



Shamanic tradition and altered states of consciousness in Turkic culture

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the ontological and cultural foundations of the shamanic tradition in the Turkic culture of Kazakhstan through the concept of altered states of consciousness (ASC). The research focused on how ASC structured the shamanic worldview, shaped ritual practices, and transformed under post-traditional social conditions. The methodological framework combined philosophical analysis of consciousness, culturological interpretation of mythological and ritual structures, and the analysis of archaeological and ethnographic data. An interdisciplinary synthesis integrating philosophy, ethnology, archaeology, and symbolic analysis was applied, alongside sociocultural analysis and interpretative culturology to examine contemporary transformations of shamanic practice. The study established that ASC functioned as a normative and regulated mode of interaction with a multi-level reality. It operated as a tool of diagnosis, sacred cognition, and social regulation, grounded in stable symbolic forms. The shaman acted as a mediator between sacred and social dimensions, integrating individual experience with collective knowledge. Spatial and material elements of ritual preserved strictly defined symbolism rooted in a mythopoetic worldview. In modern contexts, shamanic tradition has transformed into a more individualized psycho-spiritual practice while retaining core symbolic and ritual codes. Archetypal structures of shamanism continue to persist in folklore, cultural memory, and representations of Kazakh identity. The practical significance of the study lies in its applicability to the interpretation of sacred practices within the Turkic tradition, culturally oriented approaches in ethnopsychology and symbolic anthropology, and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: spiritual navigation, multi-layered reality, ritual dynamics, archetypal image, sacred mediation, altered state of consciousness.

Clarification of key and related terms that are used

ASC (Altered States of Consciousness): A controlled, intentional state in which perception goes beyond normal reality, usually brought on by ritual or other means.



Trance / Spell / Stupor: A state of focused attention and altered awareness, often characterised by a loss of self-awareness and an intense connection to the environment or spiritual forces.

Possession: A condition wherein a person is perceived to be dominated by an external spirit or force, resulting in alterations in behaviour or consciousness.

Ecstasy / Frenzy: Intense emotional or spiritual experiences, often characterised by overwhelming joy or energy, during which the individual may perceive a connection to divine or transcendent forces.

Dissociation / Detachment: A mental state in which a person feels disconnected from their thoughts, body, or sense of self, often as a result of trauma or stress.

Introduction

The relevance of studying the shamanic tradition in Turkic culture was determined by the need for a comprehensive analysis of its modern state, structural elements and cognitive foundations. Shamanism continued to function as a dynamic system of spiritual practice, despite the transformational processes caused by modernisation, globalisation and the loss of collective rituals. The need for studying this phenomenon arose in connection with changes in its social and symbolic functions, as well as with the necessity of comprehending the transforming role of shamanic practices in the identification processes of modern Turkic societies.

Within the framework of existing studies, various aspects of shamanic culture received separate consideration. Mustafayeva et al. (2023) focused on the role of Islamic education in the processes of cultural revival of the Kazakh community, pointing to the complex interaction between religious systems. The authors analysed how Islamic identity coexisted with traditional beliefs, however, the phenomenon of shamanism was not the object of the empirical study.

The study of the social roles and symbolic structures of shamanism in Turkic and Chinese cultures constituted the central axis of the analysis carried out by Burkitbaeva and Shargynova (2024). In the work, emphasis was placed on the institutional function of the shaman in traditional society, as well as on ritual typology as a cultural universal. At the same time, attention to the phenomenology of shamanic consciousness, the mechanisms of trance formation and its cognitive structure remained limited. The musical design of the ritual and its role in shaping the worldview paradigm of traditional culture became the subject of the study of Mashimbayeva et al. (2022). The authors demonstrated that sound, bodily rhythm and vocal practices acted as integral elements of ritual practice, contributing to entry into ASC. Particular attention was paid to the acoustic space of the ritual and its connection with bodily expression. The issue of intonational-sound patterns in the context of emotional regulation was presented in a study where musical practices were considered as a means of psychophysiological correction and anthropopractice. Baykuatova and Baykuatuly (2024) analysed sound and vocal elements in Kazakh culture as a form of influence on the emotional state of the subject.

