

Chuvash folksongs

Songs relating to the life and customs of the Chuvash people

As with the Cheremis, the short lyrical song is the characteristic genre of Chuvash folk-poetry. There are, however, Chuvash scholars who state that the great peasant-movements of the seventeenth century were associated with the production of historical epic also, but that these became extinct as a result of reprisals on the part of state authorities. (М. Я. СИРОТКИН, Чуваши́йский фольклор. Чебоксары. 1965. стр. 91.)

Certain songs survive that tell of Chuvash peasants migrating towards the East, of the death of Pugachov, of the Napoleonic war of 1812, and of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877 (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 92-99). Nevertheless, such songs must have been isolated phenomena in the past, as they are in the present. Collecting has been undertaken by H. PAASONEN and MÉSZÁROS in those Chuvash regions where pagan beliefs remain intact, and it might be expected that they would have met there with an epic tradition, or at least with traces thereof. Neighbouring peoples, Russian, Mordvinian, and Tatar, possess considerable amounts of epic poetry. Why should similar traditions have perished among Chuvash living under identical conditions? It seems to be more plausible to suppose that what little they have has been borrowed from the Russians or the Tatars.

One of the songs in the present collection speaks of Chuvash emigrants (No. 240), and a fragment makes mention of the Russo-Turkish war (No. 203).

As with epic songs, the ballad-genre is also missing in Chuvash folklore. In the category of lyrical songs, we found no traces either of cradle songs or of children's songs. Older collections, however, include specimens of the latter.

The lyrical songs can be divided into two classes that embrace (with scarcely any exceptions) the entire field of the genre: 1. songs performed on festive days; 2. those connected with family events, customs, and tradition.

Frequently enough, the words of a song do not refer to a particular feast; only the singer reveals the implicit connection.

1. Festive songs

Following the winter solstice, the first feast was that of *surçuri* 'lamb's foot' (cf. Cher. *şorâkjol* 'Christmas', that is, lamb's foot), which has merged with the Christmas of the Christians. At *surçuri*-tide youths and children roamed the village, singing from house to house, wishing a rich harvest and abundance of livestock to the husbands, who in turn offered them roasted peas and (in the Eastern region) cakes and money. The young would throw peas into the air, stamping, and dancing and saying: May you have as many sheep as peas; may you be as tough as roasted peas'!

Originally the event of *surçuri* included the celebration of the New Year as well, and it was only later that the two feasts became separated, owing to the spread of Christianity. On New Year's day, girls and youths assembled in the spinning-house where they amused themselves by singing, solving riddles, and telling fortunes. New Year customs were practiced on Twelfth Night also. The present volume contains only two songs connected with these feasts (Nos 13, 129), the first having no explicit reference to a feast.

The winter cycle of feasts was followed by a period of fast, lasting for a fortnight and called *šâvarni* 'butter week' (cf. Cher. *üjarña, üärñä; üj, ü* 'butter'; *arña, ärñä* 'week'). In that period, the chief pastime of the young people was sleighing. Youths went for sleigh-rides with their sweethearts or girl-acquaintances, the horses being harnessed to properly decorated sledges. Merry-makers ran either in groups, or in the form of a closed circle. A wheel fixed to a pole was burnt in a field. The closed circle, as well as the burning wheel, must have functioned as symbols of the Sun.

Sleighing during this fasting period was customary up to recent times, and memories of it are still alive, as shown by survival of some twenty-five songs, habitually performed on fast days.

The spring feast, lasting about a week, was called *mân kun* 'great day' and celebrated in commemoration of the departed; another aim was to keep away evil spirits and diseases. Gradually the *mân kun* merged into the Christians' Easter (cf. Cher. *kuçeçe* 'Easter', *kuçu* 'great' – *keçe* 'day'). In this volume, there is but one single song connected with the 'great day' (No. 172). One of the days within the *mân kun* cycle was the *kalâm kun* 'All Souls' day, when the living carried mash, eggs, beer, and so on, to the graves of departed relatives, inviting their souls to the feast. The fifth day of the feast, called *sâren* or *sârem*, was occupied with expelling evil spirits, and chasing away diseases. This same feast is also to be found among the Cheremis, who call it *sürem*; with them, it is celebrated somewhat later than among Chuvash. The Cheremis this time blow a trumpet, called *sürempuç*, undoubtedly with the aim of keeping away evil spirits. The festive song connected with *sürem* is still extant among the Cheremis (cf. VIKÁR and BEREZKI, No. 215).

