

THE MESSAGE OF THE FOLK MUSIC OF THE FINNO-UGRIAN LANGUAGE RELATIVES OF THE HUNGARIANS

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Abstract: *From the peoples speaking Finno-Ugrian languages, the closest language relatives are the Ob-Ugrians. From among the further Finno-Ugrian language relatives we introduce the archaic layer of Komi (Zyrian), Udmurt (Votyak), Mari (Cheremis), Mordvinian, Estonian, Finnish and Saami (Lapp) folk music. There are both similarities (narrow range, diatonic set of notes etc.) and differences among them. Perhaps similarities found in them are due to preserving archaic layer of music and not to linguistic language relationship.*

Key words: *archaic, motivic, narrow range, diatonic, foreign influence.*

Finno-Ugrian peoples speak related languages: their relationship does not mean more and does not mean less. However, we may regard the interest of researchers dealing with various fields of culture as natural that the question arises in them, whether language relatives show relationship in other fields of culture, e. g. in music. This occupied also Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály. Bartók mentions the theme in more writings [1, p. 583.], pentatonic melodies found in Hungarian and Mari (Cheremis) folk music; Kodály also mentions the folk music of the Mari in his book *Hungarian Folk Music*. („*In the Volga region live a small people related to the Hungarians, the Mari or Cheremis. What has so far been discovered of thier music has shown such surprising and basic similarity to one stratum of Hungarian folk music that an ancient relationship between the two peoples can hardly been doubted*”) [2, p. 17.]. This musical stratum includes pentatonic quintshifting melodies.

The closest language relatives of Hungarians are Ob-Ugrians, but as we departed from each other about 3000 years ago, we do not understand their language. Linguistic relationship is shown by the structure of the languages and the basic vocabulary.

Ob-Ugrians following the traditional course in life are polytheistic till nowadays; their shamans establish a connection with the creatures of upper and lower levels of the world to ask for their advices. As gods cannot hear everyday human speech, the means of establishing the connection is singing [3, p. 135]; as this kind of singing is not a performance in the European meaning, its aesthetic quality is different of European songs. The shaman does not want to delight the audience with his song but to talk to one of the gods, and for that it is necessary only to do something different of everyday speech.

The Ob-Ugrians perform many songs on the occasion of bear feasts in a strictly

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fixed order. Long epic songs are found among them discussing the Creation, respectively about the actions of various gods and goddesses. Short plays are also performed. During sacrificial rites calling songs are sung for guardian spirits usually before and after hunting and fishing. They also sing during long travels on boats or sleighs pulled by reindeers. Songs are composed by the singer according to the unwritten rules of constructing lyrics and

melodies, and it deals often with the surroundings seen by the singer during travel. When gathering, meeting, they sing individual songs about the life and important events of someone. Everyone composes his/her individual song, others learn them and sing later without changing it. A woman may sing the song of a man and vice versa. Nobody sings his or her own individual song to a stranger (e. g. to a researcher).

AP 12184a

...as pe - la-k(a) zu - (ja) je - laŋ jirk e - wa - t(a),
 10 as pe - la-k(a) zu - (ja) zu - jaŋ jirk e - wat
 nŋŋ - si - je-m(a) kās - ta - (ja) ar pčš - xi - je - m(a),
 wo - je-m(a) kās - ta - (ja) (ʃ)ar kü - ji - jem
 tŋŋ šī jŋŋ - ti - j(u - ʒə)t - tet i - r(a) - na - (ja)
 om-sa-m(a - ʒə) su - n(u) (ʃ)a - ri(j) jä - m(a) tet,
 15 om - sam ke - wa - n(a) (ʃ)a - ri pä - san
 tŋŋ(i) šī tut' - t'i - j(u - ʒə)t - t(ə - t(i - je)...

Fig. 1

Permian Finno-Ugrians are Komi (Zyryens) and Udmurts (Votyaks). Komi became substantially Russianized for the present time; however, some of their folk music was still in existence in the second half of the 20th century, studied by their researchers.

