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On The Types of Christian Liturgical Music in Today's Georgia

Abstract: In Georgia located at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, other religions coexisted with the Orthodoxy from olden times. By the end of the 20th century Georgian-language, non-Orthodox groups had also become more active.

Socio-political upheavals, processes of globalization and democratization, accessibility to interdisciplinary (anthropological, historical-ethnographic, theological, ethnopsychological) approaches allowed to research different religions. Liturgical music – repressed in Soviet epoch – one of the most important markers of the Georgians' ethnic and religious identity – has long been the object of Georgian and foreign scholars' scientific research. As for the music of religious minorities, it is absolutely not studied.

My goal is to study Orthodox chant and liturgical music of some religious minorities (Pentecostalism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptism). In this regard, western experience of research is of particular interest to me (T. Turino, 2008; M. Hood, 1960; T. Asad, 1982; C. Geertz, 1973, etc).

The paper sheds light on the issues of the expansion of society's musical viewpoint from "bi/multi-musicality" angle; presents the results of the observations on different ritual music.

Liturgical music, as a symbol of religious concept, is directly related to believers' outlook and dogmatism, original understanding and interpretation of the doctrine.

Acoustic space of the rituals researched by me unites the music of various styles, genres, epochs, which forms "presentative" and "participative" types.

I think the study of religious diversity will expand the research scope of modern Georgian ethnomusicology at certain extent and in general, continue centuries-old culture of religious tolerance, which justly distinguishes our country.

Keywords: Religion, Culture, Minorities, Liturgy, Music

In Georgia, located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, besides the mainstream religion, i.e. Orthodox Christianity, many different cultures and religious traditions were intersecting ever since the ancient times.

After the annexation of Georgia by Bolshevik Russia in 1921, along with Orthodox Christianity, other religious streams were persecuted as well. It is true that the situation has changed since 1970s, but, beginning from the post-Soviet period, there has started certain harassment of the followers of non-Orthodox streams. Nowadays, the situation has been relatively improved.

My aim is to study the types of Christian liturgical music in modern Georgia. The Orthodox liturgical music, which underwent repressions in the communist era – simultaneously being one of the most important markers for the ethnical and religious identity of Georgians – represents the object for the observation of Georgian as well as of the foreign scientists already for several scores of years. What about the music of religious minorities, it is yet absolutely unstudied.

I deal with the results of observation on the music of several Christian streams (Orthodox, Catholic, Pentecostals, Baptist, Jehovah's Witnesses) on the example of the capital city, Tbilisi. During the study of the matter, I refer scientific papers: T. Turino, 2008; M. Hood, 1960; T. Asad, 1982; C. Geertz, 1973; Zemtsovsky, 2002-2004, D. Dolidze, 2001; M. Sukhiashvili, 2004; S. Jordania, 2004, and others.

During the research, I use the methods of comparative and intonational analysis, intercalated observation, deepened interview.

Origins, characteristics

Christianity has penetrated Georgia ever since the first century AD. In the Georgian Orthodox chants, there are shaped **four main types**: traditional, Zioniac (elaborated and composed)¹, Sameba Patriarchal Temple

1. The terms are mine [N. N.].

style, and so called Byzantine style chants. Liturgies of these types are based upon the chants bearing the same titles and having the same verbal texts.

The nascence of **traditional chants** is usually thought to be connected with the Middle Ages. The Georgian chants, preserved by means of neumes and oral traditions, were converted to the pentatonic notation system in the 19th century. In the majority of temples of the traditional direction, the chant is polyphonic/three-part. The heritage of three different chanting schools (Svetitskhoveli, Gelati, Shemokmedi) is usually performed by a homogenous choir.

As **Sionic**, there is considered the repertoire that was performed in Tbilisi Cathedral Temple of Sioni in 1970s, and from there it used to be spread into the other temples. There can be distinguished its two subtypes: variants yielded due to the fusion of elaborated or traditional style with the European major-minor system and the new composers' creations.

The Byzantine group was formed by the end of the 1990s. The actually two-part singing (a soloist singing against the background of a continuous bass), they are referring to as one-part singing and match Georgian verbal texts to Byzantine, Greek melodies. This has caused much resistance among the congregation going in for the traditional chants as well as among the musicologists. According to the ideology of the group, the unison Byzantine chants represent the chants of *the times of the disciples*², the truth resides in them and other, national polyphonic chants contradict to the nature of the Christian praying³.

The repertoire of **Sameba Patriarchal Temple** stands out by the chants composed by the present Patriarch, Ilia II. Along with them, there are performed the Georgian traditional chants, too.

The modern Georgian **Catholic** liturgy includes traditional five parts of Missa Ordinarium, which is performed in Georgian, with Latin inclusions. The repertoire consists of the short chants translated from the Polish, Italian, French, English, Czech languages.

