WHAT DOES THE STORYTELLER SING? ON TRANSCRIBING THE EPICS OF SOUTH SIBERIAN TURKS

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Abstract: When and how do we recognize the meaning of epic poetry? Turkic peoples of South Siberia, the Shor and the Khakas, are famous for their recitations and song of classic epic tales, but even indigenous researchers are divided on the meaning of the sung portions. This essay takes seriously these sung portions of epic performances to argue that they constitute meaningful poetic texts in their own right. Examples draw on years of field study in South Siberia, and well as an experiment conducted by the author with the help of the Shor storyteller Vladimir Tannagashev (1932–2007), in which epics were performed a cappella, that is, without throat-singing or musical accompaniment.

Keywords: oral epics, the Shors, South Siberia, storytellers, textualisation

The question put forward in the very title of the article, 'What does the storyteller sing?', may seem pointless at first sight. Song can cover anything and everything. In classic examples, a storyteller may offer an epic/heroic legend or a heroic poem, thus telling us about the great deeds of famous men and women. But is there more? This question has turned out to be one of the most complicated in the history of epic studies relating to peoples with whom I have worked for many years – the Altai-Sayan Turks.

The problems of textualisation of oral epics as well as of the role of performance's musical component have long been discussed within the field of epic studies globally (see, for example, Gatsak & Petrosian 1971; Foley 1995; Honko 1996: 1–17, 2000; Reichl 2000a, and many others). With regard to heroic epics of the Turkic peoples, many issues have been successfully analysed, such as the publication of epics written down by dictation, lack of the audience reaction to performance, and just as often, the non-authentic nature of recordings made

without the actual atmosphere characteristic of live performances. Of all these issues, perhaps musical accompaniment has presented the greatest debate (Hatto 2000: 129–160; Reichl 2000b: 103–127, and many others).

I myself started listening to and recording Shor heroic epics[1] in 1983, but it was not until 2011 that I dared to transcribe one of my audio/video recordings for the first time. This resulted in the publication of one epic story titled 'Qara-Qan' (SHGE 2012: 126–182). The performance lasted for just over half an hour, and yet it took me three days to produce the first draft transcription. I then spent a few more months trying to understand unclear moments in the audio recording and to get it translated into Russian the way I myself more or less understood it. Here I should stress that the epic was spoken rather than performed in the traditional manner characteristic of Shor qaichi as well as Khakass khaidji storytellers, that is, by throat-singing (qai/khai) along with playing a special musical instrument and with the conventional subsequent retelling of the parts being sung. Despite the fact that at least two attempts have been made in post-Soviet Russian folklore studies to publish Shor epics as they were once traditionally performed (see SHGS 1998: 49–262 (musical notation and text), 263–321 (translation); FSH 2010: 71–145 (musical notation and text), 146–179 (translation)), I suggest that this task remains not just complicated but also – given the lack of understanding of the gist and meaning of the epics' sung parts – rather unproductive.

Below I turn to discussing what and how the storyteller sings when performing such epics and what is at stake when we render them in written form.

ON THE HISTORY OF PUBLISHING HEROIC EPICS

Scholars have long expressed interest in the epic tales of the Khakas[2] and Shors, yet most of them have overlooked a crucial detail: in their performances, storytellers almost always create two separate texts instead of one, each different in the way they were presented/performed.

Nadezhda Dyrenkova (1899–1941) first made this point in relation to Shor heroic epics. In 1940, she wrote: 'Heroic poems … performed by the Shors constitute semi-poetic, semi-prose works. Usually, the poetic text of a poem is interrupted by quite long prose passages' (SHF 1940: XXXVII). She then went on: '… the storyteller, having sung one or several couplets, proceeded to retell what had been sung…' (ibid.: XXXVIII).

Perhaps it is not surprising that Dyrenkova did not pursue her point further, as it was merely not worth trying to handwrite the epic during performance thereof without special audio-recording equipment. What Dyrenkova did manage

to write down by dictation was seen by her as 'prose' and for that very reason in the well-known volume 'Shorskiy Folklor' (Shor Folklore) – when publishing heroic poems – only a few starting and concluding lines which were clearly and rhythmically organised, divided into verses, would be given by the researcher; the main text of the epic was published as prose[3] where in fact it could quite often (and at least partially) be represented as a poem.

