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Children's Musical Instruments in Georgia¹

Folk music occupies a distinguished place among the Georgians' spiritual values. Similar to other people's music accompanied all the important events of our lives. In Georgian traditional system of children's upbringing, a great deal of attention was paid to the elaboration and development of music skills. A singer-chanter, an instrumentalist was always highly respected in Georgia; today folk music is still a powerful means for expressing national self-consciousness and maintaining identity.

The basic characteristic feature of Georgian musical culture is vocal polyphony (in 2001 UNESCO proclaimed Georgian polyphony a masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity). On the background of such highly developed vocal polyphony, instrumental music looks modest and instruments – as material testimony of spiritual culture – obey vocal regularities of Georgian musical thinking. Like ancient cultures in Georgia the everyday function of instruments is not heterogeneous, but in Georgia instruments have the function to tune as low voice (bass) and to accompany song and dance. It should be said, that when making instruments the Georgians strictly followed the traditional demands of musical aesthetics. Despite the centuries-old tradition of metal processing, most instruments are made of natural material – distinguished kinds of trees and skin of domestic animals. It is noteworthy, that masters decorated instruments with gems and metal. In general, scholars consider simplicity as one of the basic features of Georgian art.

Children's instruments are not often studied in Georgian organology. Despite some significant views this problem never became the topic of special study.² In general, those instruments, which can be made by children themselves, are regarded as children's instruments.³ But as in most other countries, Georgian

¹ In memoriam of Manana Shilakadze. Manana Shilakadze (1938-2010) - Georgian ethnomusicologist, Prof., Dr. of Historical Sciences. Topic of her scientific research were instruments and instrumental music of the Georgian and North-Caucasian peoples. She published articles in Georgian, Russian, German and English languages.

² Described are Acharan (Black Sea Coast) children's aerophones - *chappina*, *shivri*, *saktoeri*, *saktoemela*, *chiponi*. See Mskhaladze, Alexandre (1969): *Kartuli Khalkhart Sakravleri Musikas Istoriidan* (From the History of Georgian Folk Instrumental Music). Tbilisi, Metsniereba: 14-16.

³ Emsheimer, Ernst (1991): *Gedanken zur Welt der Kinderinstrumente und ihrer Beziehung zur Erwoachsenenkultur: Studia Ethnomusicologica Eurasatica*, II. Stockholm, Publications issued by the Royal Swedish academy of Music 62: 99-109. I am grateful to Prof., Dr. Ulrich Morgenstern for sending me the work.

children play instruments that are made by adults (mainly by men) especially for them. Also children play smaller versions of normal instruments used by adults or normal adult size instruments (see video examples 1, 2) It is important to mention that some toys that make noise take an important part in developing a child's musical ear, emotions and feelings.

The aim of this research is to gather information connected with Georgian children's instruments (or instruments specially made for them) and highlight the importance of such materials for the collectors of folklore. Besides the existing problems in the field the purposes of this research also is familiarizing young parents and teachers with the instruments that still exist in everyday life in Georgia at present.⁴ The systemic-ethnophonic method was used to conduct the research.⁵

In 1938 archaeological excavations in Mtskheta – political and cultural centre of East Georgia – unearthed a flute *salamuri* made of a swan (shin) bone in a sepulcher. The instrument dates back to the 15th -14th centuries B.C. This 19.9cm-long flute with three finger holes is slightly bent at the end. Its scale is a diatonic tetrachord, noteworthy for us is the fact, that the sepulcher, was of a little boy. There was a bull's head as well. Due to this Georgian scholars call the sepulcher *the grave of a little shepherd*. In the opinion of Grigol Chkhikvadze –one of the founders of Georgian ethnomusicology – the instrument was either a shepherd's inseparable belonging or an object linked with the Bull Cult, which was played during sacrificial offering.



Figure 1: *Salamuri* from the *Grave of a Little Shepherd*. Collection of National Museum of Georgia. Photo: Giorgi Makharadze, 2013.

