

Crimea Camp (Mir Project) 2007



The Crimea is on the North shore of the Black Sea, facing Mid Turkey. A holiday resort, the weather is beautiful until the end of August. This year it hadn't rained for half a year. The organizers had arranged an open court yard for us to dance in. A form of Russian Roulette, as late August the rain season starts. So it did. The first two nights we had to adapt the program and present and evening with Badjan singing and some dancing in the indoor meditation room (very tight oval dancing), the second rainy night we used for chanting the Fatiha, as the trip to the Mevlevi Tekke in nearby Efpatoria was planned early on in the program

After the rain the sun came and made it impossible to dance outside. The sun cover, made from plastic table coverings and put together with staples and cloth lines, soon was more bothersome than helpful. We felt back home after the Crimea camps in 2002 and 2003!

The dancing was great, intense and deep, lovely and sweet. Many participants were new to us, and all were eager to dive into the process of spiritual dancing. Quite a few lead their first ever dance on the supervision sessions and we spotted some obvious talents.

Much to our surprise and delight we counted three participants from Latvia and two from Lithuania, together with Russian participants from Perm, Vladimir, St-Petersburg and Moscow and other smaller places and several people from the Ukraine.

In the tekke we met with a Ukrainian Naskhbandi Sufi group and we invited them over for a day. Some other participants at the tekke signed up for the whole rest of the camp.

57 people attended the camp (plus the additional ten Ukrainian people from the Sufi group) plus two Ukrainian women who signed up after the tekke, totaling 69 people all together. For shared bedrooms (dormitory style), participants received reduction. Due to the numbers, the aimed income was realized.

Ariëne and Wali vd Zwan

The Crimea Camp took place from August 30st until September 7th, 2007. Shahodat came from the English Unicorn Camp and missed her flight, so the first four days we were on our own, preparing the group for the trip on Sunday to the Mevlevi Tekke in Efpatoria, a town of over 2,500 years. This tekke is the oldest Mevlevi tekke outside of Turkey. We visited it on our earlier trips and first presented the Fatiha there on invitation on September 11, 2002, so one year after Nine Eleven. The power of the place is immense and the acoustics are superb. An ideal spot for a retreat. We were full hearted welcomed by the caretaker Alifia who for seven years has lived inside of the tekke, never passing the gate to the outdoor world. There we led the Fatiha, the first line of the Lord's Prayer and some zikr for our group of 50+ plus an almost equally big group of local tourists and Sufi's, forming three large circles.

As the trip to the tekke was planned early in the program, we felt we had to pressure cook the group to make them ready for the trip. This went amazingly well. The focus came quickly and by Sunday we all were attuned to zikr and dance. As a result the discussion came up whether this was a Camp ('Festival' as they say in Russia) or a 'Retreat'. A second, more touristy excursion



was canceled, so we could stay on site. Whatever the label, the experience was great!



When Shahodat came, she took up the camp and fitted in amazingly well. We meanwhile had invited Bo and Lena (Mozorova) to also lead some dances although officially they weren't on staff, as they were the most mature dance leaders present outside the teaching staff (Karima, Shahodat and us). Both Karima and Shahodat led a full evening program and together also the Tara Dances, giving us some rest after leading the camp for four days on a row.

When it was our turn again, we led the people into the Lord's Prayer (after an afternoon class on the subject), which was a first timer for the Crimea and a new experience for some of the participants as well.

On the closing night the whole team joined in a Universal Worship, dancing the traditions and singing 'Thy Light is in all forms' in between the dances (both in Russian and English).

A very moving experience.

We led 4 supervision sessions, enabling people to lead one or two dances. Wali gave two guitar classes, assisted by Bo, after which Bo did the final third guitar class, plus the above mentioned Aramaic Class.

On our request Bo had brought 30 Russian booklets of 'On with the Dance' (we gave the Russian network the copyright for the Russian version), which sold all, so there was a strong wish for deepening insight in the process of dance leading.

The camp was a big job. Many afternoon classes (actually every afternoon!) and as we had numerous talks & interviews with people on top of that and needed to prepare also, we didn't swim in the Black Sea quite as much as we had wanted to!



