

What is *kai-chi*?

Urmat Yntaev, leader of the internationally renowned throat-singing ensemble *Altai Kai*, explained that the Altai people have three treasures. The first is *kai*, one of the oldest styles of throat-singing, preserved only in the Altai Mountains, through which the Altai oral tradition is passed, and which is developed by such gatherings. The performance of *kai*, or the person performing, are both called *kai-chi*. The other two are *kan* (their ancient shamanic heritage) and *khan* [*kh* = hard *h*] (their genetic lineage, through which they can receive *kai* and *kan*.) However, *kai* and *kan* can also be directly accessed and transmitted as a spiritual practice.

Alexey Kalkin (1925-1998) is the most revered modern throat-singer or *kai-chi*. It is said that he could sing for days without stopping, directly transmitting *kan* by accessing the “other-dimensional” records (called *Akashic* records by the Tibetans). The sounds of his singing apparently transmitted images directly into the minds of the listeners. Arzhan Kezerekov is, to my knowledge, the only contemporary *kai-chi* capable of this kind of transmission. (He can be seen on the “sacred lands” video on our website – <http://www.altaimir.org/videos.htm>.) Such ability certainly keeps history fresh and relatively free from distortion for political purposes, and is one of the great strengths of the Altai culture.

Events and contests such as the Elo Music Festival are the public face of *kai-chi*, and popularize it among up-coming generations. “Direct transmission” of *kai-chi* is much more intense and intimate, I am told, because it requires the singer to access an altered state that is difficult to maintain with festival logistics.