The same scholar noticed a youth playing the *salamuri* in the 12th century Georgian miniature painting as well and with the consideration of his own expedition materials he confirmed the uninterrupted tradition of this

⁴ The difficult political situation in the post-Soviet era and the closing of special music schools, caused further problems in musical upbringing and education.

⁵ Matsievsky, Igor (1983): *formirovanie sistemno-etnofonicheskogo metoda v organologii* [Formation of systemic-ethnophonic method in organology], Edited by Viktor Gusev, *Metodi izucheniya folkloru* (Methods for Folk Studies), Leningrad, State Institute of Theatre, Music and Cinematography: 54-63.

instrument in Georgia.⁶ Nowadays, in Achara (West Georgia) it is testified that children's instruments are made of gobblers' bone⁷.

Figure 2: *Spring*. Grigoltheologian's Works (12th century). Collection of National Centre of Manuscripts. Photo: Ketevan Matiashvili, 2012.

In 2006 an experiment carried out by Malkhaz Erkvaniidze showed that if the angle of the *little shepherd* instruments gradient is changed – another scale from another pitch would be documented. Thus we have one tetrachord approximated to minor coloring and the other tetrachords approximated to major coloring (see audio example 1).

Another Georgian fairy tale "*Tsikara*" provides interesting material in connection with the semantics of children's instruments (*Tsikara* is a bull's name), little shepherd plays feast and adversity tunes on the *salamuri* – gifted to him by the bull.⁸ The differentiation presented here can be considered as one of the first attempts to divide music into genres.

As for *salamuri* there are few legends about its origin; according to one – a reed grew up on the grave of an orphan, the reed produced sad tunes in the wind.⁹ Tongued and tongueless *salamuri* are more common in East Georgia. In West Georgia (Lazeti) children's tongueless flute is called *kavali*. Nodar Kakabadze from the village of Sarpi makes it from bamboo or elder wood. It has five finger holes on one side and one finger hole on the other side.¹⁰



⁶ Chkhikvadze, Grigol (1965): *Dvistoricheskaya Gruzinskaya Kostianaya Salamuri-Fluta* (Prehistoric Georgian Bone Salamuri-Flute). Separatum, Budapest. Akademiai Kiado. Europa of Hungaria. Congressus Ethnographikus in Hungaria. Budapest, 1963, X: 16-20. | English version Andriadze, Manana et.al. (2005): *Essays on Georgian Ethnomusicology*. Tbilisi, IRCIP of V. Sarajishvili, Tbilisi State Conservatoire: 164-168

⁷ Sopho Kotrikadze's interview with Murad Tavartkiladze, 2013, Kokotauri.

⁸ Alavidze, Davit (1978). *Kartuli da Sakartveloshi Gavrtselshuli Khalkhuri Musikaluri Saknovebi* (Georgian and other Folk Musical Instruments disseminated in Georgia). Tbilisi, Khelovneba: 50.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Gurgi Kraveishvili's field expedition materials, 2011-2012, Sarpi.



Figure 3: Nodar Kakabadze is making *kavali* for his grandson. Photo: Giorgi Kravei Svili, 2011.

It is interesting, that the flute for shepherding swine was made of clay. Apparently, these animals do not perceive the sound of wooden and bone instruments¹¹.

In order to avoid evil, women would fasten rattles made of stones, beads and shells on the newborn's bed, known in East Georgian mountain regions under the name of *satirebelli*. In the provinces of Pshavi and Khevi

datireba meant to sooth a child.¹² After certain time these objects (idiophones) were given to children and rattling would become the simplest means for developing ears for music, rhythm and coordination of movement. This was also promoted by entertaining examples for awakening, making first steps, sung by the mother. Each of these was accompanied by clapping. Children would also accompany the sound of *shako* (a toy for whirling on ice) and a spin with clapping.¹³ In West Georgia rattling idiophones were made of the so-called bitter squash.¹⁴ Children would play on the broken vessels or basins, which they found when pasturing sheep. In Guria toy *garnoni* for 12-13-year-old children were made as following: they would fold a newspaper as the bellows of harmonic, stick with a piece of dough and put flies or bees into it. The buzzing of the insects imitated the sound of the instrument¹⁵. According to the information I have collected from children in Tbilisi in the villages of Imereti (Western Georgia) children played the membranophone 'doli' when walking door to door during *Alilo* ritual at Christmas¹⁶.