Introduction of the protestant streams of European and Russian origins starts in the 19th-20th centuries. They bring with them a distinct colouring into the Georgian life and culture.

2. So they used to chant in the ancient Georgia, Tbilisi, 2001

3. Modern problems of the Georgian Ecclesiastic Chant. Reviews and acclaims to the brochure "So they used to chant in ancient Georgia." Patriarchy of Georgia, Center for the Ecclesiastic Chant. Tbilisi, 2002.

For **Baptism**, it is characteristic to appoint women to the church positions. Liturgical music is eclectic. There are performed Orthodox, Catholic, traditional or innovative, anonymous or composed, medieval or newest times chants. Out of the studied streams, this one has the most diverse repertoire. Apart from the live performance, in the practice of this Church, there are sounding records of the chants of Thèze (mainly, during the communion services).

For **Pentecostals**, it is characteristic to use foreign languages for prayers, which they explain by the secret action of the Holy Spirit. Their relationship with music is very much the same. For them it is admissible that any member of the congregation makes his/her own chant or text of the prayer, even if he/she has no professional musical competence. For such chants, it is characteristic to observe excited meditateness [N. N.], which is expressed through the swings of the body, mimics (eyes closed), handclapping. During the services, except from certain separate chants, the instrumental music serves as a background for the preachers of the priest / keyboard instruments, guitar/. Chanting mainly serves to excite the feelings and emotions of a believer and not to calm them down, because, as they believe it, it is only possible to be united with the Holy Spirit through self-forgetting, via certain meditation. In most of the compositions, the refrain is being repeated in the tonality shifted upwards with the interval of one second. It is also characteristic to sing in a loud, expressive voice, swinging the body as one sings.

At the service of the **Jehovas Witness's**, just like the other countries of the world, there are performed only the chants with those theme sets and those melodies, which are determined in their headquarters in Brooklyn.

There is always sounding the piano or an audio record, arranged for the orchestra, which is used by the congregation as an accompaniment. The melody, tempo, rhythm, arrangement – all of these are uniform as they are sent from the headquarters to all of the respective countries and then locally they choose texts to match them. The performers have no opportunities to make improvisations or to show creative activities. As one of the informers supposes, this could be made in order to induce musical compatibility of the performers coming from various countries. Once in 4 years, at a world congress held in a selected country, representatives of various countries sing selected songs in their own languages.

The performed **research attests** that **the teachings** of the studied Christian streams are based upon the Holy Scriptures and Holy Traditions.

The liturgical **music**, as one of the symbols of the religious confession, is directly linked with the worldview of the believers, with the original understanding and interpretation of the corresponding teaching. E.g., for the Orthodox Christians it is important to keep intact their dogmas backed with oral traditions, which is directly reflected upon the matter of preservation of the traditional (in certain attestations, canonical) chants. The performance is made in the form of a **presentational** performance (Turino, *Participatory and presentational Performance*).

Liturgical chants of the religious minorities, included in the research, are performed in the form of a **participative performance**, or else, with the total inclusion of the congregation. In order to achieve this aim, there are elaborated many different means, such as: special books published for the congregation, manuscripts made, or lyrics of the chant shown on the screen during the service. Their chanting is predominantly characterized by the social criterion – polyphony, and from the musical point of view, by one-part singing (Zhordania, “*Interrogo Ergo Cogito*” – *I ask questions, therefore, I exist*). **Catholicism** is relatively open to the elaboration or adoption of new dogmas. Accordingly, for their services it is nowadays acceptable to include music of various national origins, or written by composers of various styles⁴.

As for **the Pentecostals**, their direct, close relationship with God can be revealed in various aspects: as any believer reveals his/her gift, it is explained by the action of the Holy Spirit, that’s why for them it is acceptable that any of the members of the congregation creates music/chant, verse and presents it to the service.

For Jehovah’s Witnesses, music represents a certain tool of globalization, unifying all their followers all over the world.

The comprehensive example of **bi/multi-musicality** of modern people is the chanting repertoire of Georgian Baptists (Hood, *Ethnomusicology*). The same can be repeated about the Orthodox repertoire, Sionic composing repertoire, Sionic elaborated repertoire and the repertoire of Sameba Cathedral Temple.

I suppose that the study of the religious diversity, along with the characteristics of the corresponding chants, shall widen the research area of modern Georgian Ethnomusicology to a certain extent and, in general,

4. Except for the Orthodox churches, other Christian churches are far from demanding women to wear head covers and not to wear trousers, as well as to avoid makeup and jewelry.

shall continue the multi-centennial culture of religious tolerance, by which our country used to be standing out.

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