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Report on my Expedition in the Caucasus

János Sipos, Budapest

The tracing of the old Asian layers in Hungarian folk music has great tradition. The foundation-stone was laid by Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1936, Bartók carried out folk music research in Anatolia, and between 1957–79 the musical mapping of the Middle-Volga region was concluded by László Vikár and Gábor Bereczki. Due to these endeavours, we can study four monographic works on Cheremiss, Chuvash and Tatar-Bashkir folk music, and an excellent book about Anatolian folk music.

I picked up the thread of research in Anatolia where Bartók had dropped it, and proceeded gradually southward along the Toros mountains. I summarized my findings in a volume of Anatolian folk music that is the most comprehensive comparative work to this day. Back home, it was first of all Professor Róna-Tas who saw perspectives in my research and admitted me into his Ph.D. course, ushering me towards the exploration of ever broader connections.

At present, I am conducting the search for these broad connections in a vast area. Apart from Anatolia, which I visit on and off after a six-year stay there in 1987–93, I led expeditions to Thrace, Western Kazakhstan (Mangishlak), Mongolia, Azerbaijan, Karachay-Cherkes Autonomous S.S.R. and Kabard-Balkar Autonomous S.S.R. My aim is to continue with the noble tradition started by Béla Bartók and László Vikár: the analysis of the eastern elements in Hungarian music authenticated with collecting work on location. Through my researches I connect the Volga-Kama area with Anatolia so that in the final analysis the comparative musical map of the entire area could be plotted.

The Turkic-speaking inhabitants of the immense area I have chosen are, going from north to south: Chuvash, Tatar, Bashkir, Kazakh, Turkmen, Azeri and Anatolian Turkish people, as well as the Karachay, Balkar, Kumyk, Noghay groups in the Caucasus and the Turkic minorities in the Balkans. The elaboration of the languages of the Turkic peoples living in the area is relatively well advanced, whereas still little is known of the musics of

1 Bartók (1924, 1934, 1991), Kodály (1937–76).
6 Relevant books would fill a library, so let me merely mention a high-standard summary: The Turkic Languages of 1998.
these ethnic groups, especially in comparison with each other as well as in the historical perspective of the musical layers.

Music and language reflect different dimensions of human existence, therefore more profound results can be expected of their combined study than of the separate investigation of the two fields. Of similar importance is the requirement not to restrict research to a small area or state formation, since several features of folk music are areal phenomena that ignore frontiers just as rivers and mountain ranges do.

![Map of the studied area](image)

Figure 1. Map of the studied area

My aim is to get to know the music of these Turkic peoples, to compare them, to define the fundamental musical strata, their interrelations and finally, to draw some cautious conclusions as to their historical development. In addition, I always compare the studied music to the tunes of the highly stratified Hungarian folk music of eastern origin to see if there are any similarities.

A sceptical reader might argue that it would be hard to draw conclusions as to Turkic or Hungarian prehistory or ethnogenesis from however extensive a research, for in the history of folk musics, even a hundred years is hard to retrace, let alone thousands of years. Although that argument contains much truth, it is also known that in times prior to the 20th century lacking organized schooling system, cinema, radio, and especially television, the
speed of cultural change was incomparably slower. What is more, certain folk music strata such as the laments and usually the tunes in free rhythm have a great degree of persistency. Another fact is that the emergence of large coherent tune groups requires many years. For some genres it is therefore possible to take a retrospective look, especially when they are represented by different but stylistically connected tunes, or tune groups, otherwise called tune styles.

Besides, a synchronous research conducted over a large area might also have its direct values. The material collected from a variety of aspects, high-quality recording, up-to-date storage, unified elaboration and comparative analysis, the systematization of the sound material and the transcriptions reveal a lot of the current musical interactions among these ethnic groups. Even when the historical implications are ignored, the musical and linguistic connections of a vast and ethnogenetically intricate area can be learnt.

It is imperative to have personal expeditions to the Turkic people whose music one wants to explore because there are no reliable monographs and the existing publications usually do not answer the questions without a knowledge of which no further step can be taken. There is unfortunately a single country in the world where ethnomusicological research was launched by geniuses like Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály.

The ethnic groups of the studied area are in various contact with the evolution of the Hungarians. Let me mention the Kazakhs by way of an example, since the Comans migrating westward merged with the Hungarians, and their brethren remaining in Asia took part in the ethnogenesis of the Kazakhs. The North Caucasian area is also important because prior to advancing to the Carpathian Basin, the Hungarians also lived within the Khazar Empire, precisely in this area. Therefore, the Caucasian collection is a step in the comprehensive areal examination on the one hand, and a venture promising the uncovering of special Hungarian relevances.

Of course, it is beyond my competence to fully map the highly complex and colourful Caucasian area, but it is worth noting that I added an interesting control material to the Caucasian collection. In the early 20th century, a large number of Karachays fled the Russians to Turkey, then they went further to escape deportation in 1944. Today, Karachays live in the village of Başköyük close to Konya, for examples, who—unlike most minorities in Turkey who assimilate quickly—stick closely to their traditions. In the book I am writing presently I will compare the folk music of the Karachays and Balkars in the Caucasus with that of the Karachays in Turkey.