Aleksandr Smerdov (1910–1986), a poet from the city of Novosibirsk, attempted to move away from such a way of presenting texts and to basically return to what Wilhelm Radloff had proposed a century ago with regard to Siberian Turk folklore (Radloff 1866).[4] Three out of the six Shor texts that he published in Russian were translated in a manner maximally close to that of a poem. Those were the epics collected from Nikolay Napazakov (1870–1942)[5] – 'Ay-Tolay' (Ay-Tolay 1948: 31–55), 'Altïn-Qïlïš' (ibid.: 56–95) and 'Altïn-Som' (ibid.: 96–122). However, in this case translation came as an initiative on the part of the poet himself and – as far as I can judge, based on the handwritten original of the epic 'Altïn-Som'[6] – was not directly linked to the text found in dictation.

In the late 1940s to the early 1950s, Olga Blagoveshchenskaya became the first researcher who, with the help of the Shor storyteller Stepan Torbokov (1900–1980), managed to produce a translation totally consistent with the Shor handwritten original, that is, with the division of the text into verses. Two of the six epics that she prepared for publication, 'Qaan-Čayzan and Piy-Čayzan' (3194 poetic lines) and 'Kök-Aday' (1845 poetic lines), were in full accordance with the poetic self-made recordings of the epic and its subscript translation (Funk 2010: 120–137; SHGE 2011).

It was only in the very late 1960s that first tape-recordings of the Shor heroic epics in their authentic form were made, in which the epics were performed by throat-singing and accompanied by a musical instrument and retelling of the parts sung. In this same way folklore researcher Andrey Chudoyakov (1928–1994)[7] recorded several epics of the Shor *qaichi* storytellers. From the 1970s to the 1990s, there already appeared many more researchers in folklore, ethnography, and musicology, who had such recordings at their disposal.

THE FIRST EXPERIENCE OF RECORDING AND TRANSCRIBING EPICS' SUNG PASSAGES

In the late 1980s, ethnomusicologist Anatoliy Stoyanov beautifully characterised the manner in which Khakas heroic epics were performed. A central example came in a small passage on 'khai storytelling' (8 verses) and in the 'declaimed

retelling of what has been sung' (9 verses) taken from the epic 'The Nine-Year-Old Alïp-Khan-Khïs', performed by S.P. Kadyshev (Stoianov 1988: 588–590). However, the distinctive features of the Khakas epics' performance identified/described by the researcher were not used when other Khakas folklore samples were released.

Almost in parallel with this, in 1984 and 1987, musicologist Irina Travina (1927–2005) undertook field expeditions among the Shors. She managed to tape-record two epic texts: one from Mikhail Kauchakov (1934–2014) – a great story of 'Altïn-Ergek', consisting of over 230 musical and prose passages, and the other (which was an instrumental version with no lyrics) from Afanasiy Ryzhkin (1924–2003) – 'Aq-Salgïn'. Travina presented some of the collected materials and results of a musicological analysis thereof in her monograph abundantly illustrated with musical notations (Travina 1995). Heroic epics occupied a considerable part of this publication. Travina transcribed four passages from the story 'Altïn-Ergek', which she regarded as the keynote, namely the ones relating to 1) Altïn-Ergek, 2) the hero being on his way, 3) the fighting hero, and 4) sorrow (Travina 1995: 53–63), as well as provided the musical notation of a long passage from the story of 'Aq-Salgïn' (ibid.: 64–69). As I have already noted before (Funk 2005: 238), it was in this way that such transcriptions appeared in Shor epic studies for the first time.

Soon after Travina's book came out (practically unnoticed by folklorists), for the first time a Shor epic was released, being presented in a way that was meant to be as authentic as possible in terms of the epic's actual performance in the *qai* manner, that is, through singing and "retelling". This simple yet bright idea of publishing the story of 'Qan Pergen' (written down by Chudoyakov in 1967 from the *qai* storyteller Kydyiakov (1908–1970)) belonged to Viktor Gatsak (1933–2014), the editor of the publication, who had proposed to publish the text exactly the same way it was performed by storytellers, alternating the signing and telling of the epic's parts and adhering to the principle of indissolubility of the text (SHGS 1998: 31). The publication turned out to be indeed unique in its kind. The prose (rhythmic) part of each of the 102 epic parts was transcribed and translated into Russian to the fullest extent possible.

