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### **FORMS OF THE GEORGIAN FOLK INSTRUMENTAL POLYPHONY**

Instrumental music is not actually “direct” performing; this is why using a musical instrument in the orthodox Christian tradition is inadmissible. Human vocal organs are considered to be the instruments that much more adequately implement the creative intentions, than hand-made instruments.

It is true that in the musical culture of some people instruments play a leading role, but this phenomenon is mostly linked to religious reasons, or when vocal performance is taboo or the performer’s energy is spared, or when in the atmosphere of monodic thinking it is brought about by aspiring towards professional virtuosity.

Perhaps this is why instrumental music has a smaller share in Georgian traditional music and is less important than traditional vocal music. The “vocalism”, characteristic of the Christian culture, must undoubtedly have influenced this kind of correlation.

As I view it, basically, the share of the vocal and instrumental spheres in Georgian folk music indicates aspiring to the natural character of intoning (vocal music), and the instrumental music expresses a greater striving for accompanying the voice than for the solo performance.

In most cases Georgian instrumental music has the function of accompaniment. But it does not always mean accompanying the singer; it may mean accompanying a ritual physical work as well. It is noteworthy that social regulation also affects the musical result of the Georgian instrument. In the non-vocal process of the instrumental accompaniment there are intonations which cannot be found, or can no longer be found, in Georgian songs. Instead, in most cases, we can observe the projection of vocal musical thinking on the instrumental sphere, particularly in the instrumental accompaniment of a song. Vocal intonation is not alien to the solo instrument either, whereas vocal imitation of an instrument is an exception.

Due to the above peculiarities it may seem that it should be easy to determine the forms of Georgian folk instrumental polyphony, as forms of Georgian vocal folk polyphony have already been studied in depth. It is probably due to this reason that this sphere has not become the subject of Georgian researchers’ special interest yet. In this presentation I shall try to contribute as much as I can to this sphere of research.

First I shall present a comparative review of Georgian musical instruments, according to their potential for creating a polyphonic structure.

It is understandable that in a review of this kind the role of percussion instruments is not taken into account. Clapping, as well as the *doli* (drum) and the *daira* (tambourine) provide the boldly pronounced rhythmic background to Georgian dancing and singing. This is further confirmed by the fact that the correlation of their pitch with the musical activity is not taken into consideration.

In connection with the rhythmic accompaniment the group of string instruments is closer to the group of percussion instruments than the wind instruments – the plucked string instruments, the chonguri and in particular the panduri (both are long neck lutes). Apart from the differences between the materials they are made of, the number of strings, the scale, the presence or absence of frets, the principal differences between them should be looked for where the above-mentioned factors are of little significance. I consider the frequency of using the method of plucking to be the chief difference between these two instruments. The only factor partly helping the chonguri to achieve greater diversity from this viewpoint is the presence of the fourth (shorter) string “zili”.

The fact that for the panduri, the instrument widespread in eastern Georgia, the technique of plucking is not characteristic, allows us to make a number of conclusions: it is evident, that the function of the panduri as an accompanying instrument differs from that of the chonguri. The panduri is more readily identified with the vocal bass part. The method of “shebaneba” (accompanying with the bass), widely practiced in eastern Georgia, is equally often used both by the vocal bass part and the instrument panduri. On such occasions the panduri often loses even the rhythmic regularity, so characteristic of the instrument (ex. 1).

But this resemblance can be noticed only when the solo performer is accompanied by panduri; when the long pedal drone songs in free metre are performed, there is no room for the sounding of the panduri and its regular rhythmic figurations.

Therefore the fact that the panduri performs an analogous function with the pedal bass does not allow it to use the plucking technique to diversify its performance. True, there are some exceptions here too – mainly in Tushian instrumental tunes (Tusheti – mountainous region of east Georgia, which has many ties with North Caucasia), but these are isolated cases and we cannot consider them as creating a different typical group of accompaniment.

