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A Musical Map of Different Turkic-Speaking Peoples as based on Field Work from 1936 until the Present

János Sipos¹

Abstract: We do not know the folk music of many Turkic people. Lexicons are sometimes too sloppy, and many articles in this topic contain no or only a few transcriptions or analysis. However in the first half of the 20th century a research series had begun.

And really to write a comparative study on the musical styles of Turkic people seems a good idea, as these people has been playing an essential role in Asia, their music is very important to get acquainted with the Central Asian musical world.

The first steps were about the eastern connections of the Hungarian folk music, but the research soon turned to a comprehensive musical study of a large area. In 1936 Béla Bartók did his Anatolian expedition, then in 1957-1978 László Vikár collected and analyzed the folk music of Chuvas, Tatar and Bashkir people and from 1987 till our days I have been continuing this research among Anatolian Turk (also Alevi-Bektashis), Azeri, Karachay, Western and Mongolian Kazakh and Kyrgyz people. The research ranged over the music of some non-Turkic people as well (Tuvanian, Iranian, Jews etc.).

In my paper I introduce some lessons of this many-decades research and also try to sketch a map of the main styles of the Turkic speaking people. Due to lack of space and time I cannot introduce all of the folk music styles belonging to these people, I can only describe with broad brushstrokes one or two important musical layers of a few of them. However the reader will learn some important general tendencies. I touch the following questions too: What kind of connection is there between the musical and linguistic relationship of the Turkic-speaking people? Is it worth the trouble to be on the track of ancient Turkic musical layers?

In the end I draw the attention of the ethnomusicologist colleagues to the importance of comparative Turkic folk music research and suggest a coordinated work in order to discover, describe and compare the most important musical styles in the Turkic-speaking world.

1 János Sipos is a senior researcher at the Department of Folk Music within the Institute of Musicology at the Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest, Hungary.

Keywords: Ethnomusicology; comparative musicology; Bartók; folk music; Turkish; Azeri; Kazakh; Kyrgyz; Karachay; Hungarian.

Introduction

Let me quote Bruno Nettl:

"Though comparative study of all sorts is always being undertaken, things that are considered old-fashioned return as new discoveries."

On 24 February, 2011 I sent an e-mail to (one of) the father(s) of the American ethnomusicology, Bruno Nettl:

Dear Bruno!

I am very much interested in your opinion about the following. You know that my main interest is the musical world of the Turkic people, which is as complex as their ethnogenesis is.

The relation between their languages is very different from the relation existing between their music. I am thinking on writing a comparative study on the music of the Turkic-speaking people, mining out the common musical layers and pointing to the main differences and similarities.

Do you consider that a good idea? It seems so that comparative musicology looks old fashioned, but even...

Best wishes, János

Bruno Nettl in his usual very polite manner answered my letter the other day:

Dear János, Good to hear from you.

A comparative study of the musical styles of Turkic peoples? Sounds like a good idea to me. One would have to be quite careful in drawing historical conclusions. As far as the old-fashionedness of comparative studies is concerned, I wouldn't pay attention, the fact is that comparative study of all sorts is always being undertaken. Anyway, things that are considered old-fashioned return as new discoveries...

Best wishes, Bruno

And I do think too that the comparative analysis of the Turkic musical styles is a good idea. What makes this project even more important is that Turkic people play a fundamental role in Asia, and we should have a deep knowledge of their music if we would like to understand the musical world of Central Asia.

However the way leading to our goal is not easy. First of all we do not know the folk music of many Turkic peoples. Lexicons are sometimes too sloppy and many articles in this topic contain no or only a few transcriptions or analysis.

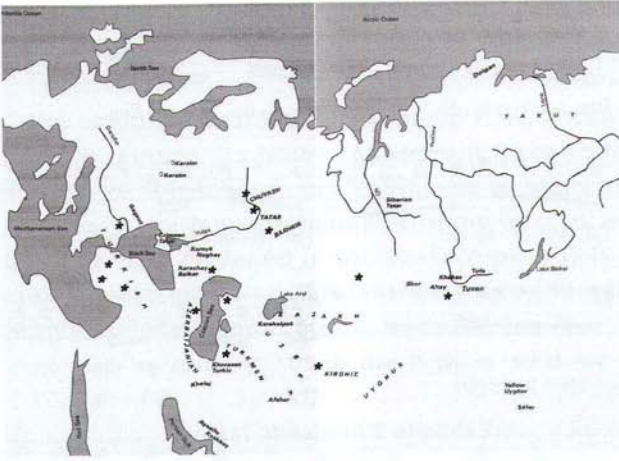
In the first half of the 20th century a research series headed by Hungarian scholars began. The first steps were about the eastern connections of the Hungarian folk music, but the project soon turned to a comprehensive musical study of a large area. After Béla Bartók Anatolian expeditionⁱ in 1957-1978 László Vikár collected and analyzed the folk music of Chuvash, Tatar and Bashkir Turkic peopleⁱⁱ and from 1987 till now I have been continuing this research among Anatolian Turks (last years mainly among Alevi-Bektashis), Azeris, Karachays, Western and Mongolian Kazakhs, Kyrgyzs and Turkmensⁱⁱⁱ. My research ranged over the music of some non-Turkic people as well.