I will not go into detail regarding the division of the so-called prose part of the story of 'Qan Pergen' (as well as of the second text published in that book – 'Altïn Sïrïq', performed by the same storyteller but in the narrative manner, without singing) into verse. Such an approach has the right to exist, although obviously a significant part of the 'poetic lines' here was produced by the publisher rather than by the storyteller. When the text is divided into 'verse' this way, eventually – and in a manner that is absolutely natural when it comes to the narrative style of epic performance, with the storyteller often shifting

to simply tell the story regardless of his poetic talent – these become devoid of a distinct rhyme.

I shall now turn to the form in which Gatsak's work presented the sung parts of the epic story. And it is from this analysis that we can clearly see that the initial idea behind the publication proves to be at least not fully implemented. To illustrate this point, I draw attention to two passages from the story of 'Qan Pergen'.

> **Passage 23**
> Below is the transcription which accompanies the musical notation:
>
> *Hay-dey yu*
> *Qonoyo perdi*
> *Qayran Qaan Pergen adan körüp*
> *Qayran turdï*
> *Šaq po čerde*
> *Qaraqï amdï per*
> *Amdï he perdi*
> *Altïnyïzï aq ten pozï*
> *Aq tuvan či ïyïrap kelip*
> *Čaykoq turyan am polyan či*
> *Arazïmperey.*
> (SHGS 1998: 99–100)
>
> Translation:
> The glorious Kan Pergen can see that 'here below and up to the khan-sky, there is a white haze spreading' (SHGS 1998: 274).

In this case, there is no need to comment on the accuracy of the 'translation'; however, it is worth noting that in the Shor original, not the slightest reference is made to the khan-sky – an image that appears only in the Russian text.

> **Passage 26**
>
> *Qayran pir poldï, poldï dey dey*
> *Šaq po pir čerge dey dey*
> *Qadïyoq agaš dei dey*
> *Qaqšïlaš qaldï dei poldï dei dey*
> *(…) qayran qara pir dei dey*
> *Tügedeš qaldï dey do*
> *Uyada qušum dey poldï dey do*
> *Uyadaŋ čaštoq dey dey*
> *Adačaq čašqa dei do*

> *Palačaq taštap dei do*
> *Qazïrlar qaptïrdï poldï dey do*
> *Paladaŋ častoq de i do*
> *Amdï qarïyanï dey dey.*
> (SHGS 1998: 105–108)

> Translation:
> The description of a battle. The heroes are fighting 'as if they were two
> strong trees hitting against one another' with such force that 'the birds
> that had their nests in these trees start to lose them' (SHGS 1998: 275).

In both cases, the declaimed part of the epic (i.e., the retelling of what has
been sung), both in the original and in translation, was presented in the book
as verse: the 'retelling' of the 23rd passage in 10 lines, and that of the 26th
passage in 103.

A sequence of these examples could be as long as the epic itself, but even from
the excerpts provided it becomes clear that in this case the 'reverse' principle of
presenting the original to the reader was realised throughout the 'translation'.
All the epic parts to be sung in the Shor original consist of partially transcribed
words or combinations of words that are far from being poetic; the Russian
translation presents these as a very approximate retelling in the form of prose
(and this is indeed a retelling, not a translation). This said, all the prose (or,
at best, prosimetric) parts of the epic are given as a text divided by its editor
into 'verse' lines.

I have already touched upon the question of the possibilities and legitimacy
of presenting a text performed in a narrative manner in the form of a verse as
well as upon issues relating to such a way of performing. Here, I would like
to look into why the parts which were to be sung and were thus organised as
a poem turned out to be hardly transcribed or translated? Perhaps this was the
case due to the unintelligibility of the sung lines for the researcher?

In his foreword to the volume of the Shor epics, Chudoyakov wrote:

> *There are 102 segments of different length and structure in this work*
> *which are sung and accompanied by qai-qomus and 92 segments told as*
> *verses. Some of the passages are not performed in a 'narrative' manner.*[8]
> (SHGS 1998: 29)

He adds:

> *Some of the parts to be sung cannot be transcribed as everything should*
> *be in line with the rhythm formation and the melody, hence the words*
> *are pronounced in a truncated and distorted manner and often do not fit*
> *together, and also abundant are the monosyllabic words like dey, di, do,*
> *pir, etc.* (SHGS 1998: 30)

Apart from 53 musical notations of the epic parts to be sung, the volume prepared by Chudoyakov includes 'subtexts for the musical notations (where it was possible to transcribe)'. In the Russian translation though, when dealing with the 'subtexts' 'with their truncated words, a maximally simple *way of transferring meaning* has been adopted, *with inclusion* of some *quoted sentences and words which lend themselves to transcription and translation*' (SHGS 1998: 31–32, emphasis added).

