## A Few Words About the Musical Structure of the Western Mongolian epic *Uln Tiw*

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Ex. 1. Musical transcription of the epos

















Transcription of the pitches



The epos telling, or to put it properly the epos singing has strong, living tradition in the culture of Turkic and Mongolian peoples. This genre is (or was) found in the culture of other people too; we know the monumental Kalevala epos of the Finns, and records show that there was Hungarian epos teller, though it is impossible to find any musical traces of the deceased epos in the Hungarian folk music.

I personally collected epos of Aday Kazakhs in Mangishlak; of Kazakhs living in the middle and the eastern area of Kazakhstan and of Kyrgyz tribes living around Ysyk Köl and in Naryn. In the process of epos singing the stress is on the text, and the function of the music is to carry the text, to help memorize, and to keep the ball rolling. However all these can be reached by different devices and really, the musical styles of the areas mentioned above are rather different. The detailed analysis of

the differences would be very illuminating, but on the present occasion we can mention only a few facts.

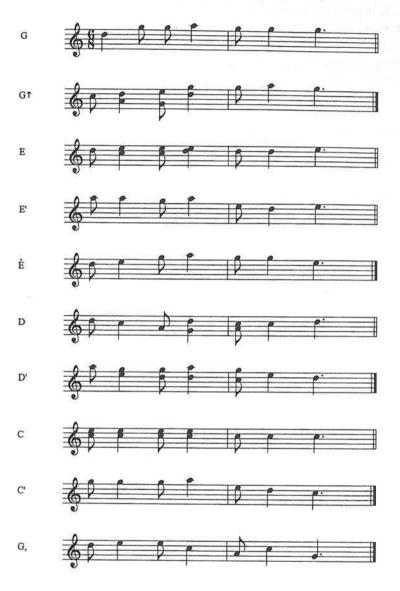
The terme style of the Aday Kazakh with short diatonic sections and 'smooth' melodic lines are in sharp contrast with the melodies of the Kyrgyz Manas epos characterized by motifs jumping on greater interval. Similarly to the terme tunes the Western Kazakh Alpamish epos is characterized by small-compass diatonic tunes. However, the musical sections of the latter are longer, and its rhythm is dominated by pulsating eights which is quite different from the triplet-rendering of the terme tunes. During the performance of the examined Mongolian epos we see a musical solution which combines the melodious arches with the forms built up from motifs so characteristic to the pentatonic world.

While the Kyrgyz epos singer uses throat-notes and other extra-musical sound effects, the singing style of the South Kazakh terme is quasi bel canto. Concerning the archaism, the manner of the Mongolian epos singing is between the Kazakh and Kyrgyz styles. The Mongolian melody progresses in deliberate beats and the performer rarely uses strong dynamical or other effects. Here we do not hear the artistic musical ornaments of the Mongolian urtin duu 'long song'. However with the help of the continuous improvisation and the confident handling of the simple musical material the performer makes the performance spirited.

The question arises: is there a musical language under the long process of the epos, from which and by the help of which the singer recreates the musical material of the epos when singing it at different times and places?

According to the analysis there are central motifs which can be regarded as words of such a language (ex. 3). I took the final tone as the main determinant of a motif. Since a motif may reach its final tone on different pitches, most of the central motifs have two or three variants.

Ex. 3. Central motifs of the epos



As we shall see, the motifs do not succeed in optional sequence; there exists a grammar of certain which controls their order.

Though during the improvised performance there are not two identical sections, it is possible to identify central motifs which help us to analyze the process. (I marked with sh the shortened one-bar form of a motif and with sp a special variant which was not considered as central motif because of its uniqueness and for the sake of the lucidity of the analysis. In ex. 4 I show the sequence of the motifs):

- Ex. 4
- (1) DG个CDG个D'C'C
- (2) G个 C' D G个 D' D' D C
- (3) E E' C G个 C
- (4) EDG, DEEG个C'C
- (5) G个 Csp C E D C' E个 C E Dsp
- (6) G个 D' D E+ Esh C' Dsh, D E D A'sh C'sh C E
- (7) DDE'E个DEDDGG,CDDCshGshC'
- (8) DEDDC
- (9) DG, CCDsh C' ECCDC

As the dune-like high-pitched motif E is very similar to motif G, I deputize G by E in the structural analysis. If we leave the pitch-variants and the short motifs out of consideration too, we get the following process (ex. 5):

- Ex. 5
- (1) D G个 C, (1+) D个 D' C'
- (2) G个 C' 个 D G个 D' D' D C
- (3) EGCG个C
- (4) GDG, DEGG个C'C
- (5) G个 C' C G D C<sup>^</sup>, (5+) E C G Dsp
- (6) G个 D' D E+ Esh C', (6+) Dsh. D G D A'sh C'sh C G
- (7) DDG'E个DGDDGG, C, (7+) DDCsh Gsh C'
- (8)  $\underline{D}GD\underline{D}C$
- (9)  $\overline{D}$  G, C $\overline{C}$ , (9+) Dsh C' G C C D C

From this process we may deduct the following fundamental motifsequences, which we may consider the rules for creating musical phrases (ex. 6):

Ex. 6

a) D-G-D-(E or G)-C (in 1, 1+, 2, 4, 6, 6+, 7, 7+, 8, 9), one of its simpler form

- b) D-G-C (in 1, 7+, 9) and
- c) G-C-G-(D)-C (in 3, 5, 9+).

Now we have three motif-sequences, which contain the musical essence of the long epos singing. We might suppose that the pattern of these sequences lie hidden in the memory of the epos singer and supervise the presentation of the epos.

The epos begins with the simplest central form (D-G-C in line 1-3), then follows a variant of the most popular motif-sequence (D-G-D-C-C in lines 4-8). These two melodies are easy to examine in ex. 1, so we do not need to write them separately.

After these follows a realization of the third central motif-sequence. In ex. 7 we show a reduced variant of this sequence (G-C-D-C in lines 12, 10, 14 and 16):

