

Antecedents to researching the eastern elements in Hungarian folk music

Hungarian folk music research is a true *Hungaricum*. It was started by outstanding personages who were both important scholars and great composers, but most folk music research of most nations has no researchers of such stature. Among the founders of the school, it is perhaps enough to mention the names of Bartók, Kodály, Bence Szabolcsi, Pál Járdányi, Lajos Vargyas or László Dobszay. The work they carried out, the methods they developed and their improved forms are still the main strengths of Hungarian folk music research today, making it also easier to work effectively in foreign terrain, since the study of neighbouring folk music and of the eastern connections of Hungarian folk music was already launched at the very beginning of research.

Our predecessors were also aware of the theoretical difficulties of prehistoric studies. Bence Szabolcsi expresses one of the main dilemmas in this regard precisely: 'The researcher hesitantly enters this path, the path of comparing old folk traditions; can he hope to ever glimpse reality through a tangled web of assumptions about blurred traces – in the wake of diverse communities of peoples that have emerged and disintegrated over the past one and a half millennia?' His answer is: 'Hardly. And yet he must make the journey...'¹ And Zoltán Kodály writes in his book *Folk Music of Hungary*: 'Neither the Hungarians nor any of the peoples with whom the Hungarians came into contact from the fifth to the fifteenth centuries have left us a single contemporary musical document.'² Later he adds: 'since there is no hope of obtaining contemporary data, it is the music of related and neighbouring peoples, or of their successors that we must turn to in order to study related characteristics.'³

We must therefore accept that we can only offer probabilities rather than mathematically exact results. Let me also mention some methodological difficulties. Melody comparison is always subjective, and melodies considered similar in one musical culture may be considered quite different in another. Moreover, we cannot expect melodies and melodic styles to remain unchanged over thousands of years. The question is, however, how to evaluate the differences between the melodic styles of different peoples, despite their similarities: as essentially separating differences or as variants of a common material that have evolved over time. One may recall Walter Wiora's reflection: 'What is now, for example, a Hungarian or Scandinavian phenomenon was once a general symptom, and its present-day bearers have only elaborated it in more detail (e.g. the Hungarian tectonic forms).'⁴

Another factor that complicates the search for the 'ancient' layers of Hungarian folk music is that, for all its richness, our folk music is in a sense 'mono-planar' precisely because of its development, since it is dominated by four-line forms moving on scales of minor character. Here, twin bars, two-line tunes and other kinds of scales are far fewer in number. The latter have presumably been washed away by time and 'development', pushed into oblivion – if not to the same extent as in the music of many other, e.g., Western European, peoples.

Kodály's above-cited advice remains, therefore, valid in the study of the music of related and once neighbouring peoples, supplemented by musical research that is as broad as possible, so that we may be able to separate general phenomena from those that appear in only a few areas or are related to specific ethnic groups. The *analytical comparative* folk music method, which is still dominant in Hungarian folk music research and is strongly linked to ethnography, history and linguistics, is of help in this respect, as it has stood its ground in Hungary in the teeth of ethnomusicology, which has been

¹ SZABOLCSI 1934: 138.

² KODÁLY 1971a: 23.

³ Ibid.

⁴ WIORA 1952.

spreading since the second half of the 20th century, and which studies primarily the social relations of music today.

Since it was generally agreed that the most important components of the Hungarians arriving in the Carpathian Basin were Finno-Ugric- and Turkic-speaking ethnic groups, historical research into the old layers of Hungarian folk music primarily focused on these peoples. (Of course, the situation is more complicated than that, because not only the Hungarian, Turkic, Finno-Ugric and other tribes that occupied the land in several waves, but also the basic strata that awaited the conquerors in the Carpathian Basin had complex and diverse evolution.)

It soon became clear, however, that there is neither a unified Finno-Ugric, nor unified Turkic folk music. Finnish music folklorists (Aino Launis, Ilmari Krohn, Ari Väisänen), for example, have tried to find common musical content in the collections of Sami, Estonian, Mordvin, Khanti and Mansi folk music – without much success. According to Väisänen's studies, the Khanti and the Mansi tunes are very similar in form, structure and ornamentation, but they do not share common types of melodic material. The relationships between the musics of the Finno-Ugric peoples (too) are therefore often fundamentally different from the relationships between languages.

