

От автора

[Введение](#) [Глава 1](#) [Глава 2](#) [Глава 3](#) [Глава 4](#) [Глава 5](#) [Заключение](#)

[Литература](#) [Summary](#) [Приложения](#)

 [Оглавление](#)

[Print](#) 

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

*References in brackets are to the pages of the book*

Preface (3)

INTRODUCTION: *Yakut Folk-Song — A Concise Ethnomusicological Survey* (5)

CHAPTER ONE: *Yakut Melodics — Some Peculiarities of Intonation* (20)

1. A Methodological Survey of Authorities (20)
2. At the Rise of Modal Thinking (34)
3. "Micro-Tempering" and the "Unfolding" Modes (46)
4. Variants of "Everyday" Songs (58)

CHAPTER TWO: *The Stabilization of Scales* (72)

1. Variability of Scales (74)
2. "Auto-Tempering" and "Even-Contractive" Scales (80)
3. On "Vocal" and "Instrumental" Scales (108)

CHAPTER THREE: *Modality and Melodics — Functionality and Linearity* (112)

1. Towards the Problem of Definitions (112)
2. Tones — Connections — Relations (118)
3. Musical Form as a Modal Factor; Melo-Modal Inclinations (129)

## CHAPTER FOUR: *The Crystallization of Modal Functions* (147)

1. Non-Centralized Modes; A "Tabular Statistical Method" (148)
2. Steady and Unsteady Tones as Formative Factors (161)
3. Tremolos and *Kylsakh* — Dichords (175)
4. The Differentiation of Unsteady Tones — Trichords (185)
5. Tetrachords; Modal Variability and Modulations (195)

## CHAPTER FIVE: *From Fluctuant Modes Through Diatonicism* (224)

1. A System of One-Steady-Tone Modes and Primary Melo-Modal Functions (225)
2. "Forerunners" of Diatonic-Thinking — the Under-Fourth and the Leading Note (232)
3. On the Road to the Diatonicization (248)

## CONCLUSION (267)

Bibliography (247)

Subject Index (278)

Name Index

Synopsis of a thesis — 1970

Summary (284-287)

## **SUMMARY**

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The present book, published by the Muzyka Publishing House (Moscow) under the auspices of the Institute of the History of Art under the USSR Ministry of Culture, is based on the author's thesis ("Candidate's dissertation") *Yakut Songs in the Light of a Theory of Melodic Modes* (1970), with "a theory of melodic modes" embodying the author's approach to the study of objective laws governing the crystallization of certain tone-systems to be found in the single-line tunes of oral tradition.

In English, the title of the book printed in 1976 may be rendered as *A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODALITY with Regard to Yakut Folk-Songs*. It is hoped that this work will prove to be of interest both to ethnomusicologists and to scholars concerned with general theory of music. For, with a large selection of traditional Yakut songs as the material, the author discusses some cardinal problems of the genesis, the nature, and the motive forces of what is meant by modal organization, which is — with good reason — believed to be one of the pivots of the art of music.

In this connection, attention should be drawn to the circumstance that the Russian musicological term "лад"

