teachings of Kāsānī, probably through oral sermons like the one given by Säydiämär himself. Compared to traditional sermons, Säydiämär's *täbligh* has come to be disseminated more widely, thanks to the media format of DVD.

After talking about different forms of *dhikr*, Säydiämär goes on to discuss dancing in Sufi gatherings, saying that "*sama* dance is meaningful, even if you don't like it," and he gives an example of how Junayd of Baghdad converted people to Islam by doing the *sama* dance with his disciples. In China, Sino-Muslim elites considered dancing to be one of the heterodox and immoral behaviours, and accused "wild Sufis" from India and northwestern China of doing in the eighteenth century (Lipman 2014:51). Likewise dancing was one of the activities that Khufiyya accused the Jahriyya of doing in Gansu Province during the eighteenth century (Lipman 2014:56). In Säydiämär's videoed *täbligh*, recorded around 2010, Säydiämär expresses new concerns in the dispute over dancing. This dispute is exemplified by the elderly man who was trying to stop people from dancing earlier during the *mäshräp*. It seems that the DVD editor agreed with Säydiämär's view, as indicated by his choice of including the *täbligh* in the DVD.

In his book about the history of Uyghur manuscripts and *mazar*, Thum mentions a sermon on the meaning of Sufi *täriqät* after a *dhikr* ceremony in Yarkand (Thum 2014:103), and such a sermon seems to often be part of a gathering. At the same time, the video of Säydiämär's *täbligh* is the only one without any musical sound in the DVD and VCDs. The compiler must have chosen it because he thinks it is as important as the *dhikr* and *sama*, as an educational talk through which Sufis can learn more about their heritage, as well as being a medium through which rapport between different fractions of the Muslim community can be advocated.

In a way, such VCDs/DVDs of local Sufi practices were competing with the increasing VCDs/DVDs of contents from abroad that were sold in the black market, like those Harris found in the Erdaoqiao area of Ürümchi in 2012: "Where before Uyghur pop songs and traditional *dutar* melodies had dominated, now imported DVDs of *nasheed* religious songs, many sung in Arabic or even in English, could be heard from the restaurants" (Harris 2014c:107).

These VCDs/DVDs are part of the increasing flow of information that has been received in Xinjiang from abroad since the gradual opening-up of the area in the 1980s. This has included a broader range of Muslim ideologies, some of which challenge traditional Uyghur customs such as *näzir* (a communal feast to commemorate the deceased) and *mazar* veneration (Waite 2007:169–177), as well as music and dance.

Schrode contends that scripturalism has become stronger in Uyghur Islamic discourses and religious practices because of more translocal communication with other Muslim societies (Schrode 2008:429). However, the state's monopoly of religious education through the governmental Islamic institutes and the banning of

private religious education from 1996 onwards (Waite 2006:255–259) have made it difficult for common Uyghur people to engage in scriptural learning.

Instead, reformists who have been labelled "Wahhabi" by the Uyghur populace have resorted to informal *täbligh* to spread their ideas (Waite 2006:261). It is against this background that I have interpreted the Sufi *täbligh* in this DVD as a conscious effort to combat reformist thinking, not only by people like Säydiämär who gives this *täbligh*, but also by people like the compiler of the DVD who shows his stance by presenting *hälqä-sohbät* as well as the *täbligh* in the DVD.

5.5 Links with the outside world: video-sharing websites

Contiguous with the decline of cassettes and VCDs/DVDs since the 2010s is the increasing popularity of the Internet as a medium through which religious content could be disseminated, especially through social media with user-generated content.

Between my first visit to Khotan in 2008–2009, and the start of my fieldwork in 2015, I downloaded some videos of Uyghur Sufis from the Internet, mainly from www.youtube.com, and also from www.youku.com, the most popular video-sharing website in China, where youtube.com is blocked. Later I found that some of the people I met during my fieldwork were documented in those videos.

One Youtube video shows a group of about fifteen people walking at dusk in the desert. It was a pilgrimage towards a *mazar*, probably the Imam Jafar Sadiq *mazar*, located in Niyä county of Khotan prefecture and dedicated to the sixth of the Twelve Imams of Shi'a Islam. Mäkhsum was leading the group in singing a

hikmät called Äntäl Hadi Äntäl Haq.[65] There were a number of people from Khotan and Yarkand in the group that I recognised, most of whom were in the DVD Mukhpul shared with me. In addition, Adil, a prominent *hapiz* from Yarkand was there but was not in the DVD. Every year in August and September a lot of people come to venerate the *mazar*, from not only around Xinjiang but also Gansu and Ningxia (Dawut 2001:160), which, though also in northwestern China, are thousands of kilometres away.

Apparently, the video was not shot during that period of time, because there were very few people at the event. It must be one of the many times that these Sufis from Yarkand and Khotan visited the *mazar*. The singing was in the form of call and response. Mäkhsum would sing one phrase, and the crowd would respond. The same melody went on for the greater part of the video, which lasts about seventeen minutes.

In Thum's discussion of the importance of place in the making of meanings of history among the Uyghur people, he argues that a complete view of the past was only possible with the convergence of text, personage, and place, while the pilgrimage was often a re-enactment of the saints' histories, which enabled pilgrims to participate in the making of history (Thum 2014:131). In this video of a pilgrimage, the collective singing of a *hikmät* about God helped to create a communal sense not only among the participants, but also between the participants and past saints and pilgrims. When the video has been shared online, that communal sense has extended to the virtual community of viewers with similar backgrounds.

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[65] I am grateful to Aynur Kadir for providing me information about this *hikmät*. Video not provided due to privacy and security concerns.

Another video I downloaded from www.youku.com shows Adil reciting *munajat* in a *mazar* shrine while a group of people knelt down and wept[66]. Some people in the previous video were also present, but it was probably not the same occasion as in the last video, as some participants were wearing different clothes. I asked Mäkhsum about the video. He told me that it was in Töt Imam Mazar in Chira County, about five to seven years earlier, which would be around 2009 to 2011. At that time the atmosphere was not as restrictive as it is now, and there were many activities at *mazar*, which are no longer possible (interview, 18 May 2016). The participants were from Khotan, Kashgar and Yarkand. It was the son of one of the participating Sufis in the group who made the video.

I asked Mäkhsum if these online videos had caused him any trouble. He replied that the videos had not yet been a problem. However, Niyaz's son Mukhpul is very sensitive about videos and has always told me not to post any of his videos online, since the government is wary of any religious gathering outside officially sanctioned mosques. He was probably right. The last time I called Niyaz, in May 2018, I learned from him that Mäkhsum had been put into a "re-education camp". I have not been able to check with Mäkhsum again if these videos have counted as incriminating evidence against him.

The account user who uploaded these and other videos of Uyghur Sufis, like those of a *hälqät-sohbät* and trailers of Liu's film about *ashiq*, has deleted all these videos. That is not surprising, as most videos related to Islam have been deleted from www.youku.com, including those about how to recite the Qur'an and how to pray. When I search for "Qur'an" on www.youku.com now, the few results that

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[66] Video not provided due to privacy and security concerns.

show up are mostly international news reports related to the Qur'an, like that of the Qur'an burning protests in Afghanistan in 2012.

However, there are a series of videos of *dhikr* from Yarkand entitled "Yarkand Khaniqa, the Origin of Sufism in China" that are, surprisingly, still on www.youku.com at the time of writing,[67] and have been viewed from around one thousand to a hundred thousand times. Different from those previous ones, these videos have been "produced", with subtitles, picture-in-picture effect, and sometimes voice-over music.

An image in the videos shows that a *dhikr* ceremony was held at the Yar Kocha Khaniqa of Yarkand, led by Khoja Abdulla Äzizkhan who is the seventh-generation *ishan* of the *khaniqa* which traces its origin to Imam Rabbani (Ahmad Sirhindī, 1564–1624), the Indian Sufi known as the "renewer of the second millennium" to his followers (Green 2012:164). The Imam Rabbani order spread to Xinjiang in the eighteenth century, and has been a major Sufi order in Xinjiang since the nineteenth century. The Yar Kocha Khaniqa, or Yarkand Khaniqa as it is called by its Hui followers, houses one of the several branches of the Imam Rabbani order (Hasan 2010:63).

The account has uploaded six videos of a *dhikr* ceremony at the Yar Kocha Khaniqa, ranging from seven to twenty-two minutes. Compared to those I attended in Khotan, the *dhikr* shown in these videos is often long and without *hikmät*. Although the videos do not show the participants dancing, the rocking of their bodies while sitting in a circle looks very dramatic and devoted. One *sapayi* is used. There are often close-up shots of faces of people who are weeping. Chinese

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[67] http://i.youku.com/u/UMTMxMjczMTM3Mg==?spm=a2h0k.11417342.soresults.dname (accessed 3 June 2018).

subtitles appear in every video. Some subtitles are explanations of *dhikr*, for example:

> In the passionate chanting, people use various passionate means to remember Allah, call Allah, and thirst for Allah's happiness. They are deeply inebriated in an intoxicating sea of *dhikr*, with strong breaths, excited and uncontrollable bodies, with their means of missing and longing for Allah, with a mixture of tears and sweat, just for love. Devotional love, pure love, love that is beyond life! *Dhikr*, an ancient ritual of remembering Allah, is kept in the Yarkand Khaniq*a* in a complete form.[68]

Interestingly, Shah Äwliya, founder of the Yarkand Khaniqa, taught only silent *dhikr* to his followers in Xinjiang in the late eighteenth century, but by the late nineteenth century, vocal *dhikr* had become the group's main practice (Hasan 2010:64). Now the suborder practices both silent and vocal *dhikr* (Änwär 2013:37).

Some subtitles in the video are about the history of the *khaniqa*: "In the mid-eighteenth century, on a mission of God, the venerable Shah Äwliya spread the sublime Naqshbandiyya path to Yarkand, Xinjiang, China, and established the Yarkand Khaniqa."[69] Some refer to the Qur'an or Hadith to show the importance of *dhikr*. Besides *dhikr*, the text used *dayier*, a term transliterated from *dairä* which means "circle" in the Uyghur language, to refer to the ceremony. It would seem that the person who edited and uploaded these videos is knowledgeable about Sufism.

In the sixth video[70], there are lengthy and somewhat propangandic texts at the end about the *khaniqa* and its *ishan*:

> …Yarkand Khaniqa has had deep influences on China, as well as Islamic countries in Central Asia, Southeast Asia and even the Middle East…. In the teachings of the late

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[68] http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNjMwNzg1NzE2.html?spm=a2hzp.8244740.0.0 (accessed 4 June 2018). All texts in this series of videos were translated by the author.
[69] http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNjMwNzMzMjky.html?spm=a2hzp.8244740.0.0 (accessed 4 June 2018).
[70] http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNjMxODQ2NzY0.html?spm=a2hzp.8244740.0.0 (accessed 4 June 2018).

venerable founding *ishan* Shah Äwliya, he predicted, "There will be a sun among my seventh-generation descendants.... He will carry forward again the right path of venerable Imam Rabbani—the renovation of the second millennium of the Islamic era".... The current *murshid* of the Yarkand Khaniqa, Mawlana Shah Khoja Abdulla Äzizkhan Yarkandi is a thirty-fourth-generation descendant of Prophet Muhammad, tenth-generation descendant of the renovator of the second millennium—Imam Rabbani, and the seventh-generation descendant that founding *ishan* Shah Äwliya predicted.