The historical-mythological image of the cultural hero and bearer of sacred values formed the basis of the work of Abikenov (2021). The focus was on the figure of Korykta, through which the researcher revealed the meanings of archetypes and sacred codes rooted in cultural memory. The topic of mythological thinking in the cognitive system was considered in the work of Umyrzakova et al. (2024). The authors convincingly demonstrated that mythological structures functioned as independent cognitive schemes, providing metaphorical and figurative processing of information. The conceptualisation of the Eurasian space as a spiritual category, proposed by Menzel (2022), created a methodological basis for comprehending the shamanic tradition of the Turks in the context of sacred geography. The representation of Eurasia as a mental construct with clearly expressed symbolic landscapes made it possible to interpret the ritual routes of shamans, sacred toponyms and landmarks (for example, the tree of the world, mountain peaks, springs) as elements of collective spiritual cartography.

The issues of the connection between the material and spiritual levels of the culture of the Turkic peoples were reflected in the study of Sultanova (2024), where attention was paid to the symbolic



content of things involved in traditional culture. The author considered how the material world was integrated into sacred practices and reflected collective representations of the supernatural.

The synthesis of existing research showed that there remained a number of significant gaps in the academic literature, hindering a comprehensive understanding of shamanic practice in the Turkic tradition. One such problem was the absence of a holistic description of shamanic trance as a cognitively organised phenomenon in which symbolic forms, ritual structure and epistemological mechanisms of perception were interconnected. The concept of ritual space also remained insufficiently developed – not as a static background of the ritual, but as a mobile and structured environment ensuring sacred communication. Finally, the task of integrating theoretical approaches with diverse empirical materials – archaeological, ethnographic and culturological – remained relevant, as it would allow the creation of a multi-layered and interdisciplinary picture of the phenomenon under study. These circumstances determined the academic and practical significance of the present study.

The purpose of the study was to identify and describe ASC, ritual structures and modern transformations of the shamanic tradition in Turkic culture as elements of the cognitive, social and symbolic system.

The research objectives included: to characterise ASC as the basis of the shamanic worldview, to identify the structure, functions and symbolic content; to study the figure of the shaman as a mediator between worlds, to reveal the structure of ritual space, the mechanism of sacred legitimation and the significance of material ritual objects; to analyse modern forms of transformation of the shamanic tradition, including the change in the functional meaning of trance, its individualisation, the role of musical and gender factors, as well as the preservation of the symbolic code under the conditions of a post-traditional society.

Materials and methods

The present study was carried out in 2022-2024 and covered the shamanic traditions of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia, mainly on the material of Kazakhstan and the western regions of Mongolia, where living forms of shamanic practice were preserved. The temporal framework of the studied material included both historical evidence (18th-20th centuries) and modern ethnographic observations (1990-2020).

The empirical base consisted of published ethnographic observations, texts of Kazakh folklore recorded in national archives and databases (Әдеби мұра), archaeological descriptions of ritual complexes, as well as visual and textual materials including interviews and audio-visual recordings of shamanic rituals (Somfai Kara, 2012). The criteria for selecting empirical data were the presence of descriptions of ASC, a structured ritual form and the symbolic function of the shaman. Materials in which these features were absent were not included in the sample.

This study integrates philosophical, ethnological, and archaeological perspectives and focuses on the ritual and cultural context of ASC, whereas previous research has mostly concentrated on psychological or neurophysiological aspects. It also introduces a gendered analysis, highlighting female vocal practices in ASC, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding within Turkic shamanism. The philosophical analysis was aimed at identifying the structure of shamanic perception and understanding of the nature of consciousness. The theoretical basis of this direction was the work of Bulekbaev and Khairullaeva (2014), where consciousness was interpreted as a multimodal system including altered states as cognitive forms. This made it possible to define ASC as a functional component of sacred practice.

Such an understanding made it possible to connect the internal dynamics of the trance state with the logic of mythological narrative. In addition, the works of Winkelman (2019) and Winkelman and Dobkin de Rios (1989) were involved, which provided the inclusion of a psycho-anthropological perspective and the interpretation of trance as a biocultural mechanism.



Historical-philosophical and archaeological methods were applied in the consideration of the figure of the shaman and ritual space. In the concept of Orynbekov (2014), the shaman was presented as a pre-institutional spiritual leader synthesising social and sacred function.

The analysis of the spatial organisation of the ritual was based on the archaeological data of Beisenov (2017), where stable elements of sacred topography were recorded: the circle, the vertical axis, stone ritual objects.

These forms were compared with descriptions in ethnographic sources. The analysis of the material content of the ritual was carried out on the basis of the approach of Price (2001), in which objects were interpreted as symbolic elements of the sacred system. It should be noted that this study relies mainly on secondary ethnographic sources. Given that this is acceptable for a theoretical synthesis, this is also limitation in the study.