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Hungarian researches in the Caucasus

Taking a fleeting look at the map will immediately reveal that the foreground to the Caucasus has a strategically salient place in the east-west route of the Eurasian steppe. The steppé narrows down here because of the Caspian Sea and the Ural Mountains, therefore the migrating peoples including the Huns and Avars passed towards their western destinations here, then, when their empires had collapsed, some of their groups returned here.\(^{10}\)

The foreground of the Caucasus has great importance in the shaping of prehistoric Hungarians. Here was the Don-Kuban habitat where the Hungarians moved mixed with Oguz groups in the 5th century before they switched over to a more intense livestock breeding and land-tilling culture inside the Khazar Empire. In the north, they performed frontier defence, as was appropriate for a people who had recently joined the empire. In the south-west they got in touch with the Alans. It is not accidental that the story recorded in the early Hungarian chronicles about the kidnapping of the daughters of the Alan prince Dula in Meotis, the marches of the Sea of Azov, who were to become the wives of Hunor and Magor—probably a reference to the marriages of Alan and Hungarian princes and princesses—took place in this very area. At any rate, the Hungarians got in touch with the Onoghurs, Sabirs, Turks, Turkic-Khazar, Bulgars and Alans, as well as other peoples, in this region before moving to ‘Etelköz’ around 670, and from there, together with the Kabars, to the Carpathian Basin in 895 being pursued by the Pechenegs.

No wonder our ancestors were always intrigued by this area. King Béla (IV.) supported a Dominican monk called Otto to set out around 1232 with a few companions in search of the relatives of the Hungarians, as our chronicles claim. He did reach his goal, probably meeting the Hungarians around the Caucasus whom Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus mentioned (959) noting that they kept in touch with the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin via envoys.\(^{11}\) This information was the basis on which Julianus and his comrades set out in 1235 on a new expedition. However, failing to find Otto’s Hungarians, they turned northwards and did come across another Hungarian group along the Volga.\(^ {12}\)

From that date up to the mid-18th century no other Hungarian research took place in the Caucasus. At the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, with the awakening of the Hungarian national feeling, a search for the original homeland, for the Asian kins, became a high priority issue. The first Hungarian explorer of some worth was János Ögyvallai Besse who came to the Caucasus in 1829. Besse was convinced that the Hungarians had come from the Caucasus; he joined the expedition that climbed the Elbrus, he got to know many ethnic groups but he found no relevance to Hungarians.\(^ {13}\)

Count Jenő Zichy led an expedition to the Caucasus and then to Central Asia in 1895. The expedition members no longer aimed to find Caucasian Hungarians, although Zichy

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\(^{10}\) Róna-Tas (1996).

\(^{11}\) Emperor Constantine presumably completed his work by 952. Originally, the book had no title, its first publisher Meursius named it De administrando imperio in 1611 (Róna-Tas 1996: 57).


\(^{13}\) Vásáry (1972), Besse (1838).
cherished some hope.\textsuperscript{14} It was detrimental that they did not speak Russian, the language of communication already at that time, and naturally could not speak the innumerable Caucasian languages. True, one of the participants in the expedition, Gábor Bálint Szentkatolnai, wrote a brief grammar of the Kabard language, but he did not speak it well. Nonetheless, it could have been a start for Caucasian research, had it not been for the Russian revolution of 1905 and World War I. Individual research became very complicated under the new circumstances, so much so that up to the end of World War II only the Hungarian archeologist Nándor Fettich got as far as Tbilisi.

After the war, scholarly and cultural relationship began to evolve with Georgia and Armenia, but the outcome again failed to live up to the expectations of the Zichy expedition. In 1966, István Erdélyi visited several museums and research bases in Azerbaijan, Dagestan, Georgia and north Ossetia, and later in Chechenia. In 1978, he led an expedition of a few members to North Ossetia, then the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous S.S.R. and the Kuban valley.\textsuperscript{15}

The head of the Department of Arabic Philology at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Károly Czeglédy wanted to set up a Caucasian subgroup after the World War II.\textsuperscript{16} The researchers, however, were chiefly interested in Armenian (Ödön Schütz) and Georgian (Erzsébet Tompos, Márton Istvánovits, Mária Bíró) culture. The culture historian Lajos Tardy also mainly studied Georgian subjects.\textsuperscript{17}

Although a few more study trips of lesser importance were conducted, no significant research or field work has been done in this area of great relevance to Hungarian culture. Besides, all research and visits concentrated on the southern side of the Caucasus. It is therefore no exaggeration to claim that our recent, short but highly intensive and adequately documented Balkar and Karachay folk music collecting trip is of signal importance.