Vargyas points out that tunes which are highly developed in form and melody do not serve as evidence for drawing conclusions about the ancient relations of the Finno-Ugric peoples as regards music.⁵ This has been confirmed by other local researchers and by László Vikár. In addition, the Khanti–Mansi melodic question is extremely complex because of the ancient Samoyedic and Tatar connections and the recent Russian influence. According to Väisänen, we also have to look for interim peoples in Hungarian–Finnish comparisons, otherwise our approach will be methodologically flawed. It is also important that the data being compared be *relicta*, related to a long-established custom, and that we could rule out a recent origin. In any case, only coherent styles can be compared, with attention paid to archaic stylistic features such as recitative, simple melodic construction or even lack of a stable form, archaic melody contour, rhythmic peculiarities, old tonal scale or performance style.

Nevertheless, some of the most characteristic ancient musical forms of the Finno-Ugric, Northern Turkic and Mongolian peoples can be clearly distinguished from each other. Robert Lach has already drawn attention to the fact that the original song type of the Finno-Ugric peoples is the 'litany type', which is formed by repeating motifs and is mostly without bars, while the Turkic-Mongolic peoples, *in perfect contrast*, have an anhemitonic pentatonic melodic realm, structured by strict symmetry in strophic forms.⁶ (Of course, there are also simpler forms of music among the Turkic-Mongolic peoples, including the quite simple diatonic folk music of the Turkic groups living further south, which will be discussed in more detail later.) László Vikár, who collected for decades in the presumed 'original habitat' of the Magyars in the Volga-Kama region says: 'Experience shows that only the Finno-Ugrics borrowed from Turkic music, and not vice versa.'⁷ Vikár has found that the Finno-Ugric peoples did not focus on singing, but on the sung text, and that this only shifted slightly, under Turkic influence, towards the demand for beautiful songs.⁸ In contrast, the Turks sing with pleasure and ease, and it is the music rather than the text that is in the focus of their performance.

Lajos Vargyas also states that in Finno-Ugric folk songs motive- and line repetitions without higher structure can be heard,⁹ and then he says about the more advanced Hungarian tunes the following: 'The distance between the broadly arched, strophic, mostly four-line descending structure

⁵ VARGYAS 1965: 377–382.

⁶ Lach (1926–1958) published a series of songs by several Turkic and Finno-Ugric prisoners of the First World War in the *Gesänge russischer Kriegsgefangener* series. In many cases, he remained at the level of generalities, but he was the first to define the specific musical characteristics of the Finno-Ugric and Turkic peoples.

⁷ VIKÁR 1993: 33.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 28–29.

⁹ VARGYAS 1988: 31.

and the small range, inchoate form and melodic line of the ancient – still living – Finno-Ugrian songs is unbridgeable to such an extent that no “fusion” can be imagined.’¹⁰

In a nutshell, let us review the most important old Hungarian folk song styles. We cannot, of course, recall a library of literature on the subject, which is outstanding in quantity and quality, but we can only select from it in accordance with our theme.

Our *descending pentatonic tunes*, which distinguish our folk music from the folk music of our neighbours, were almost unanimously considered by our folk music scholars to be of Turkic–Mongolian origin.

It seemed that the people, fused from Turkic and Ugrian elements, had become Magyarised in their language and Turkified in their folk music. In 1934, Bartók informed Bence Szabolcsi of his view that the Finno-Ugrian layer of Hungarian folk music should be sought among the Hungarian folk songs that were not pentatonic.¹¹

In his studies *Népvándorláskori elemek a magyar népzeneben* [Elements from the Age of Great Migrations in Hungarian Folk Music]¹² and *A zenei földrajz elemei* [Elements of Musical Geography],¹³ Bence Szabolcsi outlined the path of pentatonic music, which in his opinion issued forth from its cradle in Central Asia. He concluded that ‘[...] (Hungarian) folk music carries a double archaic legacy, or, at least, a migration-age heritage: a Finno-Ugrian heritage crystallized in ritual songs, which is obviously the legacy of an ancient *minority*, tinted, in a so far unknown way, by some early Germanic influence, and a much richer Turkic–Mongolian heritage, in which undoubtedly the legacy of a migration-age *majority* [...] must be detected [...]’.¹⁴ In his beautiful words, ‘Hungarians today are the outermost, the most distant branch of the millennia-old tree of the great Asian music culture, rooted in the souls of the various peoples living from China through Central Asia to the Black Sea.’¹⁵

