



DEPARTMENT OF MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES PUBLIC TALKS

'Let Me Take Your Pain Away': Female Shamanism and Music in Central Asia

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Shamanism is a global phenomenon which arose and developed during the Stone Age and was known to all humanity in the early stages of its history. According to scholars of Shamanism, the term 'Shaman' is derived from the Tungus-Ewenki word 'Saman' or 'Vaman', meaning a magician, healer, priest, mystic, poet and performer of miracles, or Shaman as the one who uses specific techniques of ecstasy. These techniques include music, rhythmic dancing, seclusion, and, most frequently, *Zikir* (i.e. *zikr*) - the repetition of mystical formulae. In Central Asian culture, Shamanism formed an essential part of religious beliefs widely spread in the area.

Today, across Central Asia, most Shamans are women. This presentation investigates the following questions: Who is a Shaman in contemporary Central Asia? How popular is Shamanism among local women? Which Central Asian folk instruments are historically associated with extreme power related to Shamanic spirits? What folk songs and narrations have deep symbolic protective meaning? On what occasions are they performed? How are all these Shamanistic practices reflected today in contemporary Central Asian culture and music? This talk is based on original ethnographic data, and will be accompanied by photo, video and audio examples.

Thursday 10 October

5.15 - 6.45pm (tea and biscuits from 5.00pm)

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