

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

By
JÁNOS SIPOS
(Budapest)

Ex. 1. Musical transcription of the epos

Ē - xē - - - xē,

Ba - rŋñ . . . tū - wīg e - je - leŋ . tör - sōŋ,

Ū - xūš - gū - i mōŋ-xīŋ šin - ji - tē,

Ū - gārš - gu - ā ba - ya - nā šin - ji - tā

ū - lāŋ ceŋ - ker mōr - tāl

Na - raŋ Tīw dū - - - tā

Sa - raŋ Tīw xa - tuŋ - tā

ūk - ū - dūk - guā Ū - lūŋ Tīw gi - ji ne - gl

sāŋ e - rel bā - sāŋ gi - w gi - nā - l.

Bā - ri - sāṇ ge - rel or - daṇ - gi - ni kel - wel

šu - ra jan - daṇ ya - rū - c - tā

šu - yum jan - daṇ un' - i - tāl

xāṇ jan - daṇ xāl - ya - tāl

xa - šal jan - daṇ te - rem - tāl

na - raṇ taṇ - nā ū - dū - tāl

na - cak - dor - ji - l ōr - kā - tāl

to - sl ca - ṡāṇ dē - wūr - tāl

ta - na - mal ca - ṡāṇ tūr - ṡu - tā.

xa - ra xam - baṇ xa - yū - wē - tā,

kō - kō xam - baṇ kō - šūg - tā

ne'-ge sã - xan õ - sar bũ - cũl - gu - ă
or - da ca - ȳaŋ őr - gã ger - tãl
im - l sãŋ e - rel bã - sãŋ gi - w gi - nã - l - la.
E - nel ti - wĩg . . e - je - lenŋ tőr - sũŋ
kũr - jãŋ ċi - nãŋ šũ - dũ - tãl
kũ - rũŋ gal - jaŋ mō - rũ - tãl
Tō - mōr Xaw - xa a - xũ - tãl
xo - ruŋ šan - dãs u - su - tãl
xor - ta šul - mus nō - kũd - tãl
xa - tu - dak - gu - ăl Xa - taŋ Xaw - xa gi - ĵi
pa - sal ne - ge sãŋ e - re bã - sãŋ gi - w gi - nã - l - lō.
Te - gãd Xa - taŋ Xaw - xa gi - dik - ċi - ni:

Ba-rūn xō - tā ti-wīg e - je - leŋ-xen tōr - sāŋ
 ū - kūš guē mōŋ - kân šin - ji - tāl
 ū - gār - ši - guā baya-nāl šin - ji - tāl
 ū - lūŋ ceŋ - ker mōr - tāl
 ūk - dūg - guā Ū - lūŋ Ti - wīg alj - l or - kād
 saŋ - mu - tā dā - ɣa
 sa - xal - tāl išk - l
 ūl - dā - l - guā a - wād i - rā - rā! - gā - l,
 ne - gel šul-mus bā - tar yo - wül - saŋ san - jē.
 Dō - rōl - jīŋ ja - mīg e - lig - di - tel jī - gād,
 dō - rān seŋ-jīg se - ter - te - l jī - gād,

kūr kūr gi - ji kūr - čūk - nād

kūr - čūk - tā - xīŋ e - rāŋ dūŋ xāŋ - kis gi - gād

xāk - riŋ dū - dād:

Ūk - dūg - l - guā Ū - lūŋ Tīw bā - nāū - čī!

Ga - rād i - rā - rāl!

Na - dīg - l xo - raŋ šan - das u - su - tāl

xor - ta šul - mus nō - kūd - tāl

xa - tu - duk - l - guā Xa - taŋ Xaw - xal al - ji or - kād

saŋ - mā - tā da - ɣa

sa - xal - tā išk - l

ūl - dā - l - guā a - wād i - rā - rā, gīj - l

yo - wūl - sīm bū - šūl! - gi - jil kel - seŋ - čin'.