¹¹ Interview of Nino Makharadze with Ketevan Baiaashvili, 2011, Tbilisi.

¹² Ghloni, Alexandre (1984): *Kartal Kilo-Imata Sityos Kona* (Lexicon of Georgian Sub-dialects). Tbilisi, Ganatleba: 173.

¹³ Interview of Nino Makharadze with Ketevan Baiaashvili, 2012, Tbilisi.

¹⁴ Interview of Nino Makharadze with Ketevan Cogoladze, 2012, Batumi.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Material compiled by the author, 2007, Tbilisi.

The ethnographic material published in the 19th century press shows, that in Abkhazia (Western Georgia) the first-cut fingernails of a newborn were put into *chonguri* (chordophone) believing that the child would be a good *chonguri* player when he/she grew up¹⁷. Available is information about small chordophones – *panduri* and *chianuri*¹⁸. Small size instruments (membranophones – *doli*, *diplytto*, multi-stemmed pipe – *larchemi*; four-stringed – *chonguri*; small harmonica – *tsiko* (*siko*)) preserved at the National Museum of Georgia and State Museum of Folk Song and Musical Instruments testify to this fact.

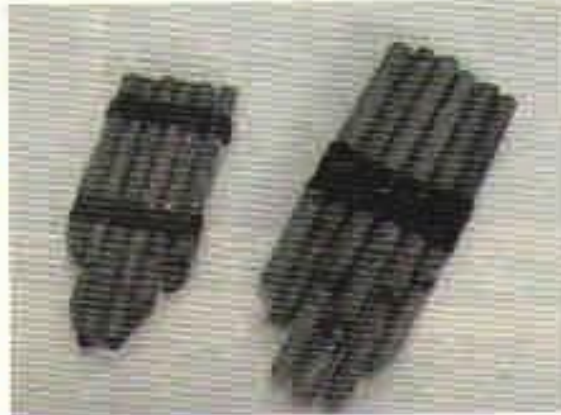


Figure 4: Megrelian (Western Georgia) *larchemi*. Collection of National Museum of Georgia. Photo: Giorgi Makharadze, 2013.

The group of wind instruments boasts variety. Ethnographic and oral material as well as field recordings made in recent years, allow us to discuss some issues of their function, makeup, construction, scale and repertoire. Wind instruments were generally played by boys.

In East-Georgian Mountains children would take home the nails of roosters, horns of sheep sacrificed during religious celebration and use them as whistles¹⁹. Sometimes adults would make whistles for them from dough, clay or bark. Frequently these instruments were given shapes of birds or animals. A large number of clay whistles, as well as small-size zoomorphic figures are preserved at the National Museum of Georgia. With them children would imitate birds, entrap and catch them.

Wooden-whistles are made seasonally in spring, when trees are filled with water and the bark can easily be removed. In Lazeti single-sound *ostvinali* is made from mulberry, wild walnut, hazelnut or alder-tree. The children and pasturing cows would respond each other's calls with such instruments.

¹⁷ Janashia, Niko (1897): *Apkhazeti*(Abkhazia), *The Moambe Journal* 11: 44-52.

¹⁸ Meskhi, Tamar and Gabisonia, Tamaz (2005): *Kartuli Khalkhuri Musikaluri Shemakmedeba* [Georgian Folk Music]. Tbilisi, International Research Centre for Traditional Polyphony (IRCTP) of the Vano Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire: 47.

¹⁹ Interview of Nino Makharadze with Kritevan Baiashvili, 2013, Tbilisi.