Modern transformations of shamanism were analysed through the methods of theoretical ethnography and interpretative culturology. The study of Pełkala-Gawęcka (2022) made it possible to comprehend shamanism as an adaptive spiritual practice in post-Soviet societies. The female aspect of the tradition was considered on the basis of the lecture of Sultanova (2019), where music and voice were shown as instruments of trance.

The preservation of ritual continuity in Kazakh auls of Mongolia was analysed according to the data of Somfai Kara (2012), and the cultural sustainability of archetypes – according to the concept of Gabitov (2022). Taken together, the approaches used ensured the reconstruction of the shamanic tradition in its symbolic, spatial and cognitive dimension.

The study also included the analysis of gender-specific forms of shamanism, with emphasis on female vocal and sound practices as key elements of ASC initiation. Using the methods of theoretical ethnography and interpretative culturology, vocal patterns, bodily strategies and the acoustic structure of female rituals were studied. The basis of the analysis was the materials of Sultanova (2019), which made it possible to comprehend music as a mediator of sacred experience and an instrument of spiritual navigation in female shamanism.

The analysis of the stability of archetypal images, such as the tree of the world, the eagle-mediator and the symbolism of the “man between worlds”, was carried out using the methods of interpretative culturology and symbolic analysis. The source base consisted of folklore texts, Kazakh ornaments, oral narratives and national legends, interpreted through the prism of the study of Gabitov (2022), who interpreted these symbols as channels of collective memory and mechanisms for transmitting sacred ontology in modern forms of cultural identity.

Results

ASC as the basis of the shamanic worldview

In the shamanic tradition of the Turkic peoples, the perception of reality was based on the recognition of the multiplicity of its levels and the possibility of transitions between these levels. Consciousness in this context was not limited to rational thinking or the waking state but included special forms of perception activated in ritual. ASC in the shamanic tradition of the Turkic peoples appeared not as a deviation from the norm but as a regular and purposefully induced element of spiritual practice.

In the shamanic worldview, consciousness was not confined to a single level of functioning: it was perceived as a dynamic system capable of moving between different modes of perceiving reality (Messina, 2025; Lawrence et al., 2023). These transitions were interpreted as a structured movement between levels of being, accompanied by inner concentration rather than a loss of control. Such a state was not opposed to ordinary perception but was considered an equivalent, though qualitatively different, form of presence.

In the shamanic worldview, reality was represented as multi-layered, with permeable boundaries between levels of being (do Nascimento, 2025; Zijjing, 2025). ASC enabled the transition between these levels, ensuring contact with forces inaccessible in ordinary perception. The very process of

transition was conceptualised through the stable symbolism of movement – ascent, immersion, crossing of boundaries – and was accompanied by strictly defined ritual actions (see Figure 1 on next page).

