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A MANCHU SONG FROM MONGOLIA

In September, 1981, in Ulanbator, the author had the pleasure to make the acquaintance of a remarkable man: Professor Yadamsürengiin Shariibuu (Ядамсүрэнгийн Шарийбуу). Born in 1909 in Hailar, he spent his childhood and



/Y. Shariibuu/

youth in the exciting international atmosphere of Northwest Manchuria. The region was populated by a Babelish multitude of peoples: the "aborigines" were represented by Mongols (Khalkha and other tribes), Dagurs, Buriats, Solons, and Manchu, while the more recent immigrants, intrudors and administrators included Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Tatars (and other Turkic tribes), Jews, Russians, as well as a wide scale of Westerners. With an exceptional talent for languages, the young Shariibuu acquired, in addition to his Khalkha vernacular, all the major languages of Manchuria: Chinese, Japanese,

Russian and, of course, Manchu. Later, in the 1930s, he became a student of Oriental history at the University of Tokyo, specializing in Manchu studies. Since the war he has lived in the Mongolian People's Republic and is at present professor of the Manchu language and literature in Ulanbator State University.

During the first decades of this century, the Manchu language was still relatively commonly used for everyday communication in Hailar and elsewhere in Manchuria, although Chinese and Japanese were fast becoming the *linguae francae*. Shariibuu, like anyone in the region, had Manchu speaking acquaintances, and had ample opportunities to use the language regularly. The use

of Manchu was, however, rapidly declining, and the break of the war meant the final blow to the disappearing language. Today, probably no one speaks Manchu actively in Manchuria. But, although four decades have elapsed since the war, Professor Shariibuu remains one of the few scholars whose command of the Manchu language has a firm oral and practical foundation. His Manchu is, of course, not "Spoken Manchu" in the narrow sense of the word, but bears traces of a strong influence by the literary language as well as, possibly, interference from Khalkha. On the other hand, his speech does certainly preserve a lot of the everyday freshness once characteristic of the Manchu language as it was spoken in its natural context.

As a recollection of his youth in Manchuria Professor Shariibuu recited a Manchu lyric song, the text and melody of which, he says, he learnt long ago in Hailar. The song, as sung by himself, was also recorded on magnetic tape. As it is not known to have been published previously, this small sample of Manchu folklore is, by the kind permission of Professor Shariibuu, presented below.

T e x t

The transcription follows the general praxis established in English-language publications (as Norman 1978). The original version in Manchu script is presented in appendix 1.

Hinggan alin-i dabagan be dulere ucun.

(Alin wéji sere ucun, Hinggan alin-i dabagan de.)

- ¹ *alin weji fisin labdu / arsuha moo seri akū.*
- ² *alban yabure geren haha / amasi julesi dulere de mangga.*
- ³ *yalu birai ilan gargan / yala sekiyen šumin goro.*
- ⁴ *hoo sere amba jilgan / hūwanggar sere eyere muke.*
- ⁵ *huweki moo bujan calu / hur har sere asuki jilgan.*
- ⁶ *guwendere gashai jilgan uran / gubci bade dogo arbun.*
- ⁷ *gelere goloro gurgu gasha / geli we be necimbini.*
- ⁸ *ekšeme saksime duleki seci / elei jorin baharakū.*
- ⁹ *tugi sektere geren alin / talman tatara bira birga.*
- ¹⁰ *hacingga boco ija halman / hafirame jabšara teyen akū.*
- ¹¹ *babade butha sirara / banjire were oroncon aiman.*

T r a n s l a t i o n

A song about going over a pass in the Khingan Mountains.

[Alternative title:] A song called Mountain Forest. In a Khingan Mountains pass.

¹ The mountain forest is dense and wide, and thorny trees are not rare.

² A group of men on an official mission have a hard time going backwards and forwards.

³ The three branches of the River Yalu: indeed their sources are deep and distant.

⁴ [There is] a great noise of water flowing, surging and roaring.

⁵ [In] the forest of luxuriant trees [there is the small] noise [of shying horses].

⁶ [There is] the echoing sound of tweeting birds, and it is dark all around.

⁷ Frightening beasts and birds [can] attack just anyone.

⁸ Although we wish to pass hurrying, we hardly [seem to] reach the destination.

⁹ The many mountains [are] covered in clouds, the rivers and creeks [are] hidden in fog.

¹⁰ Gadflies and mosquitoes of all colors harass restlessly.

