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“Melos” Concept of Polyphony and Forms of its Revealing in Old Georgian Professional Music**Tamar Chkheidze**V. Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire
8-10 Griboedov st., Tbilisi, Georgia**Summary:**

The paper discusses Organization principles of the multipart texture of Georgian chant basing on the “melos” concept proposed by prominent Russian musicologist Yulia Evdokimova, focuses on the interrelation of horizontal and vertical parameters of chant tissue, shown on the example of different style chants (simple, ornamented, “Chreli” (florid, embellished). The paper presents examples of “melos” polyphony in other church traditions and shows similarities and differences with Georgian chant. In conclusion, it marks out that, the examples of old Georgian professional music maintained specific features at all stages of development and in all forms of polyphony, which is manifested in permanent coordination of the other voice parts with the melodic line in top part, on the one hand, and in independent development and equality of voices on the other hand.

Keywords: *Georgian chant, polyphony, melos-polyphony, multipart texture, voice coordination, “strochnoe mnogogolosie”.*

Richness and uniqueness of polyphony forms of Georgian ecclesiastical chants are widely acknowledged. Notwithstanding that many interesting researchers have been conducted to study mode and texture of polyphonic tissue of chants in Georgian musicology. Studying of polyphony of the Georgian chants still remains as the priority direction. Harmonical and textural peculiarities, characteristic to the Georgian church polyphony is the result of Georgian traditional multipart thinking. At the same time it presents the multipart transmission of the one-part model delivered in the first (upper) part of the chant. The main impulse of the organization the musical tissue of the chant is the melody given in the upper part. The mentioned peculiarities doesn't present only the result of the musicological analyzing, this idea is often encountered in the opinions, remarks and expressions of the best specialist of the Georgian chant art and old chanters of XIX centuries, who kept and followed the chant tradition. It's enough to recollect the text of the manuscript ‘Shtasakhedi’¹ by the grate Georgian chant supporter and chanter saint Eqvtime Agmsarebeli (confessor) Kereselidze, where it is mentioned mode (implied the melody given in the first, upper part) is the basis of chanting, on the way of movement of witch the directions of the other parts depend [1]. Units composing the main melody, given in the upper first part of the chant define the chant structure and the direction of harmonic, or polyphonic development.

The leading importance of the first part awards the especial please for the Georgian ecclesiastical chant, among of polyphony embodiment samples of the world folklore ore professional music, about which we will speak bellow.

In the professional music West Europe the precondition of polyphony tissue arising was historically monodic Gregorian chant. It presented the main organizational source of the composition in polyphonic works of strict stile during centuries. After some period Gregorian chant

¹ In the manuscript (pg.189-191) a didactic text is represented, where the author teaches chanters, explains the meaning of plain and embellished chants to them, as well as the place of plain chant tune in the educational process of chanters.

melody merged into multipart tissue and other parts of the polyphonic texture functionally took the place equal to the *cantus firmus*.

In Georgian church chant voices possess a different function. Upper part of poly-melodic tissues of the chant (where the main melody is placed) always retains the main important, never changes position in relation with other parts and functionally differs from there. Exactly the upper part defines the form division. The rest of the parts (second and third) fulfill subordinate, accompanying² function. Though each possesses its own way of development; it is listened to and perceived as the independent horizontal line.

In the presented paper there are discussed “melos” concept of polyphony and forms of its revealing in old Georgian professional music. To define the main principles of polyphonic multipart organization of the Georgian chant we think reasonable to present theoretical conception which we share and on the basis of which we demonstrate our statements.

Let us discuss the main peculiarities of polyphonic multipart singing. Polyphony presents such a system of musical thinking, which possesses special principles and artistic means to realize multipart texture. There are singled out the following types of polyphonic texture: Heterophony, imitational polyphony and different theme, or contrast poly-melodic polyphony and hidden polyphony. Notwithstanding of the varied forms of revealing polyphonic thinking, the basic principle of polyphonic occurrences are only two, which define understanding of two different conceptions of polyphony. The well-known musicologist Iulia Evdokimova calls one *melos*-type and the other – complementary-imitational [2: 48-55; 3: 134-141]³. In the first - *melos*-type polyphonic works the primary thesis is melodically delivered musical idea, which really exist and the development of which is carried out in musical work. In the second type - complementary imitational polyphony samples the primary idea is expressed by small scale symbol-theme. And therefore primary thesis develops in completely different sound and time space.

Historically, *melos*-type polyphony is primary: it is revealed at the primary stage of the west European professional multipart music, in folk polyphony of the different people and in orthodox traditions of East Europe countries elaborated polyphonic forms among them in Georgian traditional polyphony.

In the samples of the different chanting tradition of Georgia and also in one tradition of different style samples, we encountered different forms of polyphony – from heterophony until poly-melodic type, with crossings of voices and rhythmical difference in parts.