\section*{About the Balkars}

There are several contradictory theories about the origin of the Balkars.\textsuperscript{18} Since the work of Vsevolod Miller, the Balkars are associated with the Kuban Bulgars who lived here in the 7\textsuperscript{th}–8\textsuperscript{th} centuries and were pushed back into the mountains in the 12\textsuperscript{th}–13\textsuperscript{th} centuries.\textsuperscript{19} Again others claim that the ancestors of the Balkars were Khazars who withdrew towards the upper reaches of the Terek in the 11\textsuperscript{th} century. Some claim that the Balkars had Ibero-Caucasian or Finno-Ugrian ancestors. Another view suggests that the Balkars used to live in the Crimea Peninsula and moved to the Caucasus in the 15\textsuperscript{th}–17\textsuperscript{th} centuries.

\begin{itemize}
\item Cholnoky (1905), Zichy (1897), Zichy (1899). See also Erdélyi (2000).
\item See also Erdélyi (2000).
\item Czeglédy (1955).
\item Sources of data on the history of the Balkars: Golden (1992), Kakuk (1976), Pritsak (1959), NUPI, Centre for Russian Studies (www.nupi.no), Encyclopaedia of Islam, The Columbia Encyclopaedia.
\item Miller (1881–87).
\end{itemize}
According to Balkar and Georgian tradition, the ancestors of the Balkars used to live in the North Caucasus, in the Kuban steppe, before the Mongol raids drove them back to the mountains. It also claims that before the Karachays and Balkars got Kipchakized in their tongue in the 11th century the earliest, they lived in political alliance with the Alans and came strongly influenced by them. A lot of Karachay-Balkar geographical names are of Alan origin, e.g. dan ‘river’, g’am ‘gorge’. That is maybe one reason why their neighbours called the Karachay-Balkars Alans or Ossets. In both languages there are many Digor-Oset loan words, although in recent centuries, the Karachays had no direct contact with the Ossets.

Most probably, the majority of the above traditions contain a grain of truth and the ethnogenesis of the Balkars involved certain ethnic groups of the one-time Hunsnish Empire, such as Karachays, Kipchaks, Khazars, Bulgars, Alans and other Caucasian peoples. Little is known, however, of the rate of the ethnic groups involved in the ethnogenesis, and therefore comparative musical research encompassing vast areas, of which this present investigation is a small part, can provide useful information in this regard.

The name Balkar itself did not appear before the 17th century. Until the 18th century, the Balkars were nomads and animists, believing that all objects had a soul, a spirit of their own. They personified the forces and phenomena of nature. The Hanafi branch of Sunni Islam began to be disseminated among them by the Crimean Tatars and the Kuban Nogays, and in the years of the Shamil uprising in Daghestan (1834–58) Islamization took momentum. Christianity and animism, however, lived up the early 20th century, with traces surviving in their beliefs, superstitions and, as we have found, in their folksongs to this day.

In the 18th century, Russians began to occupy the upper valleys of the Terek’s tributaries and in 1827, Balkaria was the first of the north Caucasian countries to be subjected to the Russians. The Russians did not colonize the Balkars but created Kumyk, Oset and Mountain Jewish settlements in Balkaria, with more and more Russians resettling here and transforming the pastures into arable land. That sped up the switching of the Balkars from nomadic animal husbandry to sedentary agriculture.

The Soviet regime took control of Balkaria in 1920. Upon the instruction of the Central Committee, the “Balkar okrug” was annexed to the Mountenous Soviet Socialist Republic (Gorskaya ASSR). In September of that year, the Balkars joined the Kabards to create the Kabard-Balkar Autonomous Area, changed into the Kabard-Balkar Autonomous SSR in December.

During World War II, the Germans occupied the area briefly. Charged with collaboration with the occupying German forces, 1.5 million, mainly Muslim people were deported by the Russians after the war. Apart from the Balkars and Karachays, they included Volga Germans, Crimean Tatars, Kalmuks, Chechens, Ingushes and Meskhetians. The people to be removed were rounded up and transported in cattle wagons to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan,

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20 On Georgian traditions see the works of prince Waxušti Bagrationi (1695–1772).
23 According to 17th century Russian annals two envoys of tsar Alexander Mikhailovich travelled across the Bolchary area of the Caucasus.
Kirghizia and Siberia. Estimates put the losses at two-fifths of all deported people. Most of the Balkars were moved to Kazakhstan and Central Asia in 1943–44.

For a long time the Balkars were not acknowledged as a separate ethnicity; some of their area was annexed to the Georgian SSR, the rest to the Kabard Autonomous SSR. In 1956, the Balkars were allowed to return, and in 1957 the area got back its name Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous SSR. In 1991, Kabardino-Balkar became an independent republic.

Nowadays, the awareness of the Balkars’ ethnic identity is strengthening, but it has not much palpable result as they amount to some 9% of the population of Kabardino-Balkaria. That is one reason why the Balkar leaders choose the Pan-Turkic nationalist movement. In 1991 the Balkars joined the Assembly of Turkic Peoples involving Azeris, Kumyks, Noghays and Balkars.

The Kabard-Balkar Constitutional Republic is on the northern side of the Caucasus, with Nalchik as its capital. The area of the republic is 12,400 km², the population numbered 760,000 in 1990. Their typical occupation is animal husbandry, growing wheat, flax and fruits, most of their industrial activity also attached to agriculture. Timber industry and mining are also substantial branches. Most of the area is uninhabited, a wilderness without paths. The Kabard, Balkar, Russian and Ukrainian population mainly live in the valleys of the affluents of the Terek. Sunnite Moslem Kabards and Balkars amount to 57% of the population, but unlike the Balkars who speak a modern West Kipchak language, the Kabards’ Caucasian tongue belongs to the eastern branch of the Adyge (Cherkess) language group. The Russians make up 30% of the population.