Meanwhile, in 2006, to my proposal in Sheffield the Music of the Turkic Speaking World ICTM Study Group was founded, which will hold its third meeting at Cambridge, with more than 25 participants from different countries on Dec. 1-2 this year^{iv}. This and The Musical Geographies of Central Asia conference^v in the SOAS (London) seems to be the proof that the West has also increased interest in the folk music of the Turkic peoples, while the Turkology departments and workshops close in a row.

The comparative analysis of the music of the Turkic peoples may seem limited in a sense, but we are speaking of a very large area from China to Bulgaria. These folk musics show amazing diversity, and the relationships between them are radically different from the relationship between the Turkic languages.

We should mind that language, culture and music obey different rules. As we do not expect Kurdish and Norwegian culture to be similar just because both of the above mentioned people speak Indo-European language, we do not have to expect this from either the Turkic peoples. During their long history, the culture and language of the Turks assimilated several peoples who, during the Turkicising process and later also influenced the conquering Turkic culture.

Let us recall the story of the Karachay people living now in the North Caucasus. In 3000's BC., to the base founded by the Central Caucasian local tribes (creating the Kuban culture) Cimmerians, Scythians and Alan layers were built. After the first centuries of the first millennium there came the Hun-Bulgar and Khazar tribes, then from the 10th century on, the Kipchaks^{vi}.



The stars in the map show the places where Hungarian research was done.

Due to lack of space I cannot introduce all folk music styles of each Turkic people, I can sketch only with loose brush strokes one or two important musical layers of some Turkic peoples^{vii}.

Our tour starts in Turkey. The ethnogenesis of this nearly 80 million people is highly complex and, accordingly, its folk culture is very diverse as well. Many musical forms can be found here, from motives moving on a few tones to four-line structures descending almost two octaves.

Here we see great differences according to areas or genres, for example the folk songs of the Sufi Tahtadji people is based on a single musical phrase, while their religious repertoire includes a number of very different forms. However the overview of the Anatolian folk music is not hopeless, it was tried by Béla Bartók, and later on a much larger material by myself^{viii}. Now, however, I can introduce only two major forms.

The essence of the widest spread Turkish laments is two sections moving parallel to each other on a major hexachord, improvised free and flexibly (ex.1). Such laments occur in the Spanish, Bulgarian, Hungarian folk music and in the Gregorian as well^{ix}. However the lament of several people have completely different character, so in this case we can not think of a form born from the “universal” human soul regardless of cultures^x.

$\text{♩} = 138$



Ben bu e- vin de ne- si- ne gel - dim,
 Bül- bül öt - tü de se- si- ne gel - dim,
 Şur- da bir ge- lin öl- müş de ya- sı- na gel- dim oy.

Example 1 Anatolian lament

Another important form in Anatolia is a special four-line descending structure. The musical sections take a rest on the 5th, b3th, b3th and 1st degrees of the Aeolian scale and movements on the E-D-C trichord are characteristic in the middle of the melody (ex.2). This type of melody can be found in the folk music of the South-Western Kazakhs, Karachays (here mainly in the religious repertoire) and that of the Hungarian Seclers^{xi}. However, it is rare or does not occur in the folk music of many other Turkic peoples.

$\text{♩} = 164$



Taş de - lik, taş de - lik,
 Su - lar a - kar üç - beş bö - lük,
 Bi - le - ği - zi - me bu - la - na,
 Ken- dim ye - te - rim müj - de- lik.

Example 2. Anatolian 'psalmodic' melody (Sipos 1994: No79)

Let us now move to the east, towards the closest linguistically relatives of the Anatolian Turks, the Azeris. The territory of Azerbaijan was Turkicized by the same Turkmen tribes as Anatolia^{xii}, but different was the base layer

[substratum] they were merged with, which can explain the differences between their folk music.

