

## TUVIN FOLK MUSIC

### By A. N. Aksenov

Editor's Note. The following consists of excerpts from A. N. Aksenov's Tuvinskaia narodnaia muzyka (Moscow, 1964), to date the only book devoted in a study of a single Siberian music culture.

Aksenov (1909-62) was initially a composer. He graduated from Moscow Conservatory In 1931, became a member of the Union of Soviet Composers the following year and remained in Moscow until 1943. During that war year he was sent to the city of Kizil, centre of the Tuvin People's Republic, later to become the Tuvin Autonomous Region of the Russian Federated Soviet Socialist Republic, largest administrative unit of the USSR. In Tuvin country Aksenov collected a large body of folk music, and when he returned to Moscow in 1944 he began to study ethnomusicology seriously, continuing his research on Tuvin music until his death. E. Gippius, Aksenov's advisor. In his Introduction to Aksenov's posthumous book, (p. 11) cites tuyinskaia narodnaia muzyka as being "useful and important for musicologists and musicians as well as for ethnographers, historians and folklorists".

The sections included here are excerpted from two sections of the book: first, a general discussion of Tuvin folksong and then a presentation of the four styles of the extraordinary -Tuvin manner of throat-singing, i.e. a way of one man's singing two parts simultaneously.

The Tuvins, who speak a Turkic language, joined the USSR In 1944 dissolving the Tuvin Peoples' Republic begun in 1921. The 1959 census indicated a population of ca. 100,000 Tuvins in the USSR; they also live in adjacent Mongolia.

Tuvin folk songs are primarily performed on holidays, during young people's promenades and while nomadizing or on excursions into the steppe. On holidays any songs are sung. No observer of Tuvin musical folklore has remarked on songs assigned to specific holidays or on special wedding or funeral songs, and I have not succeeded in finding, them either.

One of the greatest Tuvin holidays is New Year's (shagai) celebrated on the night of January 22<sup>nd</sup>. In addition New Year's and domestic holidays each region (Khoshun) marked its own, local festivals. Noted singers, storytellers and instrumentalists gathered in the Khoshun centres for these holidays....

At the khoshun festivities the noions (apparently clan, elders or chiefs-MS) organised singing contests, sometimes lasting all day. The performers chose their own songs. The winner or best singer was served liquor (arak) and was given the title kha (noions singer). As a mark of acquiring this title a special attachment of coloured stone (or glass) was affixed to the singer's hat, after which the kha took an oath of allegiance to the noion. Among the kha's duties was the singing of panegyric songs which accompanied the serving of arak to the noion. The kha's obligations also included fulfilling small chores for the noion. If the kha appeared at fault in some way or sang little and badly, the noion took away his title, struck him in the face with a shaaga (a leather belt for beating on the cheeks) and drove him out. The singer then became a commoner again.

Instrumentalists also competed at the noion's contests. They travelled from village to village earning their keep this way. Instrumentalists principally played song melodies, varied in virtuoso style. A special genre of Tuvin instrumental music consists of programmatic pieces. Contemporary instrumentalists only know two of these: "Oskus-kasa" ("The Orphan Goose") and "Buga, shari" (Oxen, Bullocks"). Both pieces are played only on the igil (a fiddle) and only by the most talented instrumentalists: these performers are highly esteemed.

Not only instrumentalists, but also singers of tales (tool, toolchi; "tale", "reciter of tales") travelled from

settlement (aal) to settlement. Like the instrumentalists, the toolchis were ordinary folk. From time to time they dropped their households and moved off to tell tales in nearby settlements, usually within the boundaries of a small region. Their arrival was also associated with various festivities. The people invited the toolchi to their tents, fed them abundantly and gave them gifts (furs etc.) Crowds gathered in the tent in which the toolchi stayed. The spectators listened to the tales with unabated attentiveness for several consecutive days with breaks for meals. One tale lasted two to three days.

Some genres of Tuvina tales (heroic and some fairytales) are recited melodically, with a recitative tune and rhythmic prose text. These are often accompanied by the chadagan, a stringed instrument (zither-MS), which either follows the melody of the vocal recitation (continuously or sporadically) or plays instrumental interludes periodically interrupting the vocal recitation. Other genres of Tuvina tales (domestic, animal stories and some fairytales) are not performed melodically, but are simply narrated.

