

**REVIVAL-RECONSTRUCTION OF GEORGIAN  
SACRED HYMNS – ONE OF THE PRIORITIES  
OF GEORGIAN SCHOOL OF CHANT**

Due to tribulations of times, old written sources do not contain sufficient information to cover the whole way of the evolvement of old Georgian traditional (ecclesiastic and folk) music. Though, luckily, there is always the bright side of the picture, i.e. the material whose comprehensive study and thorough research will provide possibilities to solve the difficult problem we face. It is, indeed, a most interesting situation – on the one hand very little information about the unique Georgian traditional music and, on the other hand, the abundance of notated and audio material preserved in various funds and archives. Besides even the meagre information about Georgian music that has come down to this day contains most interesting clues one of which I am going to dwell upon below.

I believe that the problems, existing in the Georgian folkloristics can only be solved by collating theoretical and historical research and practice. Ignoring even one of them will never yield desirable results. Therefore the thesis I have chosen for my work is **theory at the service of practice** and accordingly, I will try to present the results of my research, obtained by the above-mentioned method.

Of the key problems of modern Georgian ecclesiastic music the most urgent is restoring and bringing to life the lost specimens belonging to different chanting school by means of the specimens present in other schools. This is a completely new way of research, which has far-reaching aims and is directly connected with the establishing of the principles of the old Georgian traditional music school, and reviving historical tradition of a chanting school. The task is difficult, but with God's assistance everything can be achieved.

Of the chanting school functions one of the most important is a thorough study of different surviving chanting modes of the chanting schools (Shemokmedi and Gelati schools from West Georgia, as well as East Georgian schools) and performing them live in three voices. It means ornamenting a plain mode studying the ways of according the middle voice and the bass part with the top voice, and so on. It is also very important to develop a habit of improvising in the existing modes with the prospect of creating new ones.

A chant (and also a song, of course) is an organism as alive as a church. Its environment has always been alive and will remain so. Therefore, live music making should be its inherent property. Though there is a simpler possibility – chanting from the written music, which is within the ability of any professional musician. But in such chanting there is much less creativity, whereas in case of live music making the performer himself both participates in the creative process and performs, therefore the performers are free to express their will. Let us assume that we do not possess any chant, belonging to any of the Georgian chanting schools,

and corresponding to their regulations. My method envisages restoring a lost chant (in three voices) of one school according to the corresponding specimen of a different school. A decisive role in this process belongs to experience, supported by theoretical knowledge. This experience is especially necessary as the live church chanting tradition had not been practiced in Georgia for the 70 years, which resulted in severing the ties between the past experience and the present. As a matter of fact we have to find our way through the most complicated layers of Georgian chanting without any practical guidance. Thus my presentation is intended to demonstrate the process of restoring a specimen of one chanting school by means of the corresponding specimen belonging to another.

The first stage is ornamenting of some phrase of a plain mode in the chanting mode variant of various schools. During the following stage the task gets more difficult and the same work is done on the complete tunes. This process requires knowing the practical differences existing between the modes of the available material and the types of ornamentation.

Generally when collating the stylistic features characteristic of different chanting schools scholars limit themselves to defining the similarities but the differences are mostly ignored. It should be specially emphasized that it is the study of the *differences* that enrich our knowledge, creating the pre-conditions to find out the characteristic features of every chanting style.

If we wish to survey the chanting modes of various schools, we must take into account not only the harmonious structure of voice combinations which is more tangible and easier to analyse, but a number of less stable factors, such as:

- 1) Rhythm;
- 2) Tempo;
- 3) Syllable distribution in a tune: for instance, the syllables are not evenly distributed in the process of ornamenting. The syllable situated on the mode axis may change its place in the process of ornamenting, and change its position from the so-called strong beats to the weak beats. It might be conditioned by a different melodious movement;
- 4) Modulation development: in this case a difference may occur not only between the eastern and the western schools in general but between different versions of one and the same tune of one and the same school (for instance in the two variants of *Romelta Kerubimta* ("Let Us the Cherubs") of the liturgy recorded by Koridze. See the closing stanzas of *Dautevot Zrunva* ("Quit Worldly Worries") pp. 87-94; see score No 1. Tbilisi 1895);
- 5) The principle of linking stanzas present in the tune; one and the same tune in the variants of different schools may be linked in different ways. For instance, of five stanzas only three may resemble each other while the remaining two may be built on quite different melodies;
- 6) The changeability of the structure of stanzas (expanding and contracting). It depends upon using different principles in decorating the chant and bringing the voices in accord;
- 7) Emergence of new structural units; for instance, there are cases when while