¹¹ In many places, pursuing their hunting, live the Oronchon people.

N o t e s

¹ *labdu*: normally 'many, much', but here obviously 'wide'.

¹ *arsuha*: of the verb *arsumbi* 'to sprout'; here according to Professor Shariibuu *arsuha moo* = Khalkha *əpɾɛc moɔ* 'thorny trees'.

² *alban yabure*: probably the same as *alban de yabure* (*yabumbi*) 'to go to an official post' (Norman 1978).

³ *yalu bira*: obviously denotes the river nowadays known as *Yalu He* (雅魯河), a tributary of the River Nen Jiang (嫩江, Nonni) on the eastern slope of the Greater Khingan Range.

⁵ *calu*: normally 'granary'; here perhaps a poetic image: *bujan calu* 'forest granary' (?)

⁵ *hur har sere*: normally *hūr har sere*, a descriptive expression denoting

the noise caused by shying horses. Perhaps the idea is to contrast the (small) noise of the horses to the (great) noise of the flowing water.

⁶ *dogo*: pronounced, when sung by Professor Shariibuu, as *doho*. In dictionaries the word is recorded only in the meaning 'blind'; here probably 'dark'.

⁷ *geli we be necimbini*: literally 'whom do they attack'.

¹⁰ *halman*: recorded in dictionaries only in the form *galman*.

¹⁰ *hafirame*: sung as *hafirar(a)*.

¹⁰ *jabšara*: the normal meaning of *jabšambi* is 'to derive benefit from' (Norman 1978).

¹¹ *butha sirara*: sung as *butha sira* — perhaps a contamination of *butha sirara* (*sirambi*) and *buthašara* (*buthašambi*), both meaning 'to fish and hunt' (Norman 1978).

¹¹ *banjire were*: sung as *banjir(e) doro*, a roughly synonymous expression with the meaning 'livelihood' (Hauer 1952-1955).

¹² *oroncon*: in dictionaries recorded as *oronco*.

C o m m e n t s

Most of the Manchu poetry known consists of translations from Mongolian and Chinese (see, for instance, Sinor 1968). In the case of the present song, however, nothing seems to argue against its truly folkloric origin. Structurally it appears to be a very simple but typical piece of Manchu poetry; metrically it exhibits certain irregularities perhaps pointing to its relatively recent age. It is also possible that the text is composed of two or more chronologically different layers. The 11 stanzas are ordered contextually in a rather haphazard way. Stanzas 2 and 8 introduce the characters with whom the singer or listener can identify himself, while the rest of the song is focused on the description of the surrounding nature.

The most obvious stylistic means applied in the composition is alliteration, dividing each stanza into two alliterative lines. In most of the cases the phonological sequence repeated consists of a consonant and a vowel (CV: ¹⁰ *haeingga* - *hafirame*, ¹¹ *babade* - *banjire*), or just an initial vowel (V = ?/'V/: ¹ *alin* - *arsuha*, ² *alban* - *amasi*, ⁸ *ekšeme* - *elei*). In this group can also be included those cases involving a labial vowel vs. a

labial diphthong (⁴ *hoo* - *hūwanggar*, ⁵ *huweki* - *hur har*, ⁶ *guwendere* - *gubci*). In one case the alliteration is confined to the initial consonant (C: ⁹ *tugi* - *talman*), while in two cases a sequence of as many as three phonemes is repeated (CVC: ³ *yalu* - *yala*, ⁷ *gelere* - *geli*). Frequently, alliteration extends over two stanzas at a time, forming a quatrain (cf. stanzas 1 and 2, 4 and 5, 6 and 7, respectively). It is also applied within individual lines (e.g. ⁹ *talman tatara bira birga*.) Indeed, it seems that alliteration is an inevitable characteristic of Manchu poems and folksongs - as it is of the songs of, for instance, the neighboring Mongols and Buriats. It also occurs regularly in the Manchu songs collected by Radloff and Ivanovski (Ivanovskij 1893-1895.107-118, 189-192) as well as Muromski (Kałużyński 1977.87-88).