The new Komi songs for two voices are probably owe to Russian influence as Komi songs (like all other Finno-Ugrian ones) are

originally for one voice. In the case of improvised songs sung alone it is impossible differently; singing together is possibly only if the lyrics and melody of the songs are fixed. Komi songs for two voices are found not only among strophic songs of newer genres: we can find them among children's songs, recruits songs, wedding songs, love songs etc. as well [5, no. 42. (recruits song), no. 48. (wedding song) etc.].

AP 4765 e2



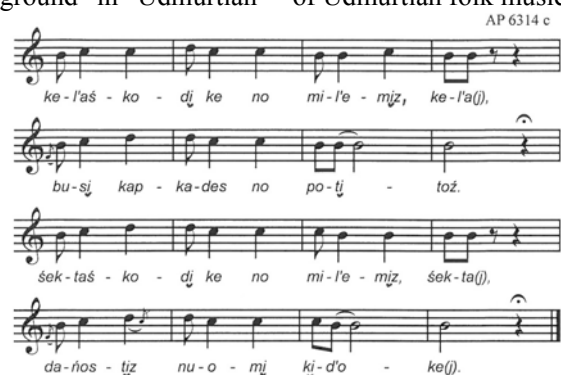
...mi ši - ja - lam ši - ja - sen, ši - ja - sen da,
 oj gi - gi la - da, ši - ja - sen, ši - ja - sen!
 mi pe ved i or - jed - lam, or - jed - lam da,
 oj gi - gi la - da, o - r(i) - jed - lam, o - r(i) - jed - lam!
 my - jen že ti or - jed - lad, or - jed - lad da,
 oj gi - gi la - da, my - jen, my - jen?...

Fig. 2

Udmurts also belong to Permian languages. There are a number of researchers among them dealing with folk music; however, the archaic layer of unisonous trichordic melodies preserved by the Udmurts of Tatar and Bashkir areas, fell into the background in Udmurtian

research yet in the 20th century. This gives a larger significance to the fieldwork and research of László Vikár, folk music researcher and Gábor Bereczky, linguist, who made fieldwork from the 1950's to the 1970's and revealed the archaic layer of Udmurtian folk music [6].

AP 6314 c



ke - l'aš - ko - dj ke no mi - l'e - mjz, ke - l'a(j),
 bu - sj kap - ka - des no po - tj - tož.
 šek - taš - ko - dj ke no mi - l'e - mjz, šek - ta(j),
 da - ňos - tjz nu - o - mj kj - d'o - ke(j).

Fig. 3

In the old layer of Udmurtian folk music we can find also pentatonic melodies showing Turkic influence. Similarly to that of other peoples Udmurtian culture, folk music is also significantly influenced by

contact with Turkic peoples of Volga area (Bashkirs, Tatars).

Mari (Cheremis) and Mordvinian belong to Volga Finno-Ugrian peoples. The archaic layer of Mari folk music consists

of diatonic melodies of narrow range. However, pentatonic quint-shifting melodies are also found among Mari folksongs, and this was the cause of the interest appearing among Hungarian folk music researchers already in the first half of the 20th century. It is definitely important to emphasize that in this case the basis of comparing is not a melody or some ones but a musical form: it is not only similarity on the surface but the similarity of musical thought manifested in

musical structure. However, pentatonic quintshifting melodies are not found in the folk music of all Mari groups and is found in the music of other peoples as well besides Maris and Hungarians. For certain it is the newest layer in Mari folk music, and is due to Turkic influence like in the folk music of other Finno-Ugrian peoples; its basis could be a more archaic structure of two lines, repeated a fifth lower.

AP 2196a

ku - ku - ju - kām, oj, ko-lāst-mām šo - eš.
 šo - šām tol-mā - kā - zā, ku - yi wu-ješ sēc-māŋ-gə,
 i[k] - kok mā - rā[m] mā - ral - tā - ōe, oj, so - ik - tok a[k] ke,
 i[k] - kok mā - rā[m] mā - ral - tā - ōe, oj, so - ik - tok a[k] ke.

Fig. 4

Mordvinian folk music is different of Mari one: it contains archaic melodies but it is under a significant Russian influence. Archaic layer is represented by unisonous and narrow-range melodies, in which motives are repeated; these are mainly laments for the bride, for the recruits and for the dead. A part of these is found between speech and song.