The feasts that follow *mân kun* are directly linked with work performed in the fields. After ploughing and sowing, the feast of *aka tuj* 'plough wedding' was held; later there came the *uj jük* 'field sacrifice', which at a later date was combined with the *šimäk* 'Whitsun' (Russian *семи́к*) feast. This volume includes a song performed on the occasion of this feast (No. 8).

There was also a special feast, *šurçi ujav* 'spring feast' celebrated by the young people, who sang traditional songs and performed round-dance. Three such songs are included in this volume (Nos 139, 163 and 211).

In connection with hay-making, harvesting, and threshing, and further with sacrificial rites and prayers devoted to greet the new bread, a whole sequence of feasts were observed in former times. Of these, that of hay-making still survives, though not in a religious form. Old customs relating to hay-making are to be met with among both the Chuvash and the Cheremis populations, mainly along the large rivers and in the extensive flood-areas. At these feasts, the villagers, old and young, go to the fields to be mown, where the young people dance and sing far into the night. Special songs, habitually performed at hay-making, are also present in our collection (Nos 244, 245, 342 and 343).

2. Family events, customs, traditions

An old custom that survived almost up to our days was that of giving new-born infants pagan names before baptizing them in church. Among themselves, the village people used these pagan names together with the Christian name. No special songs were sung at the name-giving ceremony, however.

More important was the role of songs at weddings. Since PAASONEN (MSFOu. XCIV. 1-70) has given a detailed description of old Chuvash wedding-ceremonies, we refer here to certain episodes only.

As regards the church-wedding-ceremony proper, the Chuvash tended to slight these formalities in former times. After the ceremony, the bride and the groom went home to their parents, and the wedding proper followed a week after. The wedding-feast began simultaneously, but separately, in the homes of bride and groom. The men's wedding-feast was held at the bridegroom's house, where male relatives and friends gathered together; while the women's wedding-feast took place at the bride's, where female relatives and friends were the participants.

The bridegroom's hair was cut by a female relative. Properly clothed by the women, he was then shown into the room, where parents and aged relatives were holding their feast. The parents blessed the bridegroom; and then, accompanied by the "big" bestman and the "little" bestman, as well as by the wedding-precursion, he walked about the village, visiting relatives, with much singing and dancing. After this, on horse-back and in carts, all went to the bride's village. (Among the Chuvash, as among the Cheremis, exogamy prevailed; that is, they did not marry mates from their own villages. In certain Cheremis regions, this custom was alive as late as the fifties, although the original reason had long been forgotten.)

The women's wedding-feast unfolded, by and large, in the same way. The bride was dressed by a female relative, who put the *tuxja* on her head, silver decorations on her neck and breast, finally covering her with a veil. Holding the veil above her head, the bride then began to sing her bridal-lament. Sixteen songs of this type are included in the present volume. As regards content, some of these do not seem to belong to the type. Nevertheless, most of them complain of separation, of being taken to a strange place. Bridal-laments and other wedding songs amount to about a fifth of this collection.

In old Chuvash villages, consanguinity had been of utmost social importance. Traces of this can be detected up to the present time, as shown by this volume, where the largest group of songs includes those connected with the invitation, reception, and praise of relatives, their entertainment, and taking leave of them with words of farewell, and so on. In any case, exogamy required that relatives assemble from time to time in most cases from widely separated regions, sometimes with extreme difficulties of communication.

As in the case of wedding-feasts, so also in the case of burial, a number of ceremonies were involved. In Chuvash pagan belief, *Esrel*, the spirit of death (< ar. *äzrail*) selected those, whom he wished to transfer to the nether world, where the deceased continues life as before, eating and drinking, and even marrying as in their earthly lives. Not all departed ones fare so well in the nether world, however. Their further lot is determined not only by conduct during worldly life, but also by the attention devoted by relatives to their welfare during the burial ceremony and in subsequent commemoration. The most important im-

plements of daily work used to be placed in the grave. Special songs pertained to the burial ceremonies and to commemorative feasts. These can be classed into two groups: songs sung in the name of the departed, and those sung by relatives and friends remembering the dead. In the Cheremis regions, such songs persist with a greater tenacity. Among the Chuvash, however, we only succeeded in collecting one (No. 157).