It is clear that all of the 102 segments of the epic that were performed by throat-singing and accompanied by *qai-qomus* were so difficult for the editor and translator to understand (despite the fact that the Shor language was his mother tongue!) that he could only partly fulfil the task of transcription. Broadly speaking, it is not surprising, considering that, as Chudoyakov himself rightly noted, 'everything should be in line with the rhythm formation and the melody' (SHGS 1998: 30). However, it seems to me, one word was disregarded here, and that is 'everything'. In other words, a quite obvious question remained unanswered, namely, *what* exactly was 'in line with the rhythm formation and the melody'?

In their work on sung passages, researchers of Shor epics made somewhat greater progress when preparing the next volume of the series, titled 'Folklore Monuments of the Peoples of Siberia and the Far East' (FSH 2010). Lyubov Arbachakova, the volume's editor and translator, managed to provide not just a retelling, as Chudoyakov did, but a translation of the epics' sung parts, 'despite the seemingly fragmented nature and incompleteness of the musical piece' (FSH 2010: 19). Nevertheless, none of the sung fragments (passages) here were verses either. Rather, these were 1–2–3 words that were heard and made sense of in the course of transcribing each line, accompanied by some words for 'warming up', as follows:

Passage 17

Anaŋ čügürüp… *qayrin…*	Then riding his horse… along the road…
Körzer üšter *qulaqtïy…*	He sees with three ears…
Attar čügürüp… *toguš…*	Horses running… met…
Körgey oŋner qaraqtïg…	They see with ten eyes…
Altïn… di	Golden… di
Oqča pozun keze…	An arrow to pierce him…
Köstedi…	Aiming at a target…
Učuq kelip turganoq…	It started flying…
Čooqtažip turdïy… (FSH 2010: 115)	They started talking… (FSH 2010: 165)

Can it really be that the sung parts of the epic are just 'truncated' and 'distorted' words that 'do not fit together'? Or can it be that the words the storyteller sings are there only for the music to be accompanied by a semi-meaningful text? How then should we deal with the fact that 'a part of the passages is not accompanied by their 'narrative version''? It seems the case here is that these sung parts did have a meaning and that this meaning was clear to listeners, at least to those who listened to this storyteller regularly.

EMIC EXPLANATIONS OF WHAT (AND WHY) IS BEING SUNG AND RECITED

When considering the specific features of epics performed by the Shor (and Khakas) *qaichi / khaidji*, we should also bear in mind the purely practical need for the sung parts to be retold. The thing is that there were only a few storytellers capable of singing clearly and intelligibly. The situation where the audience either does not understand the sung text at all or understands only some scraps of phrases and the general mood can be regarded as a norm. Sometimes this manner of performance would generate fantastic explanations.

I encountered one interesting reason for alternating a sung part with its retelling in the work of Canadian researcher Kira van Deusen. According to her reference to a contemporary Khakas singer seeking to master the art of *Khaidji*-storytelling, 'this allows to clarify the part sung in the khai manner and, maybe, in the language of spirits difficult for ordinary listeners to make sense of' (Van Deusen 2000: 231).

The Shor storytellers – and I had a chance to converse with at least a dozen of those who saw themselves as storytellers – have never told me of anything like this. Knowing that those who listened to the epics – and I have witnessed that myself – would listen with full attention to both the singing and the retelling of the sung parts and could simultaneously laugh and cry when the sung parts were being performed, the only reasonable thing to assume was that a Shor *qaichi*-storyteller singing in the *qai* manner sings not 'in the language of spirits' but rather *in the Shor language*. As a rule, the storyteller does not receive any information from without, from spirits, but he himself seeks to obtain it, he himself is present 'in the story' and sings and tells the listeners about what he sees (for more see Funk 2005: 331–352).