Compared to the VCDs/DVD that I collected in Khotan, which show implicit proselytising through the editing of video documentation of Sufi gatherings, these online videos present more active proselytising through their production. Photos of the *ishan* are inserted into the videos, including a photo of him in an Arabic ankle-length robe, holding a walking stick, and posing with his disciples, with Mecca in the background. This visual composition portrays him as a charismatic religious leader with a lineage that derives from the Middle East.

Interestingly, the voice-over music that is played at this part is Al-Mu'allim (the Teacher), a song in English and Arabic about Prophet Muhammad by British Muslim singer Sami Yusuf that was released in 2003 and became an international hit throughout the Muslim world. The choice of this song for this video indicates that the producer is aware of the international Muslim world, and has used this song to hint that the assumed identity of the *ishan* is the thirty-fourth-generation descendent of Prophet Muhammad, and is comparing the *ishan*'s charisma to that of Prophet Muhammad.

The Yarkand Khaniqa is one of the four *khaniqa* in Yarkand permitted by the local government to carry out religious gatherings. The other three are Tiräkbagh Khaniqa, which also belongs to the Imam Rabbani order; Hidaytullakhan Khoja

Khaniqa, which belongs to Qadiriyya but also practices *dhikiri jähri* of the Naqshbandiyya; and Mäliknisakhan Khoja Yengi Mähälla Khaniqa, which belongs to Naqshbandiyya (Änwär 2013:38–39). Each of the four *khaniqa* has its own followers, who don't attend gatherings at the other *khaniqa* (Änwär, personal communication, July 2018). The competition between the four *khaniqa* and their leaders is probably one of the reasons why these videos look more propagandistic than those from Khotan, where the *khaniqa* are less institutionalised.

The use of Chinese subtitles shows that these videos were probably produced by some Hui people, whose first language is Chinese, rather than Uyghurs. This is more clearly shown in the seventh video uploaded by the account, a video about *ishan* Khoja Abdulla Äzizkhan's trip to Gansu Province to meet his Hui disciples.[71] Again, the song Al-Mu'allim is used in this video. Starting with some texts that introduce the Yarkand Khaniqa and clips of their *dhikr*, the video goes on to show Khoja Abdulla Äzizkhan arriving at the train station of Lanzhou, capital city of Gansu Province, and being received by a group of Hui people who line up in the square outside the station. The *ishan* shakes hands with them one by one, and a still image shows him stroking the face of a baby held by a follower.

A car then takes him to Linxia, a town about 120 kilometres away where the Beizhuang Menhuan, a branch of the Yarkand Khaniqa, is located. There the *ishan* is greeted by hundreds or even thousands of his Hui followers. Some policemen are seen to be maintaining the order, which means that the gathering has been acknowledged and approved by the authorities. The watermark on a scene of the

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[71] http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNjMxMjA1Mzk2.html?spm=a2hzp.8244740.0.0 (accessed 4 June 2018).

ishan giving a sermon to his followers of the Beizhuang Menhuan shows the date of April 11, 2010.

In their Uyghur-language book on the history of Islam in Xinjiang, Nurhaji and Chen reconstruct the activities of the Imam Rabbani order in Ayköl (in today's Aqsu prefecture) through an oral history of the Hui people in Xinjiang: Äli Akhun, a messenger of Imam Rabbani, travelled from India to Xinjiang in the mid-eighteenth century, and established a *madrasa* to preach Imam Rabbani's teaching (Nurhaji and Chen 1995:382). Ayköl represents one of the two systems of Imam Rabbani's order in Xinjiang. The other one is based in Yarkand. The reason Nurhaji and Chen refer to the Hui people's oral history follows from the close relationship between Uyghur and Hui followers of the Imam Rabbani order. Äli Akhun had five disciples—two Uyghurs and three Huis. Similarly, Ma Fang, one of Äli Akhun's Hui disciples, had two Uyghur disciples and three Hui disciples (Nurhaji and Chen 1995:383).

Hasan also notes the spread of the Imam Rabbani order among both Uyghur and Hui people through the Yarkand Khaniqa, which has five branches, three of which are among the Hui people—Beizhuang Menhuan of Linxia, Dong Daotang of Turpan, and Lucaogou Khufiyya Menhuan of Ürümchi county (Hasan 2010:64). These videos of the Yarkand Khaniqa have probably been produced and uploaded by people of the Beizhuang Menhuan. By doing this, the Beizhuang Menhuan seems to be both claiming its orthodoxy, through the lineage of the Yarkand Khaniqa which can then be traced back to Prophet Muhammad, as well as educating its followers about Beizhuang Menhuan's history.

I didn't recognise anybody I know in this series of videos. It would seem that people in the videos belong to a different cohort. Compared to those videos of

Khotan from the VCDs/DVDs, which seemed to have been made mostly for personal use, these videos must have been deliberately made, in an effort to make use of technologies to proselytise, perhaps in competition with other brotherhoods.

I found a PDF file in Chinese in circulation on the Internet entitled Yarkand Khaniqa (Yeerqiang Daotang), which contains a history of the *khaniqa* narrated by its *ishan* Khoja Abdulla Äzizkhan and compiled by the author who is apparently a Chinese-speaking follower of his. The text describes the Yarkand Khaniqa as the origin of four main Sufi orders in China, and documents the *khaniqa* sending *khälipä* to various areas, including Aqsu, Guma, Khotan, Ili, Ürümchi, Shaanxi, Sichuan, Namangan of Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan. The followers of the *khaniqa* include people of the Hui, Dongxiang and Salar ethnic groups. Through the use of these videos, their production techniques, and dissemination on the Internet, the producer has enhanced the charisma of the *ishan*, and showcased the range of his influence with followers across boundaries of localities and ethnicities.

The online videos of *dhikr* has allowed many netizens, both Muslims and non-Muslims, to get to know the Sufi practice in a visual medium for the first time. Under the videos, a female Muslim commented: "Salam, can women participate in this?" Another person observed: "Although I don't understand what they are chanting, it looks breathtaking! Sufism is a part of the cream of Islam! I've seen such videos from abroad! First time to see a video like this from China! Rely upon Allah! I have to go to the place in the video to study when I have a chance! Where in Xinjiang is this?" The account holder replied "Yarkand Khaniqa of Xinjiang, in Yarkand County, Kashgar."[72]

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[72] http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNjMwNjAzMTIw.html?spm=a2hzp.8244740.0.0 (accessed 5 June 2018). Comments in this series of videos are translated by the author.

Comments can be found under most videos in the series, but not all of them are positive. For example, "The best way of memorising God is *salat*. Respectful and pious *salat* is the best way to communicate with God. Your fatuous behavior can only lead you astray." "They are deep in the trap that Satan set up for them. How pitiful!"[73] While the Internet provides a platform which makes proselytising easier, the platform has also become a convenient battleground at the same time.

The texts in the videos are taken from the PDF file, so they were probably created by the same person. The pdf file also contains some pictures of the *khaniqa* and *ishan*, with watermarks of a blog devoted to the *khaniqa*.[74] However, the blogger had deleted all of the blog content by the time I accessed it. Fortunately, I found that the contents of the PDF file were also posted at the Hui Sufi website www.chinasufi.cn, in its sub-forum devoted to the Yarkand Khaniqa,[75] which is one of ten sub-forums devoted to various orders of Hui Sufis.

In the online forum, the texts have also caused some argument from commentators, who question the author's claim that the Yarkand Khaniqa is the origin of four Sufi orders. That this sub-forum devoted to the Yarkand Khaniqa survives is probably because it is part of an online forum of the Hui people, who are subject to less restrictions compared to the Uyghurs, not least because the Hui are more Sinicised and so are not regarded as posing a separatist threat.

A sinicised, patriotic Islam is what the government is advocating, as is seen in the recent speech by Yang Faming, chair of the Chinese Islamic Association on "Rooted in the Fertile Soil of Chinese Civilization: Uphold the Chinafication of Our

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[73] http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNjMwNzg1NzE2.html?spm=a2hzp.8244740.0.0 (accessed 5 June 2018).
[74] http://blog.sina.com.cn/yeerqiangdaotang (accessed 5 June 2018).
[75] http://www.chinasufi.cn/forum-308-1.html

Country's Islam", in which he criticised phenomena such as the construction of mosques in foreign styles and the promotion of the notion of "halal", and called for socialist ideologies to enter the mosque.[76]

Another video of Sufi *dhikr* on www.youku.com was one of a *dhikr* ceremony in Guangzhou at the *mazar* of Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās, a companion of Prophet Muhammad who is said to have introduced Islam to China in the seventh century (Lipman 1997:29). Thanks to the development of Guangzhou as an international trade centre in recent decades, large numbers of Muslims from around China and from outside China have moved to the city. As a result, the shrine of Waqqās has become an international centre of worship. The video was uploaded in January 2014 and it was taken down in June 2018.[77] While it was available, it was viewed more than 230,000 times. The participants of the *dhikr* in this video were mostly Hui Muslims, but among them is a person of Afro-Caribbean heritage, probably a trader from west Africa, and a Uyghur man, Jappar from Khotan, who was in the DVD that Mukhpul shared with me, and whom I have also met in person.

The shrine of Waqqās has become a site of pilgrimage for Uyghur Sufis in recent years too. Many Sufis from Khotan who I know have travelled there, although it is a long journey. For many of them, if they have ever travelled outside of Xinjiang, it is to Guangzhou. Such is the case with Mukhpul, who travelled by train together with Nuri, a student of Niyaz, all the way to Guangzhou to venerate

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[76]
 http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-03/10/c1122516826.htm (accessed 13 August 2018). English translation by Max Oidtmann: https://www.academia.edu/36251227/_Rooted_in_the_Fertile_Soil_of_Chinese_Civilizatio n_Uphold_the_Chinafication_of_Our_Countrys_Islam_ (accessed 22 August 2019).
[77] Another version of the video still exists at https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMjUxODg1MTc1Mg==.html?spm=a2h0k.11417342.sore sults.dtitle (accessed 13 August 2018).

the shrine of Waqqās. It is almost as far as you can get from Xinjiang and still be in China.

First, they took a train from Khotan to Ürümchi, which took twenty-four hours or more, and then changed to a train from Ürümchi to Guangzhou, which took forty-eight hours or more. Together with the waiting time, it took them four days to arrive in Guangzhou. The lengthy journey adds to the feel of pilgrimage, and the experience of worshipping at the *mazar* in Guangzhou is rewarding, not least because it is a city with far fewer restrictions that is the case in Xinjiang. Mamut, who is the host of the *hälqä-sohbät* in the DVD, is said to often spend one or two months in Guangzhou a year.