being decorated *chrelis* create an independent stanza, which in most cases is conditioned by a liturgical function. For instance, on Holy Saturday while performing the heirmos *Nu Mtir Mme, Dedao* (“Do Not Thee Lament Over Me, Mother”) the bishop or the priest had long lections to read which caused inserting *chrelis* in the hymn. Generally, a *chreli* can be a chant complete on its own, and may have an independent tune;

8) Different principles of ornamenting: in eastern Georgian chanting there are two kinds of ornamenting: melismatic, when the abundance of melismas and ornaments occur in upper voices (See *The Liturgy Chanting* by Dimitri Araqishvili, 1906) and ornamenting of the middle voice that has moved forward (Karbelashvili, 1897: 1898); Here the middle voice has a great superiority which enables it to take command over the extreme voices. Owing to this fact, the middle voice takes upon the function of the lead performer, as it happens in traditional singing. In western Georgian chanting the vertical and horizontal movements are balanced. In this case very strongly pronounced is the chief ecclesiastic aesthetic principle of the integrity of the Holy Trinity and the equality of all the three principles. All the three voices have an equal creative function in forming the ornamented musical texture;

9) Different types of chordal consonances: the triad, the fourth-octave-accord, parallelism of two interlocked fifths, and so on;

10) There presumably is another significant difference that has to be proved through scholarly research. It concerns the mode (implying sound structure) differences that exist between the eastern Georgian and western Georgian chanting schools. When comparing them the difference is revealed in the structure proper. It may turn out to be the result of the adaptation of chants in the tempered scale, which warrants further study.

It should be noted that the similarity or the difference between these two main branches of Georgian chanting is mostly a result of the type of “decoration” (*gamshveneba*). As a rule, the differences between the decorated versions of chants are greater than between the plain ones, though these differences never exceed the limits of the chanting canon. It is these “decorated” versions that make up the diversity of chanting styles, which enrich the national culture. Understandably, it is interesting to find out what constitutes the main reason for these differences. There are two main arguments:

a) For many centuries in Georgia together with the Catholicate of Kartli there was the Catholicate of West Georgia, subsequently called the Catholicate of Imereti. The Abkhazian or Imeretian Catholicate (Western Georgia) comprised the chanting schools of Gelati, Martvili and Shemokmedi.

b) Unfortunately, Georgia has not always been united over the past centuries. Most importantly, it was divided into eastern and western kingdoms during a long period of time.

Even if we take into consideration these two reasons the existence of differences in chanting traditions will become quite understandable. Here is a quotation from Prince Ioane’s *Kalmasoba* (beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century) about the great differences between the nature and character of eastern and western Georgian chanting.

“At the conclusion Ioane said to Methodius: ”Imeretian chanting is really pleasant to the ear and the voices sound in such a harmony that they are like a musical instrument.”

Methodius: “You are quite right; Imeretian chanting is more harmonious than Kartlian, and which one have you studied?”

Ioane: “I have studied the Kartlian chanting mode” (Batonishvili, Ioane, 1984: 395).

It is a most noteworthy observation. The dialogue goes on about two kinds of chanting. The Kartlian chanting or the chanting tradition existing in the Catholicate of Kartli (East Georgia), whereas the term “Imeretian chanting” implies the chanting tradition of the Abkhazian or Imeretian Catholicate (West Georgia). Their basic traits are similar, though there are some objective differences as well. As it has already been mentioned above abundant musical material of ecclesiastic chanting has come down to this day. Mostly notated specimens; audio-recordings are much fewer in number. The exact number has not been specified yet, but we can have an approximate idea what material we have to deal with.