Cī ūm - l sãŋ e - re bol - jīm

o - rãd i - rã - rã! - gi - sin - čin',

dū - nãs - n'i ã - sãŋ - dãŋ taw - rū - lãd

sa - rãŋ ga - jar xol - du jē ow - rū - luŋ

xo-na-giŋ ga - jar xol-dãd oč - soŋ - čin'

kōn - dãŋ čī - nãŋ je - wū - tã

kōt - lãŋ čī - nãŋ on' ū - tã

da - laŋ te - kãŋ ōw - rãr

dap - ta - jī sūl - jīŋ kē - siŋ

na - yaŋ te - kãŋ ōw - rãr

alg - lū - laŋ sūl - jīŋ kē - siŋ



kű - rűl e - rűn nu - mu su - m̃ - rűn

ar - das n'í ta - tan t̃ - w̃d - ok - san ċin'

m̃r - - - - ñ - ñ

bu - rű x̃t u - rű

řap - dak - dan u - ñd od - sum b̃ - j̃ - ñ

Jam - ba T̃iw dog - dal - j̃

Ja - lű t̃t - n'í ja - r̃t - r̃d

kog - řan t̃t - n'í g̃ - xal - d̃d

kű - kűd no - x̃ řű - gil - d̃d

xo - cor - san b̃ - j̃ ge - ñ - l̃

řul - mus b̃ - tar ċi - m̃n'í ũ - g̃ bol - l̃!

Ći yo - w̃ - r̃! - gi - g̃d xu - yur -

ba - so ni - ge yu ru [til - le] bātə - rāŋ ay

xuyuru [til - le] bātə - rāŋ ay yo - wül - jē

Ur - da - xīŋ ne - ge ā - di - lār

xāŋ - kās gī - gād xāk - rāŋ dū - dād kū - rād ir - siŋ - čin'

bas - l urd - xī - nāŋ u - du - mār

xō - ta - xīŋ tō - mār bas - l xar - wād al - jē...

Transcription of the pitches

Ex. 2

G E D C A G

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 Kōl 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

The image displays ten staves of musical notation, each representing a different motif. The motifs are labeled on the left as G, G#, E, E', E, D, D', C, C', and G,. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation consists of eighth and quarter notes, often grouped in pairs or triads, and ending with a double bar line. The motifs are arranged vertically, showing a sequence of related musical ideas.

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) D G↑ C D G↑ D' C' C
 - (2) G↑ C' D G↑ D' D' D C
 - (3) E E' C G↑ C
 - (4) E D G, D E E G↑ C' C
 - (5) G↑ C_{sp} C E D C' E↑ C E D_{sp}
 - (6) G↑ D' D E+ E_{sh} C' D_{sh}. D E D A'_{sh} C'_{sh} C E
 - (7) D D E' E↑ D E D D G G, C D D C_{sh} G_{sh} C'
 - (8) D E D D C
 - (9) D G, C C D_{sh} C' E C C D C

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↑ C, (1+) D↑ D' C'
 - (2) G↑ C' ↑ D G↑ D' D' D C
 - (3) E G C G↑ C
 - (4) G D G, D E G G↑ C' C
 - (5) G↑ C' C G D C', (5+) E C G D_{sp}
 - (6) G↑ D' D E+ E_{sh} C', (6+) D_{sh}. D G D A'_{sh} C'_{sh} C G
 - (7) D D G' E↑ D G D D G G, C, (7+) D D C_{sh} G_{sh} C'
 - (8) D G D D C
 - (9) D G, C C, (9+) D_{sh} C' G C C D C

From this process we may deduct the following fundamental motif-sequences, 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):

Ex. 7

The musical notation for Example 7 consists of four staves of music, each in 6/8 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written in a series of eighth and quarter notes, with some notes beamed together. The second staff continues the melody with similar note values and rests. The third staff shows a variation with more complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth notes. The fourth staff concludes the sequence with a final note and a double bar line.