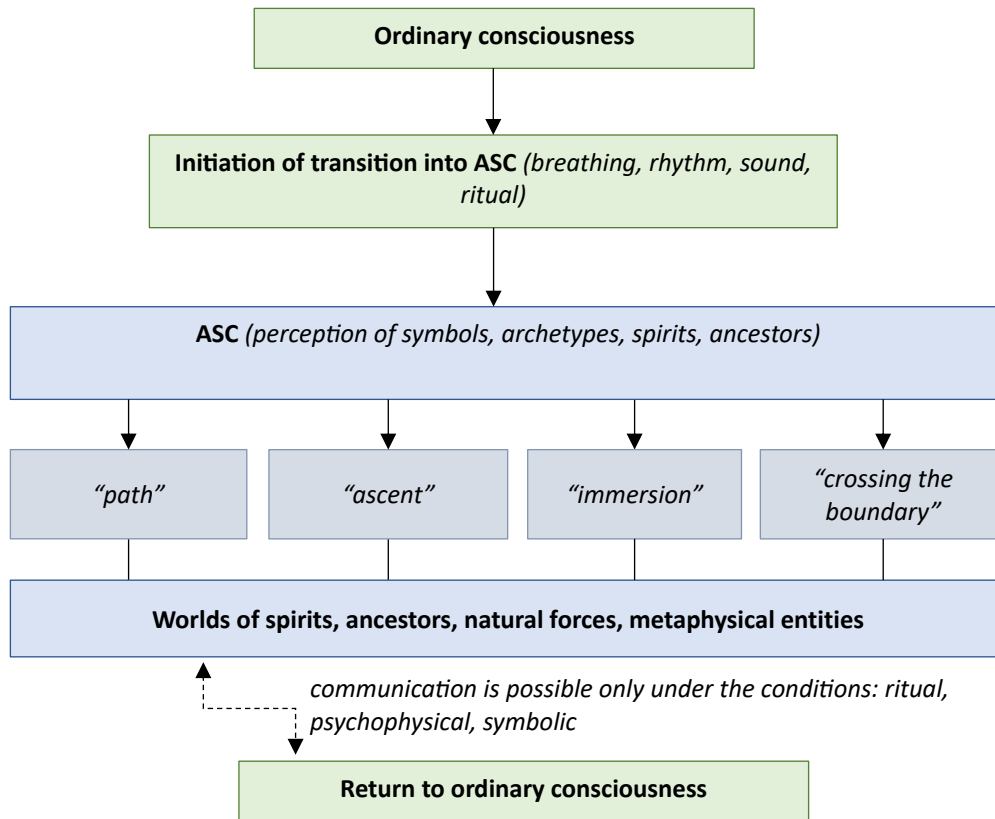


Figure 1. Transition into ASC in the shamanic tradition of Turkic culture

Source: compiled by the authors based on A. Ilhan (2024)

ASC in such a context became not an exception but a norm of a special kind. It functioned as a channel of sacred knowledge, as an instrument of diagnosis and healing, as a means of ordering causal relationships and of making decisions that in an ordinary state might remain inaccessible. These features allowed ASC to be regarded as a fundamental category of shamanic epistemology, in which sensory, symbolic and trance knowledge complemented each other and formed a holistic picture of spiritual practice.

These observations were consistent with the philosophical understanding of consciousness as a multidimensional and non-linear phenomenon proposed in the work of Bulekbaev and Khairullaeva (2014). The authors considered consciousness as a structure possessing multiple modes of functioning, including those not traditionally considered by academic philosophy but actively used in spiritual practices. Bulekbaev and Khairullaeva (2014) showed that precisely the exit beyond the limits of logical-discursive thinking opened to man access to other forms of knowledge – to archetypal, metaphorical, bodily-emotional knowledge. Such knowledge could not be fully verbalised but was perceived as internally reliable.

The philosophical concept of consciousness as an open multidimensional structure containing transcendental modes of perception theoretically confirmed empirical data on the perception of trance in shamanic practice.

Continuing the consideration of ASC as the basis of the shamanic worldview, it was necessary to emphasise that the very mechanism of shamanic trance was formed not arbitrarily, but obeyed stable cognitive structures characteristic of mythological thinking.



The analysis of trance structures in the shamanic tradition showed that visual and sound images arising in the altered state of consciousness obeyed the logic of myth: the shaman perceived events as a sequence of actions, symbols, and transformations unfolding according to a known, though not always consciously realised, structure.

This internal composition of trance reflected the structure of mythological narrative – with its initiation, trial, sacred revelation and return to the starting point. Within this approach, ASC functioned not merely as a psychophysiological anomaly, but as a special channel for activating and reproducing culturally fixed meanings.

In the shamanic tradition, the main goal of trance was not individual experience but the fulfilment of a task significant for the whole community (Baltieva, 2025; Baigabylov et al., 2013). The shaman entered into contact with otherworldly forces to obtain information, to interpret the causes of what was happening, or to restore the disrupted connection between the visible and invisible worlds.

ASC in shamanism did not have the characteristics of mental disorder, but on the contrary represented a purposefully induced and controlled state enabling the subject to solve tasks going beyond the limits of rational analysis (Efremov, 2026; Baizhanova et al., 2015). At the same time, the shaman's effectiveness was measured not by the intensity of experiences but by the results – healing, restoration of order, integration of sacred message into collective knowledge.

This position was confirmed in theoretical models of psycho-anthropology. Winkelman (2019) showed that ASC arising in the shamanic context represented an evolutionarily fixed form of adaptation. The author considered shamanic trance as a biocultural mechanism possessing therapeutic, regulatory and integrative effect.

The shaman, possessing skills of managing such states, became a kind of mediator between the neuropsychological resources of the organism and the cultural system into which the shaman was embedded.

Thus, ASC in the shamanic practice of the Turkic peoples should be interpreted as an instrument for solving existential, diagnostic and therapeutic tasks, performing a key role in maintaining the social and spiritual resilience of the community.