In contrast to the complex Anatolian folk music the Azerbaijani folk music shows a very simple picture. Its tunes range from three to four tones (Aeol, Dorian, Phrigian tri- or tetrachord), are composed of short sections with 6/8 or 2/4 meter, and here the four-sectioned strophic form is extremely rare^{xiii}. Similar melodies can only be found in the eastern part of Turkey among the Azeri and Kurdish population living here. If we want to characterize Azeri folk music with a single melody it could be the following (ex.3).

♩ = 92 Wedding song, CD-33

Al al - ma - ğa gel - mi - şik,
Şal al - ma - ğa gel - mi - şik.

Oğ - la - nan a - da - mı - yk,

A - par - ma - ğa gel - mi - şik.

Example 3 A typical Azeri melody (Sipos 2004: No.145)

Let us now take a look at the folk music of the Turkmens who live on the other side of the Caspian Sea. According to my researches carried out among them and the publications I studied the folk songs of the villager Turkmens are very simple, and show a great resemblance to Azerbaijani folk songs^{xiv}. In contrast to this, the repertoire of the semi-professional Turkmen bahşis 'minstrels' is much broader and is worth to investigate. In Ex.4 I show a typical Turkmen folk song. We see that the general characterization of the Azerbaijani melodies fits well on it.

Xüv - di - xüv - di xüv - len - sin,___

Suv - da ba - lik___ köv - len - sin.____

Example 4. A typical Turkmen folk song (János Sipos Turkmen expedition in 2011, Etrek)

Now let us proceed to North, to the land of the Karachay-Balkar people which is also near to Azerbaijan but is separated from it by the impenetrable peaks of the Caucasus Mountains. The northern side of the Caucasus is a very important scenery for the Hungarians and also for many Turkic people because here the steppe becomes narrow, and from the 4th century here passed people migrating westward, for example the Huns, Avars, as well as the Hungarians.

The Karachay folk music is similarly complex to the Karachay ethnogenesis. On stage, here we hear all-Caucasian dance music played by accordion/garmon and the dancers toddle on toes dancing dances created in the Soviet-era. At the village celebrations and weddings the music is similar but the dances are more archaic, though also having a kind of all-Caucasian character.

Karachay folk music, although not as rich as that preserved in Anatolia contains many forms. However, at least in the current folk music, simple songs are underrepresented, while they have many complex four-line melodies. The Karachays have a melody class 'djir' with a special text division which is considered by them as typically Karachay. However, this form and this kind of melodies can be heard among Kabards as well, and it is so untypical among Turkic people that we have the right to keep it a takeover from the Kabards. Let us listen now to one of these tunes (ex.5)^{xv}.

Rubato, ♩ = 112

Süy-ge-nim cı - rı - rı men ay - tı - rıq - ma

Süy-mey - di - le se - ni teñ - le - riñ

Baş - ha za - tı - rıa men qı-zın-maw-çu-em

Ca - nı-mı qıy - nay-dı köz - le - riñ a

Example 5. Karachay djir melody [Sipos 2012: ex.12.2]

If we continue our tour and take a look at bird's eye view to the music of the Turkic peoples living in the Volga-Kama region, we meet a musical world of surprisingly different character. Tatar, Bashkir and Chuvash folk music is characterized by melodies descending exclusively on pentatonic or sub pentatonic scales. Here emerges a special fifth shifting melody form with the first half a fifth higher than the second part. This characteristic phenomenon can be heard only around the Chuvash-Cheremis boarder inside a circle of 100 kilometres radius. However these melodies live among the Finno-Ugric Cheremis people while the Chuvash Turkic linguistic effect is observed.

In the almost entirely pentatonic Tatar folk music we see a fourth shift instead of a fifth shift. The pentatonic fifth shift can be heard in great quantity also in Outer and Inner Mongolia, so in the case of the fifth shift in the Volga-Kama region we might suspect the influence of Mongol people merging here during and after the era of the Golden Horde^{xvi}. This hypothesis is also strengthened by the similarity of the Bashkir-Tatar uzun kuy and the urtin duu melodies of the Mongols. Moreover there was a considerable linguistic effect of the Mongols on Volga Kipchak languages in the same period mentioned above^{xvii}.

It should be mentioned that among Turkic peoples we see pentatonic scales only in China (Uyghurs), in Mongolia, in the northern regions of Kazakhstan and in the Volga-Kama region. The music of the Turkic people living south from this stripe and the music of the Siberian Turks is characterized by diatonic tunes having usually narrower compass.

There have been several researches in the huge area of Kazakhstan, but a comprehensive work has not yet been born^{xviii}. I compared the music of the South-western Aday Kazaks to that of the Mongolian Kazaks^{xix}. It turned out that even though their language is basically the same, in contrast to the descending Aday Kazakh melodies moving on small compass diatonic scales, the music of the Mongolian Kazakhs is characterized by pentatonic melodic lines with up and down undulating movements. At the same time Mongolian Kazakh melodies are different from the also pentatonic Mongolian tunes as well (ex.6a/b).