In terms of metrics, each line of the song consists basically of four two-syllable units (e.g. ¹ *alin weji fisin labdu*). As the accent (probably better termed "prominence") in Modern Manchu appears to lie on the last syllable, the metre can perhaps technically best be called a four-footed iamb (*alin / weji / fisin / labdu*). The iambic structure is also reflected in the construction of the corresponding music (cf. below). On the other hand, the frequent presence of alliteration in Manchu poetry, including the present song, seems to suggest that the language was in a not too remote past characterized by initial stress. Thus, texts of the present type may originally have been composed in a metre that could be called trocheic (*alin / weji / fisin / labdu*). But whatever the metre, the structural division of the song reveals a number of facts of Manchu phonology. For instance, the "diphthongs" *uwa*, *uwe*, *iye* are really monosyllabic elements (as in ⁴ *hūwang-gar*, ⁵ *huwe-ki*, ³ *se-kiyen*), and the genitive *-i* also seems to be non-syllabic (as in ³ *bi-rai*). On the other hand, the "long vowel" *oo* must be considered as a sequence of two syllables (as in ¹ *mo-o*, ⁵ *mo-oi*).

The basic metrical regularity of the text is, however, not perfect, but is broken many times by the presence of additional syllables, or, more rarely, by the absence of a syllable. Quite often, in the place of a two-syllable unit (normally a word) there stands a unit of three or even four syllables (e.g. ¹ *arsuha*, ² *dulere de*). When the song is sung, these additional syllables are treated in one of two ways: either they simply share the rhythmic space of a single syllable, or the final vowel (normally *e*) is elided to remove one syllable. In the case of the absence of a syllable, its rhythmic space is left empty (¹¹ *babade*). The treatment of the sequence *ugi*

(⁹ *tugi*) is interesting in that it seems to be rhythmically monosyllabic (? /uy/). The whole song, as sung by Professor Shariibuu, got the following rhythmical patterning:

1	<i>a</i>	<i>lin</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>ji</i>	<i>fi</i>	<i>sin</i>	<i>lab</i>	<i>du</i>
	<i>ar</i>	<i>su-ha</i>	<i>mo</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>ri</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>kū</i>
2	<i>al</i>	<i>ban</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>bu-re</i>	<i>ge</i>	<i>ren</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>ha</i>
	<i>a</i>	<i>ma-si</i>	<i>ju-le</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>du-le</i>	<i>re-de</i>	<i>mang</i>	<i>ga</i>
3	<i>ya</i>	<i>lu</i>	<i>bi</i>	<i>rai</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>lan</i>	<i>gar</i>	<i>gan</i>
	<i>ya</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>kiyen</i>	<i>śu</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>go</i>	<i>ro</i>
4	<i>ho</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>re</i>	<i>am</i>	<i>ba</i>	<i>jil</i>	<i>gan</i>
	<i>hūwang</i>	<i>gar</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>re</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>ye-re</i>	<i>mu</i>	<i>ke</i>
5	<i>huwe</i>	<i>ki</i>	<i>mo</i>	<i>oi</i>	<i>bu</i>	<i>jan</i>	<i>ca</i>	<i>lu</i>
	<i>hur</i>	<i>har</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>re</i>	<i>a-su</i>	<i>ki</i>	<i>jil</i>	<i>gan</i>
6	<i>guwen</i>	<i>der(e)</i>	<i>gas</i>	<i>hai</i>	<i>jil</i>	<i>gan</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>ran</i>
	<i>gub</i>	<i>ci</i>	<i>ba</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>ho</i>	<i>ar</i>	<i>bun</i>
7	<i>ge</i>	<i>le-re</i>	<i>go-lo</i>	<i>ro</i>	<i>gur</i>	<i>gu</i>	<i>gas</i>	<i>ha</i>
	<i>ge</i>	<i>li</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>be</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>cim</i>	<i>bi</i>	<i>ni</i>
8	<i>ek</i>	<i>śem(e)</i>	<i>sak</i>	<i>sim(e)</i>	<i>du-le</i>	<i>ki</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>ci</i>
	<i>e</i>	<i>lei</i>	<i>jo</i>	<i>rin</i>	<i>ba</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>ra</i>	<i>kū</i>
9	-	<i>tugi</i>	<i>sek</i>	<i>ter(e)</i>	<i>ge</i>	<i>ren</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>ha</i>
	<i>tal</i>	<i>man</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>ta-ra</i>	<i>bi</i>	<i>ra</i>	<i>bir</i>	<i>ga</i>
10	<i>ha</i>	<i>cing-ga</i>	<i>bo</i>	<i>co</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>ja</i>	<i>hal</i>	<i>man</i>
	<i>ha-fi</i>	<i>rar(a)</i>	<i>jab</i>	<i>śa-ra</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>yen</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>kū</i>
11	-	<i>ba</i>	<i>ba</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>but</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>ra</i>
	<i>ban</i>	<i>jir(e)</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>ro</i>	<i>o-ron</i>	<i>con</i>	<i>ai</i>	<i>man</i>