Kodály also provides examples from the Volga-Kama region that are analogous with the so-called ‘small fifth shifting tunes’ in addition to the actual fifth-shifting tunes, and with Hungarian melodies mainly recited on *do-re-mi* tones, without accurately collating the details.¹⁶ He draws the following conclusions: ‘It seems probable that those forms of Hungarian music which resemble Mari and Chuvash material are relics of Old Bulgar [i.e. Turkic – J. S.] influence to which Hungarian owes some two hundred words.’¹⁷

Szabolcsi, referring to Bartók and Kodály, writes: ‘[...] the most ancient layer of Hungarian folk music is characterised by 1. the anhemitonic pentatonic scale, 2. the rubato parlando performance, 3. the isometric 4-line strophe consisting of 8- or 12-syllabic lines, and 4. the ornamentation.’ By contrast, the common features of *regős* songs [of a winter folk custom of greeting, a vestige of nature magic], laments and some children's play tunes are summarised by him as follows: !1. a major pentachordal

¹⁰ In other words, the quintal shifting Cheremis style cannot be of Finno-Ugrian origin. VARGYAS (1988: 32) assumes that the fifth-shifting style of the Volga region was passed on by the remaining Hungarians, who stayed on after the Mongol invasion, to the later arriving Chuvash (descendants of the former Bulgars) and Cheremis groups.

¹¹ *Zenetudományi Tanulmányok I*, 1953, 611. fn. 1

¹² SZABOLCSI 1934: 138–156.

¹³ SZABOLCSI 1938: 1–18.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ SZABOLCSI 1934.

¹⁶ KODÁLY 1976: 26. He also adduces Turkic (e.g. Chuvash, Tatar) and Finno-Ugrian (Cheremis-Mari and Votyak) melodies. In his essay ‘Sajátos dallamszerkezet a cseremis népzeneben’ [A peculiar melodic structure in Cheremis folk music] (1934) he gives an analysis of the Cheremis pentatonic fifth-shifting tunes, and then in *Folk Music of Hungary* he also gives the same number of Chuvash (Turkic) melodic parallels. Kodály examines 22 pentatonic tune groups and melodies. He highlights three of these when presenting the parallels: 1) *those with a fifth construction* (e.g. *Zörög a kocsi* [Rattling the carriage], *Leszállott a páva* [The peacock has settled], etc.), 2) *those with a small fifth-shift* (e.g. *Leesett a makk a fáról* [The acorn has fallen from the tree]), and 3) melodies that recite mainly on the *do-re-mi* tones without an exact correspondence of their details (e.g. *Szivárvány havasán* [On the peak of the Rainbow]).

¹⁷ KODÁLY 1971a: 61. Recent research by RÓNA-TAS András and BERTHA Árpád (2011) puts the number of words of Turkic origin at 431. This is set against the presumed 700–1000 words of Finno-Ugrian origin.

or hexachordal scale (which may be expanded to a Dorian or Phrygian scale in laments), 2. chanting performance (except in the parlando laments), 3. chain- or litany-like loose forms with few basic melodic phrases, lyrics in free verse or prose, 4. no ornamentation, 5. apparent descendants of old ritual songs. These songs seem to be part of a great European context, of an old European tradition, or may as well refer back to some archaic Indo-Germanic influence.¹⁸ So he also takes the Turkic tunes as the oldest layer of Hungarian folk music, and assumes an Old European/Indo-European influence among several old layers.