The heroic tale "Dash-khuren a' ttig Tanaa--Kherel" ...is built on a stepwise descending melody with phrases built on fourths. Each new text phrase of the tale begins with the high melodic pitches, and then descends gradually in the range of a twelfth, rising at the end of the phrase to the higher pitches, from which the next phrase begins. Along with such melodically developed forms of recitation one also finds Tuvina heroic tales built not on melodies but rather on repetitions of short tunes of three or four pitches in a narrow range.

Games and competitive sports are an unchanging feature of Tuvina holidays, both old and contemporary. These include khuresh (wrestling matches) and a't khooleer (horsemanship contests), accompanied by special musical recitations. Wrestling (in which any devices but blows are allowed) is very popular among all strata of the population, irrespective of social status. The number of contestants is not restricted, usually consisting of 8, 16, 32, 64 or 128 wrestlers. The wrestling match lasts many hours, to the unabated, tense attention of spectators. Wrestlers appear with seconds (salikchi) dressed in bright national cloaks, with six to eight salikchi for 30 to 40 wrestlers.

The wrestlers are dressed in costumes of rawhide or other material (ringed with rawhide to protect the hands and body from injury. The costume consists of shorts and a short jacket with long sleeves barely covering the back just below the shoulder-blades. The jacket is fastened by a rawhide thong so that the opponent can't jerk it. The legs are covered with leather maimaks (embroidered boots with turned-down sharp-ended socks). Before the beginning of the match two equal groups of wrestlers gradually approach from different corners with a particular dance like gait depicting "the flight of the eagle", the eagle being the symbol of strength and agility. They caper in a zigzag manner from foot to foot and smoothly clap their hands to the rhythm of the jumps to imitate the rustle of wings. Approaching each other, both groups return to opposite corners of the field with the same dance like gait.

The salikchis approach each group taking alternate wrestlers by the hand and leading them to the centre of the field. Next, both salikchis come forth and simultaneously intone the traditional "call" in the form of an improvised melodic recitation, often concluded by a speech. In the "call" the salikchis praise the strength and agility of their wrestlers and their former victories.

Our strong man has come, bring out his opponent!  
This outstandingly famous strongman has taken part in 64 matches!  
Bring out our strongman's opponent! There he's come!  
Be careful, be careful! This is an experienced strongman!  
He has taken part in 64 matches'. He is as strong as a tiger and a lion!  
Be careful, be careful, grab hold!

This singing appearance of the salikchi is limited only to one episode of the match: the appearance of the wrestler in the arena. Each salikchi improvises melodies for this recitation in his own way. They vary considerably in melodic style and cannot be assigned to one specific type..... The wrestler's

success depends considerably on the salikhchi. He encourages his wrestler with words and gestures, ridicules the opponent, amuses the audience and between jokes warns his wrestler of the intentions and tricks of his opponent, whom He observes.

... No less popular is another Tuvin sport: horse-racing ... several neighbouring khoshuns compete in horseracing, in which 10 to 100 riders take part... and up to 200 to 300 in large races. The ride to the gate is accompanied by the riders' improvised song in re-citatory style. In these songs the riders praise the endurance, strength and other qualities of their horses just as the ...salikhchis praised ... the wrestlers. However, of late the riders arriving at the gate most often sing re-citatory melodies without words... . The voice of the riders, resounding far into the steppe mixes into a long multi-voiced uninterrupted roar.

... After the winners are decided. ... a ceremonial procession of the participants is begun. At this time a singer comes forth, holding a saucer full of arak in upraised palms, covered with a bright silk kerchief. The singer tenders the cup of arak to the winning rider, and in a solemn song, praises the winning horse;

Its eyes are like two saucers of arak.  
Its' breath Is like mist in the valley,  
Its gait is like a strong wind in the steppe, etc

Along with horseracing and wrestling, marksmanship must also be included among sports beloved of the Tuvins. No special songs were devoted to these games, but the spectators often cheered on the contestants with shouts or songs of the kozliamik genre (a song with refrain-MS) with Improvised words.

Until recently the Tuvins had no folk dances outside of the pantomimic imitation of the "eagle's flight" at the entrance of wrestlers.