The Guangzhou video started with people sitting in a circle, and a leader reciting through a headset, an accessory I never saw used in the *hälqä-sohbät* in Xinjiang, although it is used by Abdurakhman when he busks. The headset soon proved useful, when the lead reciter had to compete with a loudspeaker, through which the management announced that a phone had been found and asked the owner of the phone to go to the management to retrieve ith. Many people gathered around the circle of *dhikr* to look, and, at the same time, many people videoed the ceremony with their phones. The participants were a diverse mix of ethnicities and nationalities. A senior man, who looks like a member of the *dhikr* gathering, is videoing with a camera and tripod. The African in the circle also uses his phone to video part of the ritual.

Different from the Uyghur *hapiz* who recites *hikmät*, the leader here is mostly leading the *dhikr* that is to be repeated by others. The participants wag their heads and bodies while reciting the *dhikr*. After a while, a man begins to play a *sapayi*, which I have never seen played among the Hui people. According to Ma Qiang, a

Chinese scholar who researches the Hui Muslim community, this group is probably a new brotherhood of Hui Sufis from Xinjiang, called *Simen Tongxing* ("Four Orders Walking Together") who have been influenced by Uyghur Sufis (Ma Qiang, personal communication, June 2018).

The brotherhood's name indicates that it combines teachings of four Sufi orders, in the same way as that claimed by the Yarkand Khaniqa, so there might be some links between the Yarkand Khaniqa and the *Simen Tongxing*. The use of the *sapayi* is another influence from Uyghur Sufism. The melodies, however, are dissimilar to those of Uyghur *dhikr*, and are with few ornamentations. Rather, the *dhikr* of this gathering seems to have been influenced by the Buddhist chanting and the folk music of the Han people in northwestern China, a phenomenon typical of Hui *dhikr* and Qur'anic recitation of the region.[78]

Later, the *hapiz* leads people to stand up, and many of the participants begin the *sama* dance, forming a smaller circle in the centre of the big circle. Soon, Jappar appears and joins the dance, and for a while, he whirls in the centre. The video is about thirteen minutes long, and does not show the entire ritual, but it provides a rare example of *dhikr* in China performed by a multi-cultural mix of people, representing various ethnicities, nationalities, and sects, in a sacred place—a place that is imagined to be the tomb of someone from the centre of Islam and reconstructed as a transethnic site for religious devotion.

For Uyghur Sufis, who usually map out their world by the *mazar* spread all over Xinjiang, the Waqqās Mazar extends their world by both stretching the physical distance of their sacred routes and by creating opportunities for them to meet Muslims from other parts of the world, which in turn, strengthens their faith.

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[78] Similar recordings can be found at http://www.soundislamchina.org/?cat=106.

Given that it is difficult for most Uyghurs to travel abroad, Guangzhou is the most reachable place for them to feel the global *ummah* in a cosmopolitan atmosphere in which people of different backgrounds can recite *dhikr* together. This is in sharp contrast to Khotan where even cross-village worship is discouraged, if not banned.

5.6 Mobile phones

Since the early 2010s, smart phones have become common in China, and SD cards, which are called *domitika*, transliterated from the Chinese term *duomeitika* ("multi-media card"), have become a new means of storing and disseminating multi-media files in Xinjiang, especially videos and recordings. When I asked Mäkhsum if I could still find cassettes of Sufi sounds in 2016, he said they had been replaced by DVDs and *domitika* now (interview, 16 May 2018).

Compared to cassettes which mostly contain local content, *domitika* often feature more international content. This may have more to do with the changing times than with the media formats per se. When cassettes were popular, less information from abroad was available due to the travel restrictions, however in the 2010s there is much more cross-border flow of information because of the increase in travel. But the technology is also important. With the rise of the Internet and smartphones, it takes just a click now to share international religious content, which is heavily censored in mainstream channels in China.

Once I asked Mäkhsum about the two styles of Qur'anic recitation in Khotan—one a more local style that was transmitted from the Ferghana Valley area of Uzbekistan centuries ago, and the other an Arabic style that has been adopted in recent years by some young imams. These imams are often called Wahabbi in Xinjiang, a term that carries associations of religious dogmatism or

extremism (Waite 2007:171). Mäkhsum uses the local style, but he has also learned the Arabic style through videos copied into the *domitika* of his mobile phone.

Mäkhsum said he didn't look for such files, but he used to have some in his phone a few years ago. However, he has deleted them as they can be used as evidence of religious extremism. The Xinjiang authorities are especially watchful of new media like the SD card, and a report by the Fenghuang Zhoukan magazine in Feburary 2015 claims that terrorists leave SD cards wrapped in banknotes in the street to disseminate extremist thinking.[79] The government has also banned the Arabic style of Qur'anic recitation (Mäkhsum, personal communication, May 2016), although as Harris argues with reference to a village *dhikr* ritual of Uyghur women in 2012, the borrowing of foreign styles of Qur'anic recitation in Xinjiang often happens in a process of decontextualisation, so absorbing the sounds of reformists does not necessarily mean agreeing with their ideology (Harris 2014c:120–121). In other words, there is nothing intrinsically "extremist" about the style.

In 2011, the Chinese social media app WeChat was released and has since become the most popular social media in China. A lot of video and sound recordings are shared among its users. WeChat became very popular among the Uyghurs too, especially from mid-2013 to mid-2014, when perhaps a million Uyghurs inside Xinjiang and in the diaspora used it, often sharing Islamic content. Harris and Isa note that WeChat not only provides a more democratic platform that encourages grassroots voices and creativity, but also shapes the message it conveys to some extent through its support of local production, for example, the

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[79]
https://m.ifeng.com/yritr/news/shareNews?forward=1&aid=96274270&aman=&gud=&ch= (accessed 9 June 2018).

affective and mobilising power of the mediated voice through effects such as reverb.[80]

The relatively free sharing of religious content on WeChat stopped in 2014 when the authorities implemented a crackdown. When I first met Mäkhsum in 2015, he did not have WeChat on his phone, because he was afraid of being caught with sensitive content. At the ubiquitous checkpoints in Xinjiang, mobile phones are often checked in search of extremist thinking, which can mean anything related to Islam. I have a Uyghur friend who asked me to delete some of my posts on WeChat Moments, because she said the authorities might use some key words to search her phone, and if anything sensitive was found in the WeChat Moments of her friends, she would be in trouble too. Mukhpul used to have an iPhone, but he switched to a Samsung, because he said the authorities in Xinjiang tend to check iPhones more frequently. While the Internet and smart phones have made it convenient for Uyghurs to share files with their friends, they have also made their lives more risky.

When I started my fieldwork in Khotan in July 2015, the Internet was still down since a riot happened in Yarkand in July 2014.[81] Although there was an Internet connection, it was extremely slow and WeChat could only work with some "accelerator" software. I experienced a similar Internet cutoff in Ürümchi in 2009 after the 5th July Riot, because the government wanted to stop the online organisation of more riots. Fortunately, not long after I started my fieldwork, the Internet resumed and people could use WeChat normally.

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[80] http://www.soundislamchina.org/?p=1222 (accessed 4 April 2019).
[81] See https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/reports-07292014102851.html (accessed 4 April 2019).

I became WeChat friends with many people in Khotan. Even Mäkhsum installed WeChat later, and he would often send me some voice messages. Once he even sent me a picture of him attending a governmental meeting with religious figures. Mukhpul would send me voice messages of music-making in his home, especially when I was away. For example, when I was in Beijing and some musicians visited his home and played *muqam*, he would make some recordings (limited to one minute at the most) and send them to me as voice messages. I also received some video messages from Tursunturäm, Abdurakhman and the other musicians rehearsing for a concert in Korea (see Chapter 6) while I was in Beijing. But they would never share such video clips publicly on WeChat Moments. For that same reason, Mukhpul didn't let me upload videos of his wedding online.

There are many public channels on WeChat, created by organisations as well as individuals, for various content, including religion. I have saved a lot of articles from different WeChat channels since I began to use WeChat in 2013. However, in June 2018, when I looked back at those articles related to Islam, most of them were no longer available. Some appear to have been "deleted by the publisher", like "The 99 Names of Allah", "A 3-D Cartoon Demonstration of the Movements of Salat", and "Professor Tugrul Keshkin Talks about Uyghurs in Diaspora".

Other posts are not available anymore because the channels themselves have been closed down—due to complaints from readers that the channels are "suspected of violating Temporary Regulation on the Administration and Development of Public Information from Instant Messaging Apps"—like "Complete Recordings of 114 Suras of the Qur'an", "Current Research of China's Frontiers in the US", and "A Primary Observation of Private Qur'anic Schools in Xinjiang".

Not surprisingly, a post in Uyghur language about the music of the late rock star Äkhmätjan Mämätimin that a friend forwarded to me in 2016 has also been deleted. By 2017, most of my Uyghur friends had deleted me from their friend lists, because they are not currently allowed to keep in touch with people abroad. While my WeChat moments are replete with short videos of both musical and religious content posted by people from other areas and ethnicities, my Uyghur friends have almost disappeared from my social media. In a time of fast-developing media technologies, they have been marginalised again, as they have been for much of their history as part of China.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the mediation and dissemination of the sounded practices of Uyghur Sufis through different formats—cassettes, VCDs/DVDs, online videos, and mobile phones/social media. These media have not only helped Uyghur people to document personal memories, but have also provided platforms for them to record and narrate their culture as a whole, especially when this culture is denied by mainstream media.

The oldest of these media, the cassette, was the first affordable format for common people to record sounds. They provided the earliest examples of DIY documentation of the Uyghur soundscape, and contributed to the burgeoning Uyghur pop and record industry. The decentralised and duplicable nature of the cassette also helped Uyghur Sufis to document their sounded culture, first for personal use, but later for wider circulation too. There is a clear educational dimension to these cassettes, which have been used by people to learn *dastan* and *hikmät*. For researchers, they also constitute the earliest recordings of Uyghur Sufi

practices made by the practitioners themselves, and contain valuable data that can provide material for further research.

When cassettes were gradually replaced by the digital media of VCD/DVD in the 2000s, people continued with their documentation, using the new media, to record and disseminate Sufi content, such as videos of *hälqä-sohbät*. However, compared to the earlier era, the VCD/DVD era sees a greater flow of international information. As a result, Uyghur Sufis find themselves to be challenged by more reformist Islamic ideas against their practices, often through VCDs/DVDs. By including videos of both *hälqä-sohbät* and *täbligh*, the VCDs/DVDs of Uyghur Sufis not only document their practices but also promote their ideologies in a context of competition against reformist thinking.