Soldiers' farewell songs, and farewell songs in general, are similar to songs connected with family events, and in part belong to the same category. In the old Czarist army, soldiers had to serve for twenty-five years; the recruit therefore took leave, as if he were departing for good. Conditions have changed radically in the course of time, but the traditional songs survive to the present day. How alive the custom still is, is shown by some thirty soldiers' farewell songs in this volume. We also had opportunity to see recruits walking through the village, singing their farewell songs.

The word *vâjâ* (meaning 'game, dance, merry-making') refers to a kind of entertainment practised by youths. The term corresponds to the Russian *хоровод*. Both the Chuvash and the Russian words denote group-singing, dance, and sports, with which young people amused themselves, while walking round the village. A special place was appointed as the site of *vâjâ* in each village.

The *vâjâ* is nearly extinct now, though memory of it lingers still. Eight songs in this book are directly connected with this custom.

A particular group of songs were sung in the spinning-house. There were mainly performed by girls. The related custom has passed into oblivion, however, and songs of this class are not found in this volume.

There are, of course, numerous songs not linked with any particular occasion. Such are, for example, love-songs, which in the Chuvash tradition are conspicuously reticent in giving vent to personal feelings.

Finally, we may mention a further category not customarily regarded as a special group: that of songs in which the singer speaks of his weary life. As regards personal feelings, these are much more outspoken than are the love-songs. As an example, we cite here No. 322.

1. *Babbling, babbling, hey, the water flows,
And nobody asks, hey, how it flows.
Morning comes, hey, evening comes,
And nobody asks, hey, how you live.*
2. *Babbling, babbling, hey, the water flows,
Flowing, it turns the stones.
Thinking all kinds of thoughts,
My head is turning round, full of care.*

Representatives of this type of song are mostly to be found among the Mountain-Cheremis.

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Work-songs are usually mentioned as a special group in Chuvash collections. These are closely linked with some particular process: threshing, linen-softening, stake-driving, weaving of sedge-bags, swingling (hemp-dressing) scutching of flax, and so on. Unfortunately, not a single work-song is included in this volume, presumably, because these processes are no longer practised.

The Chuvash language

1. The origins of Chuvash, its development, dialects and literary usage

Chuvash belongs to the Turkic family of languages, more narrowly to the Bulgar branch of this family, of which it is the sole living representative. Although a typically Turkic language, Chuvash differs mainly from the so-called z-Turkic languages in its phonetic features. Of these, rotacism is most conspicuous. For example: Chuvash *pâr* 'ice' ~ z-Turkic *buz*; *ura* 'foot' ~ z-Turkic *ajaq*. Another differing feature is lambdacism: Chuvash *čul* 'stone' ~ z-Turkic *taš*; *alak* 'door' ~ z-Turkic *işik*, *esik*; further, Chuvash *ś* ~ z-Turkic *j*, for example, Chuvash *śul* 'year' ~ z-Turkic *jaš*; Chuvash *ś* ~ z-Turkic *č*, for example, Chuvash *śar* 'army' ~ z-Turkic *čärig*.

(Rotacism in Chuvash has a dual origin. In the first example *r* derives from *z*, the same phonetic property being also reflected in Turkic loanwords in Hungarian; in the second example, *r* developed from *d*, a comparatively recent phenomenon.)

The Finno-Ugrian languages of the Volga-Kama region have played a considerable role in the development of Chuvash as it now is, since the Chuvash have assimilated Finno-Ugrian ethnic groups to a significant extent, although the impact of reciprocal influence has been much more marked in the Finno-Ugrian languages of the region, and especially in the Cheremis and Votyak vocabulary and syntax. For example, Cheremis includes some fifteen hundred Chuvash lexical elements, while Cheremis etymologies in Chuvash do not exceed one hundred and fifty. (In peripheral Cheremis we can demonstrate a further one hundred and fifty loanwords, taken over from Chuvash; there are disregarded here, however, as regional phenomena.) As to Votyak, only a few dozen Chuvash etymologies are to be recognized.