Here is an extract from my conversation with the Shor storyteller Tannagashev (T.), in which we discussed the need to have a prose retelling:

T.: *When some storytellers sing, it is not quite clear what they sing. But no matter how many times I sing, I am told that it is amazing how easy it is for them to understand me word for word. Mikhail's performance* [Mikhail Kirillovich Kauchakov – D.F.] *was difficult to understand. And some* [sing the words] *as if in passing, it seems.*

F.: *Why do you need to first sing a piece and then retell it? The two passages do not always coincide.*

T.: *When you sing, maybe, it is more for embellishing the words – you say one word and up another word comes. But in fact it is all the same. Without embellishing, the singing won't do, it will be distorted. It won't be as beautiful and tactful* [rhythmical – D.F.], *and as 'direct' as a verse, and smooth enough.*

F.: *There are storytellers who simply sing fairy tales…*

T.: *It is also possible. But then again all the people need to understand. Otherwise, you first sing and then retell – that was the case since the beginning of time. And what you sing needs to be clear. I used to not understand everything Pavel Petrovich* [Tokmagashev – D.F.] *sang the way he sang. Opim-apshiy* [the Khakas qaichi Opim Podachakov – D.F.] *… his singing was completely unintelligible. He used to have only a melody.* [He had] *no teeth at all, his lip would even lean to the side. You couldn't make sense of any of his words. But* [when] *he was speaking – he spoke clearly.*[9]

WHAT DOES THE *QAICHI* SING?

In an attempt to answer the question raised above, I defer to the epics performed by Pavel Kydyiakov, who died almost half a century ago. I then turn to my own field materials gathered with the help of the *qaichi* Vladimir Tannagashev (1932–2007), who represented the same regional school of storytelling as Kydyiakov (for more about Tannagashev see: SHGE 2010: 139–159; Funk 2014: 7–36).

In the course of regular work with Tannagashev and thanks to our joint efforts, I managed to conduct several experiments on the re-recording of nearly a dozen epic stories performed in different ways. These were throat-singing performances with 'retelling' of the parts sung, narration in the prosimetric form, and self-recordings. However, it took me a long time before I was able to clearly formulate the task for the storyteller with regard to understanding of what is being sung. I repeatedly asked him to retell the sung parts 'word for word' but he would only 'repeat' those in the prosimetric form or as prose,

insisting that this was exactly what he was singing. This went on and on, up until the moment I managed to put into words – for myself – the essence of the problem, or rather of the question: What is it exactly that does not allow me to hear (and understand) the poetics/language of the epic's sung parts? Just to remind you: the storyteller himself claimed that these were in verse.

And I have found the answer: firstly, it was about the music muffling words that were being sung (something that researchers had paid attention to before; see Reichl 2000b: 103–127), and secondly, it was about the very manner of performing the epics, by throat-singing, where many words were not sung in full, or were sung somehow differently in accordance with the length of a melodic line and the specific features of sound production.

The only thing left to be done was to ask the storyteller to perform the sung parts without playing the musical instrument (*qai-qomus*) and without throat-signing, that is, in a normal voice. Surprisingly, he agreed to do so straightaway, saying: 'This is also possible'.

The issue of understanding the sung parts of Shor epics, which had been unresolved for one and a half centuries, turned out to be resolved in a minute when the right question was put forward.

In the end, I had a few variants of the performance of the epic 'Forty-Breasted Qïday-Arïg' at my disposal and, more specifically, of one episode in which Qïday-Arïg appears and the first fight between her and the heroine, Altïn-Čüstük, takes place. The storyteller himself recorded this episode in late October to early November 2003 (the full recording of the text) and then approximately in a month it reappeared through my full audio and partly video recording of this same epic's performance in the prosimetric form (the recording dated 10.12.2003) and also in the recordings of the given episode performed by 'ordinary singing' a cappella without *qai* and music (the recording dated 23.10.2006).

Several versions of this bright epic, along with a detailed textological analysis, are to be published in one of the next volumes of the 'Shor Heroic Epic' series. Here I would only like to share some general observations which are important for the understanding of the structure and meaning of the Shor epic's sung part.

The rhythmic formula of the pieces sung a cappella is quite stable and in most cases it is represented by verse lines with a distinct division of each of these into two parts (two hemistichs) or sometimes into three parts of 4 to 5 syllables each.