Statistics for 1989 claim there were 85,000 Balkars, 90% in the Kabardino-Balkar republic, with considerable diasporas in Kazakhstan and Kirghizia. Prior to 1946, the valleys of the Terek’s affluents from the Elbrus to the country of the Osets also belonged to the Balkars in addition to the northern slopes of the main range of the Caucasus. The overwhelming majority speak Balkar as their mother tongue.

Collecting among the Caucasian Balkars and Karachays

I and Gergely Agócs visited the Kabard-Balkar and the Karachay-Cherkes areas in September-October 2000. We got the impetus from Svetlana Dashieva, a depute rector of the Kabardino-Balkar State University, who invited us to the conference on the Nart epic poem held in Nalchik and a collecting trip.²⁴

We knew there was dangerous radioactive pollution from the materials buried in the Karachay lake and that efforts to cleanse the lake stopped for lack of resources in 1998. It was also a matter to consider that the Chechen-Russian war was going on hardly over 100 km away from Nalchik, and the Chechens took hostages in neighbouring countries as well. When, however, a researcher had made up his mind, nothing can deter him. Indeed, on September 25, 2000, our plane took off for Moscow, and the same night we arrived in Nalchik, at an 8-hour delay.

In our two-member team, I took on Balkar communication, handled the video and photo cameras, while Gergely communicated in Russian and worked with the DAT tape-recorder. We returned home with an excellent collection of 250 tunes, most of them recorded from reliable informants in five Balkar villages (Qashkataw, Qarasu, Bezengi, Yanjikoy, Oğar Malqar) and in three Karachay villages (Oğar Mara, Karaçaevsk, Teberda). Another four venues were added to that: the Ethnographic Research Institute, the Nalchik Radio, and two folk music concerts. We did not only record songs and beliefs of Turkic peoples, but also registered some material of the local Cherkes and Kabard people, and collected from Cherkeses who came to the Nart congress from Turkey and Syria. We acquired many folk music publications, but these were mainly devoted to the folklore of the majority Kabards.  

![Musical notation]

**Figure 2. Pitches and degrees**

**A Karachay-Balkar folk music style**

For the exploration and arrangement of a musical material, one has to define the musical layers, musical “styles” and types comprising a considerable number of interrelated tunes, for their significance is incomparably greater than that of sporadic tunes. If this step is made with due absorption and circumspection, we usually get the key to the musical systematization, for the examination of the substrata and the connections between the strata is already a somewhat easier task.

In this paper I am going to present a Karachay-Balkar folk music style, before I attempt to see if the folk music of these people has any connection with Hungarian folk music. Since the detailed presentation of no musical style can be condensed in a short paper, this time I am going to sum up only the process of analysis and the final conclusions.

A typical tune was already striking at the beginning of our collecting work and many of its variants cropped up later as well. The tunes that were very similar at first hearing eventually outlined two significant classes, one containing tunes ending on la, the other ending on so. The two can be called twin classes, for transposing the so-ending tunes a note higher, we get melodies similar to the tunes ending on la. This could be inferred from the

inner cadences of the two subgroups, VII(4)VII being for the so-finals, and I(5)1 for the la-
finals. These tunes are appropriately handled in one group, although their scales are different.

With reference to some texts, I termed this compound, dual tune class Taš köprǜ ‘Stone 
bridge’ class for easier treatment. The tunes have several common features, such as 
individual arrangement of text, parlando-rubato rhythm on a latent 6/8 ground, and four-part 
musical arrangement, with typical cadences but diverse melody motion.

The odd-numbered lines of the texts had 10, 11 or 12 syllables (5+5, 5+6, 6+5, 6+6), the 
even lines mostly having 8 (5+3) syllables. A syllable or two might be added to the odd lines, 
but shortening is rare in both odd- and even-numbered lines. Symbolizing the 5- 
and 6-syllable section with S, the general syllable formula is S+S / S+3. This layout of the text is 
also adopted by the music, although the inner division of the musical lines is not always 
plastic. It can be illustrated with a multitude of examples.

This musical class contains tune groups of different character to be presented here in the 
order of the height of the starting motif or first section. For musical arrangement, a study of 
the height of the first part appears to be sufficient, because the second section either 
progresses below the first or descends relatively evenly, thus unlike the variable first part, it 
does not fundamentally influence the overall character of the tune. The class containing a 
total of 65 tunes has three basic forms. In the first two (a and b), the structural scheme 
already shows that the second part is largely determined by the first. As for the c) form, there 
is usually a descending motif in its last line, so the second (CD) part of the ABCD forms is 
again smoother, less pronouncedly characteristic than the first.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character of the melody</th>
<th>Form of 1st / 2nd part</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Two-part fourth-fifth shifting</td>
<td>AB^4^5/AB</td>
<td>43 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Two-part melody</td>
<td>AB/AC</td>
<td>29 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Four-part melody</td>
<td>AB/CD</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let me embark on the real point to this paper, on what is more than just summary: the 
presentation of some novelty about a so-far unpublished musical material. Let us see the tune 
groups of this class. I will show one tune of all major groups, but I have to stress that the 
9 tunes represent 65 tunes constituting an autonomous, highly variative class of tunes divided 
into markedly characteristic subgroups.