Chonguri (long neck lute from the western Georgia) have a different function. It is very rare that the chonguri accompaniment is assigned the role of the harmonic root and a passive backing function (like a drone). The chonguri accompaniment is oriented not to the bass part but to the whole complex texture of the song in general and, as it seems, this is why it is more individualized. It should also be mentioned that the panduri-like “bass” accompaniment (continuous strumming) is not so rare in chonguri tunes, especially when accompanying a solo singer; this can be possibly explained by the antiquity of these tunes, but alongside them the organically harmonized, if a rather later method of pulling (plucking), has its artistic merits.

It follows therefore that the chonguri is clearly distinguished as an instrument, possessing the rudiments of contrapuntal polyphony. Here functionally different sounds take shape by means of the alternating of melodic movement with plucking a chord. Here the function of two hands is rather clearly distinguished – in the melodic movement both hands actively participate. As to the chord plucking, here various methods of right hand techniques are created by playing chords and broken chords.

Functionally closest to the chonguri is the change (lyre), now found in Svaneti only. The specific features of the chonguri, as a plucked instrument, which essentially projects the song texture on the instrument, is more readily realized in the lyre. As Akhobadze suggests the lyre playing technique is a kind of instrumental transcription of a song. In the lyre, as well as in the chonguri, the additional rhythmic function of an accompanying instrument is demonstrated by means of broken chords.

Broken chords are less characteristic of the chuniri (a three-string bowed lute). Here the rhythmic function is mainly expressed by changes in the direction of the bow movement. The chuniri often reproduces the texture identical to a song, but, quite often, when accompanying a solo singer, chuniri reveals an original polyphonic (three-part) texture of the song (ex. 2).

The intensive sustaining sound of the chuniri and the “chianuri” (two names of essentially the same string bowed instrument, consisting of a hollow body and a neck) renders these instruments’ vocal qualities, though this specific feature does not produce an effective difference when Svan songs are performed to the accompaniment of other instruments as well.

As is usually known by their structure and sound-producing mechanism wind instruments resemble human speech organs. This is reflected in the musical result as well. It can be said that wind instruments are very far from the so-called “instrumental melody” and are very close to “the vocal melody”, at least in Georgia.

Now I am going to touch upon the salamuri (the pipe) very briefly, because as a solo instrument it has neither the potential of a polyphonic texture, nor does it often participate in the polyphonic process with other instruments.

In Georgia the chiboni and the gudastviri (kinds of the bagpipes) can reflect a functional vocal polyphony best of all. Georgian researchers often consider these instruments to be two versions of the same instrument. I do not agree with this opinion. The chiboni and the gudastviri, apart from the differences in their structure and range, also differ by individual methods of playing.

The principal factor of the polyphonic nature of the chibony and the gudastviri lies in their structure. In string instruments in order to produce a single melodic line it is necessary to use both hands, which is an additional problem, because one hand – the right hand - can only produce a type of broken chord-like melody. Unlike string instruments each pipe of the chiboni and the gudastviri can create only one melodic layer with each hand (it is of secondary importance that the right hand covers the finger holes of both pipes), the pipes create separated melodic layers of the original functionalism. In this respect the Rachian and Kartlian bagpipes stand out vividly.

Here the bass part quite obviously tends to get closer to the drone. It is noteworthy that in these instruments the instrumental melody quite often becomes the main vocal melody as well, and the bagpipe-player's recitation is often performed against the background of a bagpipe melody. The Acharan chiboni, unlike the gudastviri, does not perform the accompanying role for a solo vocal performance. It is mostly a solo instrument by itself, and accordingly, can perform tunes of a more developed character. This is why the drone polyphony is here substituted by the ostinato formulas (ex. 3).

The larchemi or soinari, a multi-stemmed panpipe that has survived only in western Georgia, has no perspective to create a polyphonic texture. In this respect it is not better than the salamuri (pipe). Even more, in the salamuri one can sometimes notice concealed polyphony. On the other hand, the larchemi-soinari can produce two sounds at a time (when the player blows into two pipes together which is a widely used technique on this instrument), but due to its specific structure it can only produce the simplest melodic phrases (ex. 4).