Digital files saved in SD cards and shared through social media provide a more decentralised way for both Sufi and reformist practices to spread, and a more open site for the debate of religious ideas. At the same time, video-sharing websites also provide an opportunity for Uyghur Sufis to proselytise through production and mediation, and expand their views through exchanges with Hui Muslims and foreign Muslims, despite the reduction of the space for virtual activities as a result of the stricter controls of the authorities.

The Uyghur Sufis, whose voice has no outlet in the mainstream media, have been making use of various micro-media to document and disseminate their practices and ideas. For them, cassettes, VCDs/DVDs and online platforms offer a resilient means of writing their history, in a way similar to the *tazkirah* manuscripts that were collectively written, copied, and edited, and consumed by the community in a way that aids maintenance of their community identity.

Chapter 6. Force Majeure—An Ethnography of Cancelled Tours of Uyghur Sufi Musicians

Contemporary ethnomusicology sees a greater extent of reciprocation between the fieldworker and informant, as opposed to the traditional model in which the former's activity is limited to collecting data from the latter. As the ethnomusicologist's role changes in fieldwork, "we are moving from a concern about the potential negative impact on those we study and toward active advocacy for those same individuals and their communities" (Cooley and Barz 2008:13). There is also an important movement in anthropology and ethnomusicology toward collaborative models in which research is combined with advocacy (Seeger 2008:278).

Music can be a tool to assist in claims for material rights by groups of native people, for example, the claim of land by the Australian indigenous people (Koch 1995) and the Suyá people of Brazil (Seeger 2008). However, such advocacies can only be achieved when the right of musical expression itself is guaranteed. In this chapter, I discuss Uyghur Sufi musicians' right to perform their own repertoire and represent their own community, which is tied to the right of movement. While doing fieldwork, I became involved in organising tours for some of the musicians with whom I worked. I tried to advocate that the musicians had a cultural right to be able to undertake these opportunities to tour as performers. When analysing the processes and results of these projects, I am concerned with whether my efforts count as reciprocity, as well as considering to what extent ethnomusicologists should engage themselves in advocacy and how informative these activities are in ethnomusicological research.

Before starting my PhD study, I worked as a music journalist and concert producer. In my role as music producer, I once produced concerts in Shanghai for Abdurakhman, who introduced me to the Uyghur Sufi community that became the focus of this study. As those concerts helped Abdurakhman to gain some income, mobility, and credentials (exemplified by the accolade of a local government certificate for his performance in Shanghai and by his narration of his experience of travelling to Shanghai during his busking), as well as promoting the understanding of Uyghur music and culture in the society at large (exemplified by the feedback from the audience), I see helping Uyghur musicians to tour as a form of reciprocity. As I myself began to learn about many different musical cultures through going to concerts, I consider such concerts as effective ways of promoting Uyghur music more widely.

I also believe that such concerts will help focus people's attention on the individual performers who are transmitting this traditional music rather than on the music itself, which is often a problem in China's discourse of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). For example, Abdurakhman and some other *dastanchi* (singers of *dastan* epics) were invited to perform at the first International Symposium on Uyghur Folk Dastan in China, held in Beijing in October 2015, yet the programme did not mention their names but simply referred to them as "*dastan* artists".

Another example is the book *A Study of the Ecology and Form of Dolan Muqam* (*Daolang mukamu de shengtai yu xingtai yanjiu*, Zhou et al. 2004), which was the outcome of a research project headed by the late ethnomusicologist Zhou Ji on the music of the Dolan people, a sub-group of the Uyghur. The book has two attached CDs of Dolan Muqam made by Zhou's team, but again, did not list the names of the musicians. Such conventions reflect a tendency in China to regard folk

music as collectively owned assets without recognition of the individual performer's work.

Although China has established a system of bearers of Intangible Cultural Heritage and has recognised 1986 national-level ICH bearers at the time of writing, official data about these bearers is often scant, providing only name, age, locality and the area of specialisation[82]. The sparsity of information on bearers has not improved since the 1980s when folk music reference works supplied very little information other than performers' names and counties of residence; sometimes even the performers' names were omitted (Rees 2009:6). By presenting the bearers as individual artists instead of anonymous conveyers of traditions, I hope to give them credit that they deserve.

During the period of my fieldwork, I tried to arrange three overseas tours for the musicians with whom I worked. To the great disappointment of me and the musicians, all these efforts failed for various reasons. Although some ethnomusicologists involved in applied ethnomusicology projects might feel uncomfortable reporting their failures (Seeger 2008:282–283)—as do the musicians in this project—I am willing to share the experience because it illustrates the situation of the community I am researching, and is informative to other researchers and cultural workers.

6.1 Hong Kong

The first project was to give a performance at the "International Conference on Islamic Arts in Intercultural Perspective in Conjunction with Workshop on Ethnographies of Islam in China" [cit.], held in March 2016 at the Chinese

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[82] As shown on http://www.ihchina.cn/6/6_1.html, the official website for China's Intangible Cultural Heritage (accessed 9 August 2017).

University of Hong Kong in collaboration with the Sounding Islam in China research project based at SOAS, University of London, UK. As a member of the research project, I suggested this concert to the organising committee. It seemed a highly appropriate opportunity for Uyghur Sufi musicians to perform at an event focusing on the sound world of Chinese Muslims. This performance would enable the conference to present voices from research subjects themselves as well as researchers, and would add the live experience of sounds of Islam to the academic papers presented at the event. In addition, the event would promote the sounded practice of Uyghur Sufis—which is little known outside their community—and add credentials to the musicians.

After discussing the performance with some musicians and considering the budget and various other factors, I selected four musicians to take part in this performance: Abdurakhman, who is a *dastan* epic singer*;* Tursuntokhti, a *muqam* expert; Mäkhsum, a Sufi ritual singer and organiser; and Niyaz, who is not as good a musician but was a very important project facilitator. Niyaz speaks Chinese and knows the Uyghur Sufi community well, so could help me communicate more effectively with the others musicians. He is also more experienced in dealing with government formalities, and was able to provide a venue for rehearsals.

Unfortunately, this proposed Hong Kong tour failed because the necessary paperwork procedures were so complicated that it was impossible for us to complete them in time, even though we started working on the paperwork for the tour about six months in advance. Although Hong Kong is theoretically part of China, it is more complicated for these musicians to travel to Hong Kong than to a different country, because they have to get permission not only from the Hong Kong government, but also from the Chinese government. This was further

complicated by the event organiser requiring that the musicians obtain working visas for Hong Kong, despite the performance being an unpaid component of an academic conference. To avoid the paradox that Hong Kong requires a visa from citizens of China of which it is a part, the visa to Hong Kong is termed *qianzhu* in Chinese, different from *qianzheng* which refers to visa from a different country—but they have the same function.

The process started with the musicians' application for the "Exit-Entry Permit for Travelling to and from Hong Kong and Macao" (EEP), the designated travel document for Chinese mainlanders travelling to Hong Kong. Mäkhsum failed to get this document because he has records of "illegal religious activities" that renders him a "key person for inspection". We had to replace him with Nurmämät who was able to get the EEP, however the replacement of Mäkhsum created tensions between Mäkhsum and the other musicians of the group because Mäkhsum thought that they were not supporting him.

The second step was to put in an application for "entry for employment as professionals in Hong Kong" to the Immigration Department of Hong Kong government, and if this was completed, the third step would have been to apply for an exit endorsement from the Public Security Bureau office where the applicant's *hukou* (household registration) is kept. The application for Hong Kong's working visas involves an application form with details of the applicants, the submission of any certificate of professional qualification, and a letter of consent to be signed by the applicant's employer or person in charge of the applicant's dossier; the letter of consent indicates that if the applicant succeeds in getting employment in Hong Kong, he will be allowed to leave for Hong Kong for work. Most of the musicians

are unemployed, and need to go to the sub-district office (*juweihui*) or village office (*dadui*) for the signature.

For these Uyghur farmers without affiliation to any working unit, every step was difficult, and we spent a lot of time being creative in preparing the required materials. For the letter of consent, only those musicians who had better connections with the cadres of governmental agencies were able to get the necessary official signatures. For the musicians who were unable to obtain appropriate government signatures for the letter of consent, I had to find nominal employers who were willing to help.

Abdurakhman's ability to obtain the "professional qualification" certificates required—an absurd requirement for a grassroots musician—was facilitated by his participation in governmental events, and the documents he had acquired. These documents included certificates of his status as an ICH bearer, a member of Xinjiang Folk Artists' Association, and a "graduate" of three training workshops for *dastanchi* in Ürümchi organised by the government. Through attending these governmental events, Abdurakhman both increased his agency as a folk musician and raised his social status, which was important for him as an otherwise poor farmer with few social resources, or family support (he does not have any sons) in the harsh environment of south Xinjiang. Elevating his social and musical profile would enable him to attract more students who would provide revenue, farm labour and an increasing network of social connections through which he could further improve his status.

When we prepared for the tour, he told me that he had more than twenty students; now he has many more students, since the government arranged regular classes for him to teach. Many of them are only nominal students, such as Niyaz,

Mäkhsum and Nurmämät, who did not really study with him but often sent him money and gifts and helped him in other ways. For example, Niyaz helped him to dig a well in his courtyard, and provided accommodation and food for him when he came to town to busk.

In exchange, Abdurakhman recommended that Niyaz and Nurmämät become members of the Xinjiang Folk Artists' Association, and brought them to attend the Ürümchi training workshops which also enabled them to get "graduation certificates" as *dastanchi*, although neither of them really count as a *dastanchi*. These certificates endow them with a semi-official status that affords some protection from being accused of attending "illegal religious gatherings". The documents are also valuable for the application of Hong Kong working visas.

However, after we provided these documents as proof of the musicians' professional qualifications, the Hong Kong Immigration Department highlighted that some of the musicians' names in Chinese characters and/or their dates of birth on the certificates were not exactly the same as those on their ID cards—a common problem in Xinjiang due to the lack of standardisation in transcribing Uyghur names into Chinese, together with the carelessness of governmental workers (many of whom are Uyghurs who do not know the Chinese language well) —and asked us to get official letters to prove they are the same persons. At that point, it looked like we would not have enough time. We hadn't secured visa permissions from Hong Kong, let alone permissions from the mainland side.

It also takes a long time to post anything from south Xinjiang to Hong Kong, and since the Chinese New Year was approaching, governmental agencies were not working efficiently. At that time, I was in Beijing to apply for my tourist visa to Hong Kong and to prepare for my presentation at the conference. From that

distance, it became more difficult to communicate with the musicians in Xinjiang. After reassessing a realistic estimate of the time it would take to organise these logistics, I decided we had to give up the project. In retrospect, I think I made the right decision, because even if they got permission from Hong Kong, I am not sure that they would have received permission from the China side. While Abdurakhman is someone trusted by the local government and can to some extent guarantee the others' credibility as his students, Tursuntokhti, the final musician of the party, was resident of a different region so his travel document and letter of consent had to be separately applied for. I did not expect that he would be able to get them, and there seemed to be many other unpredictable factors.