The first piece that Tannagashev sang to me from the epic about the Forty-Breasted Qïday-Arïg without *qai-qomus* and throat-singing consisted of 8 lines/verses where verses 1–4 and 8 were two hemistichs of 4 to 5 syllables each, and verses 5–7 were much longer (of 16, 15, and 13 syllables respectively) due to the introduction of a third significant part thereto, which allows to complete the idea expressed at the beginning of this verse:

I.

O-dur-ču-ɣay-(ïn)	*tuš-ta(a)-rïn-da*	
čer-ler üs-tü	*ni-gi-liš-če(e)*	
če-gen ar-ɣa-zï	*tar-ta-liš-ča-(no)*	
qay-ran-(an) e-ne(e)n	*aq-(tar) ber-ɣan*	
qay-ran-oq a-ba(a)	*sen-(ner)-oq ayt-qï(ï)n*	*(am na-rï) sös-čaq*
aq-(tar) ča-rïq-qa	*eb-re u-ɣu(u)l*	*(qay-ran) par-ɣan-(no)*
pis-tiŋ-oq čer-ge	*öl-bes-par-ba(a)s*	*a-lïp kir-čaŋ*
teb-(oq) tur-ɣa-nï	*Al-tïn-Čüs-tü(ü)k.*	

I draw particular attention to the semantic completeness and (with minor exceptions) the grammatical form of each of the verses and sentences. Indeed, there are 'warm-up' words in the sung part (presented both as excessively used grammatical forms *-tar*, *-ner*, *-oq* and others, and as 'warm-up' words per se *am, amnar, no,* and others), and often used are the unusual for everyday speech lengths of the vowels or, conversely, their truncated variants, and so sometimes some words do get really distorted (the fact that Chudoyakov had pointed to). Nevertheless, what the storyteller sings each time is no less than a verse filled with meaning.

Each verse that I split into two or three parts could be written down otherwise, where each part would be presented as a standalone verse itself. Below, I provide an example of a passage sung a cappella, divided into verses of 4 to 5 syllables each (with no additional breakdown into syllables as shown above).

Text sung a capella	Translation
odurčuɣayïn	sitting they were
tuštarïnda	when
čer ler üstü	the earth's surface
nigilišče	started shaking
čegen arɣazï	the foundation of the universe
tartalïšča no	widened
qayran an enen	dear mother
aq tar berɣan	……….
qayran oq aba	dear father
sen ner oq aytqïn	said by you
am narï sösčaq	the words
aq tar čarïqqa	across the whole wide world
ebre uɣul	are heard
qayran parɣan no	(dear) have become
pistiŋ oq čerge	[because of this] our land
ölbes-parbas	the immortal

alïp kirčaŋ	hero enters
tep oq turɣanï	so said
Altïn-Čüstük	Altïn-Čüstük

This sung verse's basic structure can also be clearly seen in other passages sung a cappella (equating to 117 verses if split into lines of 4 to 5 syllables each), of which I shall give here only one more example:

II.

Qal-qa-lïg dey
am köz-nük-ti
qay-ra šap sal
a-naŋ kör-ze-le(e)r:
at-tar aš-pas
ar-ɣa-lï zïn-ɣa
to-ɣus ay qa-ra(a)t
ke-lip tüš-tü-ler
to-ɣus ay qar-at
am-nar üs-tün-ge(e)
te-bir-e sal- čaq
sa-lïl par-tïr
te-bir sal-dï(ï)ŋ
am üs-tün-de
qï-rïq em-ček-tig
Qï-day-A-rï(ï)
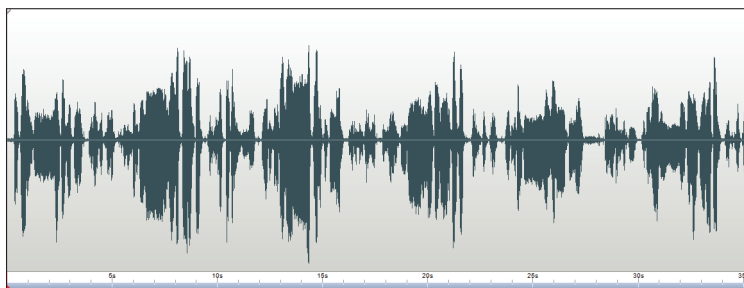*qïɣ-(n)ïn šïɣ-naq-tan*
ča-dïp sal-tïr.