The following manuscripts are preserved at the Korneli Kekelidze State Institute of Manuscripts: Ekvtime Kereselidze’s manuscripts, about 5000 specimens; Razhden Khundadze’s manuscripts, about 1500 specimens, Karbelashvili’s manuscripts, more than 1000 specimens, preserved in his own archives and various collections published in the 1900s. As for the audio materials they include 102 hymns performed by Artem Erkomaishvili and 11 hymns sung by Patarava, Erkomaishvili and Simonishvili. Of course, this is not a complete picture, I give approximate figures. The number of the Shemokmedi school notated chants is the smallest despite the fact that the greater parts of audio-recordings that have survived belong to the Shemokmedi mode. Our task is to restore and revive all that this or that school lacks on the basis of the entire material. Suppose we lack some chant of Shemokmedi school; in this case we resort to the tune of the corresponding chant of another school (the one preserved in the copies that have survived) and with the help of it and taking into consideration the above-mentioned factors we begin restoring and reviving the same chant in Shemokmedi school mode. The same method is employed in the instances when some other schools lack this or that chant. It is desirable that when wishing to fill in the deficit in the Shemokmedi school, the experience of the Gelati school should be resorted to as it is closer to the Shemokmedi mode and vice versa, if Gelati school lacks something, in the first place it is the Shemokmedi experience that will come to its assistance.

It should be noted that there are few exceptions. One of them is the Shemokmedi school chant *Ats Ganuteve* (“Lord, Now Letteth), the tune of which can be found in the surviving traditions of all the schools. Though the tune of *Ats Ganuteve* (“Lord, Now Letteth”) by Shemokmedi School is different from that of others.

I should only add that quite frequently as is known one and the same chant can have different tunes in different schools. For instance, such chants of eastern and western liturgies as *Movedit Taqvani Vstset* (“O Come Let Us Worship”), *Tsmidaio Ghmerto* (“O Holy God”), *Raodenta Christes Mier* (“As Many As Are Baptized”) and many others. There is another issue that deserves special mention. It concerns the

stanzas contained in the tune, when in different schools one and the same text is performed to one and the same melody, though some stanzas do not coincide musically. Let us compare the stanzas of the third voice of the chant *Upalo Ghaghadqav* (“Lord, I Have Cried”) with the identical tune in Gelati and Eastern Georgian schools (Erkvanidze, 2001:40; 2005:39). In the first case there is the following succession of stanzas: a, b, c, b and the terminating d.

In the second case the picture is as follows: a is an identical stanza having an additional ending of another kind, b is identical but partly repeating the corresponding western stanza, c – is identical, d is not identical and the final e is not identical.

As we see the difference is great. In its turn, a stanza itself is divided into small melodic tones. Though some differences can be traced here too. When compared, the stanzas may prove to be extended or shortened by the melodic intonations. Such cases are numerous. The differences between eastern and western chanting is so great that we can safely state that there are no two identical tunes and chants; it is that enriches our people and our church and results from a single whole which branches out. The differences among schools complement and enrich one another.

Here are some restored tunes in three-part harmony: As an example I have chosen the widely known chants *Shen Khar Venakhi* (“Thou Art a Vineyard”) and *Romeli Kerubimta* (“Let Us the Cherubim”). There are three versions of the first chant. “Thou Art a Vineyard” has different tunes in eastern and western Georgia. Proceeding from the above I have transferred it into the modes of different school. To make it more understandable I indicate the original first voice variant by using the upper stems, where possible. The Gelati mode of “Thou Art a Vineyard” has been restored according to the Kartli-Kakhetian tune (Ex. 1), the Shemokmedi school mode of the same chant has also been restored according to the Kartli-Kakhetian tune (Ex. 2), the eastern school mode of “Thou Art a Vineyard” has also been restored according to the western tune (Ex. 3) (Khundadze, 1911). “Let Us the Cherubim” of the Shemokmedi school has been restored according to the simple and ornamented mode of “Let Us the Cherubim” from Q 674 (Ex. 4).

### **Conclusion**

Our method of restoring chants requires further research. Work in this direction should continue until most of the issues have been solved, and until most of the specimens that had been lost in different chanting schools are restored.