Having discussed the tendency of Georgian folk instruments towards polyphony I am going to deal with the issue of polyphony forms that can be embodied by these instruments.

But before discussing the embodying of these forms in instrumental melodies, taking into account performing regulations, the following issues should be determined: What is the criterion that can define instrumental polyphony in comparison with a vocal one? What is the analogous term for "the voice" in instrumental music? How can the varied forms of the combination of instrumental and vocal polyphony be defined?

In Georgia the aesthetic status of instrumental polyphony, which rarely reaches the functional character, is lower than the status of vocal polyphony. It is the solo instruments that the specimens of functional polyphony are the most vividly expressed by, i.e. it belongs to the solo performer, which undoubtedly lowers the index of the above-mentioned degree.

It is rather difficult but not impossible to adjust the functional meaning of the term "voice" to instrumental music; due to the above-mentioned close resemblance we can call the corresponding musical layers of the wind instruments as "voices" with more confidence.

Generally speaking, if the performer makes certain efforts to produce two or more voices while playing the instrument, in this case we have to deal with polyphonic thinking. But the successions of chords, produced by a single stroke of the hand, cannot be considered to be polyphonic music. And the solo instrumental performance, when the functionally individual voices are distinct, is called "**individual polyphony**" (the word individual chiefly means that the instrumentalist is alone). This occurrence can be observed in some tunes performed on the chiboni, gudastviri (both bagpipes), chonguri (lute) and some examples of the change (lyre) as well (ex. 5). As regards the functionally indiscernible chord-synchronized multipart texture within the

framework of a single instrument (the chonguri, panduri, larchem-soinari), we do not view them as specimens of real polyphony. It is caused by the functional indifference of the voices resulting from the specific character of the performance of a single player only, though such cases are rather rare (ex. 6).

As opposed to the individual or solo instrumental polyphony there should be ensemble instrumental polyphony as well. But today Georgian instruments cannot provide any diversity in this aspect. According to recent data one of the important components of the most widespread instrumental ensemble – a duet – is usually a percussion instrument.

Can a polyphonic instrumental part accompanying a vocal ensemble be considered “polyphony within polyphony”? The degree of the functional diversity produced within the framework of a polyphonic instrument pales beside the functional independence of the performers of the vocal ensemble. And what is more, there are quite frequent instances when an instrument imitates the vocal ensemble it accompanies, in this way creating a kind of “replica” of the song. This is especially the case in western Georgia. I think that the function of “a voice” should not be assigned to instrumental music elements which possess some functional independence. To denote the form of polyphony, attested in the instrument per se, the name “duplicative polyphony” may be used as a working term (ex. 7). Duplicative polyphony can also be manifested in a solo instrument. Quite often one instrument can perform the tunes of another instrument. Sometimes the duplicative performance extends the musical phrase of the corresponding vocal performance, decorating it with additional melismatic embellishments. The instrumental accompaniment is often presented as a solo tune and it can acquire the independence, characteristic of a solo performance.

Generally speaking, by their heterogeneous and diversified regulation the polyphony forms evoke temptation to create an array of definitions. Here, we come across a combination of a real or the above-mentioned “duplicative” polyphony of an instrument with a vocal solo or a choir, or a combination of a solo instrument with a vocal solo or a choir, or a duet of an instrument and a vocal solo, or their alternation and so on.

In my earlier works, in order to overcome the homogeneousness of the instrument and the vocal ensemble, I charged a single instrumental part with the notion of “a layer”, which resulted in the creation of the term “the vocal-instrumental multi-layer character”. But, in my opinion, this term should be considered still-born due to its being clumsy, like the other five or six similar terms. I hope that either I or some other scholars will work out better terms to indicate these syncretistic phenomena. With an eye to all that has been said above I will try to review Georgian folk instrumental polyphony according to their polyphonic forms.