Figure 1. *The sound waves (shown in the WavePad Master's Edition v.6.23)*
of excerpt II given above. Screenshot.

It is not difficult to see, firstly, that absolutely all the sung verses are indeed a poetic text and, secondly, that it turns out to be quite a meaningful and therefore transcribable undertaking.

It can be stated with confidence that the storyteller was right saying there was practically no difference between the epic sung and the epic retold. This can be clearly seen from excerpt II sung a cappella (and presented in the recording without 'warm-up' words) and the corresponding semantic passage from the self-recording[10] of this epic made by Tannagashev[11]:

Self-recording (2003)	**Singing a cappella (2006)**
At ašpas aryalïg sïnya	*Attar ašpas aryalïg sïnya*
On a mountain ridge impassable for a horse,	On a mountain ridge impassable for horses,
Toγus para[12] ay qarattar kel tüštüler.	*Toγus ay qarat kelip tüštüler*
Descended nine sparkling black horses.	Descended nine sparkling black horses.
Toγus para ay qarattardïŋ üstünge	*Toγus ay qarat(tïŋ) üstünge*
On the nine sparkling black horses	On the nine sparkling black horses
Tebir sal saldïr saltïr,	*Tebir salčaq salïp partïr*
There is an iron platform, it turns out,	There is a small iron platform, it turns out,
Tebir saldïŋ üstünde	*Tebir saldïŋ üstünde*
On the iron platform	On the iron platform
Qïrïq emčektig qïs palazï čat saltïr.	*Qïrïq emčektig Qïday-Arïg*
There is a forty-breasted girl lying.	There is forty-breasted Qïday-Arïg
Qïs palazï qïyïn čatqan ozïba qïyyï kel salča …	*Qïyïn šïγ(a)naqtan čadïp saltïr*
The girl, lying on her side, leaning on her elbow, is screaming …	Leaning on her elbow is she lying, it turns out.

And yet, the main question of what exactly the storyteller sings when performing the epics, by throat-singing and accompanied by his two-stringed musical instrument, remains open. To try and answer it, I recorded the same passage describing the first meeting and fight between Altïn-Čüstük and the Forty-Breasted Qïday-Arïg performed in the *qai* manner by the same storyteller Vladimir Tannagashev. The video recording of approximately 11 minutes in total had been produced on 22 October 2006, one day before the storyteller

performed this passage a cappella for me. The transcription of the entire re-
cording (as well as of the whole text performed a cappella) will be published
later on; here though I find it important to demonstrate the principal stability
of the performed text, regardless of the performance style, be it prosimetric,
a cappella or *qai* singing.

Let us start from the very beginning (see the first passage sung a cappella
above), but this time we shall look at a text performed in the *qai* manner (the
left column) and compare it with the lines sung a cappella (the right column):

Odur oy ep čïɣïn	Odurčuɣayïn
tep oq tüštarïn dey	tuštarïnda
čerler pir üštü	čerler üstü
qïybražïp čaran oq	nigilišče
čegen pir tübü	čegen arɣazï
qïy(…)iš turɣan oq dei-döy	tartališča no
	qayran an enen
	aq tar berɣan
qayran abïy	qayran oq aba
sen ner aytqan	sen ner oq aytkïn
qayran oq sösček	am narï sösčaq
aq tar čarïqqï	aq tar čarïqqa
ebirey uɣul	ebre uɣul
qayran parɣan no	qayran parɣan no
pistiŋ oq čerge	pistiŋ oq čerge
ölbes-parbas	ölbes-parbas
alïp oq kirče	alïp kirčaŋ
tep oq turɣanï	tep oq turɣanï
am nar Altïn oq	Altïn-Čüstük
qayran oq Čüstük	
qïs tar palazï	
adazï paroy	

When singing the epic in the *qai* manner, the storyteller obviously takes as
a measure the length of a musical phrase to which he adapts a performed
verse and hence the use of 'warm-up' words. Among them there are also plural
formatives (*-ner*, *-nar*, *-tar*) and words or particles which have an independent
meaning in the language (of the type of *oq* – 'zhe'[13], *pir* – 'one', *qayran* – 'affective'
(both the feminine and masculine forms)) and 'warm-up' words per se which do
not bear any meaning, such as *dey*, *dei-döy*, *no* or *oy*/*ey,* which sometimes can
substantially change the phonetic form of the main word as is the case with the
word *pariy,* which, when sung in the *qai* manner, turned into *paroy*, or *ebire,*
which was sung as *ebirey*.