Lessons learned

1. Into each life some rain must fall, but too much was falling in the first few days (Thank you, Platters, for your lovely song).
2. The Russian dance family keeps surprising us. Even after over ten years of visiting the far corners of European Russia once or twice a year and many camps, we still cannot fathom what is happening. We are used to expect the unexpected but organizing a camp without any proper dance facilities was new to us. Again it helped us to live Rumi's verse that by traveling you grow. On a camp like this it is impossible to stick to our values. All you can do is surrender and go with the flow. This issue will be solved a next time, but surely another will come up.
3. Ten days together and the depth of dances is a great support in all sorts of psychological, social and spiritual processes (a lot was going on for Shahodat and Masha). Murshid SAM was a genius in putting together badjan and mantra singing, Buddhist walking meditations and Middle Eastern body movement in prayer together into the Dances of Universal Peace as an embodied way to experience spirituality.
4. We love camps (but that isn't something we learned, we already knew it)

September 11th 2007
Wali & Arienne

Evaluation from participants & leaders team (by Shahodat & Maria)

1. As never before this year we – the organizers of the Camp - could feel its fullness and opportunity. Despite of a big number of participants it appeared to become surprisingly

deep. Participants arrived from different Russian cities: Vladimir, Yaroslavl, Perm, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Krasnodar, from Bukhara (Uzbekistan), Lugansk (Ukraine), and Jerusalem, 7 people from Baltic States (Latvia and Lithuania). Among them there were people who knew about the Camp from the Internet and who never attended the Dances. And on the Camp they had received their first experience of the DUP. We witnessed how the Camp was united through everyday practices thanks to our teachers. We had a strong intention that physical difficulties will not stir participants to take part in the spiritual work led by Ariënne & Wali. It took us a lot of energy to create friendly and receptive atmosphere in the Camp so that hot weather outside would be supported with warmth of heart sympathy.

2. The morning Dance sessions unveiled the many-sidedness of the DUP through experienced leaders who already lead their own groups. The afternoon sessions were intended for those have some experience in leading and for the emerging leaders. They were very intensive and gave us a new experience of supervisor's job through delicate valuations and inspiring remarks from Ariënne & Wali.

The Emerging Leaders Class appeared to be very important. Despite hot and lazy after-lunch time there were from 10 to 25 people in the circle every day. Before the Circle started Ariënne & Wali had gathered those who wanted to lead the Dance that very day to discuss the Dance leading details, gave some technical directions and explained some fine aspects both of the Dance itself and of the way of leader's behavior in it. It was very detailed and intelligible analyses of the Dance leading techniques clearing up participant's questions and uncovering the new faces of the Dances.

After that Dances order was discussed i.e. in fact it was setting up the session program with the analyses why this or that order is suitable for this very day. It was important and interesting not only for the beginners but also for the experienced leaders because setting the program with different leaders is always arising questions not only from the novices.

After the Dances the Circle sat down for the feedback session noting personal experienced of different aspects of the Dances led. It was concluded by Ariënne & Wali who always gave support and kind words even in difficult cases which could happen among the beginners. We could illustrate how supporting and inspiring it was by the fact that two girls (one 12 years old from Moscow and the other 13 years old from St. Petersburg) had led their first Dances in a very confident and open way. Apart of that there were 3 leaders from Perm, Riga and Jerusalem who stepped up into the Circle to lead the Dance for the first time and who leaved the Camp with a solid confidence to continue the job at home. Those leaders who had already some experience had gained more confidence. And all of us had mentioned extremely safe and supporting atmosphere created by Ariënne & Wali which is so important in the beginning of the Path. The whole Circle expressed its hope that such a school with these teachers could become regular yearly practice.