The ostinato polyphony may be said to be the most widespread form of solo instrumental polyphony. The continuous spiral development is a chief characteristic feature of the dance accompaniment tunes which is the central sphere of individual performance on Georgian polyphonic musical instruments. The ostinato pattern comes forward in the vocal accompaniment of the singer as well. It is noteworthy that in

the chonguri tunes, it is in the accompanying vocal part that the ostinato principle is manifested; this emphasizes the antiquity or possibly even the initial character of the principle. Ostinato polyphony is not characteristic of instrumental performance when it accompanies a vocal ensemble. The only exception can be noticed in the chonguri accompaniment of the song “Harira”, where the ostinato principle dominates throughout (ex. 8).

Drone in Georgian instruments is often closely linked with ostinato form. I think it would be more accurate to say that in this case the creative principle of the drone is used as a specific artistic method within the ostinato framework. But drone dominates in those bagpipe fragments in which the instrument acts as a background for the vocal part (ex. 9).

Synchronous polyphony (often known in vocal music as “chordal unit polyphony”), at a glance, seems as widespread in instrumental music as it is in vocal performance. But unlike the song texture the instrumental chord texture fails to display any distinct features of functional polyphony (possibly also because of the duplicative character of this type of instrumental polyphony). This is why clearly expressed synchronous polyphony in Georgian instrumental music cannot be attested.

Similarly, the parallel voice movement in Georgian folk instrumental music is limited to the fragmental appearance of this compositional principle.

Paralinear (contrapuntal) polyphony is also alien to Georgian instrumental music. Specimens of improvisations, performed on the chonguri, panduri and chiboni, are fitted within the framework of short phrases and here I cannot speak about the large scales of the independent linear development characteristic of free-contrastive polyphony (ex. 10).

As can be seen two main forms of polyphony are characteristic of Georgian folk instrumental music, they are: ostinato and drone. The role of the former is more diversified and its share is much greater.

### Audio Examples

Example 1: *Khutshabats Daghamebasa*. Unknown performer. (1959). Phono archive of the Laboratory of Georgian Folk Music of Tbilisi State Conservatoire. Tape 65, No 6

Example 2: *Nanaila*. Performer: Gvashaqan Kvitsiani. (2007). Tskhumari (Svaneti). Recorded by Natalia Zumbadze

Example 3: Piece for *Chiboni* and *Doli*. (2006). Performer: Ensemble *Anchiskhati*

Example 4: *Mtsqemsuri*. Performer: Dzokia Aronia (1959). Chale (Samegrelo). Recorded by Otar Chijavadze. Phono archive of the Laboratory of Georgian Folk Music of Tbilisi State Conservatoire. Tape 82, No 13

Example 5: *Sazandruli for Gudastviri*. Performer: Giorgi Michnigauri. (1965). Akhalsopeli (Kartli). Recorded by Kakhi Rosebashvili. Phono archive of the Laboratory of Georgian Folk Music of Tbilisi State Conservatoire. Tape 163, No 6

Example 6: Dance piece for *Chianuri*. Performer Vasil Rekhviashvili. (1962). Chiora (Racha). Recorded by Mindia Jordania. Phono archive of the Laboratory of Georgian Folk Music of Tbilisi State Conservatoire. Tape 146a, No 7

Example 7: *Batonebo for voices and Chianuri*. Performer Ensemble. (1965). Vani (Guria). Recorded by Otar Chijavadze. Phono archive of the Laboratory of Georgian Folk Music of Tbilisi State Conservatoire. Tape 170, No 8

Example 8: *Harira with Chonguri*. Performer Kionia Baramia. (1936). Albom "Georgian Folk Music" (2007)

Example 9: *Arsenas Leksi for Gudastviri*. Performer Aleksandre Jikuri. (1964). Misaktsieli (Kartli). Recorded by Kakhi Rosebashvili. Phono archive of the Laboratory of Georgian Folk Music of Tbilisi State Conservatoire. Tape 161, No 14

Example 10: *Gandagana*. Dance piece for Chonguri. Unknown performer. (1959). Batumi (Achara). Recorded Vladimer Akhobadze. Phono archive of the Laboratory of Georgian Folk Music of Tbilisi State Conservatoire. Tape 97, No 7

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