In the end, I gave my conference presentation on the Islamic Soundscapes of Khotan without the musician's demonstration of these soundscapes. The fact that I was able to travel to Hong Kong, in contrast to the musicians, is indicative of the relative freedom of movement which I enjoy as a result of having my *hukou* in Beijing, a higher social status endowed by my education and affiliation to a university, and my language skills of Chinese, and English. Applying for my EEP and Hong Kong visa in Beijing was also much simpler.

As my experience relative to that of the musicians highlights, the musicians who are farmers of the Uyghur Muslim minority occupy subordinate positions in terms of mobility. As John Urry notes, "moving between places physically or virtually can be a source of status and power, and expression of the rights to movement either temporarily or permanently" (Urry 2007:9). This is most obvious in south Xinjiang. Every time I fly from Khotan to Ürümchi or vice versa (the only flights operated at Khotan airport go to Ürümchi), I can see that Uyghur people account for less than half of the passengers, although 97% of the population of

Khotan area are Uyghurs. This is also the reason why Abdurakhman likes to boast about having travelled to Beijing and Shanghai when he busks, since those cities are far beyond the reach of most Uyghurs in south Xinjiang, so to have such experiences showcases his special status.

6.2 Korea

The second project was to give a concert entitled "Sufi Night" at "Transgression and Syncretism", a programme of the Asia Culture Centre Theatre in Gwangju, South Korea. This concert was scheduled to happen in March 2016 immediately after the conference in Hong Kong. Having to deal with the two projects at the same time complicated the logistical organisation, because each place required different travel documents and visa application procedures. However, travelling to Korea seemed simpler, because we only needed to apply for Korean visas, and so did not, theoretically, require permissions from the Chinese government to travel.

Of course, the musicians had to have passports in the first place. It has always been more difficult for Uyghur people to get passports, especially those without any affiliation to any working unit. However, during 2015–2016 (when I did my fieldwork), the Xinjiang government loosened passport controls, which enabled people like these musicians to obtain passports, although one of the musicians got his passport so late that there was barely enough time to apply for the visa for Korea. At that point, I was already in Beijing, and I just managed to get his passport from the courier in time to submit to the Korean Embassy.

Then I headed to Hong Kong to attend the conference. I was scheduled to go back to Beijing, where I would pick up the musicians' visas, meet the musicians and

travel with them to Korea. However, while I was in Hong Kong I checked the status of the musicians' Korean visa applications, via the Korean embassy website, and to my shock, learned that their visa applications had been rejected, because they had "failed to provide legitimate reasons to enter Korea". That did not make sense, as we were invited by the Asia Culture Centre which is a government-owned organisation. Maybe it was because the musicians did not have stable jobs and income, or because they have never travelled abroad, or there was some restricted reason of which I was unaware. Nonetheless, in both the Korean and Hong Kong contexts, I feel that the musicians' identities as Muslims from Xinjiang had a negative influence upon their visa applications.

I immediately contacted the event organiser in Korea. They replied they would talk to the Korean Embassy in Beijing, and asked the musicians to travel from Xinjiang to Beijing according to the original plan. Just as I was beginning to feel a glimmer of hope that the performance would take place, a further problem arose. The musicians were not allowed to board the plane at their local airport. The reason given was that the organiser in Korea had booked their flights using their passport numbers, however the musicians only had their ID cards on them at the airport because their passports were still in the Korean Embassy in Beijing.

Although I had told the Korean organiser to book the domestic flights using the ID numbers, the Korean organiser said there was no place to enter ID numbers on the website on which they booked the flights, and added that as long as the names were correct it shouldn't be a problem. I was still in Hong Kong when the musicians called me from Khotan airport. After endless phone calls to both Xinjiang and Korea, it became clear that this problem was insurmountable, so the Korea performance had to be abandoned and the musicians had to go home.

It was a hard day for me, and probably even more so for the musicians. They had had a party at Niyaz's home before they departed for the airport, and some friends came to the airport to see them off. I cannot imagine their mood when they had to go home. The Korean organiser originally said they would book other flights for them the next day, but later decided to give it up because the hope of getting visas for the musicians seemed slim and the organiser could not afford to lose more money. I filed a complaint on the musicians' behalf to the Korean Embassy in Beijing, to no avail. And like the first time, I travelled to Gwangju by myself and showed a film that I made of the musicians. Again, my travel to Korea clearly shows the higher degree of mobility that I enjoy compared to the musicians.

6.3 Turkey

The third project was a performance at the Konya Mystic Music Festival in Turkey. In this case, the organiser had enough budget to bring nine musicians, and we were hoping to re-present a *mäshräp* on the stage, a musical gathering that involves songs attributed to the Central Asian Sufi mystic Shah Mashrab. I also named the group "Khotan Mäshripi" which means Mäshräp of Khotan. There was no problem with the visas this time, as Chinese nationals can get electronic visas for Turkey online. I got visas for the musicians, booked their flights and accommodation, and consulted a friend of mine who works with the Khotan police whether it would be alright for them to travel to Turkey on their own. He said it should be fine.

Niyaz was still apprehensive and wanted to go to the police himself to ask about it. I advised him not to, because things might get more complicated if he did so, but he said they might get into trouble if they travel abroad without the

authorities' permission. Apparently, he understands the local situation better than I do. It transpired that he had already asked some of his friends who worked in the local government, and each time he asked he got a different answer.

For example, on one occasion he was told it would be fine if they came back within ten days, as the authority was concerned that some Uyghurs would travel to Mecca for hajj without permission once they were abroad. However, on another occasion when Niyaz enquired about independent travel to Turkey, he was told to travel to and from Turkey directly, not via any other country. In order to play safe, I booked flights for them to fly to Beijing, and from there to Istanbul directly, although flying from Ürümchi via Kazakhstan would have been cheaper and shorter (the Ürümchi–Istanbul flight was no longer running at that time). I had to attend an academic conference in Italy before the festival, and like last time, the plan was for me to fly back to Beijing where I would meet the musicians and fly to Istanbul together. I arranged their accommodation and transportation in Beijing, and to avoid any risk I gave up the idea of arranging any event for them in Beijing.

So Niyaz went to ask the police about travelling to Turkey. At first the police said it was alright, but on 20 September, while I was in Italy, I got a call from Niyaz saying that now only him and Abdurakhman could go as the police suddenly forbade the rest to travel and took away their ID cards, which they needed for the domestic travel from Khotan to Ürümchi and Beijing. Then he called again to say that nobody was now allowed to travel. The reason given by the authorities was that the Eurasia Commodity and Trade Expo was going to be held in Ürümchi from September 20 to September 25, and nobody was allowed to travel around that time. Even long-distance buses from Khotan to Ürümchi were cancelled during this time.

Unfortunately, the musicians were scheduled to fly to Beijing on 23 September. I had always been worried that something unpredictable like this would happen, although I kept telling myself we could not be this unlucky. Nevertheless, the unexpected obstacle had appeared at the end. I tried my best to contact anyone whom I imagined could be of any help, Uyghurs, Hans, professors, officials, friends, and friends of friends, but as I had foreseen, there was nothing I could change in face of a system that does not afford high regard to a tour of grassroots musicians. All our efforts fell through simply because of this expo which had a theme of "Silk Road: Opportunities and Future". The police told Niyaz that they (the musicians) could travel after the national holiday that runs from the first to the seventh of October, which was not helpful at all.

6.4 Reflections

Naturally, both the musicians and I were very disappointed by the three failed tours. Probably I felt even more disappointed than them, because as Uyghur peasants, they have been used to all kinds of restrictions, while for me it is difficult even now to look back and write about the experience. For me, these are not only failure of three art projects, but also failure of part of my research project for a cause which is the central aim of my research. As I write this dissertation, the situation is deteriorating for them. Xinjiang has become "one of the most heavily policed areas in the world", and the people there "are controlled and monitored to an extraordinary degree and detained in extraordinary numbers".[83]

Those of my interlocutors who had obtained passports had their passports taken away and kept by the police. People who have travelled abroad are being

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[83] http://thecessblog.com/2018/08/18/securitisation-and-mass-detentions-in-xinjiang-by-rachel-harris-soas-university-of-london/#more-2497 (accessed 20 August 2018).

questioned by the police upon their return and are often put into "re-education camps". Even inside Xinjiang, many Uyghur migrant workers have been forced to go back to their hometowns,[84] and people have to ask for permission from the neighbourhood committee in order to travel even inside Xinjiang (anonymous, personal communication, May 2018).

In retrospect, I worked so hard to bring the musicians on overseas tours at that time because it still seemed possible. In the current political climate, I would not even think about it. What was hopeful at the time has become the very cause of our disappointment. Sometimes I regret having pursued that direction in my research, but on the other hand, I feel that these experiences have provided me with insights into my research topic that I would otherwise not have had.

First, in preparing the programme, I came to understand more about Uyghur Sufis' ideas about performance and to think about the potential influence of a stage performance on their practice. I wanted to present a performance of what I have seen and heard among the Uyghur Sufis with whom I work, which few people outside these grassroots communities have had the chance to hear.

Instead, the kind of Uyghur music that most people can access is in forms appropriated by professional arrangers and performers, often under the rubric—these days—of Intangible Cultural Heritage. As Harris points out in regards to the Uyghur Muqam which joined the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2005,

> "although the nomination devoted considerable attention to locally maintained traditions, the staged performances of the Muqam Ensemble and Xinjiang song-and-dance troupe continued to dominate the national sphere, while the

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[84] https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/aug/07/why-uighur-muslims-across-china-are-living-in-fear (accessed 20 August 2018).

'representative transmitters' of regional Muqam traditions were brought to Urumchi to participate in the work of transforming their own repertoire and practice into the aesthetic framework of the established troupes" (Harris forthcoming a).

In other words, the local musicians do not have the chance to represent their musical traditions, but are almost always relegated to the role of providing raw materials for professional musicians' stage appropriation.

However, although my ideal was to present authentic musical practice of Uyghur Sufis as it is carried out in the community, I was still trying to organise a stage performance, which would inevitably involve recontextualisation and subsequent outside influences on the music, especially for a concert at an international festival. In the early days of my communication with the Konya Mystic Music Festival, the organiser made it clear that I needed to arrange a program. The organiser wrote in an email "I am assuming they are humble folk [sic] and not professional performers. What we will have in Konya is after all a stage performance and it needs to be planned. Someone will need to act as a [sic] 'art manager' for them and simply produce a stage performance out of their tradition" (anonymous, personal communication, May 2016). So I discussed this with the musicians and decided the programme would consist of Nawa *muqam/mäshräp*, the first *dastan* of Chäbiyyat *muqam*, the instrumental piece Shadiyana, and a part of *hälqä-sohbät* with *hikmät*, breath *dhikr*, and *sama* dance.