The shaman as mediator of sacred knowledge: Archetype, space and ritual

The shamanic tradition in Turkic culture formed a special type of interaction between man and the sacred world, at the centre of which was the figure of the shaman as mediator.

The shaman's status was determined not only by the ability to enter into contact with other levels of being, but also by the capacity to structure this interaction through symbolism, space and ritual action (Torebaev & Bayzhanova, 2013; Nurmatova, 2024).

In traditional Turkic culture, the shamanic figure had a unique status going beyond the framework of individual spiritual practice. The shaman acted as an institutionalised mediator between visible and invisible worlds, between society and the sacred order.

The shaman's activity was directed at fulfilling a collective task connected with maintaining balance, explaining crises, healing, restoring disrupted links between people and spiritual reality (Bektenova et al., 2025). Thus, the role of the shaman had a social character.

In the shamanic tradition of the Turkic peoples, the mediating function of the shaman was formed at the intersection of two spheres – the social and the sacred (Zhandossova et al., 2017).

The shaman's unique status was conditioned by the ability simultaneously to belong to the community and to enter into contact with other levels of reality, transmitting sacred knowledge in forms accessible to collective perception (see Figure 2 on next page).

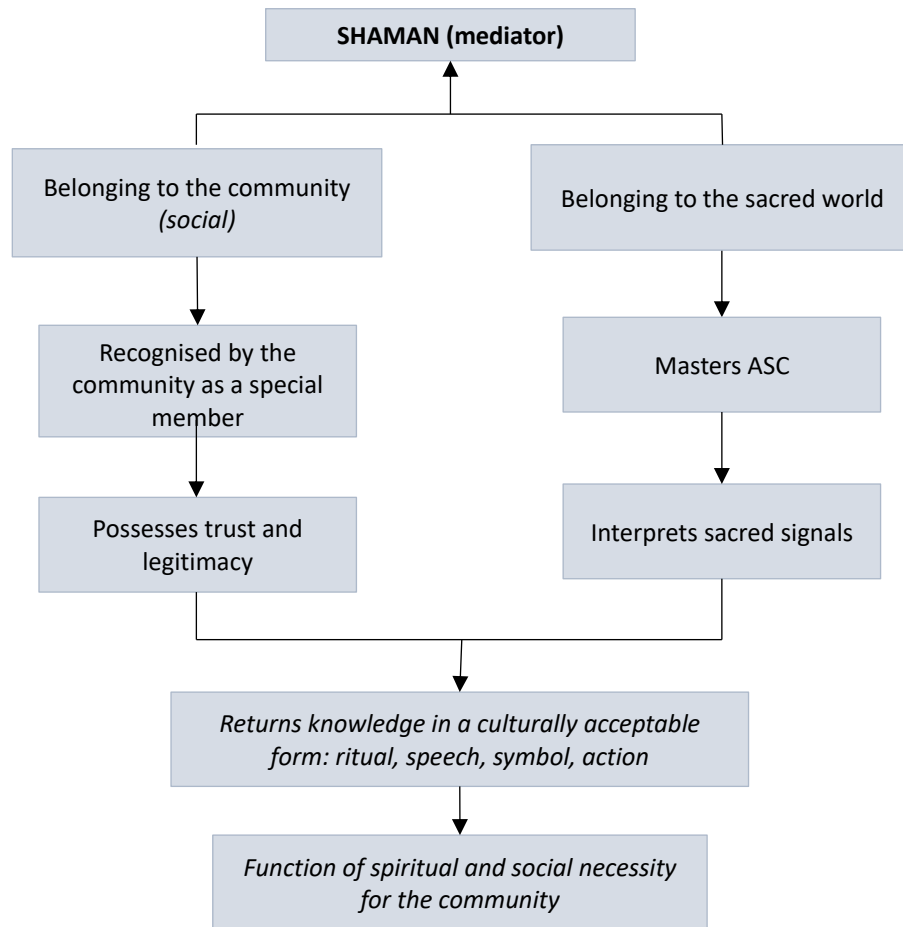


Figure 2. The function of the shaman as mediator between the sacred and the social order

Source: compiled by the authors based on C. Chen (2025).

Such an interpretation of the role of the shaman as mediator between the sacred and social levels received justification in philosophical and cultural approaches to pre-institutional forms of spiritual authority. Orynbekov (2014) considered shaman as the primary figure of spiritual leadership existing before the emergence of official religious institutions. The shaman embodied the structure of religious consciousness, in which the spiritual function was not separated from the social. Orynbekov (2014) also emphasized that the shaman's recognition came from the community and was based on the ability to establish contact with the transcendent. The shaman's actions were directed towards maintaining spiritual and social integrity, and the status was based on recognition of the special abilities for interpretation, transmission, and regulation of sacred information.