According to Lajos Vargyas, 'the various types of our pentatonic songs can thus all be associated with the musical styles of the Volga region or more distant, Turkic–Mongolian areas.'¹⁹ Virtually all recognised Hungarian folk music researchers, including László Vikár, who was a long-time researcher in the field, agree with this.²⁰

We also consider the narrow-range pentatonic melodies moving on *re-do-la-so*, notes to be old Turkic in origin. These were discovered by Lajos Vargyas (1984: 147–150), and Katalin Paksa (1982: 527–553) added numerous melody parallels and variants to this group.

It can be concluded, therefore, that our folk musicologists almost unanimously considered our pentatonic tunes, which distinguish our folk music from neighbouring folk musics, to be of Turkic–Mongolian origin.

The small form of laments and the associated psalmodic melodies also form an important old layer.²¹ The latter is considered by Kodály to be a 'transnational' style of which the Hungarian tradition is also a part.

According to Dobszay–Szendrei, '...the view that Hungarian tradition possesses the style as a Finno-Ugric inheritance is only vindicated if the possibility of other encounters can be excluded, which is fairly improbable at present.'²² In any case, this style of music can only be found in Transylvania and in areas directly bordering it (Moldavia, Bukovina, Mezőség [a Transylvanian area traditionally of Hungarian culture]), and it could easily be indigenous to the Székelys [Seklers]. However, that would argue against a possible Finno-Ugric origin, since why would the Hungarian ethnic group bent most

¹⁸ SZABOLCSI 1934: 139.

¹⁹ VARGYAS 1988: 47. VARGYAS (1988: 51–52) considers the tritonic, tetratonic, pentatonic music of the Volga-Kama region to be of Turkic–Mongolian origin, and sees the major tetra-, penta-, hexachords evolved from the *mi-re-do* core as a Finno-Ugric endogenous development. He also draws attention to the similarities between the ancient Chuvash musical layers and the songs of the Khori-Buryats.

²⁰ The pentatonic fifth-shifting form is only present in the Cheremis–Chuvash and Cheremis–Tatar borderarea, within a 100 km circle, and among the Cheremis only as far as the Turkic language influence is present. It is not found outside the circle, neither among the Cheremis, nor among the Chuvash or the Tatars. All this strongly suggests that the Finno-Ugric people living in the border areas of the Cheremis learned it from Turkic peoples. In any case, the Cheremis fifth shift is completely unparalleled in the folk music of the Finno-Ugric peoples, while the Chuvash fifth alternation harmonises with the North Turkic and especially Mongolian tunes, which are also largely descending pentatonic and in some cases include fourth-shifting. SZABOLCSI (1934: 144) describes the Cheremis pentatonic fifth shift as 'a style that cannot be called Finno-Ugric, but an adoption from the musical tradition of one or more Turkic peoples... the closer the individual Cheremis settlements are to the settlements of the Chuvash or Tatar population, the more Tatar, and in any case Turkic, features are present in their culture... the further they are from these, the more they share the simpler melodic world of the Mordvins, Votyaks, Zuryens...' Bence Szabolcsi's clear-sightedness is evidenced by the fact that after twenty years of field research, László Vikár and Gábor Bereczki came to the same conclusion. I discuss the Turkic–Mongolian–Evenki quintal shift in more detail in SÍPOS 2001: 180.

²¹ According to DOBSZAY (1983: 38), the core of the main type of pentatonic laments is a *mi-re-do* tritone which can stand alone or be symmetrically complemented both above and below to (*la-so-mi-re-do-la-so*) pentatony. Its motive set is usually descending, but we also encounter convex lines reminiscent of the well-known line-ending hump of laments (DOBSZAY 1983: 36, example r). Some laments display an almost didactic incorporation of the *mi-re-do* core and the appended slide (to *a* or *g*) within the form, as well as of the dramatic high beginnings and high recitatives (ibid., example p). In the Gyimes lament, the tradition is a single broad-range descending line: (*la-so-mi-re-do-la-so*, (ibid., 39). Let me point out here that the same is characteristic of the laments of several Turkic peoples.

²² DOBSZAY–SZENDREI 1992: 66.

strongly toward a Turkic identity have preserved a Finno-Ugrian musical layer? There is no other stylistic group among the old layers of Hungarian folk music whose scope of validity would be limited in this way within the Hungarian language area. It is possible that it is peculiar to the Székely people and has never had a national scope.