Another layer of Mordvinian folk music consists of fixed strophic songs. Among these we can find epic historic songs dealing with the great events of the past; elderly people could remember these songs in the second half of the 20th century. These may contain 50-70 strophes: the melody is of narrow range, the set of notes is 3-4 pitches.

AP 10530 e

lu - gaš, lu - gaš,
 lu - ga-vaŋt' ja - ke da ka - rij a - la - ša,
 lu - ga-vaŋt' ja - ke da ka - rij a - la - ša,
 kun - da - ta - n(e) ka - rij da, ke-r(e)-ča - ta - n(e) ka - rij...

Fig. 5

The next group is Baltic Finno-Ugrians; we find Estonians, Finnish and Saami here. Estonia was a member state of the Soviet Union for a long time; in 1991 it successfully got back its independence. The archaic layer of Estonian folk music is that of runo melodies. These have a motivic structure; lines of 8 syllables are constructed from the motives. The melodies are different according to musical dialects, but in all dialects there are one- or two-line melodies of narrow range and descending character. They are very similar to Finnish runo melodies (see the example there).

A special layer of Estonian folk music is that of the Setu. Structure of 8 syllables is growing by syllables, words or refrains. Polyphony of this music is not found in other Estonian dialects, and it is also different of polyphony of the neighbouring Russians.

Speaking of Finnish folklore, folk poetry, the first is Kalevala, the national epos of the Finns coming to our mind. It is not an only poem, but the uniting of lyrics of several areas and several performers. The lyrics were sung, and naturally the melodies are also different. They are most often one- or two-lined ones, in one line 5 fourths are found. There is a rich possibility for varying. The melodies of Kalevala, being similar to the archaic melodies of the Estonians, are also called runo melodies, there are more thousand variations of it; new ones may be recorded even at the beginning of the 21st century. Not only the lyrics of Kalevala may be sung with this kind of melody but also children's songs, other epic songs, love songs, ballads etc.

SKM 1. 1977. p. 15.

An - ni tyt - tö ae - nut nei - to is - tu - pa tu - run ko - rol - la,
tu - run ko - ron kor - va - sel - la, kat - tšou y - lös, kat - tšou a - les,
y - lä - hä - nä päe - vä pais - taa, a - la - ha - na ve - no sou - taa.

Fig. 6

Researchers know more ballads sung with runo melody and with newer melody as well. Unfortunately, these could be recorded mostly with the newer melody, and there are only written resources of occurring with runo melody as well. Joining of texts and melodies is loose: as written earlier, there are more lyrics sung with the same melody, and there are more melodies sung with the same lyrics. This kind of archaic musical culture began to

disappear from Western Finland at the beginning of the 17th century, but is preserved in the eastern part of Finnish language territory till the beginning of the 21st century.

The newer age of Finnish folk music occurred after the 17th century, when strophic melodies of four lines appeared. With the spreading of instrumental dance music Germanic influence strengthened, showing itself in vocal folk music e. g. in upbeats.

Saamis (Lapps) are living in our days at the northern edge of Europe, on the territory of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Their best-known and most spread song genre is “yoika” or “yoik”, meaning

‘song’. This song is mostly improvised, in some of them there are more so-called filling syllables or filling words than meaningful word-groups.



Fig. 7

So what is the message of the folk music of the Finno-Ugrian language relatives of the Hungarians? In their folk music there are similarities and differences as well. Similarities are found primarily in archaic layers: motivic structure, narrow range, diatonic set of notes are found in the folk music of Ob-Ugrians as well as in that of Permians, the Finno-Ugrians of Volga area and Baltic Finno-Ugrians. The Turkic, Russian and German influence with which we can meet in the music of certain peoples, is understandable knowing their history, and if the influence is not only shallow but being present in the music of one or the other Finno-Ugrian people, it brought that music nearer to those also meeting that kind of influence, and moved it farther to the music of others. We can find peoples where the foreign influence on music was less and remained on the surface, and others on which the influence of pentatonic Turkic music, polyphonic Russian music, Germanic music with upbeats was strong and essential. It is questionable that similarities found in the folk music of Finno-Ugrian peoples are

due to relationship or preserving archaic layer of music.

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