Beisenov (2017) presented the theoretical interpretation of the spatial solutions which was consistent with archaeological data. Studies of burial complexes, cult structures and ritual sites showed repeated use of the same symbolic elements: stone circles, barrows with a central post, traces of sacrificial fires. These findings confirmed the resilience of the spatial logic of shamanic practices and the presence of a sacred topography inextricably linked to the function of ritual transition. Ritual space in the shamanic tradition was constructed according to a stable scheme and served as a necessary condition for realising contact with the sacred level of being (Ivashko et al., 2020; Dyomin et al., 2021).

Price (2001) emphasised that shamanic practice in many cultures demonstrated the repetitiveness of the object complex, regardless of geographical location and historical period. The repeated symbolism in the material culture of shamanism – from masks to musical instruments – indicated the archetypal nature of these objects and the resilient link with specific functions: entering trance, protection, communication with spirits, visualisation of the shaman's spiritual status.



The material traces of shamanic practice confirmed not only ritual presence, but also the profound symbolic stability of the entire shamanic system. The presence of a resilient set of artefacts demonstrated that shamanic culture conceived itself also through the material world, forming a codified model of the sacred, in which the thing became an expression of super-sensory content.

Modern transformations of the shamanic tradition: From ritual to identity

The modern state of the shamanic tradition in Turkic societies was characterised by the transformation of its forms and functions. Changes in social context, the weakening of collective practices and the influence of global discourses led to a rethinking of shamanism as an instrument of individual experience, self-knowledge and spiritual identification.

Modern forms of shamanic practice in Turkic communities of the post-Soviet space demonstrated significant changes in the functional load and interpretation of ritual actions. Shamanic techniques became an instrument not only of addressing spirits but also of personal search, psychological relief and inner transformation. ASC, previously directed at solving ritual-social tasks, were increasingly used as means of diagnosis and restoration of inner balance. The modern shaman often combined elements of traditional rite with practices close to body-oriented therapy, meditative techniques or even psychedelic practice in legalised and controlled forms (Lazarenko, 2022; Kurganskaya et al., 2024).

Such an interpretation found reflection in the observations of Pełkala-Gawęcka (2022). The author indicated that shamanism in modern conditions appeared not so much in the form of a collective institute, but as a flexible, adaptive system of spiritual healing. Shamanic practices were increasingly regarded as a path to the restoration of the lost connection between the bodily, the emotional and the spiritual, rather than as a rigidly fixed rite. Pełkala-Gawęcka emphasised that recourse to shamanism in post-Soviet countries was associated with the crisis of official forms of religiosity and the search for authentic ways of self-healing and identity.

The modern transformations of the shamanic tradition in Turkic cultures were accompanied not only by a change of functions and meanings, but also by a rethinking of gender roles within ritual practice (Toktarbekova et al., 2025; Tulenberggenova et al., 2024). One of the characteristic manifestations of this process was the expansion of women's participation in shamanic actions, especially in those forms where voice, sound and bodily expression played a key role. The musical components of the rite – singing, rhythm, the use of repetitive vocal and instrumental forms – became the main mediator of ASC and performed the role of a modulating factor facilitating the transition into trance.

In the analysed data, a stable correlation between female singing and the initiation of trance states was recorded. Women's rituals were organised mainly around vocal practice, including plaintive chanting, recitative, vocal improvisations and rhythmic shouts. At the same time, music in female shamanism performed not only a functional, but also an expressive, emotional and therapeutic role: it served as an expression of inner state, a means of conveying pain, tension and a healing message. Through the musical flow there occurred a connection with ancestors, nature spirits, clan, or earth forces.

Sultanova (2019) emphasised that music in female shamanism in Central Asia performed a mediating function between the inner state of the performer and the external sacred space. Female shamanic practice, unlike traditional male shamanism, was built on subtle energetic interactions, where the voice was not an attribute but an extension of the body and a way of spiritual navigation.

The participation of women in shamanic rituals, mediated through musical techniques, demonstrated not only the resilience of symbolic forms, but also the capacity for flexible adaptation. Music became the central channel of trance dynamics, and the female voice – the instrument of sacred transmission, allowing the reproduction of ancient practices in the modern cultural environment.