Sometimes they would also make from squash stem, "Big stem produced strong sound" (Nodar Kakabadze)²⁰.



Figure 5, 6: *Sustemi* (whistles). Collection of National Museum of Georgia. Photo: Giorgi Makharadze, 2013.

In Shavsheti (this historical province of Georgia is also a part of modern day Turkey) children's small whistle called *dūdūk*, was made from bladder nut or thorn. It produced only one sound²¹.

In Hereti (this province of Georgia became part of Azerbaijan in Soviet times), whistle is called *vititi*, *svitina* or *tuti*²². It is made from mulberry, hazelnut or fig trees, also from new sprouts of walnut tree.



Figure 7: *Vititi* by Ilia Otarashvili (47 years). Figure 8: Shveni Otarashvili is playing *vititi*. Photos: Giorgi Kraveishvili, 2012.

The hole on the upper part is cut aslant; comparatively lower sounds can be produced by slight upward and downward movement of the instrument. "In spring when the nature wakes up and adults go to the fields, the children are given the instruments to entertain themselves and not interfere in the adults'

²⁰ Giorgi Kraveishvili's field expedition materials. 2012, Sarpi, Kvariani.

²¹ Giorgi Kraveishvili's interview with Isa Altune. 2013.

²² Ghambashidze, Rogneda (1988): *Kartuliens ingilauri dialekti* [Ingilauri Dialect of Georgian Language], Tbilisi, Ganatleba: 209.

work". *Vititi* has deafening sound; children compete who will better play the instrument (see audio example 14-02).

Boluzani (*boluzana*) is a little bugle. It is made in spring from wild walnut tree. The bark, which is easily removed from the tree, is rolled like a cone – narrow at one end gradually broadening. The instrument is long, without holes and produces only one sound. *Boluzana* has a vent at one end. "In olden times a watchman would stand on the merlon; he had a big long instrument *ochandinoni*. With this instrument people were called up for war, wedding, or gathering. Its strong sound was heard a long way off, signaling that enemy was approaching. People would leave everything and go inside the fortress, to escape from the enemy. The *boluzana* made for children resembled that for the adults, but was much smaller in size. As Nodar Kakabadze mentions *boluzana* and *ochandinoni* are the same, they differ only in size²³. In Hereti similar instrument is called *boruzani*. It is made of walnut tree bark rolled like a tube, and produces only one sound²⁴.

In Georgia pipes for children were made of wheat or barley stems, reed and briar²⁵. It should be mentioned, that Georgian children can produce the sounds similar to *stviri* by means of flowers, straw and comb.

The *stviri* group also includes *chqipina/chiponi*. It is a direct ancestor of Acharan *chiboni* (bagpipe). Is made from the stems of elder or squash and produces only one sound. Playing the *stviri* in childhood prepared basis for playing bagpipe at adult age²⁶. Well-known performer – Murad Tavartkiladze refers Acharan children instrument as *pilli*²⁷.

It is noteworthy, that in a Georgian fairy tale "Three sisters" attested is the simplest way of making a wind instrument. Making the instrument is determined by sadness caused by the loss of a child. The pipe has magic power, it talks in a human voice; here is a vast quote: "The mother sitting in an apple-tree wept so much that she fell down to the earth as tears and blood. In the spot, the tears and blood dropped down dense reed grew up densely, like a forest. Flowers and grass bloomed. One day the boy brought his cow to the

²³ Giorgi Kraveishvili's field expedition materials. 2012, Sarpi, Kvartati.

²⁴ Giorgi Kraveishvili's interview with Ruslan Aklmedov, 2012, Tbilisi.

²⁵ Rosebashvili, Kakhi (1984): *Kartuli Khalkhuri Sakrebulo/Gudastviri* [Georgian Folk Instruments/Gudastviri]. Tbilisi, The scientific works preserved at the Archive of Georgian Folk Music Department of the Vano Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire, copyright No. 4846:10.