This programme was meant to showcase a variety of sounded Uyghur Sufi practice. The *muqam/mäshräp*, which lie at the core of Uyghur repertoire, are a series of songs often set to Chagatay poetry attributed to Central Asian Sufi poets such as Ali Shir Nawayi and Baba Rahim Mashrab, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Before this music-poetic repertoire was canonised as large-scale suites, it had been circulating orally among the Uyghur people for centuries. Although the government and professional troupes have codified *muqam/mäshräp* into fixed forms, the pieces played by the "amateur" musicians are still flexible in terms of their instrumentation and the matching of lyrics with melodies.

I was trying to use the opportunity of the Konya Mystic Music Festival to promote a form of *muqam/mäshräp* that is closer to its root. Such a performance is not to be found in China, where extravagant shows by professional musicians and dancers are the norm, like "Dolan Mäshräp" by the Xinjiang Song and Dance Troupe and "Forever Mäshräp" by Xinjiang Dilinaer Arts Troupe (Harris forthcoming a), and where unauthorised *mäshräp* gatherings have been banned in Xinjiang and can only take place secretly, if at all.

Nawa *muqam*, the first piece, was chosen because it was (and is) one of the most frequently played *muqam* at Sufi *mäshräp* gatherings that I attended in Khotan, and is suitable for the introduction of the sounded practice of Uyghur Sufis at the beginning of a concert in Turkey. Next, the first *dastan* of Chäbiyyat Muqam is a joyful instrumental piece which can uplift the spirit and alternate the tone colour of the concert. The third piece, Shadiyana is another instrumental piece which is often associated with Sufi rituals, especially the procession at Ordam Mazar which used to host the biggest *mazar* festival in Xinjiang. Lastly, I envisaged a scene of *hälqä-sohbät* since it showcases *hikmät* sung poetry, breath *dhikr* and *sama* dance, the combination of which can give the audience a comprehensive feel of Uyghur Sufi ritual and create a powerful impact on stage.

However, when we rehearsed for the concert, the musicians almost never followed the programme we had decided, and often played other pieces or

changed the order of works. During rehearsals, I learned that the improvisational form of a *mäshräp* is what the musicians have in mind when they are asked to give a performance. A *mäshräp* usually consists of a number of songs selected at the lead singer's will.

And when I asked them what *muqam* they were singing, they could not often tell me the name of the *muqam*. Their repertoire seems to be a loose body of pieces that are circulated orally among Uyghur Sufis and differs from the canonised On Ikki Muqam (Twelve Muqam), or a fixed concert programme. As a result, I abandoned the idea of having a programme of exactly fixed pieces, but just asked them to keep the types of works in a general order.

In recontextualising the performance for the Konya Mystic Music Festival, I tried to negotiate a programme that would showcase sounded elements of Uyghur Sufism as they are practiced in the community, and at the same time, avoid boring a non-specialist audience. The result was a medley of works of different styles, each of which was given a time slot that would neither allow the musicians to perform in a prolonged manner (which they sometimes do at home) nor artificially reduce necessary elements of the works. Another criterion I adopted was to emphasise the more "mystic" part of the Uyghur Sufi tradition, for example the breath *dhikr* and *sama* dance, which are aural and physical stimulations for practitioners to enter trance and can be similarly suggestive to onlookers, in this case the audience.

The emphasis on these "mystic" parts was in accordance with the concept of the Konya Mystic Music Festival, which is a globalised imagination of "mystic" music, legitimised by the location of Konya, where the famous Sufi mystic Rumi was buried. At the same time, the "mystic" aspect of the performance agrees with

the musicians' idea to "perform something that is uniquely from Xinjiang" (Niyaz, personal communication, July 2016). If we had succeeded in travelling to Turkey, the Uyghur Sufi musicians would have brought a unique local music tradition closely associated with altered states of consciousness to both the festival and the world music market, which could potentially have expanded the audiences' imaginaries of "mystic music".

Second, the process of preparing for the tours provided insights into the inner politics of a group of musicians who, had it not been for the tours, would normally be only loosely connected to each other. In addition, for this project in Turkey, we would have been able to travel with more musicians. When I asked for recommendations, every musician wanted to bring friends. This created some conflicts, but these conflicts were partly solved by the shortage of passports. At last, we basically accepted every interested party who had a passport.

The musicians can be grouped into three categories: those with religious titles like *ishan* and imam; common Uyghurs engaged in sounded Sufi practices; and semi-professional musicians who are less of Sufis. Among the first group, Tursuntokhti is an *ishan* from Yarkand, while Mäkhsum is an *ishan* from Khotan. Both have their followers and their pride, and when they were in the same group they became adversaries. They would compete for the group's leadership by arguing about the right form to present. During rehearsals, most musicians knelt on the floor, while Tursuntokhti sat on a bench to play the *satar*. It might be for the sake of playing the instrument, but by sitting on a bench he looked higher than others and seemed to assume a leader's role. Tursuntokhti comes from Yarkand, which is famous for its *muqam* tradition, and he would go so far as saying people in Khotan do not know about *muqam*, which annoyed other musicians.

Most of my research subjects identify themselves as *ashiq*, or lovers of God, who sing for God, not for money. Abdurakhman, on the contrary, makes his living by busking in bazaars and *mazar*. Abdurakhman is sometimes invited to take part in Sufi rituals, but he does not recite *dhikr* daily as Sufis do, and is on the periphery of the Sufi community. So is Rozimämät, a student of Abdurakhman that Abdurakhman brought into the group. The difference between Sufis and non-Sufis became clearer in the rehearsals. Paradoxically, non-Sufis like Abdurakhman can become better "Sufi musicians" on the stage, because he makes the performance more "musical" with his plucked instruments, which Sufis don't always need for their rituals. For Sufis, sound is just a means of religious practice; for the audience of a Sufi concert, it is the aim. The real influence of a concert at an international festival on the musicians would have been something to reflect upon, had we succeeded in doing it.

Third, the cancelled tours made me rethink the immobility of the Uyghur musicians, and political factors that affect the Uyghur intangible cultural heritage. In recent years, there have been more Chinese musicians who play traditional or tradition-based music and tour internationally as "world music" acts, like Hanggai and Shanren, but it is nearly impossible for these grassroots Uyghur musicians to perform their music on a global level. On the one hand, it is because of their social status as farmers, compared to the internationally active "world music" artists who are mostly urban professionals. On the other hand, their ethnic identity as Uyghurs often means more restrictions on their mobility. Few Uyghur musicians from Xinjiang have travelled abroad to perform, except those affiliated with governmental troupes such as the Xinjiang Muqam Art Ensemble or the Xinjiang Art Theatre. Sänubär Tursun is probably the best internationally known Uyghur

musician, and about the only independent Uyghur musician from Xinjiang who performs abroad frequently. Different from the farmer Sufi musicians, she is a college-educated urban professional, who used to work at the Xinjiang Muqam Art Ensemble and studied at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, but even she has not been able to travel abroad for the past few years.

None of the musicians I work with have travelled abroad, and many have not even travelled outside of Xinjiang. It is an open secret that many hotels in China do not accept Uyghur guests. I had this problem before when I arranged a concert for some Uyghur musicians in Beijing in 2006, and the same problem arose when I tried to book accommodation for these Sufi musicians in Beijing where they were supposed to change flights. Eventually I found a hotel which was willing to take them, but their receptionist told me that the police would come to do a security check when the Uyghurs checked in. Even within Xinjiang, the government required people who stay at a hotel to have the "convenience contact card", which was difficult for some to get, especially those with records of "illegal religious activities". Even within the same town, we had problems with rehearsals because Niyaz was afraid the authorites would come to check if a group of people gathered in his home.

From another perspective, the system of transportation in China is designed for the Han majority, and can be inconsiderate of minority people like Uyghurs. For example, when I tried to book domestic flights to Beijing for one of the Sufi musicians, I found I was not able to do it on the airline's website. The designated space for entering the passenger's name on the website only allows for a maximum of ten Chinese characters, while his name written in Chinese characters amounts to twelve characters. I had to call the airline to apply for a special case. There is no

way to book flights with a passenger's name written in the Uyghur script, and many Uyghurs in south Xinjiang do not know Chinese at all. Even Uyghurs who have had a more extensive education and know the Chinese language, nevertheless often find travel inconvenient under their Uyghur names.

In China, Uyghur names written in Chinese characters (required for travelling, banking and all other formal occasions) use a dot to separate their first and last names, as with Chinese translations of Western names. However, in the computer system, there are at least four kinds of dots, thereby obstructing the correct spelling of a Uyghur name without appropriate training on the relevant IT system. In many cases, banking staff members are not trained to deal with Uyghur names. As a result, their spellings of a Uyghur names may be distinct from, and not recognisable by, the spelling used by the police system, thereby voiding their registration. To make things simpler, airline companies require passengers to omit the dot when entering their names and to write the first and last names continuously without any spaces in between. All of these matters are not easy for common Uyghurs who lack Chinese education to navigate.

The degree of immobility of these Uyghur musicians is extraordinary. While in many other areas of the world, artists travel globally and appropriate their traditional music for a transnational audience (Shannon 2003), in Xinjiang these musicians find it hard to travel anywhere. By organising these tours I was hoping to help the musicians to claim their right to freedom of movement; unfortunately my efforts failed.

The Uyghur musicians' immobility is combined with restrictions on their expressions of culture—including music and religion—resulting in the absence of Uyghur music in the global music market. Although the world music market is

often seen as jeopardising the authenticity of local traditions (Shannon 2003, Taylor 2016), I argue that the Uyghur Sufi tradition is a long way from the risk of commodification, and a performance at the like of Konya Mystic Music Festival would have positive influences on the Uyghur Sufi musicians and their tradition.

Situated on the Silk Road, the land that we call Xinjiang today has long been a historical meeting point of different cultures, from which the Uyghur Sufi tradition arose. However, the political border and system have to a great extent impeded the ability of contemporary Uyghur society to engage in exchange with the outside world, especially Central Asia and the Turkic-speaking world of which it is a part. Touring would help the musicians restore the historical links and see their tradition and identities in a bigger context, as well as represent their own culture on national and international levels.

Music related to trance has been sought after by a series of "mystic" or "sacred" music festivals throughout the world, and a number of authors have discussed the influence of staged performances at such occasions on the local traditions (Shannon 2003, Kapchan 2007). Talking about Gnawa musicians' performances on the world music market, Kapchan argues that this requires Gnawa musicians to play several roles, which does not necessarily entail a loss of tradition at the level of the local (Kapchan 2007:237). Actually, playing several roles has already been happening at the local level with some of my interlocutors. For example, Abdurakhman plays at both governmental events and Sufi gatherings which entail different repertoires and behavioural conventions.

Weintraub argues that although global markets have created new possibilities for some music, other music may be devalued and excluded from representation at the same time (Weintraub 2009:4). However, Uyghur music as a

whole largely does not have the access to the opportunities created by globalisation and is absent from the international stage, except through the tours of governmental troupes which represent Uyghur music from a more propagandist point of view. In this case, I argue, creating opportunities for Uyghur music to partake of "world music" will help to diversify the representations of Uyghur music.