The analysis of the modern transformations of the shamanic tradition in the Turkic context showed that the degree of its preservation directly depended on the historical-political conditions in which local communities functioned. In regions that had undergone active processes of repressive Soviet



policy towards religious and sacred practices, there was either a complete disappearance of shamanism as an active tradition, or its radical transformation towards individualised, fragmented forms. However, in certain culturally isolated spaces not affected by large-scale modernisation and forced secularisation, shamanism was preserved in a structure maximally close to the traditional.

In particular, Kazakh settlements in the territory of western Mongolia demonstrated the presence of a stable shamanic practice including transmitted initiation, ritual continuity and the preservation of the symbolic language of the rite. Somfai Kara (2012) documented the shamanic practice of Batyrkan – a Kazakh living in the Altai region of Mongolia – describing both the individual features of the trance work and the collective character of the rite. The research emphasised that the practice was not of a ritual-folkloric nature, but functioned as a full form of religious-cosmological communication. The author indicated that shamanism in this environment was not a symbol of ethnic identity, but a real working mechanism for regulating the world and life.

The symbolism of the “man between worlds”, the image of the tree of the world (Bayterek), the eagle as mediator between heaven and earth, the wind as carrier of power, continued to be reproduced as part of the cultural code. The archetypes retained the function of a connecting link between the present and the sacred previous times, acting as mediators of cultural continuity.

Gabitov (2022) noted that Kazakh culture preserved “ancient codes of sacred perception” fixed both in folklore and in the structure of the collective imaginary. The author indicated that the symbols historically associated with shamanism performed in modern culture the role of channels of memory, through which the transmission of the previous ontological model of the world was carried out.

Even in the conditions of a post-traditional society, where ritual forms lost the former force or disappeared, the shamanic tradition continued to exist through archetypes and symbolism. This testified to its deep rootedness in the cultural structure of the Kazakh world. In combination with the examples where shamanism was preserved as a living practice, its high capacity for adaptation and resilience of symbolic content became evident. The shamanic tradition in Turkic culture did not disappear but transformed – moving from ritual to folklore, from action to image, from formalised rite to the space of collective memory.

Discussion

One of the key results of this research was the understanding of ASC as an orderly and culturally institutionalised form of spiritual practice embedded in the worldview system of shamanism. This position found confirmation in neuroscientific data presented by Huels et al. (2021), where the shamanic state of consciousness was characterised as a specific neurophysiological state, distinct from both sleep and wakefulness. The authors recorded increased activity in the occipital and parietal areas of the brain, which correlated with the findings of this research regarding enhanced visualisation and symbolic richness of the trance experience. Unlike the present study, the researchers focused on instrumental verification; however, both works confirmed the neural specificity of the shamanic state.

The analysis carried out in this research also noted a stable distinction between shamanic trance and psychedelic experience, while indicating a partial overlap of phenomenological characteristics. Yaden and van Elk (2024) emphasised that shamanic and psychedelic experiences could demonstrate similar features – the feeling of going beyond the “self”, mystical involvement and altered perception of time and space. However, the authors insisted on a fundamental difference in the context and mechanisms of entering such states.

The research of Yaden and van Elk (2024) indicated that shamanism was based on ritual practice supported by cultural code, whereas psychedelic experience depended on the action of an external substance and a subjective scenario. This coincided with the conclusions of the present work, where it was emphasised that shamanic trance was induced exclusively through bodily, vocal and rhythmic practices and was perceived as part of a culturally prescribed process.



The functional significance of shamanic trance as a tool of healing and restoring balance between the sacred and the social also found reflection in the conclusions of Venkatesh (2025). The author emphasised that shamanic trance allowed the subject to go beyond everyday logic and immerse into a state of symbolic reconstruction of personal history. A comparison with the results of the present research made it possible to clarify that trance performed not only the function of individual healing, but also served as a means of collective regulation. In particular, in the Kazakh version of shamanism, trance was perceived as a clan necessity, activated in the case of a threat to the spiritual balance of the family or community, and the figure of the shaman gained legitimation through the experience of an initiation illness recognised by the clan.

The cultural role of the shaman as a mediator between worlds, recorded in this research, received additional confirmation in the conclusions of Grant (2021), who considered the shaman as a figure with a transitional status. Grant emphasised that the shaman did not fully belong to any of the worlds – neither the living nor the spirits. The present research agreed with this position, indicating that in the Turkic tradition the shaman simultaneously belonged to the community and went beyond it, entering into contact with the transcendent order. However, the difference lay in the fact that in the Kazakh model the mediation of the shaman was not an autonomous function, but one embedded in clan and spiritual hierarchy, with a clear system of knowledge transmission and status markers (costume, mask, drum), which reflected the specific institutionalisation of shamanic knowledge in the Turkic context.