²⁶ Rosebashvili, Kakhi (1983): *Kartuli Khalkhuri Musikas Achomdi Dialekti* [Acharan Dialect of Georgian Folk Music]. Tbilisi, manuscript, Archive of Georgian Folk Music Department of the Vano Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire, copyright No. 4707: 22.

²⁷ Sopho Kotrikadze's interview with Murad Tavartkiladze. 2013, Kokitauri.

apple-tree, broke a reed, made a pipe with his fingernail and played. The pipe played and exclaimed: pipe, oh pipe why are you weeping? I am your mother and you are my son. The boy cuddled the pipe and never separated from it, upon returning home, he played it again and the pipe exclaimed the same words. The woman got furious, she took the pipe away from the boy and broke it, but the broken piece of the pipe sang and sang.... the woman threw the broken pieces into *tone* (a cylindrical clay oven, placed in the ground, used in cooking and baking), when the pieces burnt down, a woman's face appeared in the ashes, it leaned against the side of the *tone*, the child too was sitting there and weeping²⁸.

In Tbilisi in March 2003, I met a 72-year-old *stviri* (pipe) master named Elguja Mukhigulashvili. In September, 2004, I was able to travel to his village of Telatgori in the Kaspidistrict. The *stviri* can also be made from dried stems of common reed. It is approximately 20-21 cm long, and 0.7-1cm in diameter. It has a tapered mouth-hole and six finger-holes.



Figure 9: Elguja Mukhigulashvili's *stviri*. Photo: Ketevan Matiashvili, 2004.

Aleksi Davituri also confirmed the fact of making children's 2-3 finger-holes sweetbrier *stviri* in the village of Tsitliana near Pasanauri (East-Georgian mountain region)²⁹.

ElgujaMukhigulashvili learned to play the *stviri* in his youth from a shepherd, who lived in the neighborhood, near his village. Today he makes these instruments for children and sometimes blows the *stviri* as a signal. Children use his *stviris* as whistles during football and other games. This is a toy for sale, but it is not able that one performer may play two of these *stviris*. The player blows a shorter, tongued *stviri*, with no finger-holes and at the same time he plays the main *stviri*, with finger-holes. In this case, a simple drone-based polyphonic melody is produced (see video example 14-03).Elguja Mukhigulashvili provided me significant information about the healing function of wind instruments.

It is noteworthy, that the memory of Georgian people still is keeping this knowledge. Blowing is especially necessary for the children with lung

²⁸ Vursaladze, Elene, ed. (1984). *Kartuli Zghapribi* [Georgian Fairy Tales]. Tbilisi, Nakatuli: 113.

²⁹ Interview of Nino Makharadze with Otar Kapanadze, 2012. Tbilisi.

problems. Today doctors advise such children to frequently blow up balloons. According to Revaz Kotrikadze -Director of the State Museum of Georgian folk song and Instruments, in Bakhmaro (renowned mountain resort in West Georgian province of Guria), where children are most frequently taken in April and May- the season when conifers bloom, he often encountered people selling duckbill shaped croaking instrument, whistles and pipes³⁰.

Musical upbringing as part of education was topical from olden times. Modern studies confirm, that the children who sing and play musical instruments significantly antecede their coevals in intellectual, social and psychomotor development. They better apprehend information and can better concentrate their attention.

Proceeding from the particular role of musical instruments in traditional system of children's upbringing it would be good to provide young parents and teachers with more information. Musical toys and simple instruments are taking children to the world of music. I believe that active application of children's musical instruments in educational sphere must be directed with the consideration of regional and age peculiarities.

Georgian material on Georgian children's instruments clearly show the entertainment and aesthetic level of their magic, signaling, hunting, healing, religious-sacred and cognitive function, as well as that of communication with nature. It should also be noted, that the names of children's instruments come from imitation principle - they are onomatopoeic, which testify to their ancient origin.

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* Interview with Revaz Kotrikadze, 2005, Tbilisi.

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