Much stronger has been the influence of Tatar, which has resulted in the adoption of many hundred loanwords. The monographic study of these, however, is a task for the future.

Nor has Russian rule, lasting for some four hundred years, ended without leaving traces in Chuvash, although its influence in pre-revolutionary times was not particularly strong. The flood of Russian words, and international lexical elements mediated by Russian, did not start until after the Great October Revolution. This has influenced, in first place, the terminology of political and scientific writings, and to a lesser extent literary usage, but has left the language of folklore virtually untouched. This emerges from the folksong-texts published in this volume.

There are no dialectal differences in Chuvash to cause difficulties of comprehension among speakers from the various regions. In general, two main dialect groups are distinguished, one being the Viryal, that is the Upper dialect, spoken by the Northern population, the other the Anatri, the Lower, that is the Southern. The area in which Viryal is spoken extends, by and large, to the Moscow-Kazan railway-line crossing the Chuvash Autonomous Republic. The Viryal dialect largely covers the area formerly inhabited by the Cheremis as shown by toponyms. Differences between the two dialects are mainly present in the system of vowels; for example, Viryal *o* corresponds to Anatri *u*: *ot* ~ *ut* 'horse'.

There are four reduced (more precisely, markedly short) vowels in Chuvash Viryal: ə, â, ũ, ŷ, while in Anatri ũ, ŷ were delabialized, thus coinciding with ə and â. In Viryal certain Southern dialects do not use the vowel ũ.

As regards morphology, the most striking differences emerge in the use of signs of the plural. While in Viryal the plural signs *-sem*, viz. *-sam*, are added to words characterized by a palatal, viz. velar, vowel order, for example, *ənesem* 'cows', *lašasam* 'horses', in Anatri only *-sem* denotes the plural.

Stress relations differ widely in the two dialects. In Anatri, stress is placed on the last syllable of the word. In Viryal it falls on the last full sound; or, if the word contains only reduced sounds, it falls on the first syllable.

The rules of accentuation in the Viryal dialect hold also for most of the Cheremis dialect area, as well as for literary usage. The trend of adoption has not as yet been clarified. The general characteristics of Chuvash > Cheremis borrowings are certainly worthy of further consideration.

The earliest records of Chuvash originate from the eighteenth century; but the foundations of modern Chuvash literary usage were laid as late as the seventies of the last century. An outstanding role in this development was played by Y. Ya. YAKOVLEV, who established the rules for Chuvash orthography. The Chuvash literary language is based on the Anatri dialect, but the general rules of accentuation have been borrowed from the Viryal dialect.

In the years after the revolution, Cheboksari (situated in the Viryal Region) became the centre of Chuvash economic and cultural life; and, in consequence, many Viryal words have been incorporated into Chuvash literary usage.

In our day, compulsory education, and the expanding impact of press, radio, and television are instrumental in securing that the norms of literary usage become ever more widespread. Our informants in the younger agebracket almost exclusively adhere to this usage, at least as regards phonetic features.

2. The phonetic system and the method of transcription followed in this volume

As with the Cheremis, Mordvinian and the Votyak nations, Chuvash literacy developed from Russian antecedents, that is, from the Cyrillic alphabet. Symbols for missing sounds were formed by adding auxiliary marks to existing Cyrillic letters, as with Chuvash and Cheremis $y = ü$.