It should be noted that in the course of singing there is also the possibility of varying suffixes and root sounds (both vowels and consonants; for example, *üštü* sung instead of *üstü* when performed in the *qai* manner). The word *sös* 'word', in different variants of singing, took on the diminutive form with the affixes *-čaq* and *-ček* (*sösčaq* and *sösček*; in the first case with the violation of the vowel harmony rule). In affixes there can be noted a steady and equal alternation of ï and a: *aytqan*, the literary norm *aytqïn*; *čarïqqa*, the literary norm *čarïqqï*. In the case with the verb form *kirča*, 'enters', third-person singular, in both variants of singing I did not come across the normative form at all: *kirče*, *qai* and *kirčaŋ*, a cappella.

As can be seen from the transcription below, even the name of a character can not only be accompanied by 'warm-up' words but also be broken by them as was the case with the name Altïn-Čüstük. In the *qai* singing, this name was sung in 4 verse lines:

am nar Altïn oq	now *nar* (plural) Altïn zhe
qayran oq Čüstük	dear zhe Čüstük
qïs tar palazï	girl *tar* (plural) child
adazï baroy	well-known

As the experience of transcribing the epics' sung parts shows, there are grounds to start preparing Shor epic stories performed in the traditional *qai* manner for publication exactly the way they are sung. This way, both in the recording and in translation, the sung text is indeed perceived as actual verse, and not just as a hint, an accident, or suggestive filler.

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NOTES

[1] Shors (approximately 13,000 people as of 2010) are a Turkic ethnic group that is officially recognized in Russia as a small-numbered indigenous people of the North, residing in the south of Kemerovo region (see more in Kimeev et al. 2006: 236–324).

[2] Khakas (approximately 73,000 people as of 2010) are a Turkic ethnic people residing in the south of Siberia. Their main territory of residence is the Republic of Khakassia (Krasnoyarsk region, Russia) (see more in Butanaev 2006: 533–630).

³ In 1940, in parallel with the book by Dyrenkova, Shor linguist Georgiy Babushkin (1907–1969) published a number of Shor epics in prose (Babushkin 1940).

⁴ Four of the eight Shor texts published by Radloff in their contemporary written form and their translation into Russian can be found in SHGE 2013.

⁵ Hereinafter all storytellers' lifespans are based on my field materials (see Funk 2005: 379–387).

⁶ As I understand it, this is the only fragmentarily preserved Shor original (kept at the Museum-Reserve 'Tomskaya Pisanitsa' in the city of Kemerovo) of those texts that constituted the basis for Smerdov's poetic translations.

⁷ It is rather difficult to conclude how many texts performed this way were written down by Andrey Chudoyakov, according to the list of materials left behind after the researcher's death in 1994 (see Trudy 1998: 146). Judging from the length of the surviving recordings (which is also indicated in the list), except for the text of the story 'Qan-Pergen' recorded by Pavel Kydyiakov, this could also be the story of 'Qara-Qan', recorded by P.P. Tokmagashev (the list provides an inaccurate name – P.P. Tokmashev).

⁸ *Qai-qomus* is a two-stringed plucked musical instrument of the lute type. It was usually made of willow or cedar.

⁹ From a conversation with the storyteller on 24 July 2002, city of Myski, Kemerovo region.

¹⁰ A scanned copy of the manuscript, transcription, and standardised variant of this self-recording are available at http://corpora.iea.ras.ru/corpora/. For more on the structure of this corpus of texts on the languages of the peoples of Siberia and on the order of texts therein, see Funk 2013: 193–204.

¹¹ In both cases, I standardised the orthography in accordance with the contemporary norms of the Shor literary language. Translations from the Shor language are mine.

¹² I specifically discussed the translation of this word with the storyteller. Evidently, it was borrowed from Russian, and in this verse the wording *toyus para* should have been translated as 'nine pairs'; however, the storyteller himself rejected this categorically, claiming that he used the word para 'for embellishment'.

¹³ The particle 'zhe' is used in the Russian language to amplify the meaning of a preceding word or phrase.

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