As Dobszay notes, we can find Cheremis and Chuvash tunes that may compare our psalmodic tunes, but the Gregorian psalm models are even more similar, and they even occur in the old monophony of Western Europe and in the music of Asia Minor. In any case, Hungarians have given this style its own individual character, and have lived with it for so long and in such richness as perhaps none of the musical circles mentioned above except the Gregorian.

Another explanation is that the psalmodic tunes are a regressed form of a tradition that was originally widespread throughout the country. This is 'contradicted, however, by the fact that other melodies driven back to "border regions" are usually found spread over several border regions of the language area'²³. According to Dobszay, 'it is conceivable that they could have occurred over a wider area than this, but this must be checked by the results of a gapless music geography.' In the introduction to Anatolian folk music, we shall see that most of the Turkish parallels found by Bartók belong to this style, but moving on a diatonic rather than a pentatonic scale.

So where is the Finno-Ugrian musical heritage?

Knowing the nature of Finno-Ugrian folk music built of simple, short motifs, one might think that there are Hungarian–Ugrian connections to be found in the motive-repeating, twin-bar tunes of children's games, *villőzés* custom (welcoming springtime), etc. Kodály (1976: 54), however, writes of this musical layer: 'The endless repetition of pairs of bars, or of short motifs in general, is characteristic of the music of all primitive peoples', and even of the old traditions of more advanced peoples.²⁴ And indeed, the most typical basic motifs of Hungarian children's play tunes are to be found, for example, in German and, on a mass scale, in Anatolian children's songs.

However, the typical rotating motifs of Hungarian children's play melodies (e.g., *mi-re-do-re, so-la-so-mi*) are hardly ever heard in the music of Finno-Ugrian peoples, and what does occur is lost in the mass of various simple motivic forms. It is symptomatic that even György Szomjas-Schiffert, one of the main advocates of Finno-Ugrian musical kinship, has failed to find any related Hungarian–Ugrian twin-bar songs.

The motif of the *regölés* chant with a jump-up ending (*so-la-so-la-so-la so-fa-mi-do / re-do-mi-fa so-so*) has been widely studied and compared with, among others, an intonation formula of the Byzantine liturgy, and with custom-related tunes from Southeast Europe, Asia and the Caucasus. Here, too, a Finno-Ugrian origin has been suggested, but not confirmed.

Of course, research is open to the search for oriental parallels to stichic or double-core tunes of short lines using a narrow tonal range, but here we are faced with the difficulty that tunes of this kind, which are more or less similar to each other even in their melodic progression, can be found in the music of many different peoples contact points between whom could hardly be found. An example of this can be found in György Szomjas Schiffert's work, who, starting from the fact that the intonation of a type of Hungarian compound sentences is *rising – falling* (e.g. 'Elmentem azt Operába, hogy megnézzem a Bánk Bánt' [I went to the Opera to see Bánk Bán]), searched for and found tunes with similar inflection outline in the folk music of various Finno-Ugrian peoples.²⁵ In the summary of his book, however, he also notes that such melodies can be found in many parts of the world. I would add

²³ DOBSZAY 1992: 65.

²⁴ KODÁLY 1971a: 84.

²⁵ SZOMJAS SCHIFFERT 1976: 124–146.

that they are also discernible among Turkic peoples, where the intonation of a spoken sentence is completely different.

At the same time, research into the relationships of the *lament* is of paramount importance, as it is perhaps the least variable authentic genre, and the one offering the greatest chance of looking backward the farthest.

In the case of the ‘small form’ of the Hungarian lament, there are two descending lines of narrow, basically hexachord, range which progress below each other and end on adjacent notes. Such tunes can be found all over the world. However, if we add the recitative performance to these basic features of the Hungarian lament,²⁶ the number of parallels is drastically reduced. Especially if we keep in mind other important features of Hungarian lament tunes, such as the genre, the free variation of melody lines, the (occasional) end-of-line motifs in the form of small hills, the characteristics of melodic motion, the interchangeability of cadential tones, etc.