In our previous volume of Cheremis folksongs, we made use of the simplified phonetic transcription introduced by E. N. SETÄLÄ. Simplifications of this kind have been resorted to by several of Finno-Ugrian and Samoyed scholars, and the system has been given wide currency by a mimeographed table. [Cf. LAURI POSTI ja TERHO ITKONEN (toim.): FU-transkription yksinkertaistaminen (On simplifying of the FU transcription). Castrenianumin toimitteita 7. Helsinki 1973.] Although Chuvash is a Turkic language, use of the SETÄLÄ method of transcription did not cause us any difficulty: PAASONEN also made use of this method in his Chuvash nomenclature (Budapest, 1908); his Chuvash texts were published using the same method of transcription (MSFOu. XCIV); and MÉSZÁROS used it in his Chuvash folklore-collection (I, Budapest 1909; II, 1912); RÄSÄNEN also

makes use of it when quoting Chuvash words (cf. M. RÄSÄNEN: Versuch eines etymologischen Wörterbuchs der Türkisprachen. Helsinki 1969). In any case, the systems used by Finno-Ugrian and Turkic scholars have been markedly unified in recent years, owing to certain phonematic ideals becoming prevalent in Finno-Ugrian linguistics. The Finno-Ugrian method of transcription has, accordingly, been adopted by us as well. In this second volume of our planned series the system is identical with that of the first volume (Cheremis Folksongs), and the same system will be used in the next volumes.

a) Vowels

As in other Turkic languages, the law of vowel harmony operates in Chuvash also, although the rule does not always hold in the case of suffixes, and is sometimes abandoned in compounds. Accordingly, the Chuvash vowels are as follows:

Palatal	<i>i</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>ü</i>	(<i>ü̃</i>)	<i>ə</i>
Velar	<i>ı</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>u</i>	(<i>o</i>)	(<i>ü̃</i>) <i>â</i> .

Turkic scholars usually write *ı* as *a'*. In his Chuvash manual, Krueger uses the symbol *ı*, as in Osmanli orthography. In Cyrillic Chuvash orthography, the symbol is ы. (Cf. JOHN R. KRUEGER: Chuvash Manual. Indiana University Publications, Uralic and Altaic Series. Bloomington 1961, 70.)

Reduced sounds are represented by the symbols *ə* and *â*; but the term reduced is inappropriate in their case, since they are not inadequately articulated sounds, but rather shortened sounds. In Russian topical literature they are called *сверхкраткий*, that is, too much shortened. Representing these sounds with the symbols *ě* and *ã* has become fashionable in Turkic linguistics (cf. KRUEGER, *ibid.*; PhTF. I); but this practice is quite unjustifiable from the standpoint of phonetics – especially in respect of *ã*, since this sound is a back-formed counterpart of *e*, having nothing to do with *a*. The symbols of both sounds have been taken over from literary orthography. (It is interesting to note that Romanian orthography also uses the symbol *ã* to represent the same sound.) The Viryal dialect includes two more labial reduced sounds: *ü̃* and *ǖ*. Scholarly works in Russian used formerly to represent these by the symbols *ö̃*, *ȫ*; more recently, by *ě* and *e*. In the wake of ASMARIN, MÉSZAROS also uses the symbols *ö̃* and *ȫ*. When occurring in postposition after *ü̃* and *ǖ*, *a* is labialized (*â*), but this has not been taken into consideration in our publication.

In the table above, *e* is ranged above *a*. From this it may be guessed that *e* is a more open vowel, standing nearer to its palatal counterpart *i*, than to *ä*, represented by *ε* by PAASONEN and RÄSÄNEN.

Only the Viryal dialect has *o*. In the Anatri the sound has changed to *u*.

b) Consonants

In Chuvash texts, the following consonants occur:

č, j, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, ś, š, t, v, χ.

Earlier systems of phonetic transcription were much more complex as regards the indication of palatalization of consonants. *K, l, m, n, p, r, t, v, χ*, namely, are palatalized to a greater or lesser degree, if they are pre- or postpositioned to a palatal vowel. In earlier practice, this feature caused difficulties of transcription. In our system, palatalization is only indicated therefore, when it does not depend on position, as in the case of *kalat* 'he speaks'. Consonants are not all palatalized to the same extent, *l, n, t* being those most strongly affected by this rule, and also *r*, in certain dialects.

The degree of palatalization varies according to dialects; for example, in Viryal *k* and *t* are more strongly palatalized than in Anatri.

In Chuvash, the consonant *č* is always palatalized; accordingly, we have not used a special sign to indicate this feature.

Another typical phenomenon: voiceless consonants in inter-vowel position, or those following a voiced consonant, partly or fully assume a voiced character: *laša ~ laža* 'horse'. This feature again is more conspicuous in the Viryal dialect. In the Anatri dialect the feature is less pronounced, and East of the Republic, in the Tatar environment, the Chuvash do not observe it at all.