For easier comprehension, I also present the basic motion of the first part of the tunes in 
schemes. Let us keep in mind that the ‘first part’ designates the first two lines of the score.

26 Including the more frequent AB^4CB and the rarer AB^3AB, A^4B^5AB forms.
27 Including A,BAC, A,BAC forms, too.
Group 1. First part moving low and touching the fundamental note

It is typical of the first part of the tunes in the first group to move in a low register, touching on the keynote once or twice and ending on the 4th or 5th degree.28 The second part of these melodies moves about the same way, but it ends on the fundamental note.

This group can be divided into three tune types, differing by the pitch of the first part. The first group differs from the second by starting on the key note and stepping from there to the 5th/6th degree. Also, on the whole the first part of these tunes move lower than the first part of the descending second type (scheme 1a-b, exs.1-2). The first part of the third type has its melody descend to the fundamental note in the first third, then leaps sometimes as much as an octave upwards to descend to the 3rd-4th degree, undulating on the third or fourth of the key note at the end of the first part (scheme 1c, ex.3).

Scheme 1. The abstract melody movement of the types in class 1

It cannot be stressed enough that although only a few la-ending tunes are presented here, each could be coupled with an equivalent ending on so.

28 5th degree with songs ending on la, 4th with those ending on so.
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Example 1. Low-moving first part descending to the fundamental note in the middle

Example 2. First part descending to the fundamental in the middle from higher
Example 3. First part descending to the fundamental in the first third of the period

Group 2. Low first part without the keynote

The first part of a popular Taš köprü tune ending on so and having a bunch of variants moves in the band of the 1st-5th degrees, around the 3rd-4th degrees as the backbone, without touching on the fundamental (scheme 2, ex.4). No tunes of this kind can be found among the songs ending on la.

Scheme 2. Melody contour
Group 3. Higher first part moving in the 6- b3 band

The Taş köprü tunes include some whose first part undulates around the 4th-6th degrees. The first part begins with a descent, and ends on the 5th degree after outlining a little mount. The second part descends from the 6th or 7th degree to the first, sometimes twice (scheme 3, ex.5).
Example 5. First part moving in the 6-b3 interval
Group 4. Types beginning with a wide-span mount

The Taš köprü class has some tunes whose first part begins low, arching high to the 6th (so') or 7th-8th (la') degree, and then declining back to the fifth of the fundamental. The 'mount followed by descent' type of first part is frequent, as illustrated by the next example. Hungarian descending shepherd's songs also include similar tunes.

![Scheme 4. Melody outline](image)

Group 5. Types beginning higher

The core of the Taš köprü class comprises the most balanced form represented by the highest number of collected songs. The first higher part moves in the zone bounded by the 8th and b3rd degrees, and the series of cadences are 4 - 5 - 4 (la) or b3 - 4 - b3 (so). Both the la- and the so-ending subgroups can be divided into two types according to the shape of the first part. One type begins with 'small mount + descent + ...' form (scheme 5, ex.6), while the other type has 'mount + mount' or less frequently 'mount + descent' (ex.7).

These tunes has some fifth-shifting character, where the first part of the melody is a fourth/fifth higher than the second part (AB4-5AB). The only difference between fifth-shifting and non-fifth shifting tunes is that the last part is high in the latter and lower in the former type.

![Scheme 5a. Melody outline](image)
Example 6. Central type, ‘mount + descent + mount’ variant
Example 7. ‘Mount + descent’ variant of the central type

Most of the types seen so far began ascending, while there are several tunes in this class that descend from high right from the beginning. The first part of these tunes usually consists of two smaller descents from the 7th-8th degree to the 4th-5th degree (scheme 6, ex.8). Examples can however be found of the ‘descent + mount’ form as well. Similar is the case to 1a) and 1b) types. The main difference between the two being the start on the fundamental in one and the descent in the other.

Scheme 6. Descending melody outline
Group 6. Descending Taş köprü tune ending on do

As we have seen two tune types are parallel in this class, one ending on la, the other on so. A single similar tune ending on do could only be collected, but it was sung by an old woman apparently aware of the older traditions and knowing them reliably well, as she sang the tune long and with variations. Although unparalleled in our collection, this tune must be taken into account (ex.9).
Are there any analogies between Hungarian and Karachay-Balkar folk music?

Historical sources would suggest that there might be connections between certain layers of Hungarian and Karachay-Balkar folk music. Let us see what analogies we can find.

Pentatonic turns in Caucasian Karachay-Balkar folk music

As against the strongly pentatonic folk music of Hungarians, the Karachay-Balkar folk music is not fundamentally pentatonic, as in the majority of tunes the sixth and second degrees play important roles. Let us examine if there are traces of pentatony in the music of these peoples, for the intricate ethnogenesis involving Turkic people as well in addition to the (similarly complex) Caucasian and Iranian peoples would make it possible.

In the whole collection, there are a mere five tunes that are pentatonic throughout, and in two tunes there are pentatonic turns. In the rest, either at the beginning or end of the tune, or at line-ends can we sometimes hear pentatonic solutions.²⁹

In group 4 of the Taš köprü class there are two strongly pentatonic tunes that only use the 2nd and 6th degrees in passing at most. In some ways similar are some descending shepherd’s songs and large-compass ascending tunes of Hungarian folk music, but these are merely accidental similarities and not genetically well-founded connections.³⁰

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²⁹ At the beginning of tunes so-do-re, so-mi-re, mi-re-do-la, mi-do-re-so, at the end re-ti-la-so, at the end of lines mi-do-la, do-la-so, so-mi-do, re-so, re-la.

