A Kammu Song and Its Structure

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There are two structurally different types of songs in Kammu culture. One type is characterized by the fact that each song has its individual melody. This melody consists of a short musical phrase, which is repeated for each new line of words. These lines are often built up of five or seven syllables, and one of the last syllables in each line rhymes with one of the first of the following line. Many children's songs are of this type, as well as the songs of certain ceremonies.

The other main type of song consists of orally transmitted poems which are sung to a limited number of melodic formulas. Certain words and certain melodic formulas belong to certain situations. This type includes songs which are sung on festive occasions. It is my aim to describe this kind of song and to present a first step towards a method of analysis of its verbal and musical contents.[1]

The Trnจอm

To sing in the manner proper for feasts or parties is called to tจอm. The songs which then result are called trnจอm. Tจอm singing involves much variation in both words and melody.

The trnจอm repertoire consists of an indefinite number of traditional poems, which principally are sung only to one melodic formula in each village. These local melodies can be grouped into main types, which, though similar in their basic structure, are distinctly different. The distribution of these main types approximates that of the tmจจy, or dialect areas. The melody, which seems to dominate in the Yùan area, may be described as follows. The song starts with a long shout at a high pitch and then gradually falls to a pitch one octave lower.

This is a kind of recitation tone, and it is kept to the end of the song. The recitation tone is interrupted by occasional skips to higher pitches, usually at intervals of a fifth or a minor third. The song is divided into two parts by a pause, which sometimes is followed by a high-pitched shout before the recitation continues. The second part of the song is shorter than the first. The song is finished off with an ending formula. There is a slow and regular pulse throughout the song but the rhythmic structure appears to be more or less free. The form may be described as AA_1. The singer may stop here or continue directly into another song.

The general outline of the different melodic formulas may be described in similar terms. When it comes to details of phrase length, rhythm and pitch, however, musical analysis proves to be less useful. For these matters it is necessary to consider the words and poetry of the trnə̀əm.

In order to illustrate the problems which arise when one attempts to systematize trnə̀əm as a type of poetic structure, I have chosen one trnə̀əm which has a simple but rather typical poetic structure. This particular trnə̀əm has been recorded in ten versions by six informants (four are from the Yùan area and two are from the Rɔ̀ɔk area).

The version shown in Ex. 1 contains a high degree of repetition. Here two phrases occur four times each in somewhat varied forms. Furthermore, the words of these phrases which are not repeated are arranged in a pattern of interior rhymes as shown by the numerals below these words. When this version is compared to another one (Ex. 2) some phrases will be found to be nearly identical. However, there are also phrases which occur in one version but not in the other. Important similarities are that the rhyme-words present in both versions are identical and that both versions fall into two parallel strophes, which correspond to the AA_1 division in the musical form.

əəəy sáh, tə́a th̆ian ə̀ay yɔ̀ɔ r̆ic   phrase a
                1   2
sáh, tə́a th̆ian ə̀ay yɔ̀ɔ k̆ɔɔy   "   a
                          3
sáh, th̆ian yɔ̀ɔ r̆ic tə̀ŋ mə̀h nə̀ŋ r̆ic   "   . b
sáh, th̆ian yɔ̀ɔ k̆ɔɔy tə̀ŋ mə̀h nə̀ŋ k̆ɔɔy, kàay sáh   "   b

heee sáh, tə́a p̆ic ə̀ay yɔ̀ɔ pr̆ian   "   a
                    2   1
sáh, p̆ic yɔ̀ɔ pr̆ian tə̀ŋ mə̀h nə̀ŋ pr̆ian   "   b
sáh, tə́a pl̆ɔɔy ə̀ay yɔ̀ɔ pr̆ian   "   a
                3
pl̆ɔɔy yɔ̀ɔ pr̆ian tə̀ŋ mə̀h nə̀ŋ pr̆ian, kàay sáh   "   b

Ex. 1

heee tŋsáh, tā̀ə_thíaŋ_ àay_yɔ̀ɔ_rìc
                              1   2
ì mɛ̀ɛn stú khūul

heee tŋsáh, tā̀ə_thíaŋ_ àay_yɔ̀ɔ_kɔ̀ɔy
                                       3
ì mɛ̀ɛn stú rɔ̀ɔm .