The Aday Kazaks have more psalmodic tunes than the Azeris, but less than the Anatolian Turks or the Hungarians. In general Aday Kazaks have more and quite diverse melody styles than Azeris, and these melodies are quite different from the pentatonic music styles of the Mongolian Kazakhs.

a)

Ka - ša - dī en to - gay-dan, e - he, ey,
 ar - dan bō - ri, aw,
 Er - kem - di kōr al - ma-dīm dūn - ya, ho,
 ay - dan ber', aw, iŷ.

b)

At' a - na-sīn sīy - la - gan a - lal ul - g'aw,
 Ta-mīy ber-sen dāw - lō - ti jil-dan jil-g'aw, ey, aw, gaw.

Example 6. a) Aday Kazakh 'psalmodic' melody (Sipos 2001c: N^o 13a) and a
 b) typical Mongolian Kazakh melody (Sipos 2001c: N^o b7a)

Based on my large field works I have just started to analyze the Kyrgyz folk music, but lack of space prevents me to describe it in detail. All I can mention is that in complexity Kyrgyz music resembles that of the Karachay, but there remained much more basic forms in the previous. The folk music of the Siberian Turks (Saha, Tuvan, Altay Kishi, Xakas etc) have been gathered and published in Novosibirsk.

Last year I used to finish my speech the way Plutarch Cato Roman senator did and I do so this year in London and Cambridge as well as in my lecture at the University of Sakarya in Turkey. Cato made infamously, that whatever he mentioned in the Senate, his speech always ended with the words: 'Otherwise, it is my opinion that Carthage must be destroyed!' My suggestion is not demolition, plunder and salt away, but I suggest again and I draw the attention of the ethnomusicologist colleagues to the importance of coordinated comparative Turkic folk music research.

This can be achieved in several steps.

- 1)** First, a reliable and representative music material has to be collected from each Turkic people, possibly supplemented by audio and video recordings. This means - in the case of a smaller nation, less than one million five hundred people - 500 tunes, whereas in the case of a more populous nation, let's say 5 million people, 1200 to 1500 tunes, and in the case of a very densely populated nation like e.g. Anatolian Turks, 5-6000 melodies.
- 2)** The melodies should be written in a consistent mode, preferably with the Finale music notation software. It is important to transcribe texts as well as to translate them into a common language, for example English or Turkish. Each melody should be given the data necessary, in Excel spreadsheet requirements (e.g. details of the sources like age, sex, collection site, time, name acquisition, rhythm pattern, scale, shape, number of syllables, etc.).
- 3)** This should be followed by the analysis and the musical classification of each people.
- 4)** The last step is the comparison of the music of the Turkic peoples.

Endnotes

- i Bartók (1976, 1991), Saygun (1976)
- ii Vikár-Bereczki (1971, 1979, 1999)
- iii Sipos (1994, 1995, 1997b, 2000, 2001a,b,c,d, 2002, 2004a,b, 2005, 2006a,b,c, 2009, 2010a,b,c), Sipos-Tavkul (2012).
- iv See <http://www.ictmusic.org/group/111/post/third-symposium-ictm-study-group-music-turkic-speaking-world-1-2-december-2012-cambri>
- v See <http://music.sas.ac.uk/research-groups-and-networks/middle-east-and-central-asia-music-forum/musical-geographies.html#c1546>.
- vi Karatay (2003), Şeşen (1985), Tavkul (1993, 2002)
- vii There are other important issues as well: How can we characterize the musical repertoire of a people? How one can compare different folk music? What kind of connection is there between the musical and linguistic relationship of the Turkic-speaking people? Is it worth the trouble to be on the track of ancient Turkic musical layers?
- viii Bartók (1936, Sipos (1994, 1995, 1997a, 2001b, 2005)
- ix Dobszay (1983), Sipos (2006c)
- x Sipos (2010c)
- xi Dobszay – Szendrei (1988), Sipos (2001c, 2006a)
- xii Ezek azonban nem egyeznek meg a mai Türkmenisztánban lakó türkmén törzsekkel.
- xiii Sipos (2004a, 2006b, 2009)
- xiv Beliaev (1975), Sipos (2012b)
- xv Otarov (2001), Sipos – Tavkul (2012a)
- xvi Sipos (2001a)]
- xvii Csáki (2006), Vikár (1993)
- xviii Erzakovič (1966, 1979, 1995)
- xix Sipos (2001c)

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Figures

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Stars added by author.

Examples 1-6: authors own work