In Georgian ecclesiastical chants notwithstanding variety amplitude of polyphonic forms (which is conditioned by different difficulty of the main melodic outline, it spreads on different parts and creates different forms of rhythmical and interval coordination between parts) all types and style chants are based on *melos*-type polyphony: there is always preliminary given single part and ready melodic formulas for composition. Not only the main idea is delivered in them, but also all those preconditions are concentrated, which define the direction of multi-part embodiment of the given one part sample. The musical composition of the chant in all parts is orientated on melodic development regularities. In other words, in the composition centre there is the main melody, the principles of musical tissue structure are connected with complete and clear demonstration of “*melos*” features. As a result poly-melodic polyphony is received, where its revealing forms can be different: accompanying parts can make duplication of the main melody (ex.1).

² The old Georgian terminology connected with the chants voice parts precisely expresses differentiation of functions of textural lines into the main and subordinated parts: according to the Georgian traditional terminology the third part is called - bass, and the middle - high bass. The correspondence of the rest parts with the first (upper) is clearly singled out in these names.

³ Yulia Evdokimova’s several works are devoted to show forth the “*melos*” concept of polyphony [please see: 4; 5; 2; 3].

Example N1⁴

♩ = 140

კვერ - თხო ო - ე სე - ს ძი - რი სა - გან
 kver - tkhi i - e se - s dzi - ri sa - gan

In other cases Main tune can be doubled by only one of them, whilst the other will develop another melodic line (ex. 2.a.2.b)

Example N 2. a⁵

ყო-ველ - სა ქვე - ე - ნა - სა გან -
 yo - vel - sa qve - ya - na - sa gan -

სდა სმა შე-ნი რო-მელ-მა - ნ - ცა შე - ი - წენა - რა სი -
 xda xma Se - ni ro - mel - ma - n - ca Se - i - wyna - ra si -

Example N 2.b⁶

მღვდელ - თა ხარ ბრწყი - ნ - ვა ლე -
 mghvdel - ta khar brts'q'i - n - va le -

⁴ “Rod of the root of Jesse”[6].

⁵ The hymn of the Saint in tone I “All the Earth” [7].

⁶ The meeting-Chant of the Bishop [8].

or there may be a variant of the main tune, proceeding from the melodic material of the given tune (ex. 3).

Example N 3⁷
 აღდგომისა დღე არს ა ძლისპირი ხმა ა (გ. კ.)
 The Day of Resurrection I rmos in tone I

♩ = 83

103

აღ - დგო - მი - სა დღე არს, გან-ბრწყინ-ღე - ბო -
 აღ - დგო - მი - სა დღე არს, გან-ბრწყინ-ღე - ბო -
 agh - dgo - mi - sa dghe ars, gan-brts'q'in - de - bo -

ღეთ ან, ერ - ნო, პა - სჯა უ - ფლი - სა,
 ღეთ ან, ერ - ნო, პა - სჯა უ - ფლი - სა,
 det ats', er - no, p'a - sqa u - pli - sa,

პა - სჯა, რო - მ - ლი - თა ქრი - სტე - მან ღმერთ -
 პა - სჯა, რო - მ - ლი - თა ქრი - სტე - მან ღმერთ -
 p'a - sqa, ro - m - li - ta qri - st'e - man ghmert -

Proceeding from the above-mentioned, the principles of polyphonic development in chants are connected with variance, the types of which are changeable in different school ('*Svetitskhoveli*' school, "*Shemokmedi*" school, "*Gelati*" school and different style (plain, embellished, "*Chreli*") chants. But the main principle is stable – repetition with renewal, variant modification, embellishment. The chant form is structured on the sequence of the completed structures, stanza, where each structure presents the variant of starting or any structural units.

Imitation is not characteristic to the Georgian chant. Not because that the imitation principle is strange for Georgian musical thinking. Georgian folk music samples prove this. **Rejection of imitation** is conditioned by the nature of the main melody, which should be become malty-part (should be polyphonized).

The main impulse of the imitational polyphony - short musical thesis, or short motif with several pitches defines the idea of the development. It is based upon not horizontal revealing of melodic process, but delivering the symbol-them from part to part by imitation way, by using the

⁷ The day of Resurrection . I rmos in tone I. [9].

combinative techniques of complex sequences and canonical sequences, or round canon. These causes formation of *melos* by diagonal development way. All these is opposed to the melodic development principle and excludes the unity of melodic idea, which is primarily given in the chant.

Now, let's touch the vertical parameter of parts interrelation. It is well - known that multipart tissues functions by ratio of horizontal and vertical parameters, and these parameters sometimes are added by diagonal.