Long consonants are rather frequent in Chuvash. Double letters are used to indicate these in our transcription.

Stylistic and poetic features of the songs

It is characteristic of Chuvash folksong-construction that the allegorically described natural scene of the first half is echoed by a concretely expressed meaning in the second half of the stanza. For example:

*The sparks burning bright on the white snow
Will never melt away in the sunshine.
The fate written on our forehead
Cannot be washed away, not even with white soap.* (3)

And again:

*Hazelnut-tree, don't stoop, don't stoop
Because of one or two handfuls of hazelnuts.
Don't worry, my head, don't weep, my eyes,
Because my youthful days are passed.* (46)

Parallelism of this kind is wide-spread in the folklore of the Turkic peoples, as also in Hungarian folk poetry. Within this system, Chuvash poetry has developed certain symbols; for instance, 'strong horse' means a young man; 'swallow', a beautiful and diligent girl; 'oak-tree', father, 'lime-tree', mother; 'dry twig', orphan or lonely person.

Stock epithets are not infrequent. The attribute blond (*sar ača* 'fair lad'; *sar χâr* 'blond girl') is perhaps the most frequent, with reference to the notion of the beautiful; in translations it might well be replaced by handsome or 'beautiful'. By contrast, the adjective 'black' means ugly, in Chuvash popular taste.

'Black' is also used as a stock epithet for woods (*χura vâрман*). Many Chuvash songs begin with this attributive construction, and in Tatar songs also it is of frequent occurrence – a circumstance that cannot be regarded as incidental.

'Kerchief' also occurs frequently in Chuvash songs, mainly in combination with the epithet 'white' (although it may be qualified as 'many-coloured' or 'velvet' as well).

The horse is mostly a 'bay' (*turâ laša*), but 'yellow' and 'mottled', etc. are not uncommon. As to zoological symbols, in addition to the horse a few birds (such as thrush, swallow, and cuckoo) are significant.

Chuvash songs often begin with onomatopoeic words like *čanĳkâl-čanĳkâl šavâr čan* 'tinkling-ringing sharp-sounding bell' (177); *šânĳkâr-šânĳkâr šiv juĳat* 'babbling, babbling runs the water' (222); *tâvik-tâvik tâmana* 'tâvik-tâvik owl' (249); *kikik-kakak ĳor kajâk* 'kikik-kakak wild-goose' (265); *vâštâr-vâštâr šil varet* 'fresh breeze is blowing' (175), and so on.

Alliteration is more extensively used in Chuvash than in Cheremis folklore:

*šur jur sine šunâ šut jâltârka,
ĳærtse ĳavel pâĳsa irâles šuk.*

*'The sparks burning bright on the white snow
Will never melt away in the sunshine.'* (3)

pâri pâtti pašenâ, kushe çivnâ ...

‘The mush has been cooked, butter has been put on it...’ (74)

an çavâltet çakeš pâr çappüşân ...

‘Do not twitter, swallow, for your one lost young...’ (321)

Repetition produces much the same sound-effect as alliteration; but the former may have, in addition, the role of emphasizing certain elements of the content.

*çoptartâm, çoptartâm,
sar çarsene çoptartâm švarnine.*

‘I was riding, I was riding,
Giving a ride in my coach to the pretty girls on Shrove Tuesday.’ (193)

vâštartâm, vâštartâm te šur tutrâm.

‘I have thrown away, I have thrown away my white kerchief.’ (167)

Another type of repetition occurs when a noun is repeated with a different adjective:

amalâç ta uram aslâ uram.

‘The street of Amalæç is a broad street.’ (155)

š(â)varni laši tor laši ...

‘The Shrove Tuesday horse, the bay horse ...’ (177)

š(u)paškar tuji šur tuja ...

‘The stick, the white stick of Cheboksari ...’ (194)

Little has so far been written about Chuvash folk verse. What follows is intended to raise certain related problems, rather than to solve them.