The researchers were understandably delighted when they found similar forms to the small form of the Hungarian lament in the folk music of some Finno-Ugric-speaking peoples. Finno-Ugric language and Finno-Ugric folk music: perhaps a segment of prehistory has been revealed. But is this the case? Let us first recall some of the arguments in favour of the Finno-Ugric origin of the lament, and then examine the contradictory statements.

In his article ‘Oszttyák hősdalok – Magyar siratók melodiái’ [Mansi heroic songs – Hungarian laments], Bence Szabolcsi compares a Mansi bear song and a heroic song with three Hungarian lament passages. He concludes that ‘we are dealing with a common melodic scheme which we possibly may rightly regard as the same ancient root of the Mansi heroic songs and the Hungarian lament tunes.’²⁷

Kodály only refers to Szabolcsi’s above statements in a footnote in his description of the lament,²⁸ without, however, ‘approving’ them.

Following in the footsteps of Väisänen and Szabolcsi, Béla C. Nagy also adds Votyak, Finnish and Sami parallels to the examples presented by Szabolcsi.²⁹

Lajos Vargyas concludes that the European peoples have an elementary melodic style characterized by a narrow-range diatony in parlando or simple giusto rhythm, with a somewhat convex or undulating, possibly descending, repetition of fixed motives in stichic or periodic form; the motives may descend to different degrees, thus producing different types of cadence (1 1, 1 2, 2 1, etc.). He writes: ‘Obviously, the Hungarian lament also belongs to this Old European tune type, with the difference that it does not repeat fixed motives, but constantly strings up newly improvised lines and changes the sequence of cadences incessantly.’³⁰ He finds this kind of improvised melody as a coherent style only among Khanti–Mansi tunes, and assumes that the Hungarians taught these tunes to the Ob-Ugrians.³¹ – Let us note that in this case we are not talking about a Finno-Ugric stratum, but about a specific Hungarian musical formation! Vargyas has also found a direct ‘parallel’ among the Ob-Ugrians to the greater lament which alternates cadences of degrees 5, 4, 2 and 1, but he states that ‘these divergent extensions are undoubtedly the result of secondary development [...] it is advisable to keep to the small (lament) forms in the comparison, i.e., to the original, still uniform type.’³²

²⁶ KODÁLY 1971a: 86: ‘singing without beat or measurable rhythm; ... musical prose, on the borders of music and speech, and its “music” is only a variation in pitch.’

²⁷ SZABOLCSI 1933: 73. However, the heroic song and the lament are very different in genre and function. The function of the lament is to relieve the grief, while the professional bard’s primary requirement is to maintain attention during the performance, which often lasts for hours. Accordingly, the lament is performed in a plaintive tone with free rhythm, while the heroic songs are sung in short, tightly rhythmic lines, usually accompanied by an instrument.

²⁸ KODÁLY 1979: 70, lj.

²⁹ C. NAGY Béla 1946, 1947.

³⁰ VARGYAS 2005: 275.

³¹ VARGYAS 1988: 51.

³² *Ibid.*, 48.

György Szomjas-Schiffert says about the lament and *regös* tunes: 'The connection of the lament and *regös* melodies with the music of the Finno-Ugrian peoples of today is undoubted!'³³ He also sees the realization of speech melody forms in lamentations, and this among all of the Finno-Ugrian peoples(!). At the same time, László Dobszay's dismissive remarks on Lajos Vargyas's lament parallels are even more closely fit for the majority of Szomjas's examples which are almost invariably short lines performed *tempo giusto*, not with a lamenting but with a jumpy melodic movement. Szomjas, for some reason, describes them as a lamenting pair of lines. Moreover, he adopts Vargyas's method of suggesting a recitative performance when comparing Finno-Ugrian *giusto* songs with Hungarian laments by omitting the bar-lines of Vaisänen's notations. The melody lines of the examples are often descending, but this is no proof of Finno-Ugrian affinity, since the tunes of many peoples, including most Turkic peoples and even the Mongols or Sioux Indians, have a descending character. In any case, if we were to accept these tunes as parallels to Hungarian lamenting tunes, the field of comparison would suddenly widen, since we find songs of this kind all over Eurasia, and even the world.