International tours can also increase the status of Uyghur artists and counterbalance the governmental representation of Uyghur music in China. With the support of Aga Khan Foundation, Uyghur female singer Sänubär Tursun has toured a number of countries and performed at such events as the Edinburgh International Festival and the very Konya Mystic Music Festival that the Uyghur Sufi musicians were supposed to participate in. She has also released a CD with Felmay Records in Italy in 2013, which received reviews from the international press.

Tursun has been able to keep her style rooted in Ili of north Xinjiang in her international tours, and to promote Uyghur music to wider audiences. At the same time, these international tours increased both her visibility as a performer and that of Uyghur music in China. Because of the fame she gets through these tours, she has expanded her influence from Xinjiang to the Han-dominated areas. For example, the World Music Shanghai opened their 2015 festival with a concert by Tursun at the prestigious Shanghai Grand Theatre.

Unfortunately, most Uyghur musicians do not enjoy the same level of support that Tursun receives, and there is no NGO in China that works to preserve traditional Uyghur music. There are not many choices other than commercial festivals through which Uyghur music can be promoted and even within these

festivals, such work is quite difficult. I have held discussions with two music festivals in China about putting on concerts of the Uyghur Sufi musicians with whom I work. They initially showed interest but later decided not to go ahead. If we had succeeded in making one or more of the overseas concerts, maybe this would also have generated more opportunities in China. Unfortunately, the lack of travel mobility for Uyghur musicians has largely prevented them from participating in the world music market.

When Chinese festival organisers declined the opportunity to present Uyghur Sufi concerts, they were worried about possible religious, political, or other sensitive content in the performance that differed from the officially sanctioned representation of Uyghur music and could consequently jeopardise their events. Their worries are justifiable from a promoter's point of view, especially when it is a concert of Sufi musicians which is bound to contain religious content. Of course, I avoided promoting it as a "Sufi" concert and instead used the terms "*muqam*" and "*mäshräp*" which sound more innocuous since they are recognised by the government as Intangible Cultural Heritage.

In practice, both *muqam* and *mäshräp* are closely related to Sufism and are often played together with *dhikr* in the *hälqä-sohbät* ritual in south Xinjiang. The official ICH discourse in China has deprived *muqam* and *mäshräp* of their religious elements. Instead governmental troupes represent them as a classical Uyghur music that is part of China's multi-ethnic culture in the tradition of "the artifying of politics" (Li, Jing 2013). In reality, those who practice religious rituals related to these "intangible cultural heritage" forms often face persecution. A performance of sounded practices of Uyghur Sufis which emphasises its "mystic" or "religious"

elements without depriving them of religious meaning would encourage tradition bearers to preserve their tradition in its context.

Through engaging in these tours of the Uyghur Sufi musicians, I have been trying to advocate for their mobility and cultural rights. When they cannot engage in the community events of *mäshräp* and cannot represent their cultural tradition on the stage, their cultural rights have been compromised, as Article 27 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) makes clear, "everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, [and] to enjoy the arts".[85] More importantly, such cultural rights not only relate to these individual musicians but also to the cultural rights of the community as a whole. As Weintraub argues,

> … there has been an increasing awareness that the protection of "the cultural life of the community" is as important as an individual's right to be part of that community. If what identifies and distinguishes such a community through its cultural practices is drastically altered by forces beyond the control of its membership, then it becomes meaningless to protect an individual's right to be part of that community. Such awareness marks a move from individual rights to collective or group rights, in particular because of the struggles of indigenous peoples and minority groups (Weintraub 2009:3).

Here I am dealing with a case in which the bearers of a musical tradition do their best to keep the tradition alive at the grassroots level. The tradition is appropriated on national and international levels by governmental discourses of which the owners of the musical culture are not a part. Trimillos has applied cultural rights and related entitlements to three categories: the right to access, the

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[85] http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/ (accessed 15 August 2017).

right to stewardship, and the right to control (Trimillos 2009:20), and has developed the following schema:

Right to access	Right to steward	Right to control
Right to perform	Right to critique	Right to display
Right to observe	Right to advocate	Right to create
Right to research	Right to transmit	Right to change
Right to inform	Right to suppress	Right to own

(Trimillos 2009:34)

It seems that in this case, all the three sub-categories of cultural rights are involved, as I was struggling for the right to advocate, by which I hoped to help the musicians to claim the right to perform and right to display.

The importance of advocacy in the research of ethnomusicology and anthropology has been widely recognised. The El Dorado Task Force of the American Anthropological Association contends that

> … the anthropology of indigenous peoples and related communities must move toward 'collaborative' models, in which anthropological research is not merely combined with advocacy but inherently advocative in that research is, from its outset, aimed at material, symbolic, and political benefits for the research population, as its members have helped to define these (Lassiter 2005:ix).

The Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology of International Council for Traditional Music advocates "the use of ethnomusicological knowledge in influencing social interaction and course of cultural change".[86] However, Trimillos finds advocacy to be the most challenging and problematic domain. He asks ethnomusicologists and field collectors to reflect upon their entitlement and responsibility, and argues that it is at the "nexus of the ethics of advocacy, the

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[86] http://ictmusic.org/group/applied-ethnomusicology (accessed 16 August 2017).

social conditions of entitlement, and the moral implications of responsibility" that ethnomusicologists should engage themselves (Trimillos 2009:38). This leads to my last point—the experience helps me to reflect on my role in the local community as well as my influence on the local people.

In my fieldwork, I was firstly a researcher, and then a culture broker (Kurin 1997). It is possible that most people I met in Xinjiang did not really understand what I was doing there. Some of them knew I was a student of Abdurakhman. Some saw me just as a friend or a guest, which was easier to understand in the context of hospitality. Apparently, I am someone from a more developed world, equipped with advanced apparatus such as a laptop, single-lens reflex camera and high-definition video camera. I know there was rumour that I sold the film I made of them and made money from it.

Some people also suspected that I cheated the musicians when I failed to bring them to Hong Kong and Korea. Such suspicion was alleviated a little after I divided the compensation from Korea among the musicians. I also tried to improve the living situation of the community in other ways. For example, I arranged for some friends of mine to donate their used laptops to students of the community. I taught a local person to shoot film so that he could make a living by filming weddings in the future. By doing so, I saw my role as someone who is more of a community member through abiding by the law of hospitality (Bellér-Hann 2008) than in the role of a culture broker. However, I was (and remain) most interested in doing something related to the community's musical tradition.

Failing to travel to Korea was a face-losing experience for the musicians, especially Abdurakhman, whose friends and relatives sent him money for his use during the trip. In the end, he hid in Niyaz's another house for a few days and

pretended that he went to Korea. I also witnessed him showing journalists the house programme of the Korean festival which included his photo, and telling them he did perform in Korea. I felt guilty because these projects did not bring them any good. When we planned these tours at first, everybody was excited because they would like to see the world, make new friends and show their traditions. Later, when they had to run between different government departments to beg for permission to perform, it became a burden for them, and for me as well, as I felt that they were enduring all these trials and tribulations so as to do me a favour.

I have imagined that if we had succeeded in just one of the three tours, I would have become a hero in the community. In arranging these tours, I was motivated by gaining credibility, but I also had (and continue to have) more important motivations. I feel that the musical sounds of the Uyghur Sufis, which I cherish so much, deserves to be heard by the world. At the same time, they have the right to represent themselves, rather than relying on those governmental troupes to represent them. Their voice is as important as anybody else's if we are to believe in cultural democracy, in which the cultural expression of any group of people should be encouraged and respected.

Unfortunately, all our efforts to tour failed, because of force majeure beyond our control. I have encountered force majeure before in my work in the music business, but I have never experienced so much force majeure with one group. It reveals the adversity that my research subjects—Uyghur Sufis—face. At the same time, it also demonstrates that as an ethnomusicologist and an individual, I have a limited capacity to engage in reciprocity and adversity. Despite my enthusiasm, it is after all impossible for me to change overnight a situation that involves national

and international politics. For the musicians, I hope they have felt both my respect, and the event organisers' respect, which they rightly deserve as bearers of a unique tradition.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have discussed the sound culture of Uyghur Sufis who live in an area that is marginal in both the Islamic world and in China. In this area, Sufi Muslims have been cultivating various forms of sounds as part of their religious practices, including *dhikr*, *hikmät*, *muqam*, *mäshräp*, and *dastan*. These sounds are part of broader international Sufi cultures, and many similar forms of sounded practices exist in other parts of the Muslim world. For example, *dhikr* is practiced by Muslims throughout the world; *muqam/maqam* can be found in the Middle East as well as Central Asia; and chanting of Mashrab's poetry is a tradition among Sufis in Ferghana Valley. However, Uyghur Sufis have developed specific variants of these practices pertaining to their environment and show a tenacious way of performing religiosity through these local musical idioms that have accumulated through centuries.

Uyghur Sufis' sounded practices are at the interface of Islamic practices and Uyghur music. Despite this, Uyghur Sufis themselves do not see many of their sounded practices as music because of the profane connotations contained in the term music in many Islamic contexts. However, all sounded Sufi practices of the Uyghur people have at least some musical form, in the sense of form of organised sound in terms of pitch, rhythm, melody, or texture. Some of these practices are closer in form to what other cultures understand as music, while others are closer to Qur'anic recitation, the primordial form of sounded Islamic practices. But, all can be seen as parts of the continuum of Uyghur musical sounds.

The link between music as a secular art and sound as a religious practice is epitomised in the fact they share the same verb in Uyghur language—*eytish*, which

means both "to sing" and "to recite", and can be used for both a song and *dhikr*. The use of the same verb for two kinds of sounds indicates that in Uyghur concepts, reciting and singing are not two different categories but are regarded as the same action. Although religious chanting and love song singing are differentiated by Uyghur Sufis, the behaviours in both cases are in essence the same, if we look at them without ideological attachments. However, in reality no music exists without ideological attachments, and much of the significance of musical works depends on extramusical contexts.

This has led us to problematise the term "religious music". As the Uyghur case shows, what some scholars call "Uyghur religious music" (Guan and Zhou 2001, Du 2002) or "Uyghur Islamic ritual music" (Zhou 1999) is a porous body of works that shares many same tunes with folk and classical repertoires, and the religious functions of those sounds often depend more on the context than on the musical organisation. *Mäshräp* is an example of the ambiguous nature of this body of sounds. Originating from the itinerant *ashiq* as a way of expressing one's emotion for God, *mäshräp* songs have been canonised as part of the classical Twelve Muqam, becoming Uyghur national music par excellence (often with modified lyrics).

In the grassroots context, *mäshräp* songs are also flexible. One can perform them at light-hearted parties, or at Sufi rituals together with *dhikr* and mixed with crying; one can sing them without instruments or with the *sapayi* percussion sticks, or one can perform them with the accompaniment of string instruments which is deemed as *muzika*. Similarly, the Chishtiyya's use of musical instruments in their *dhikr* ceremonies have bridged the gap between what is considered to be music and what is not. All in all, the sounded practices of the Sufis include a variety

of sounds and their combinations, which reflects Uyghur Sufis' culturally-specific ways of practicing their religion.