heee tŋsáh, tā̀ə_píc_ àay_yɔ̀ɔ_prìaŋ
                       2   1
ò mɛ̀ɛn yɔ̀ prɔ̀ɔm tūul tā̀ə.yə̀

tŋsáh, tā̀ə_plɔ̀ɔy_ àay_yɔ̀ɔ_prìaŋ
                            3
ò mɛ̀ɛn yɔ̀ prɔ̀ɔm kwɛ̀ɛn

Ex. 2

No two of the ten versions are identical. On the contrary, they
are remarkably different. It would of course be possible to isolate
fixed parts by comparing the different versions. This, however, would
be a time-consuming and adventurous work considering that hundreds
of songs are waiting for the same treatment. Above all such an ap-
proach would only be possible with songs which have been recorded
in more than one version, and this is not always the case in the present
sample of songs. There is one possible short-cut which does not have
such drawbacks.

Hrlïi SINGING
Some trnə̀əm are used only in connection with feasts, but many may
also be sung at other times. Outside the village these songs may be
tə́əmed anywhere in the forest or the fields unless forbidden by a time
limited taboo.[2] In the village, however, one may only tə́əm at feasts
and certain ceremonies. If somebody wants to sing one of these poems
in the village but not at a feast, he must choose another way of singing
it. There are at least five different ways of singing.
     Obviously the Kammu concept of song differs from the present-
day Western concept. There are a number of traditional sets of words
arranged in strophes with interior rhymes. Some of these sets are
used only in very special situations whereas others are used more freely.
Each one of the latter may be sung to any or some of at least five melodic
formulas—or in other words, they may be sung in up to five different
ways of which tə́əm singing is but one.
     This means that a study of the words of the trnə̀əm needs not
to be limited to a comparison between different trnə̀əm versions. Other
singing ways may be included as well, if, for example, the song in ques-
tion is also sung in situations other than feasting.
     One of these other ways of singing is called hrlïi, and may be

used freely outside the village.   It may be used in the village anytime
except at feasts, when one is supposed to tɔ́əm.   The hrlɨ is a kind
of recitation, and involves little or no variation of words.

The hrlɨɨ is particularly interesting since it is much used by young
people and even children.   To a certain degree it serves as a teaching
device, in that parts of the traditional repertoire are learned in the form
of hrlɨɨ.   Consequently, hrlɨɨ singing is likely to represent the sim-
plest statement of the traditional words (Ex. 3).

táa don't	thîaŋ deny	àay me	yɔ́ɔ like	rîc munia-bird				1a
táa don't	thîaŋ deny	àay me	yɔ́ɔ like	kɔ́ɔy [squirrel]				1a₁
thîaŋ deny	yɔ́ɔ like	rîc munia-bird	tə̂ŋ indeed	mə̂h –	nə̀ŋ –	rîc munia-bird		1b
thîaŋ deny	yɔ́ɔ like	kɔ́ɔy [squirrel]	tə̂ŋ indeed	mə̂h –	nə̀ŋ –	kɔ́ɔy [squirrel]		1b₁
sə̂h I say								
táa don't	pîc leave	àay me	yɔ́ɔ with	prîaŋ others				2a
táa don't	plɔ́ɔy shoo off	àay me	yɔ́ɔ with	prîaŋ others				2a₁
pîc leave	yɔ́ɔ with	prîaŋ others	tə̂ŋ indeed	mə̂h –	nə̀ŋ –	prîaŋ other		2b
plɔ́ɔy shoo off	yɔ́ɔ with	prîaŋ others	tə̂ŋ indeed	mə̂h –	nə̀ŋ –	prîaŋ other		2b₁

Ex. 3

THE Hrlɨɨ MODEL

Two versions of the song under study here are hrlɨɨ versions.   They
contain all those phrases of the trnɔ̀əm versions, which carry the same
rhyme-words but no other phrases.   However, the two hrlɨɨ versions
are not identical.   They have a different order of phrases, and since
different phrase order results in different rhyme patterns, the choice
of either as a starting point would result in a description of poetic struc-
ture based on mere coincidence.