On the basis of my investigations, I concede that the notated score of the Mansi Bear song might be comparable with the Hungarian lament, but after listening to the recording of the song, the motivic, twin-bar structure, which is alien to the Hungarian lament and is a fundamental characteristic of Finno-Ugrian folk music, becomes clear.

Katalin Paksa is somewhat more cautious than Vargyas: 'These tunes were presumably brought along by the Magyars from their coexistence with other groups in the Ugrian period...' She adds: 'Even if the Ob-Ugrians received their contemporary languages by language exchange, as certain scholars hypothesize, the possibility of the musical relationship remains just the same.'³⁴

László Dobszay, who wrote the most comprehensive book on the Hungarian lament, rejects most of Vargyas's examples,³⁵ just as Vargyas³⁶ does not accept Dobszay's examples as analogies to the Hungarian lament.

This is how Dobszay (1983: 92–93) sums up the achievements: 'The Bulgarian and Gregorian analogies disprove that we could consider the Hungarian lament as an exclusively Ugrian melodic tradition. The Bulgarian and Ugrian examples argue against the influence of a Gregorian descent, and the Gregorian and Ugrian ones speak against the influence of Balkan connections. Musical groups with more or less specific styles testify to the fact that the structural principle, and also specific melodic elements, may have had the same or similar function in larger areas of Europe. The traces of this style in the music of several peoples point to a wider geographical area; a coherent stylistic layer similar to that of the Hungarian style might have possibly evolved only in the "insular areas of retreat".'³⁷ He stresses that, leaving aside the methodological difficulties of using negative data, 'we should rather localise this musical language to the southern zone of Europe, and regard the styles analysed as the divergent descendants of a melodic culture that was essentially located in a Mediterranean strip, turning a bit northward at its eastern end [...]. The musical characteristics ... point uniformly to antiquity without narrowing the designation to Greco-Roman high culture.' He finds that 'there are data in Finno-Ugrian folk music which, if not proving it, at least allow the roots of the lament (certainly not its modern forms) to be traced back to the Ugrian or maybe to the Finno-Ugrian period'.³⁸

³³ SZOMJAS-SCHIFFERT 1976: 97.

³⁴ PAKSA (1999: 64) refers to the lament in connection with the bear festival and the heroic song. The bear feast is the atonement for the spirit of the slain bear. The bear is placed on the table and in front of it the shaman tells the story of the bear's death in the first person. Performing a hero's song, the bard sings the life and death of the hero in the first person singular. Some of the Bear feast songs and heroic songs are similar to the small form of the Hungarian lament, she says. It must be noted, however, that nothing of the Hungarian heroic songs has survived, and the eastern heroic song analogies are of a different nature.

³⁵ DOBSZAY 1983: 50–51, fn. 18.

³⁶ VARGYAS 1988: 48.

³⁷ DOBSZAY 1983: 92–93.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

From Lach's collections in POW camps during the First World War, we know that lamenting melodies of this kind also appear among ethnic groups around the Caucasus, among Turkic peoples and even Slavs.³⁹

According to my own research, the most widespread *Anatolian* lament form is very close to the Hungarian lament, and this is also one of the central forms of Azeri and Kyrgyz laments. Similar forms can also be found among the Karachay-Balkar tunes, the lament of the Mongolian Kazakhs corresponds to the simplest Hungarian lament, and the Southern Kazakh lament shows typological similarities with the Hungarian lament.

Summary

Scholars agree that among the old layers of Hungarian folk music, the pentatonic descending tunes, which fundamentally determine our folk music, and the narrow-range pentatonic tunes are of northern Turkic and Mongolian origin. The idea of a Finno-Ugrian affinity has been raised with laments, children's songs and *regös* incantation tunes, but more recent research tends to regard these simple musical forms as the common melodic treasure of a large area that also includes some Turkic peoples. My research suggests that the Hungarian lament is much more closely related to the lament of some Turkic peoples than to the Finno-Ugrian and other parallels that have been put forward previously.

This was the basis from which I started to further investigate the eastern connections of Hungarian folk music.

Picture 1. The author (right) collecting music in Anatolia

³⁹ LACH 1952: 60–61.