Khoi alzir songs are a special section of the Tuvin folksong tradition. These are melodic recitations accompanying the pastoral ceremony of transferring baby sheep, goats, cows and horses to another mother when their original mother does not have milk, refuses to nurse its child or has died. They led the young to its new mother, placed them next to each other and turned to both with the words of traditional animal-goading noises (e.g. "tiro. tiro, tirogat" for sheep, "chu, chu, chu" for goats and "oog,,oog, oog" for cows), sung to melodies in re-citatory style. The tunes of these melodic recitations are close to each other and are strikingly close to Tuvin lullabies (urug opeileer) with melodies of analogous re-citatory style. For rocking children such melodies are sung to a few words. "opei, opei ("rock-a-bye"), "udui ber, olgum" ("sleep, my son"). or "sariim" ("yellow one, " an endearing term). The Tuvins say that from a far one cannot distinguish whether one is rocking a baby or accustoming a calf, kid or lamb to a new mother...

It is characteristic that in the past Tuvin shamans turned to the same type of melodic recitation. The tunes of their séances (according to the faithful account of Kok-ool) wore similar both to the tunes of lullabies and to the melodic recitation accompanying the domestication of animals... (EX . 1)

The Tuvins divide folksong into two groups of genres: irlar ("songs") and kozhamik (songs with refrains). Irlar is the plural of ir, "song", from the verb irlaar, "to sing. " The word kozhamik stems from the verb kozhar ("to unite," connect", "pair off "). According to the Tuvin poet S. Piurbiu, this term is explained by the pairing of strophes of poetic text, characteristic of the kozhamik, especially for one if its typical forms a dialogue of two singers. To the irlar genre belong slow melodic lyric songs with poetic texts mainly of a contemplative nature (about the homeland, pastoralism or hunting. love and separation, complaint about one's hard lot in the old days), and also historical songs (e.g. about the uprising of the "60 heroes") and a large part of contemporary folk songs. To the kozhamik genre belong fast melodic lyric songs often with refrains (kozhumak) with largely improvised texts. The themes of love and youth are most characteristic for the song texts of the kozhamik genre, since songs of this type

are mainly sung by young people during holiday promenades.....

Songs of both genres are traditionally sung solo, but on holidays and during young people's promenades they may be sung by a chorus in unison. Heterophonic departures from unison are looked down upon by the Tuvins as being the result of untalented performance. They use unison singing as a means of learning new songs.

The guttural or throat song (Khomei) is a special vocal genre of Tuvan folk music. This is the simultaneous performance by one singer of a held pitch in the lower register and a melody (composed of overtones) in the higher register. Throat singing is known not only to the Tuvins, but also to several neighbouring peoples (Mongols, Oirats, Khakass, Gorno -Altai and Bashkirs). However, among the Tuvins it has been preserved in the most developed and widespread form, in that there is not one but four stylistic varieties of throat-singing. It appears that Tuva is the centre of the Turco-Mongol culture of throat singing...

The solo ostinato two-voice throat (or guttural) singing of the Turkic peoples has aroused the amazement of all observers. It has seemed incomprehensible and inexplicable to everyone. "It is unnatural for a human being to carry two voices simultaneously", wrote L. Lebedinskii apropos of the Bashkir uzliau throat singing. "The timbres themselves of uzliau are unnatural, as is the ostinato lower organ point, as well as the sounds of the upper register; the necessity of such lengthy breath - holding is unnatural too". (Lebedinskii 1948:50-51). The unusual timbre of throat singing and the enigmatic character of its technique has been characterised by observers as "forest wildness" (Rybakov 1897:271), or they have seen in it traces of shamanism. (Lebedinskii 1948:51).

The Tuvins make no connection between throat singing and shamanism. They view it in purely everyday aesthetic terms and approximate it to the purely everyday act of playing on the khomus (Jew's harp) to which the art of throat singing is strikingly close both in musical style and in the character of the sound. In fact the melodic style of one genre of Tuvan throat singing (kargiraa) is reminiscent of pieces played on the iash khomus (wooden Jew's-harp-MS). The Tuvins' converging of the art of throat singing and the art of Jew's-harp play is certainly not coincidental. Both these types of Tuvan music arts based on a common technique of producing melodic sounds; they differ only in the technique of producing the ostinato basis of the melody (organ-point). ..

In throat singing the performer sings only a single low fundamental rich in upper partials; the partials, forming a melody, are selected from this unceasing sound through changes in the width of the mouth cavity just as in playing on the Jew's-harp. However, the melodic possibilities of throat singing are incomparably richer than those of the Jew's-harp. On the khomus one can produce a fundamental of only one unchanging pitch and timbre, and in throat singing the singer can produce (with the vocal chords) several alternating fundamentals of varying pitch and can select partials (forming the melody) from each.