I have therefore reduced the two hrlɨɨ versions into a model which
permits changed phrase order (Ex. 4).   In this model phrases in common
between the strophes are grouped together.   Each syllable is given
one square and words which are repeated are only written out once.
The squares (=syllables) which contain rhyme words are shadowed
in different ways.   In this way the parallelisms and the rhyme structure
are easy to recognize.[3]
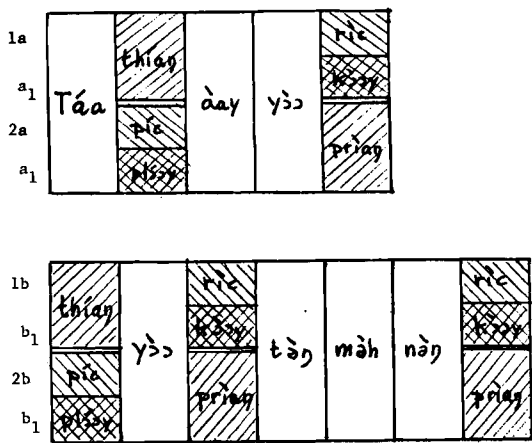
Rhyme-words:

thíaŋ	–	priaŋ
deny		others
rìc	–	píc
munia-bird		leave
kɔ̌ɔy	–	plɔ̌ɔy
[squirrel]		shoo

Translation: Don't shoo me off like a munia-bird,

If you do I will surely be a munia-bird.

Don't cast me off like a squirrel,

If you do I will surely be a squirrel.

Don't shoo me off to the others,

If you do I will surely be one of the others.

Don't cast me off to the others,

If you do I will surely be one of the others.

Ex. 4

The two strophes are named 1 and 2 respectively. The first phrase is called " a " and the second " b." "A₁" and " b₁" are variations of these phrases, and result from the additional rhymes. In what follows this model will be tested on the trnə̀əm versions of the same song.

THE ORDER OF PHRASES
The hrlɨ̵ model in Ex. 4 can be used for describing songs with regard to the order of phrases. Thus one of the hrlɨ̵ versions has the following

form:
    $1a—1a_1—1b—1b_1 \ / \ 2a—2a_1—2b—2b_1$.

In this case parallel phrases are linked together two by two. It is very common in hrlïï singing that parallelisms or rhymes are kept close together and sometimes phrases of the two strophes may be sung in connection with each other.

In a trnɔ̀ɔm version, which comes from the same informant, the order of phrases is different:
    $1a—1b—1a_1—1b_1 \ / \ 2a—2b—2a_1—2b_1$.

In this case phrase a is always followed by phrase b. The parallelism here is less obvious and in more complex songs also the rhyme-pattern becomes less obvious. This is definitely the most artistic way to tɔ́ɔm when it comes to the order of phrases.

The direct contents of the song are to be found in the second strophe. The first strophe is built on the same phrases, but poetic pictures are inserted as rhyme-words. Thus the word " others " is foreshadowed by the poetic pictures " birds " and " squirrels." In a way the trnɔ̀ɔm can be said to resemble riddles: the first strophe is unclear, misleading or even incomprehensible, and the second part then functions as a conclusion.

Consequently, a person well-versed in the art of the trnɔ̀ɔm needs to hear only the first one or two phrases in order to know what is to follow. This can be deduced from a good knowledge of how the parallelisms and rhymes work, even on the first hearing of a trnɔ̀ɔm.

STROPHES, LINES AND SYLLABLES

When the hrlïï model was compared with the remaining trnɔ̀ɔm versions it became clear that all or some of the phrases in the model occurred in all ten versions. The most problematic point would normally be that of divisions into strophes, lines and syllables. The definition of these entities is made possible by the character of the hrlïï.

In a hrlïï the division into strophes is marked by a breathing pause and the addition of the word sáh, " I say," before the second strophe. With the possible exception of the last syllable of a strophe only one other syllable per phrase is long, all the others being equally short. This corresponds to a division into lines: the second to last syllable of a line is long (except in the case of the last line of a strophe in which the last syllable may also be long). In the recitation dipthongs (as in the word prìaŋ) are treated as one syllable words. The division into strophes, lines and syllables used in the model of Ex. 4 is thus present in actual hrlïï singing.

While questions of lines and syllables are problematic points

where trnə̀əm are concerned, they are clearly stated in hrlïï singing. Since several different patterns occur, including different rhyme patterns, in the trnə̀əm repertoire, it is necessary to find a way of describing these patterns. Since different phrase-order sometimes alter the rhyme patterns, such a description should be based on the hrlïï model (Ex. 4), which is constructed to avoid the effects of different phrase-order.

The words of this song consist of two phrases. One of these has five syllables and the other seven. In the five syllable line (" a " in Ex. 4) the rhyme words are located both in the middle syllable and in the last one. In the seven syllable line (" b " in Ex. 4) there are not only rhymes in the first and last syllables but also in the middle.