(*literally*: in the first place, "concord", "harmony", and secondly, "manner", "mode"), which is in current use in this country, is virtually not to be rendered, to the full extent, by means of any single English (or German, or French, etc.) word, so the common way to translate it — as "*mode*" — is far from providing a really exact equivalent of the notion, which, in the context of our musicologists' writings, often implies the idea of organic coherence of the sound-material employed. Meanwhile, the Russian term under discussion is no less than an appropriate vehicle for conveying the common musicological acceptance of the English (and French) word "mode" as one of the conceivable arrangements of several notes in a scale, particularly in reference to a given fundamental tone. To put it differently, the Russian term is, by tradition, much more comprehensive than its counterparts in the rest of the world. That is why the Russian word in question is often — when implied just in its wider sense — being rendered here as "*modal organization*", or "*modality*". It is necessary to take into account that such descriptions, too, are not adequate enough to suggest the general idea (almost inseparable from the Russian term) of a meaningful interplay in which the tones of different pitch are bound to be involved as an indispensable condition for musical structures of a certain, if not every, kind. Nevertheless, the expressions "modality", "modal organization", and the like, appear, for the nonce, to be expedient to apply to certain points of the present book (and of some other works by Soviet authors) with the view of distinguishing the universal quality of various folk tunes (and various musical texts in general) that has just been outlined from the concept of one or other particular mode. It is also noteworthy that the conception of modal organization has been treated by the leading Russian theorists with a good deal of flexibility: on the one hand, "modality" is supposed to *cover* what is commonly qualified as "tonality"; but on the other hand, the former — just in contrast with the latter — is *occasionally* felt to be devoid of structural precision, "vertical polyphony", unambiguous centripetency, and other well-known attributes of "tonal" music (or if its classical variety at any rate). So modality is somehow or other taken — by most of this country's musicologists — to be the course and course and groove and move of musical thinking. One or other form of modal organization determines both the obscure remote past of the human "sense of music" and its crystal yesterdays, its turbulent present and its vague and novel future...

Now the author of this book is primarily concerned in re-collecting some features of the distant times of "modal sense". And it is in this undertaking that he concentrates on the traditional songs of the Yakut, a small Turkic people inhabiting immense areas in the north-east of Siberia. Nomad cattle-breeders, they have been dwelling in those severe, sparsely populated parts for more than half a thousand years. Their way of life had been rather primitive, and it was only after the October Revolution that they came into a closer contact with the outer world to find themselves familiarized with our modern civilization. The Yakut folklore is exceptionally rich and distinctly original in form and content, with two mainstreams established from centuries past: long epic songs (e.g., *olonho*), performed by skilled improvisators with a great deal of virtuosity, and far less sophisticated "everyday" ("plain") songs, the latter being much more liable to stylistic innovation than the former. It stands to reason that this national culture could not remain unchanged up to date, but — at any rate — the native population of today's Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) has preserved much of its traditional musical folklore, which may actually show a great many of characteristics of what the author of this book describes as "an early stage of modal thinking". To quote a scholar of the late 19th century, "if it is true that the Ancient used to sing the *Iliad* and the *Odessey*, then I think they must have been doing so just in the same manner as the Yakut sing their famous *olonho*." (V.Seroshevsky). At the same time we cannot but recognize that even the most archaic of the surviving Yakut folk-songs have remained greatly appealing to our ear, which circumstance may, to a certain extent, be accounted for by the contemporary listener's longing for a genuine and inimitable expressiveness which the music of the non-European peoples is apt to radiate. Along with many other researchers, the author of the book in hand does not hold the bizarre and vigorous folk-songs of the Yakut to be merely exotic. Nor holds he them to be preposterous in any way. For it is common knowledge nowadays that the study of different national musical cultures is of the utmost importance not only for theory's sake but also for a further enrichment of the modern composer's musical idiom.

All traditional Yakut songs are single-line melodies, and they are practically always sung by a soloist without any accompaniment. According to the author, the *modal* aspects of those folk melodies which reflect an initial phase of the evolution of musical thinking is so closely connected with their *linear* physiognomy

that a song material of this sort cannot be completely comprehended in the light of the generally known functional theory. Moreover, melodies of that kind are remarkable for fluctuation and instability, so that scarcely allow of rendering in terms of semitones. If fixed by means of our common notation, those inconstant tunes turn out to be either artificially "diatonicized" or, on the contrary, superfluously "chromaticized" and, consequently, in any case misrepresented and occasionally even deprived of their sense. (In his transcriptions of folk-song tape-recordings the author often applies some special additional signs of raising and lowering. However, recordings are indispensable for the student of folk music to make an idea of those peculiar songs.) Nonetheless, there is a certain regularity of modes in the songs of such a rudimentary type, even though this relative regularity is rather unusual and hardly capable of being expressed in an accepted system of notations. Thus the author attempts to establish a coherent (and flexible) system of concepts and statements, so as to realize and generalize some principles of the primordial forms of musical intonation. With the songs under consideration being noticeably different in "age" and, consequently, in degree of "completion" of modal organization, the author is anxious to reconstruct the long and complex process of primeval linearity becoming mature tonality as a probable "distance" for the evolution of modality to have covered — up to the stabilization of what is known as major-minor system (which makes itself discernible in the Yakut folk music, too, especially at some relatively recent stages of its history).