3. The music classes uncovered a lot of interest in the way of using the elements, influencing the Dance, and in repertoire choice. The group consisted of 8-10 participants sing guitars and drums and also 5 listeners who were attentive throughout the class. The participants learned how to transmit different elements with the help of different guitar techniques and different ways of sounds producing with the drum. This was new information represented to the listeners in a clear and interesting way. The support from the Teacher was also very important delicately but mightily inspiring us towards personal development and professionalism.
4. A part of the Camp program was a trip to the Tekke in Yevpatoria noticeably prepared and held by Ariënne & Wali. Literally in a few days they had managed to prepare quite a

new people to participate in common prayer in the Tekke. That prayer meeting went on like a feast. We were warmly greeted by the Tekke hostess Alifie-Hanum who hospitably greeted our group and shared with us traditional pilaf after the Zikr. We also met 10 Sufi pilgrims from Ukraine (Naqshbandiyah) in the Tekke who joined the Zikr. That was the beginning of our friendship, - later on the pilgrims expressed intention to visit our Camp and stay for the whole day with us. They arrived early in the morning to take part in the morning practices and then sang, dance and pray with all day round. Leaving they asked us to send them "The Prayer of the Cosmos" which was performed immediately on return to St. Petersburg. This meeting in the Tekke led us to new very good practice of "open meetings".

5. Shahodat and Karima took part in setting the evening Dance sessions. Everyone had the opportunity to lead his or her individual session and took part in common programs. That interaction gave the experience of how to build up harmonious common program.

One of the main participants of the Camp was the Black sea ☺ which is of a great attraction for everyone and proposes natural combination of leisure and inner work.

Spiritual leadership of the couple (man and woman) was undoubted advantage of the Camp. That was an example of the balanced harmonious interaction of different gender leaders. Moreover warmth and humor in relations between the leaders had built up receptive and open atmosphere for the whole circle, which was mentioned by the participants in their reviews.

Thus the Camp had inspired both organizers and participants to go on deepen into the practices and spreading the DUP. It showed how deep could be the influence of the Walks and mantric Dances. It helped the emerging leaders to affirm on the Path chosen and attracted new leaders into the DUP. The goals which we intended to reach were reached!

6. Let us listen to the words of the participants:
...There is surprising combination of dances, music, communication, practices, sea and sun...

...The Festival appeared to be very harmonious and integral. The atmosphere of the Camp was open, attentive, and tolerance to each other. Sometimes one could not believe that it is possible. But this relations were indeed, this was truth, and this was a real miracle...

...I have learned a lot about guitar playing for the DUP. It was very important for me that while playing one can accentuate on different elements and these elements could influence the painting and dynamics of the Dance. I've got a great experience accompanying the Dances together with Wali...

...It was new for me to get the deeper vision of the structure of the Dance, of how the Leaders are setting up the Dance, of how one dance passes into another, the feelings after the Dance...

...Sufi Dances are very interesting for me and the music sounding in the performance of Ariëne & Wali will always sound in my heart...

...I learned a lot during my stay here: enlarged and deepened my experience of living through the DUP, led the first Dance in my life thanks to the emerging leaders class, held by Ariëne & Wali. I have also managed to learn a lot of interesting and helpful things connected with the guitar accompaniment of the Dances: the telling and demonstration of

the different elements in music on the Wali's guitar class were extremely interesting; Bo's consultations were laconic and very practical from professional point of view...

...I've got deep impressions from common morning practices, where it seemed our breath and the breath of the sea, the earth and the sun united in one prayer in one song to God...

...Those ten days proved to be a real school for me on very different levels of life... Desire to take part in Sufi practices didn't let me sleep in the morning...

"Sand and Sea, Dances and Songs, all have twisted into the wonderful stream, and the heart is not beating like a frightened bird. It is free; there are no duties in the sky.

The guitar and the flute penetrated my soul, It flatters like a butterfly in the rhythm, Love woke up. The world is light and beautiful. We are all united. Let's exclaim: "Hurray!"

...As a result – this Camp became for me the place of acknowledgement of my power and of realization of my place in the Dances, Camps, Dances Network, spiritual practices and in all the diversity of the world!

Here are the questions of the participants and the answers they gave themselves at the end of the Camp:

Q: How is it possible to improve yourself if you are already a certified leader and even could lead the pupils?

A: You have to work on the deep uncovering of every tale, parable, legend, and mantra.

Q: Should we include joyful dances into the program?

A: Yes it is necessary and it is very important to use the Dances from all traditions because using only Sufi tradition gives depth but it is too tiring for the people. The balance and harmony are needed.

Q: The relations between man and woman is also a question.

A: There were several couples in the Camp who personified Harmony and Love and I could always see the example of warm relations between Ariëne & Wali during leading the Dances. Thank you for the possibility to study through our meetings!