T u n e

The tune of the song has been analyzed from the point of view of ethnomusicology by lic.phil. Timo Leisiö. The complete notation is given in appendix 2. Leisiö suggests the following normalized shape for the tune:



As no information is available on other tunes of the Northwest Manchurian peoples, it is difficult to put this particular tune in any well-defined context. The singing of Professor Shariibuu exhibits extremely many variations, as in the case of a true folksinger. Leisiö further comments: "The scalar basis is a pentachoid with a minor third, but there are so many variations with auxiliary tones (d^1 , e^1 pro e^1 flat) that the music could also be regarded as having the scale of a hexachoid. The rhythm is clearly metrical but there is a considerable rubato in it. An interesting feature in the construction is a tendency to use a third transposition between the 1st and 2nd line of each stanza (as demonstrated in the normalized notation above). Each line concludes on the 1st degree (c^1) after g^1 - a^1 in the first line of a stanza, and, alternatively, after f^1 - g^1 or e^1 flat- f^1 in the second line of a stanza. Additionally, there are some free movements which differ from the seemingly basic procedure of the melody construction. The decorating notes are organized in a very structured way, and especially the second bar of the first line moves with quite many notes, without which the relation between text and music could be called syllabic. The singing voice is relaxed and the register quite low."

P r o n u n c i a t i o n

In Professor Shariibuu's pronunciation of Manchu, some details seem to point to the possibility of Khalkha interference. It is, however, not known, whether it is a question of pure idiosyncracies, or general characteristics of Manchu pronunciation in Hailar and elsewhere in Northwest Manchuria. The most typical deviations from the standard Manchu pronunciation (as described, for instance, by Haenisch 1961.33) are as follows:

b, *d*, *g*, and *j* are sporadically realized as more or less voiceless segments, e.g. *banjir*(e) [*Baŋ*^h*dʒir*], *bade* [*baDe*], *gwender*(e) [*Guender*], *jilgan* [*ᠵᠢᠯᠭᠠᠨ* ~ *dʒilᠭᠠᠨ*].

b in syllable final position is once pronounced as a fricative: *labdu* [*laβdu*]; in other cases as a stop, e.g. *jabšara* [*dʒaβšara*]. On the other hand, in initial position the distinction between *b* [*b* ~ *B*] and *w* [*β* ~ *u*] is consequently preserved, e.g. *weji* [*βe^hdʒi*], *boco* [*bo^htšo*].

f is pronounced as an aspirated stop: *fisin* [*pʰiśən*], *hafirar*(a) [*χapʰi-rar*].

n in word final position is normally a velar nasal, e.g. *ucun* [*u^htśun*]. In

sandhi, however, it is assimilated by the following consonant, e.g. *jorin baharaku* [dʒorim baxarakul], *talman tatara* [t'almən t'at'aral]. In the position before a vowel, e.g. a genitive *-i*, the velar pronunciation is preserved, e.g. *alin-i* [al'əŋil].

The qualities of the vowels are generally close to their Khalkha counterparts. This is also true of "diphthongs", e.g. *aiman* [aemən]. *e* is normally pronounced as a relatively low (middle high) back vowel with no observable lip rounding, e.g. *gelere* [gɛlɛrɛ]. *i* in non-initial syllables is often reduced and the preceding consonant palatalized, e.g. *alin* [al'əŋ]. Sporadically, other vowels are reduced, too. The sequence *oo* is pronounced as [ou].

The material is too limited to enable a complete solution of the interesting problem concerning the phonetic and phonemic relationship of the realizations of the graphemes *u* and *ū*. Normally, *u* seems to be pronounced in a way reminding of Khalkha /ü/ [u ~ y], while *ū* comes close to Khalkha /u/ [y]. The two vowels in Manchu contrast only in the position after a velar obstruent, and, indeed, it seems that the basic phonological distinction lies not in the vowel itself but in the preceding consonant. Standard Manchu possesses two phonologically distinctive series of velar obstruents, of which one — the front velar series /k, g, x/ — occurs before the vowels /(w)e, i, u (=u)/, and the other — the back velar series /q, γ, h/ — before the vowels /(w)a, o, u (=ū)/. A similar situation, in a somewhat more complicated form, is known from "Spoken Manchu" (cf. Hattori & Yamamoto 1969.12-14, 16-17, 21).