³⁰ E.g. one of the Balkar tunes (Sipos Archives, Balkar/5a-7) is similar to the Hungarian descending shepherd’s song Édesanyám rózsaféja (type no.: 18-079-00-01).
Fifth-shifting and the Taš köprü class

As is well known, fifth-shifting plays an important role in the music of some ethnic groups including the Hungarians. However, one has to differentiate between frequent and sporadic, definite and partial, as well as pentatonic and non-pentatonic fifth-shifting.31

In the most populous Taš köprü class the non-pentatonic fifth-shift is widely spread, but it is not distinct but vague, meaning that we have not the repetition of a motif a fourth or fifth lower but we have more or less accidental analogies between a higher and a lower part. We have seen that in the tunes of this class only traces of pentatony can be found, so the different scale, melody line and structure all mark them off from the Hungarian fifth-shifting tunes.

There is a group of variants and a single tune among Karachay-Balkar fourth- and fifth-shifting tunes ending on la and so. The first part of these tunes moves between the 8th and 5th degrees, and closes on the 4th or 5th. The second part begins high - as is frequent with fourth- or fifth-shifting tunes, before the parallel motion to the first part sets in. The tunes have the form A3-5A (ex.10a). The other tune that belongs here has its second part unusually start 6-8 notes below the first part, before the parallel motion is established (ex.10b). Fourth- and fifth-shifting motion was also seen among the high-beginning forms of the wide-spread Taš köprü tune. As against those, the tunes here resemble somewhat the Hungarian fifth-shifting tunes on account of the kolomeika rhythm (e.g. C C C C C C C | C C C C C C C | C C C C C C C ) and the fifth-shifting structure.

Twin-bar tunes

The recitation of the Koran—similarly to Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan—moves on the mi-re-do trichord ending on re among the Balkars, too. This form has a significant role in the children’s songs of Hungarians and other ethnicities, but this recitation on mi-re-do does not seem to have much repercussion in the Karachay-Balkar folk music, and the folk tunes using similar notes utilise deeper register. The Ozay and Gollu tunes of ancient Karachay-Balkar religion end on re, but unlike the Koran recitations and the Hungarian children’s songs, they go deeper down. The Gollu tune is the following: fa-fa-fa mi-mi-mi / re-re-re ti so / do ti-do / re re.

Laments

Laments are hard to collect anywhere, but in the land of the Karachays and Balkars it seemed almost impossible. The superstitious belief that singing a lament would conjure up a tragic event made it impossible to collect laments even in intimate friendly atmospheres in which the psychic barriers would long be overcome in other locations. Eventually, a woman hired as a wedding musician sang the tune of the lament, without words. Typically enough, she did not do even so much before the local people, especially the men, left the room. The responses of the women who stayed on and the plaintive mood that settled confirmed that the lament was authentic.
The lament tune sung several times descends on series of the so’-mi-re-do-la-so scale; it has a two-line variant in which la’-so’-mi-re-do do-pentatony of the first line is answered by mi-re-do-la-so so-pentatony in the second. It is worth pondering that in this definitely non-pentatonic melodic realm it is the lament that is pentatonic. At any rate, this lament is dissimilar to Hungarian laments. There is, however, a Karachay tune that displays some similarity to the small form of Hungarian, Anatolian and Azeri laments in that it is constructed of two motifs, the first descending on la’-so’-fa-mi-Re, the second on so’-fa-mi-re-do tetrachords (ex.11).

Example 11. Karachay tune ending on do, with similarity to Hungarian laments

‘Psalmodic’ tunes (about the psalmodic tunes see Sipos 2001: 32)

These seven- and eight-syllabic Karachay-Balkar tunes ending on la constitute a markedly distinct group. They are typically built of two short parts, a fa/mi-do descent (A) and a mi-la descent (B). These two musical lines may vary to create diverse forms such as ABBB, BABB, ABBB-AABB, AAAB+B+, BBBB-ABBB-ABAB. All this might as well lead towards a more general psalmic style, but this musical style does not seem to be fully fledged here (ex.12a-b).

Such tunes and their more advanced variants can be found galore in Azeri, Anatolian and Hungarian folk music. Some of the tunes are religious songs, yet many being lullabies suggests that a more archaic form is at issue. This form is missing from among the folksongs proper, or it may have been pushed back from there.
Example 12. ‘Psalmonic’ tunes. a) religious song, b) lullaby
To sum up, we can conclude that apart from a few formal correspondences, there is hardly any similarity between Hungarian and Karachay-Balkar folk music. Some traces - such as the pentatonic lament or the importance of fifth-shifting structure may suggest that earlier other musical forms were also used by the Karachays and Balkars but these were squeezed out in the course of the ethnogenesis. Not a single tune of the most prevalent Taš kőprü class has Hungarian analogies, including the fifth-shifting ones. It would be imperative to get to know the music of the Osets, Kabards and Cherkeses to be able to draw more profound conclusions. The fact, however, that certain elementary forms such as the twin-bar mi-Re-do core tune of salient importance in Hungarian folk music or the psalmodic tunes appear in the Turkic region in connection with religion and among the lullabies is important.