... The types of throat singing of various peoples differ not only in melodic style, but also in the height and timbre of the fundamentals forming their melodic possibilities. In Tuva, four genres of throat singing and four associated melodic styles are found. Each has its own name: kargiraa, borbannadir, sigit and ezengileer.

**The Kargiraa.Style:** The fundamental, similar in timbre to the lower register of the French horn, is produced by the singer with half-opened mouth. Among various performers its height varies in the range of the four lowest pitches of the great octave. During performance it may be kept unchanged, but sometimes it is moved down a minor third for a short period.

The melody, placed in the upper pitches of the first and lower pitches of the second octave, is made from the eighth, ninth, tenth and twelfth partials of the fundamental, though some performers add the

sixth partial as well. The change to a fundamental down a minor third is used by the performer only when the eighth partial sounds, which then also shifts down the same minor third. This is a traditional means of widening the scale of the tune. The partials forming the melody sound clearly and distinctly and are reminiscent of reed-pipe tones in bright and whistling timbre. Each partial sounds to a specific vowel sound and the melodic change from one partial to another is accompanied by a change of vowel-sounds. (Ex. 2a).

The repertoire of kargiraa throat-singing consists most commonly of, special ornamented broad-breathed melodies not performed as songs, though distinctive musical pieces might also be performed in kargiraa. These pieces begin with a psalmodic recitation of the text (sometimes any text and sometimes special kargiraa opening texts) on two pitches or, more accurately, on one fundamental tone in two positions: raised and lowered by a minor third. In such recitations the eighth, or more rarely the ninth, partial sounds simultaneously with the fundamental (in both its positions). Each half-strophe of the song of these opening recitations is interrupted by a wordless melody usual for kargiraa throat singing. This melody is analogous to the traditional melodic line at the end of each text-line or half-strophe of Tuvins folksong, featuring a melodic figure for each syllable.

**The Borbannadir style:** The fundamental in the borbannadir style is softer and quieter, similar to the timbre of the bass clarinet's lower register. It is produced by the same position of the vocal chords as the kargiraa style but with a different position of the lips, almost totally closed (as in pronouncing the voiced fricative consonant v) Due to this, the breath is released significantly more economically in borbannadir style than in kargiraa. In the former the performer can encompass a greater number of melodic tones (partials) than in the latter. The fundamental in borbannadir style remains unchanging in pitch as opposed to the kargiraa style, where it moves down a minor third occasionally.

The height of the fundamental varies among individual performers within the range of the three middle pitches of the great octave. The melody, placed in the range of the whole second octave and the lower third octave, is made of the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, twelfth and sometimes thirteenth partials. It sounds more resonant and soft than in the kargiraa style, reminiscent of the harmonics of the viola and cello. (Ex. 2b)

In contrast to the kargiraa style, which remains unbroken for the space of an entire breath, singing in the borbannadir style is sometimes interrupted and sometimes broken. In unbroken singing the fundamental and its melodic partials are heard only as a single tone-colour of the consonant v. In the broken singing of this style the intoning of v is interrupted by the full closing of the lips followed by opening either on x the plosive voiced consonant b or on the nasal consonant m. The timbre of the sound on m has two nuances differing in the height of the tongue: The lowered tongue sounds a usual m while the raised tongue (as for pronouncing...n) along with closed lips (as for ...m) sounds like ... mn. ..

The Tuvins consider the borbannadir style as technically similar to the kargiraa style. All performers who master the ... kargiraa style master ... borbannadir style, but many cannot master the remaining two styles of throat singing, which depend on a different technique of sound production. The technical similarity between kargiraa and borbannadir styles allows sudden changing from one to the other in the same vocal piece, as often happens among skilled performers. Some pieces begin on borbannadir, change to kargiraa in the middle and return to borbannadir at the end. Other pieces begin with a melodic recitation of text in the kargiraa style and then move to the borbannadir style instead of kargiraa for the melodic section (after each half-strophe).