In trnə̀əm lines of seven syllables or more, the rhyme words are often repeated somewhere in the first half of the line. In this particular trnə̀əm two versions have a different order of words in the second phrase, which causes these repeated rhymes to fall on another syllable compared to the other versions. These two versions both stem from the Rə̀ɔk area and may be typical of that area. It is also possible, however, that the rhymes in the first and last syllables are structurally more important than those in the middle. However this may be, this variation must be accounted for in a description of the rhyme pattern.

Furthermore, there are in the trnə̀əm repertoire also seven and nine syllable lines with rhymes in the last syllable and the third (counting from the end of the phrases) just as in phrase " a " in Ex. 4. A description of rhyme pattern should be so devised that these rhymes are grouped together regardless of the number of syllables in the lines. This can be achieved by counting the syllables from the end of the line.

The following representation covers all these demands:
5 (4/1)+7 (7/1); repeated rhymes: 7 (5 or 4)
The numbers 5 and 7 refer to the number of syllables per line. The " + " indicates that they are linked together in strophes. The figures within parenthesis represent the syllables in each line that carry rhyme words (1=last syllable, 2=second from the last, and so on).

ADDED WORDS, LANGUAGE TONES AND MELODY
The 2nd strophe of a hrlïï starts with the word sáh, " I say." In a trnə̀əm several or all lines are often preceded by the same word, but also other interjections or words of address may occur. Words— some of which occur only in songs—may also be added after a line or within a line. This is an important ingredient of tə̀əm singing, but it is not always easy to tell which words have been added by the singer and which have not.

A comparison of the hrlïï model and all the trnə̀əm versions shows

that all words in the trnə̀əm which are not present in the model are treated differently by different singers, and differently from time to time by the same singer. They may thus be seen as added words characteristic of tə́əm singing. It is obvious that alterations like these must be accompanied by changes in the melodic line. There seem to be no metric rules for these additions—they rather depend on the singer's ability, inspiration and intention. Irregularities in phrase length and rhythm, which cannot be explained by musical analysis alone, should therefore be compared to the variation of the words.

The Kammu language spoken in the Yùan area is a tonal language with one high and one low word tone. Thus there is reason to suspect that there is a close relationship between words and melody. In the case of the hrlìi this is definitely so. There appear to be three pitch levels, which correspond to word tones in the following way:

high pitch =high word tone
medium pitch=low word tone
low pitch =high or low word tone at the beginning of strophes
or after a pause

The melodic formulas used for tə́əm singing in the different areas all have a distinct contour, which in certain parts of the song dominates over the word tones. There are, however, also parts of the trnə̀əm where the word tones seem to be the stronger factor, but it is yet too early to say how this works. No doubt the language tones are decisive for the melodic line at certain places in a trnə̀əm. There seem to be no special regularities between word tones and the arrangement of syllables in lines, which means that there are as many possible combinations of pitches as there are combinations of high and low word tones in a line. Neither is the combination of word tones tied to the rhymes.[4] Pitch fluctuations in the melody, which cannot be explained as a part of the melodic contour or the poetic structure, may thus be suspected to depend on the word tones.

ADDED PHRASES

Returning to our initial example, then, I have thus far discussed the poetic structure, the insertion of words in lines and the relation between words and melody in the trnə̀əm. What remains is the fact that a trnə̀əm can contain whole phrases which are not present in the hrlìi model, and that whole phrases may be missing.

In order to understand this phenomenon it is necessary to consider the situation in which the trnə̀əm are used. In the feasts when people join together, whole suites of songs are sung and the participants take

1a

ĩ	mɛ̃ɛn	s -	tṹ	khũul
we	are	[tree]		hair
	1			2

1a$_1$

ĩ	mɛ̃ɛn	s -	tṹ	rɔ̃ɔm
we	are	[tree]		grown together
				3

2a

ɔ̃	mɛ̃ɛn	yɔ̃	prɔɔm	tũul	tàa	yə̀
I	am	friend	–	–	for	long time
			3	2		

2a$_1$

ɔ̃	mɛ̃ɛn	yɔ̃	prɔɔm	kwɛ̃ɛn
I	am	friend	–	–
				1

Ex. 5

turns in singing.   The singing is governed by conventions of politeness. When the trnə̀əm versions are compared to the hrlìi model it becomes evident that all the added phrases are polite phrases, which basically express praise for others and depreciation for oneself.

The added phrases of the first example are of the kind used between friends (Ex. 5).   They may have been sung in order to comfort a visitor who has expressed shyness in his singing or perhaps embarrassment over his own voice, but there are also several other possible situations.