In the next paragraphs, I would like to outline some essential constituents of the author's doctrine.

The author hypothesizes that there must have been three stages of the evolution of melodic modality (p. 38).

The characteristics of each of the three phases are as follows: I: *accidental nature of scales* employed in singing, with a number of "stanchions" being "groped for"; II: *mobility (lability) of scales*, with a few "steady" tones emerging from the semi-fortuitous sound-material; III: *stability of scales*, with their "tonics" being formed.

One of the typical features of the Yakut epic songs is what G. Grigoryan, a Soviet composer, has described as "*unfolded mode*". (E. Alekseyev supports and elaborates that point of view, — p. 52 ff.) The essence of such an "under-developed" modal system consists in an extraordinary flexibility of intonation, unattainable for the modes that deal with normal semitones and whole-tones. The tone-material of an "unfolded mode" is unstable and "expansible", whereas both the rhythmical organization and the linear structure of the songs in question are strictly regular. The melodic line of those epic songs is usually marked by the dominance of "centrifugal" tendencies. Within a given melody, the set of tones the singer makes use of at the initial stage of the melodic progression turns out to be successively replaced by some other tone-sets, each being slightly different from the preceding one. Thus the scale is evidently apt to vary within one and the same melody.

Furthermore, the author reveals one more kind of the variability of scales — in that he compares a given "plain" tune with a number of similar ones which are sung to the same words (p. 59 ff). In this connection, he arrives at a very interesting statement: those variants of one and the same song prove to exemplify *different versions of one and the same modal structure* — not different modes; and all of them are — at some early stages of the evolution of modality — essentially tantamount to each other, since they have (or must have had) one and the same musical "meaning" for the performer. Each single "version of the mode" may be compared to one of the successive phases of the process of "expansion" the "unfolded mode" (portrayed above) is associated with.

So the archaic modal organization is *not* determined by the *scale* applied in a given melody. *Nor* is it determined by the *tone* as such. The "mode" we have to deal with here is virtually no mode, in a sense. It is rather a "pre-mode", as it were, or something of the kind. — E. Alekseyev uses such "nonce"-expressions as "non-tonal mode," "pre-tonal mode," and the like. — Yet as to the idea of *modality*, there is a form of modality in the melodies under discussion. So, in a certain sense, the notion "mode" as such — or "melodic mode", as it often worded in the book, — is as well feasible for us to apply to the phenomena at issue.

Analyzing the *linear* aspect of the songs, the author succeeds in classifying various patterns of intonation into two "*inclinations*" — "*ascendent*" and "*descendent*" (p. 144 ff). And — since it is in the linear element that the researcher sees the source of modality — those inclinations are subsequently related to the

melodic modes. At the same time the author endeavors to trace the gradual stabilization of a few interdependent tones as essential modal components as well as some typical tendencies controlling the interrelationship of linear and modal factors. The whole results in a meaningful system of *primary melo-modal functions* (p. 229) and, finally, in a hypothetical *model of the crystallization* of our mature *tonal system* (p. 258).

Thus we may state that the author has been anxious to research into the gradual "tonalization" of what may have been rough and even unintelligible at the rise of spontaneous singing.

I hope this book throws a new light on some aspects of the nature of modal organization in music and, therefore, on such an important matter as the problem of the origin of our "tonal sense".

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**[Литература](#)   [Summary](#)   [Приложения](#)**