**Balkar song texts**

A comparatively detailed presentation of the Karachay and Balkar languages can be found e.g. in Pritzak (1959: 343–346), in dictionaries, grammars and glossaries, and in *The Turkic Languages* (1998). Below I present the texts of the examples and their translation. I used the following special marks.

/ is used for the division of musical lines.

() is used to designate the phonemes left unuttered, e.g. when cigiwcu ́édím sounds cig`we`e`m, it is written cig(i)wc(u) ́éd(i)m.

Additional or padding phonemes, syllables, words are underlined (da, wa), the words that could not be made out are marked ‘...’.

I used the following transcription for the texts:

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The texts were translated from Balkar and Karachay by Éva Csáki. The Hungarian variants of the poems and the paper were translated into English by Judit Pokoly.

Ex.1. Lament over the untimely death of a student, Murtazov Asadullah (1910) and Atabiev Magomed (1930), Ogâr Malqar

Te̱nlerim qaťŞ / sǔ(y)gen murat éte,
Dağşi men kelgenem / qurğa.
Oqur murat éte / bir şkolğa
kelsem da,
Aruruğumu / bilgenem.

It was my heart-felt desire to learn with my friends,
Therefore I had come here, too.
Although I arrived with the hope of studying in the school,
I knew I was exhausted.

Tiśina da čabip / alay da čiğ(i)wc(u) é(di)m
Senir izlydile / desele,
Aruruwm da biraz da / mazal boluwç(u) ēdi da
tenlerim da suray / kelseler.

I ran out into the street
When I heard I was being asked for,
My illness became symptomless
When my friends inquired about me.

Ex.2. Love song in skit form, Murtayov Asadullah (1910) and Atabiev Magomed (1930), Ogâr Malqar

Süy gönle deye wa, / süy gönle da deye,
Süy gönle da qayda, / biz qayda?
Men da süy gönlükge, / ol süymeyd(i), deye da.
Quru men süy gönden / ne fayda.

They are said to be in love, in love,
But where is the loving couple, and where are we?
I love in vain, she doesn’t love me,
I’m dying of love, but what good is it?

Qolumdağı dar / alay a palatok,
Men süy gönim / bereme.
Dağ süy gönim / oğleğemin da,
Men anasfın / koremen.

A silken kerchief in my hand,
I hand it to my sweetheart.
Because my love turns away from me,
I do not respect his mother.

Ex.3. Love song, Giliâhova Arîwkiç Aźievna (1900), Karasu

Ěrtâ(n)lisk(e) / ĕ(r)te turğanlı, le,
... Ŝeš namaz(ın) / qilğanlı,
Alsam allayni wa / allıqma, oy teyri,
Almasam bilay / qallıqma(n).

One who gets up very early,
... prays five times,
When I get married,
I’ll take one like that for my wife.

Qoluna tiyâq a / alğanna, oy, teyri,
Miň qoyn(u) izândan /
barğança,
Barsam allayga wa / bar(l)ıqma, oy, teyri(i),
Barsamam ıyde / qallıqmaŋ.

I’ll hold myself aloof if she’s not like that,
One who takes a stick in his hand and oh gosh, drives a thousand sheep,
When I get married, I’ll surely only marry one like that,
Or, I’d rather stay at home.

Arbazina fayton wa / kirgenni, oy teyri,
Oneki tilni / bilgenni,
Barsam allayga wa / bar(l)ıqma, oy teyri(i),
Barsamam ıyde / qallıqmaŋ.

One who has a coach driven in the courtyard,
One who speaks twelve languages,
When I marry, I’ll surely only marry one like that,
Or, if I don’t, I’ll surely stay at home.
Ex.4. Complaints of a young man about love, Holamhanova Afuğan (1963), Bezengi

Suw boynuna / barğanma  
Suw bla birge / ži(y)lärğa.  
Bir-ek(i) iynarlə / da men aythanma  
Seni halleriği / śinaɾğa.  

Seni halleriği / śinasam, hanım,  
Amanan aman / žaśa sen.  
Sennən igerin / dağt tapmasam,  
İzlerne dep ay- / lanama men.  

Jun tarağan / qyiyn boladi,  
Taray bilmegən / qollağa.  
Eretten sayin / çişip qarawcem  
Sen a žörwçe (žuřuğen) / žollağa.  

I went to the shore  
To weep together with the water.  
I’ll sing some love songs  
To learn how you are.

If I learn how you are, my khan,  
If you’re worse than wicked.  
I won’t court anyone  
Until I find a better one.

Carding wool is a hard job,  
For hands that cannot comb.  
I went out day by day to see  
The roads that you walk.

Ex.6. Love song, performed by the semi-professional folklore ensemble of Nalčik radio

Başıbızarı / ariw žulduzçuq,  
Ol tawla / artına batad.  
Ariw sıfatı / čiśimmen getmeý,  
Tanım aman bla / atadi.  