The song-texts printed together with their tunes in this volume are divided into regular stanzas, which may be two-, three or four-lined. (Three-lined stanzas are relatively rare.) Stanzas of five lines, such as occur here and there (Nos 346–350) cannot be regarded as normal or typical constructions, since the fifth melodic sections in such songs are performed without words.

In the case of two-lined stanzas, often an interesting conflict between musical expression and verbal meaning can be observed. For example:

1. *I looked out of the window,
It seemed the sun was setting.*

2. *When I was married in a strange land,
It seemed my life was ended.*

(37)

As to the music, two strophes are present, while the texts of these constitute a unity. Perhaps an older musical form has been disrupted by a more recent poetic content.

In former Chuvash publications without melodies, such as those of PAASONEN and MÉSZÁROS, we often meet with stanzas that exceed considerably the scope of the four-line construction. Clearly, the reason for this has been indifference to the musical framework of the song. Eight-line stanzas occur even in publications with music, for example, in the song-book of MAXIMOV (1964). A closer look at the melody soon convinces us, however, that two stanzaic lines correspond to one melodic section, in such cases.

In his booklet on Chuvash folk verse N. I. IVANOV (1957) emphasizes the isosyllabic character of the text-lines (p. 34). He distinguishes line-types of seven, eight, nine and ten syllables. On the other hand, it appears from the tunes that lines with fourteen syllables may also occur. Ivanov separated these up into two lines of seven syllables.

Let us enquire whether isosyllabism is really a basic feature. In the present volume, scarcely a third of the songs consist of isosyllabic stanzas. More typically, differences amounting to one or two syllables exist between lines, for example: 7, 7, 8, 7; 10, 9, 10, 10; 14, 13, 14, 14, and so on. At the same time, wide variation may occur. We are therefore inclined to say only that a quasi-isosyllabic tendency is manifested in Chuvash songs.

According to IVANOV, rhymes in terminal position are of particular importance. He illustrates a number of rhyme-schemes, which he regards as typical, such as *abca*, *aaba*, *abab*, *aabb*, *aaaa* (pp. 66–67). It is to be noted, however, that, almost without exception, rhymes in Chuvash folksongs are not real, but suffix rhymes. From the practice of parallelism, it follows that consecutive lines end with the same suffixes. (This is a common phenomenon in agglutinative languages.) Admittedly, the rhyme-schemes listed are all displayed in the present volume, but they are far from being consistent throughout a given song; the second stanza, for example, usually shows a different pattern. We contend therefore that rhyme in Chuvash folksong is more a decorative element than an organic constituent of the verse.

It is of decisive importance for this question that we also find another and different technique of versification exemplified in Chuvash folk verse (though in its non-melodic genres). We recall GYULA MÉSZÁROS' Collection of Chuvash Folk-Poetry, the first volume of which contains relics of ancient Chuvash religion. All pagan prayers, charms, and so on, therein are found to be in unrhymed, accentuated verse with no trace of isosyllabic tendencies. Scholars generally regard this feature as characteristic of ancient Turkic verse. "Old Turkic verse was a *litterative* verse. Initial alliteration, falling on the ictus of the temporal feet (or on the beginning of syllable groups), had a rhythmic function (establishing the metre) as well as a constructional function (uniting the stanza)." (STYEBLEVA 1971). In the eleventh century Islamic influence strongly modified the system of versification of old folk poetry in Central Asia; the older form was replaced by forms typical of Arabic-Persian verse (*ibid.*, p. 297).

This new type of verse provided the foundation for classical Tatar poetry in the Volga Region, and to a certain extent affected folk poetry as well. In any case, the stanzaic patterns of the Tatars show striking similarity to those of the Chuvash, both as regards syllable-number and variation in these, and the character of rhymes (*ibid.*, p. 297).

To all appearance the intrusion of Arabic-Persian poetic standards, their combination with former practices, and the resistance of the surviving archaic forms of verse, provide an explanation for this phenomenon. The same problem demands attention not only in re-

gard to Chuvash-Tatar relationships, but also in the domain of Cheremis and Votyak folklore.

Earlier attempts were made to demonstrate classical verse-features in Chuvash songs (such as iambic scansion cf. MAXIMOV and BELAEV); but endeavours of this kind proved fruitless and have been completely abandoned in recent decades.