In Georgian chants with *melos*-type horizontal development principal coexist the second most important principle – the principle of permanent coordination in the vertical of other parts with the main melody, given in the upper voice part. The leading role of the upper part in the formation of the polyphony tissues is proved by researches held in Georgian musicology. Also with naming of the parts and remarks and opinions of old chanters. The main part is cold “*mtkmeli*”, person who says. In the name of the rest two, there is seen an attitude a register dependents to the main: the low sound is cold “*Bani*” (bass), the middle one – “*Maghali Bani*” (high bass). In both names it is read the coordination function with upper part, correspondence with upper one. In definition high bass, high implies the melody in more upper register than bass. Thus, texture function of the parts differ from each other, by the principle of main and subordination. T. Bershadsckaya calls such a variety of polyphony “homophonic polyphony” and connects it sub-part (*podgolosnaya*) polyphony [10:17]. These term is relevant to Georgian chant with all parameters. Here polyphonic and homophonic texture features are revealed simultaneously.

Part's textural function (in these case, coordination of other parts with the main melody) are well singled out in other Christian polyphonic tradition. It should be mentioned Russian chant tradition of “*strochnoe mnogogolosie*” – three part chanting, where the main part is cold – “*put*” (way), which indicates the main direction of melody, two other parts make it be placed in the middle and correspond with the main part according to the certain rule. Such binary function of the parts on the one hand independence, and on the second – permanent coordination with preliminary defined melody in a certain part (in Georgian tradition in the upper part), presents the new form of horizontal and vertical parameters relation.

In Georgian chant samples, as in other polyphonic traditions which reveal parameters of *melos*-polyphonic conception (e.g. west European polyphony till middle years of XII century, Russian “*strochnoe mnogogolosie*”⁸) three parts are formed according to the following pairs of parts: the main and one accompanying, and the main and the second accompanying:

Position of voices (parts) in different musical tradition		
Georgian (XI -XIX)	European polyphony IX- XII (till middle years)	Russian <<strochnoe>> XVI c.
<i>mtkmeli</i> (c.f)	<u>Triplum</u>	<u>Verkh</u> – upper
High bass	<u>duplum</u>	<u>Put</u> – (c.f)
Bass	<u>Tenor</u> (c.f)	<u>Nyz</u> - low

In Georgian ecclesiastical chants these pairs are created by upper and lower, upper and middle part. Like Georgian chant Russian polyphony – ‘*strochnoe mnogogolosie*’ is also created by combining of two pairs of part: “*niz*” – “*put*” (bellow- way), “*verkh*” – “*put*” (above-way)⁹ (see: ex.5).

⁸ The phenomena of the “*strochnoe mnogogolosie*” is studied in Konotop's monographic work [11].

⁹ In early polyphony forms of the West Europe these pairs were created by coordination of low and middle, low and upper parts to each other, and in Russian polyphony samples were the main melody is in the middle part, the following pairs are created: middle – upper, middle – low.

Example N6¹¹

♩ = 110

ღმერ - თი უ - პა - ლი და გა -
 ghmer - ti u - pa - li da ga -

მო - გვი - ჩნ - და ჩვე - ნ დღეს.
 mo - gvi - chn - da chve - n dghes.

Example N7¹²

♩ = 120

დი - დე - ბა შე - ნ - და ა - ი - ა ქრის - ტე ღმე - რთო
 di - de - ba she - n - da a - i - a qri - st'e ghme - rto

In “Chreli” (florid, embellished) chants, the distance between coordinating spots in the vertical, increases (ex.8).

¹¹ [6]
¹² [6]

Example N8¹³

The musical score consists of three systems, each with three staves. The top system includes Georgian lyrics and their Latin transliteration. The music is written in a key with two flats and a 4/4 time signature. The upper staves feature complex melodic lines with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, while the lower staves provide a more rhythmic and harmonic foundation. The lyrics are: მღვდელ - თა ხარ ბრწყი - ნ - ვა - ლე - . The transliteration is: mghvdel - ta khar brts'q'i - n - va - le - .

We encounter here so wide spaces that the action of the vertical parameter is till minimum. Exactly such spots present the main moments of part connection and balance the relation of the vertical and horizontal coordinates.

Thus, in Georgian chants the logic of polyphonic organization can be formulated: The formation process of polyphony proceeds in linear, which is created by equal right melodic lines. Each part (especially in complex polyphonic forms) has the own way of development. In poly-melodic tissues of the chants the upper part (where the main melody is placed) always retains the leading importance, never changes position in relation to the other parts, and functionally is singled out from them. The melodic material subordinate to the vertical, synchronic coordination and has a firm support in the form of eighth and fifth. Thus, in Georgian polyphonic multipart music the vertical is the bases of the part correlation and the horizontal is its formation method.

The *melos-type* polyphonic multi-part singing, established in the Georgian chanting tradition, characterized with specific features, are singled out in all types of chants and are preserved at all stages of the historical development of Georgian chant; At the same time presence of similar forms In West European professional music (9th-12th centuries) and in Russian chant tradition (16th century), indicates this is not a temporary phenomenon (connected with a stage of development), as it was discussed only during demonstration of development stages of western European polyphony. It is vivid even in the chants with extremely developed polyphonic texture, such as Georgian sacred chant.

The article contains eight sheet musical examples and one table.

¹³ [8]

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