To give a general idea of the pronunciation, the whole song text is presented below in a rather impressionistic phonetic transcription (the Finno-Ugrian system). For the sake of completeness, a very tentative phonemic transcription is added.

al'ən *βe* *dʒi* *sɛrɛ* *u* *tʃʊn*,
xɪŋən *al'əŋi* *dabaxande*.

/alɪn *weji* *sere* *'ucun*,
xɪŋən *'alɪni* *dabayande*.

¹ *al'ən* *βe* *dʒi* *p'iʃən* *labdu*,
arsuxa *mou* *sɛri* *aku*.

'alɪn *weji* *piʃɪn* *labdu*,
'arsuha *mo'o* *seri* *'aqu*.
'alban *yabure* *gerɛn* *haha*,
'amaʃi *juleʃi* *dulɛrede* *manya*.

² *alban* *jabure* *gerɛn* *xaxa*,
amaʃi *dʒuleʃi* *dulɛrede* *manga*.

³ *jalu* *biraɛi* *ilan* *garyan*,
jala *sɛkiɛn* *ʃumən* *goro*.

yalu *biray* *'ilan* *ɣaryan*,
yala *sɛkyɛn* *ʃumɪn* *ɣoro*.

- ⁴ *xou sere amba džilʻan,*
xuangaṛ sere ejere muke.
- ⁵ *xueki moui Bu dʻʒaŋ tʻʒalu,*
xur xar sere asuki džilʻan.
- ⁶ *Guender ʻasxaɛi džilʻan uran,*
gub tʻʒi baɖe doxo arbun.
- ⁷ *gelere yoloro yuryu ʻasxa,*
geli bebe ne tʻʒimbini.
- ⁸ *ekšəm sakšəm duleki se tʻʒi,*
eli džorim bayaraku.
- ⁹ *tʻui sekter geren alʻən,*
tʻalmən tʻatʻara bira birya.
- ¹⁰ *xa tʻʒiŋa bo tʻʒo i dʻʒa xalmən,*
xapʻirar dʻʒaBšara tejeŋ aku.
- ¹¹ *bābaɖe butxa šira,*
Baŋ dʻʒir doro oron tʻʒon aemən.
- ho'o sere 'amba jilyan,
hwanʻyar sere 'eyere muke.
xweki mo'oy bujaŋ calu,
xur har sere 'asuki jilyan.
gwender ʻashay jilyan 'uran,
gubci bade doho 'arbun.
gelere yoloro gurgu ʻasha,
geli webe necimbini.
'ekšim sakšim duleki seci,
'eley joriŋ baharaqu.
tuy sekter geren 'alin,
talmaŋ tatara bira birya.
haciŋya boco 'ija halmaŋ,
hapirar jabšara teyeŋ 'aqu.
babade butha šira(ra),
banjir doro oroncon 'aymaŋ./

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Appendix 2. The tune as transcribed by Timo Leisiö

♩ = ca. 172 (whole duration 1'34"). c¹ = orig. H.

Molto rubato.

1 a - lin we - ji fi - sin lab - du ar - suha mo - o se - ri a - kü

2 al - ban ya - bure ge - ren ha - ha a - masi jule - si dule - rede mang - ga

3 ya - lu bi - rai i - lan gar - gan ya - la se - kiyen su - min go - ro

4 ho - o se - re am - ba jil - gan hūwang - gar se - re e - yere mu - ke

5 hawē - ki mo - oi bu - jan ca - lu hur - har se - re asu - ki jil - gan

6 guwen - der gas - hai jil - gan u - rangub - ci ba - de do - ho ar - bun

7 ge - lere golo - ro gur - gu gas - ha ge - li we - be ne - cim - bi - ni

8 ek - sem sak - sim dule - ki se - ci e - lei jo - rin ba - ha - ra - kü

9 tugi sek - terge - ren a - lin tal - man ta - tara bi - ra bir - ga

10 ha - cingga bo - co i - ja hal - man hafi - rar jab - šara te - yen a - kü

11 ba - ba - de but - ha si - ra ban - jir do - ro oron - con ai - man

A c k n o w l e d g e m e n t s

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