The Tuvins sing only special songs belonging exclusively to borbannadir in that style. Characteristic of the melody is descending motion, beginning with the high pitches (predominantly from the twelfth partial) and descending through leaps usually to the seventh, or more rarely the eighth partial, which is lengthily ornamented in a varied complex rhythm, mostly by trills. Pieces of this sort, but without the

ornamenting on the seventh and eighth partials, are also typical for instrumental tunes on the iash hkomus. In some locales the borbannadir style is also known under a different name, khomei (a term also used by the Mongols for a related style--MS). In the locales where borbannadir is called khomei they use the term borbannadir for melodic recitation of song texts beginning with several pieces in kargiraa style.

**The sigit style:** The fundamental is tenser and higher than in the kargiraa and borbannadir styles. Its height varies according to performer around the middle pitches of the small octave, and is similar in timbre to a muted French horn or at times to a cello playing ponticello. It is produced by a special strained position of the vocal chords with half-open mouth and sounds markedly weaker than the kargiraa style. During the course of a single piece it does not remain fixed but changes, but according to a different principle than in kargiraa. The character of its motion is the distinguishing feature setting off sigit from the other styles of Tuvin throat singing.. The fundamental is used not only as an ostinato tone with melodic partials but as a mobile, lower melodic voice without melodic partials.

Two types of throat singing alternate in sigit: a monophonic one only in the low register and a two-voiced type with a simultaneous lower and upper line. At the beginning a special melody (not from a song) of re-citatory nature is sung with the fundamental to the words of any song. Next (either after the ending of each line or, in songs with a refrain (dembildei after each verse) the melody remains on a held pitch (the fundamental) on the basis of which the performer selects partials for a second, ornamented melody in higher register.

In pieces with a two-voice melody each odd line of verse (first or third) is ended with a fundamental of one pitch while the even lines (second or fourth) end with a fundamental of a different height, a tone below the first. In the continuation of two-voiced episodes after an even line the fundamental sporadically and briefly lowers a minor third, as in kargiraa style, and each two voiced episode ends with a traditional glissando fall of an octave, along with its partial.. . (Ex. 2c)

Ornamented melodies of partials are produced in two-voiced melodies after each line, from both alternating fundamentals. In two voiced melodies, following the odd-numbered lines of song text such ornamented melodies are built on the eighth, ninth and tenth overtones ... and on the eighth, ninth, tenth and twelfth overtones after even numbered lines.....

The partials on which ornamented melodies are built in sigit sound in a very high register (upper part of the third and beginning of the fourth octaves) in a sharp, whistling timbre reminiscent of the piccolo in the same register. The vocalisation of vowels in such a high register can hardly be distinguished and the corresponding relationship of vowels and their partials cannot be established. The upper voice in sigit.... Does not constitute a melody so much as an ornamented trilling and punctuating rhythm principally on two pitches (the ninth and tenth partials of the two fundamentals). This special melodic hallmark sets sigit off from all the other styles of Tuvin throat singing, in which the upper voice constitutes a developed melody.

**The Ezengileer Style:** This style is identical in sound production and timbre to sigit, and is special only in melodic terms. The fundamental in ezengileer is placed in the same register ... as in sigit, but in contrast to sigit it does not move during the course of the entire piece. The opening melodic recitation on the fundamental, typical of sigit, lacks in ezengileer.

The melody of the partials has melodic significance, as in kargiraa and borbannadir, and is not merely ornamental as in sigit. The melody in ezengileer is quite varied as it is improvised by performers from various partials. Thus, in one piece of this style recorded on a disc in 1934 from the performer Soruktu, in based on the sixth, eighth, ninth, tenth and twelfth partials (Ex. 2d), whereas a piece in the same style recorded in 1932 ... from D, Trubacheev is built on the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth partials (Ex. 2e)

In all the details just described (Including sound production and timbre) ezengileer is strikingly close to sample of Bashkir throat singing, uzliau. The latter differs from . . ezengileer only in the national character of the melody. In addition, the use of agogic accent in pieces of Tuvian ezengileer style sets it off from Bashkir uzliau.

In the melody of the partials, as In the sounding of the fundamental of ezengileer one clearly hears the uninterrupted dynamic pulsations (alternation of strong and weak tones) in the rhythm of a... gallop... This characteristic dictates a tradition of performing pieces in this style on horseback. The term ezengileer in literal translation means “stirrupped”, from the word ezengi, "stirrup".... The persistent upward leaps of a third and a fourth (to the twelfth partial) with holds on the upper pitch....sound like fanfares or calls.

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