For Uyghur Sufis, what they "sing" or "recite" during the *hälqä-sohbät* ritual is an expression of their longing for Allah, not an incantation with magic power. In other words, the content of their singing or reciting during a collective *dhikr* is essentially the same as reciting *dhikr* in silence by oneself; it cannot bring out something that is not already in their hearts. At the same time, there is a difference between collective *dhikr* and individual *dhikr,* in that the former provides an atmosphere in which sound acts as a transducive force that makes modification of felt space possible (Eisenlohr 2018:92). Or, in the words of Mäkhsum, the function of sound in collective *dhikr* is to increase the passion (*zäwq shäwq ashurush*, interview, 17 May 2016).

Although sound is important in Uyghur Sufi practices, Mäkhsum does not emphasise its role because sound is not an end in itself, but a means of getting closer to God, which is the difference between sound as a Sufi practice and as music. However, while Uyghur Sufis tend not to attach importance to sound itself, musical analyses can reveal particular parts of sound that may contribute to practitioners' emotional changes. The limping rhythm, for example, which consists of regular interchanges of two different beats and time units, can suggest a feeling of being between two worlds. However, sound is not the only factor at work here, and sound only intensifies one's emotional state in particular contexts and together with other psychological and physiological factors.

Within the framework of sound as a way of Sufi practice, each person can have his own interpretation, as the meaning of these sounded practices is constructed both collectively and individually. What taught me the most during my

fieldwork were my casual conversations with common Sufi practitioners. Although many of them do not have much formal education and cannot express themselves in a sophisticated language register, their ideas nonetheless represent their thinking about the meaning of sounded practices, and the reasons why they hold on to their tradition.

For example, "*dhikr* is our spiritual food" (Nurmämät, interview, 15 May 2016), is a metaphor that reveals the importance of *dhikr* and the practitioners' psychological needs to get spiritual satisfaction through it. "If you have fallen in love with a girl, you know how it feels when you miss her but cannot see her" (Niyaz, interview, 15 May 2016), is another metaphor, which refers to the strong emotions from practitioners that are expressed through sounds and movements during the *hälqä-sohbät* ritual. Each Uyghur Sufi's understanding of the meaning of sound has to do with his background and experience, as is shown in the biographies of three Uyghur Sufis I provided in Chapter 1. Rather than generalise, I try to particularise and call for more attention to the agency of individuals in the construction of meaning of sound in Uyghur Sufism.

The political discourse of Xinjiang also plays a role in the construction (or de-construction) of the meaning of sound of Uyghur Sufism. By presenting *muqam* as musical suites based on classical poetry and *mäshräp* as traditional performing art, the discourse of Intangible Cultural Heritage has detached them from their Sufi meanings, which has resulted in more secular renditions of these sounds. Such political discourses have had influences on Sufi sound practitioners, some of whom take part in governmental organised events to perform officially approved *muqam* and *mäshräp* songs.

Religion, including sounded religious practices, is a part of the Uyghur identity. This is clearly shown in another quote from Niyaz, who told me "If the prophets hadn't come, we would have been Mongolians" (Niyaz, interview, 14 May 2016). During my fieldwork, multiple layers of identity have been performed by my interlocutors, as Uyghurs, Sufis, Sufis of Khotan, or members of a particular Sufi brotherhood of Khotan and so on.

Sounds have become vivid markers in most of these layers of identities. For example, as a Uyghur, one is supposed to fulfil his religious obligations, especially the *namaz* (daily prayers) in which the Qur'an is recited. As a Sufi, one should engage in *dhikr* rituals like *hälqä-sohbät* as a common practice. As a Sufi of Khotan, one is familiar with the song Imam Hüsäynim, which is particularly popular in this region. As a member of the Chishtiyya brotherhood of Khotan, one recites *dhikr* together with musical instruments. Almost every aspect of a Khotan Uyghur Sufi is closely related to sound, without which it is difficult for my interlocutors to maintain and negotiate their identities.

Sound is a way for Uyghur Sufis to practice and make sense of their religion in a place that is largely cut off from mainstream Islamic teachings. This is especially true in Khotan, a remote area even in Xinjiang, compared to Kashgar and Yarkand which are closer to the Ferghana Valley (in today's Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), an area that has had important influences on Islamic practices of Xinjiang.

This status of Khotan as a margin of margin may have bestowed us an opportunity to observe Sufism that is not as institutionalised as in some other areas. While in Yarkand there are four legal *khaniqa* that are allowed by the

government to carry out their collective *dhikr* activities (Änwär 2013:36), in Khotan there are none.

Such disparate contexts reflect the inconsistencies of governmental policies on religion in different areas and in different eras. One government cadre in Yarkand observes that giving the four *khaniqa* in Yarkand legal status is the county government's biggest mistake, and to dilute the atmosphere of Yarkand, these *khaniqa* should be closed (Änwär 2013:46). Problems of governmental policies aside, the four Sufi brotherhoods represented by these *khaniqa* in Yarkand have such a competitive relationship that members of different *khaniqa* do not even eat together (Änwär 2013:46).

Similar conflicts have happened in a different context—that of post-Soviet Uzbekistan. In the Ferghana Valley, the Menzilköyü *ṭarīqa* that entered Uzbekistan from Turkey after the fall of Soviet rule rejects vehemently the oral *dhikr* practiced by local brotherhoods (Zarcone 2006:50). In Khotan, however, it seems common for people to attend *dhikr* of a different brotherhood, and the silent and oral *dhikr* do not comprise a dichotomy that one has to choose from, but are rather two different approaches that every Sufi adopts. Mäkhsum says that he teaches students the way to do silent *dhikr* of the Mujädidiyya, but he also takes them to attend *hälqä-söhbät*. This lack of tension and competition between different brotherhoods may have to do with the fact that none of them are established and all of their activities are in a grey area. As a result, there seems to be more flexibility in the demarcation of Khotan Sufis.

The advancement in technologies has made it easier for Sufi sounds to cross geographical and sectarian boundaries in order to reach to wider audiences, through tape cassettes, VCDs/DVDs, video-sharing websites and mobile phone

apps. Although media of Uyghur Sufi sounds has never developed legally, it seems that there have been many more products than those I have collected. For example, Abliz, a senior *hapiz* that I interviewed in Khotan, told me that he had seen VCDs and cassettes of recordings of himself singing *hikmät*, although he did not own any of them.

To some extent, and for a period of time when these illegal media products were not cracked down upon, they helped to maintain the education of the traditional knowledge of Sufism and constituted personal archives of cultural memories, which can be especially important in the environment of Xinjiang where the available sources of religious information has been narrowed and the nature of religious traditionality changed (Waite 2006:259).

Such media products not only spread through the social-spiritual networks of Sufis (Frishkopf 2013:177), but also reach outsiders like me, thereby expanding the scope of circulation of sounded Sufi practices. In this process, with the change of audience some meanings are lost, but new meanings emerge, facilitating for example, new music works based on Uyghur Sufi sounded practices. On the other hand, media technologies have largely reduced the distances between people and ideas around the world, and have consequently exacerbated ideological conflicts. Mediated *täbligh* (sermons) as well as sounded rituals of Uyghur Sufis amplify their ideas manifold.

Media products like cassettes and VCDs/DVDs are some of the latest means for Uyghur Sufis to pass down their traditional knowledge, and they are more useful means compared to the traditional *tazkirah* manuscripts (Thum 2014) in that they re-present sounded and embodied Sufi practices in more vivid ways. These are not only part of Uyghur Sufis' religious experience, but are also part of

the collective memories of Uyghur people in general. In a sense, *ashiq* are the core force in transmitting the art of *muqam* and *mäshräp*, which have become symbols of the Uyghur as a people. Although these sounded practices are being appropriated or even prohibited, their tenacity has been proven by history. If Sufis in Khotan were still continuing with their gatherings during the Cultural Revolution, and if the Sufi traditions of Uzbekistan have persisted through Soviet rule to this day (Zarcone 2006:52), the Uyghur Sufi practices will hopefully also endure into future generations.

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Glossary

adhan (*äzan*)—call to prayer

ashiq—"lover", a person who devotes one's life to God, sometimes in the form of a mendicant beggar and singer

barat—praying for the intercession of the dead on the fifteenth night of the month of *Sha'ban*

bakhshi—ritual healer

bamdat namizi —morning prayer

büwi—woman ritual specialist

dadui—village office

däm zikiri—breath *dhikr*

dap—frame drum

dastan—sung epic

dastanchi—epic singer

dhikr (*zikir*)—"remembrance", the ritual recitation of God's names

digär namizi —afternoon prayer

dua—supplication

dutar—two-stringed long-necked plucked lute

hälqä—"circle", a round of sung poetry, *dhikr* and movements

hälqä-sohbät—"circling and talking", a Sufi ritual that involves chanting Central Asian Sufi poetry, *dhikr*, and dance

hapiz—lead reciter

hikmät—"pieces of wisdom", verses attributed to Ahmed Yasawi

hukou—household registration

imam—prayer leader

iman—faith

irshad—document of spiritual genealogy

ishan—leader of a Sufi brotherhood

khaniqa—Sufi lodge

mäddah—religious storyteller

madrasa—religious school

mäjnun—madman

mäshräp—devotional songs based on the poetry of Shah Mashrab; Sufi gathering of singing *mäshräp* songs, and more secular forms of gatherings

mäshräpchi—singers of *mäshräp* songs

mazar—tomb and shrine

munajat—supplicatory songs

muqam—free-metered songs based on Central Asian Sufi poetry; suites based on the Sufi *muqam* tradition

muqamchi—players of *muqam*

muzika—instrumental music and songs with instrumental accompaniment

naghra—paired kettle drums

namaz—daily prayers

näzir—feast to commemorate the dead

peshin namizi —midday prayer

pir—religious master; dance during a healing ritual

pirikhun—ritual healer

qäländär—beggar

qawwali—a *dhikr* ceremony of Indo-Muslims

rawap—shorter-necked plucked lute with sympathetic strings

sama—group dance in Sufi rituals and celebrations

samāʿ—audition, spiritual concert

sapayi—percussion sticks with iron rings

satar—long-necked bowed lute with sympathetic strings

shagirt—disciple

shäykh—guardian of a *mazar*

silsilä—spiritual genealogy

sunäy—double-reed shawm

täbligh—sermon

tälqin—melodic *hikmät* verses sung over collective *dhikr*

tämbur—five-stringed long-necked plucked lute

täriqät—Sufi path

tash—percussion instruments made of two stones

ustaz—master

yäkkhollaq—a free-standing song as part of *hälqä-sohbät* ritual

zikiri jähri—loud *dhikr*

zikiri khufi—silent *dhikr*