Men žolga čişip, / allağa wa qaray,  
Èki köžümmem / boşayma,  
Ul sütmeğligin / èlge wa bilinip,  
Bolmaz qayğığa wa / qalganma.  

A fine little star above our heads,  
It hides behind the mountains.  
Your fine face is fading from my memory,  
It dawns upon me amidst sufferings.

I got out to the road, waiting for you,  
My two eyes are exhausted.  
Boy, the whole village knows of your devotion,  
And I am in incredible worry.

Ex.7. Song about Tauqan, excerpt from a lyrical song, Roza Teppeeva (1949), Bezengi

Tauqan tawlağa / ketgendi, alay  
Taw kışıkleni / mararga.  
Keligiz, qızla wa, / ma biz barayiq  
Tauqann(i) allina / qararga.  

Tauqan went into the mountains  
To hunt for mountain beasts.  
Come girls, come!  
Let’s go and meet Tauqan!

Ex.8. Lament, Başıev Maştay Mahmutovič (1928), Oğarlı Malqar

Žamal da deyle, / Žamal da deyle  
Malqarda qawgə / sözlege.  
Wav, qara qalla, / qanغازand deyle  
Žamal da čolpan / gözlege.  

Quru da qaraqdan / işlenñend deyle  
Ullu Małqarm / köpür.  
Qayış oruslu / bolur ċi anam,  
Žan (meni) Žamalimı / ökülů.  

Zhamal is talked about, Zhamal is talked about  
In angry Balkar words.  
Alas, Zhamal’s beautiful eyes are said  
To have filled with black blood.

It is rumoured that the bridge of Great Balkar land  
Has been built of dry planks.  
Which Russian was, mother darling  
The counsel for my Zhamal?
Meni Žamalím, / woy, woy, ketkendi
Ol Arustovla / qumacha.
Žamalím kelse, / oy, men barlîqma
Ullu Malqarğâ / quwančha.

My Zhamal, alas, went
To Rostov for cloth.
When Zhamal arrives, I will surely go
To Great Balkaria for a feast.

Ex.9. Love song, Giliahova Ariukț Ažicewna (1900), Karasu

Bilabîr (brigadir), ey, adîr (alay) / bolsam ar alan
Postroykağa / sulîqmaŋ.
Da sen de meni wa /süyûp elsen gå,
Qaçîrîp ar alay / allûqmaŋ.

When I am the brigade foreman,
I will take you to the construction site.
And if you love me,
I’ll elope with you, that’s how I’ll get married.

Da tûbûndeyi / atçîgım na žaši,
Bardîrailmişa / žürüşün.
Kesîm süymegelay / tiysem
a Rasul ap
(Zî)bîrma žîlg(a) ettimer / süzöysün.

You must curb the horse under you, lad,
It must walk slowly.
If you touch me when I don’t want you to, I say to the
Prophet
I’ll have you gauled for twenty years.

Da tûbûndegi / atçîgım a, qizî,
Bardîrailmişa / žürüşün.
Kesîq süymegelay / tiysem da, oy, qizî,
On žîlg(a) edîrime / sütûsûn (sûdûsûn).

I’ll surely curb the horse under me, lassie,
Let it walk slowly.
If I touch you when you don’t want me to, lassie,
I’ll sit in gaol for ten years.

Ex.12. Zikr - religious song recitation, Budaeva Nürziyihan Xusejewna (1928), Nalçik

Sözüm(ü) awalt / bismîlliyah,
Ekinîcîsi – alham-/dulîlîyah,
Salat-salam / paygâmbargâ,
Ahlusuna – / ashatlağa.

My first word is in Allah’s name,
The second is thanks to Allah;
Greetings, glory to the Prophet,
His relatives and disciples!
To the faithful,
To those who keep to the path of religion,
May holy Allah be merciful to them!
May they stick to the path of faith!

Ağa tabîq / bolallağâ,
Din jolunda / turğallağä,
Razi bolsun / stîlît Allah,
Din jolunda / tursun illyah.

Namaz haqイン-nan söleyim,
Tilibizde / nazm(u) aylayîn,,
Adamlâ a-/nîlar üçün,
Jürekle ju-/mușar üçün.

Let me speak of namaz,
In verse, in our language.
That people shall understand it,
That the hearts shall be moved.

Ex.13. Lullaby, Galiæwa Liza (1938), Oğart Malqar

Böllaw-böllaw, / böleyim,
Saŋ(a) ašlılîq / tileyim.
Žândan süygen / jan bâlan,
Adam bolup / körleyim.

Sleep, sleep, let me swaddle you,
Let me wish you good.
My child dearer to me than myself,
Let me see you grow up.
Žanumdan süt-/gen balam, My child dearer to me than myself,
Sense jurek / sütgenim. You are the one loved with all my heart.
Sen irahet / bolmayım, Don’t be worried,
Tincliq tapmayd / jüregim. Then my heart won’t find peace.

Jüregimi / quwanči, The joy of my heart.
Jašwumu / jubači. My life’s delight,
Naqut-nalmis / taščiğim, My brilliant-diamond gem,
Gokka hans / balačiğim. My little flower.

Bölley-bölley, / böleyim, Sleep, sleep, let me swaddle you,
San(a) ahsliği / tileyim... Let me wish you good...

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Szeged 2001