The issue of the loss of sacred symbolism and weakening of the ritual function of shamanism in a modernised society, raised in this research, resonated with the observations of Saukh and Melnichuk (2020). These authors recorded the tendency of desacralisation of spiritual culture. The present research did not deny these processes, but offered a more complex picture. It was found that in the Turkic tradition – especially in Kazakh settlements in Mongolia – the sacred structure of the rite was preserved in its full form: from the fire as a vertical mediator to the use of sound and bodily techniques clearly assigned to female and male ritual roles. Even in cases of loss of ritual appearance, the symbolism of the mediator, the images of the Bayterek (tree of the world), the eagle and the wind continued to exist as active elements of the mythopoetic code and ritual memory.

Special attention in this research was paid to the symbolic language of trance, perceived as a cognitively organised system of signs forming a special channel between the unconscious and the conscious. This approach intersected with the conceptual positions of Relic (2020), who interpreted shamanic trance as a space of manifestation of universal symbols, interpreted through cultural code. The author emphasised that these symbols functioned as archetypal structures and acted as mediators between personal and collective experience.

The present research specified this thesis, indicating that in the Turkic model archetypal symbolism (the eagle as mediator, the fire as the centre of the sacred vertical, the tree of the world as the structural axis of the universe) not only persisted, but also had a clearly fixed ritual realisation – in verbal formulae, spatial arrangement of the rite and visual images integrated into costumes, masks and musical practices.

The comparative analysis showed that the results of the present research correlated with a number of contemporary works, simultaneously clarifying and supplementing these studies. The research confirmed that shamanic trance represented not only a phenomenon of spiritual experience, but also a stable cultural, cognitive and social mechanism. While other authors focused on individual aspects (neurophysiological, therapeutic, symbolic), this research integrated these aspects into a unified picture, emphasising the integrity of the shamanic phenomenon in the Turkic cultural tradition.

Conclusions

In this research, it was established for the first time that ASC in the shamanic tradition of the Turkic peoples functioned as a stable and culturally institutionalised mechanism of interaction with other levels of existence. These states were not regarded as deviations from the norm, but were identified as a deliberately induced form of perception with a clear internal structure. Within the framework of



the analysis it was shown that ASC served not only as a channel of spiritual connection, but also as a tool for obtaining knowledge inaccessible in everyday life, interpreting sacred signs, diagnosis, and healing. The transition between levels of reality was accompanied by stable symbolic forms activated through ritual actions, bodily practices, voice, and sound. It was revealed that such states performed a cognitive function and ensured the integration of mythological and sensory experience into a holistic system of spiritual orientation.

Within the present research, the mediatory function of the shaman as a link between society and the sacred order was also theoretically substantiated. It was proven that the activity of the shaman consisted in interpreting transcendental signals and translating these signals into forms understandable to collective perception. It was shown that the figure of the shaman was formed in a special borderline space between social belonging and metaphysical mission, which endowed the shaman with a special status within the community.

The spatial organisation of rites, as established through the analysis of archaeological data, demonstrated a high degree of symbolic stability – elements such as the circle, fire and vertical axis were reproduced in different regions. The material elements of the rite were systematised, which functioned not as ethnographic details, but as sign carriers of sacred meanings.

Moreover, in this research, it was established that under modern conditions the shamanic tradition transformed towards individualised psycho-spiritual practices, while preserving the core of symbolic and ritual structures. Special attention was given to gender-specific aspects, in particular female musical practices, which served not only as a means of entering altered states, but also as the basis of the acoustic organisation of the ritual. It was documented that in communities not affected by repressive policies there was continuity of ritual practices transmitted through clan legitimisation and internal initiation. It was also revealed within the research that the key archetypes of the shamanic tradition – the figures of mediator, the images of the tree of the world and totemic spirits – continued to exist in folklore, collective memory and visual culture as symbols of identity and means of spiritual navigation.

The limitation of the research lay in the absence of a large-scale empirical sample, which predetermined a focus on theoretical-analytical and interpretative approaches. As a prospect, it was proposed to conduct field and comparative studies of shamanic practices in Turkic regions with emphasis on current forms of ritual, gender transformations and the interaction of traditional sacred thinking with modern psychotherapeutic approaches.

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