There are polite phrases like these for a number of given situations, and these seem to belong together in sets, with their own pattern of interior rhymes.   The sets of polite phrases may constitute whole songs, they may be sung before or after another trnə̀əm or, as is the case here, they may be interspersed between the lines of another trnə̀əm. In such cases the other trnə̀əm is often sung only half-way through, i.e. some lines are omitted (cf. Ex. 5).   When sets of polite words are inserted in another trnə̀əm the effect is that of a second poetic structure being superimposed on the trnə̀əm itself.

Introductory additions	Poem proper							Polite phrases			Finatory additions	Phrase order
Həəəy –	sáh I say	táa don't	thíaŋ deny	àay me	yɔɔ like	rîc munia-bird		ũul –	hɔɔm tie	trɔ̂ torch		1a
								ũul –	hɔɔm tie	trɛɛŋ elephant grass	kaay sah what I say	
Eee –	sáh I say	thíaŋ deny	yɔɔ like	rîc munia-bird	tə̀ŋ indeed	mə̀h –	nə̀ŋ rîc – munia-bird					1b
	sáh I say	táa don't	thíaŋ deny	àay me	yɔɔ like	kɔ̂ɔy [squirrel]						$1a_1$
	sə̀h I say	thíaŋ deny	yɔɔ like	kɔ̂ɔy [squirrel]	tə̀ŋ indeed	mə̀h –	nə̀ŋ kɔ̂ɔy – [squirrel]				kǎay sǎh what I say	$1b_1$
Həəəy –	sáh I say	táa don't	píc leave	àay me	yɔɔ with	prîaŋ others						2a
	sáh I say	píc leave	yɔɔ with	prîaŋ others	tə̀ŋ indeed	mə̀h –	nə̀ŋ prîaŋ – other					2b
	sáh I say	táa don't	plɔ́ɔy shoo off	àay me	yɔɔ with	prîaŋ others						$2a_1$
	sáh I say	plɔ́ɔy shoo off	yɔɔ with	prîaŋ others	tə̀ŋ indeed	mə̀h –	nə̀ŋ prîaŋ – other				kǎay sǎh what I say	$2b_1$
Eee –	sáh I say							yɔ̂ friend	prɔɔm all	tũul –		
								yɔ̂ friend	prɔɔm together	kwɛ̀ɛn –	khîn dɛɛ nɔ̂ɔ pity too dear	
											kǎay sǎh what I say	

Ex. 6

CONCLUSION

The use of the hrlii as a starting point for an analysis of the trnɔ̀ɔm has proven to be useful. Those characteristics of the trnɔ̀ɔm which have been discussed here would otherwise have been difficult to come to terms with. It is now possible to choose one of the trnɔ̀ɔm versions and " undress " it, so to speak (Ex. 6). In other words, it is possible to take a trnɔ̀ɔm and reduce it to a hrlii. Thus this is more than a mere method of analysis in that it gives an insight into the technique of tɔ́ɔm singing.

A logical step is now to use this method on other trnɔ̀ɔm, which also have been recorded in hrlii versions, in order to check its value for analysis and classification. In the process it will also be possible to learn more about the words and phrases which are added to the poem in tɔ́ɔm singing.

As mentioned before, however, there are also trnɔ̀ɔm which are seldom or never rendered in the hrlii style. These happen to be the most complex trnɔ̀ɔm, namely those which are sung in praise or depreciation of villages, houses, food, wooden drums and so on. Apparently these songs are predominantly learned by participation in the situations where they are used. There is also reason to suspect that their poetic structure is such that they do not fit into the hrlii singing. This is where the method which has been presented here becomes really important. If it is also possible to reduce these trnɔ̀ɔm into the hrlii model much would be won. In that case, however, the method would no longer be parallel to actual practice but would have become a purely theoretical tool.

The ultimate goal with this procedure is to be able to conduct a meaningful musical analysis of the trnɔ̀ɔm. As has been shown, tɔ́ɔm singing involves the variation of poetry as well as of music. These two factors are completely interwoven and one cannot be fully understood without an understanding of the other.

NOTES

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2. Such taboos include those which forbid singing during working hours in the sowing and harvesting seasons as well as death taboos.

3. Assonance also plays an important role in these poems, but at this stage only proper rhyme-words have been considered.

4. In this particular song high word tones (′) rhyme with low (`) and vice versa (cf. Ex. 4), but this appears to be an exception rather than the rule.