This is the first attempt to fill in the gap in the chanting mode stock that has been preserved. The existing differences among different schools in tunes, stanzas, and melodic movements contribute a lot to the stylistic and verbal basis of the Georgian ecclesiastic chanting. The realization of this method will enable us to determine the modern Georgian chanting school subjects complete with school programs in solfeggio and harmony, targeted at bringing up the so-called “accomplished chanter”.

**Translated by Liana Gabechava**

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მაგალითი 1. ქართლ-კახური ჰანგის მიხედვით გელათის კილოს “შენ ხარ ვენახი”.

**Example 1.** The Gelati mode of “Thou Art a Vineyard” restored according to the Kartli-Kakhetian tune.

I ვარიანტი Version I

შენ ხარ ვე - ნა - ხი ახ - ლად ა - ყვა - ვე - ბუ - ლი  
შენ ხარ ვე - ნა - ხი ახ - ლად ა - ყვა - ვე - ბუ - ლი

II ვარიანტი Version II

ახ - ლად ა - ყვა - ვე - ბუ - ლი  
ახ - ლად ა - ყვა - ვე - ბუ - ლი

I ვარიანტი Version I

და თა - ვით ოვი - სით მზე ხარ და გა-ბრწყინ-ვე - ბუ - ლი  
და თა - ვით ოვი - სით მზე ხარ და გა-ბრწყინ-ვე - ბუ - ლი

II ვარიანტი Version II

მზე ხარ და გა-ბრწყინ - ვე - ბუ - ლი  
მზე ხარ და გა-ბრწყინ - ვე - ბუ - ლი

\*\*\* ორჯერ ნელია. Twofold slow.

მაგალითი 2. ქართლ-კახური ჰანგის მიხედვით შემოქმედის სკოლის “შენ ხარ ვენახი”.

Example 2. The Shemokmedi school mode of “Thou Art a Vineyard” restored according to the Kartli-Kakhetian tune.

შენ ხარ ვენახი ახლად აწყობა ვეზულა  
შენ ხარ ვენახი ახლად აწყობა ვეზულა

I ვარიანტი Version I

და თავით თვი სით მზე ხარ და გაბრწყინვე ბუღია  
და თავით თვი სით მზე ხარ და გაბრწყინვე ბუღია

II ვარიანტი Version II

მზე ხარ და გაბრწყინვე ბუღია  
მზე ხარ და გაბრწყინვე ბუღია

III ვარიანტი Version III

მზე ხარ და გაბრწყინვე ბუღია  
მზე ხარ და გაბრწყინვე ბუღია

\*\*\* ორჯერ ნელია. Twofold slow

**მაგალითი 3.** დასავლური ჰანგის მიხედვით აღმოსავლეთის სკოლის “შენ ხარ ვენახი”.

**Example 3.** The eastern school mode of “Thou Art a Vineyard” restored according to the western tune.

I ვარიანტი Version I

Musical score for Version I, consisting of three staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs). The lyrics are: შენ ხარ ვენახი, ის ღაღი ი - მუა - ვე - ხი, აბ - ღაღი ა - მუა - ვე - ხი.

I ვარიანტი Version I

II ვარიანტი Version II

Musical score for Version II, consisting of three staves. The lyrics are: ბუ - ლი, აბ - ღაღი ა - ა - მუა - ვე - ბუ - ლი, ბუ - ლი, აბ - ღაღი ი - ა - მუა - ვე - ბუ - ლი.

Musical score for the third system, consisting of three staves. The lyrics are: შორ-ში კე - თი - ლი ე - დემს ში - ნანერ - გუ - ლი, შორ-ში კე - თი - ლი ე - დემს ში - ნანერ - გუ - ლი.

Musical score for the fourth system, consisting of three staves. The lyrics are: და თან-ვით თუი-ხით მზე ზარ ვა - ზრწყი - ნ - ვე - ბუ - ლი, და თან-ვით თუი-ხით მზე ზარ ვა - ზრწყი - ნ - ვე - ბუ - ლი.

მაგალითი 4. გელათის კილოს მიხედვით შემოქმედის სკოლის “რომელნი  
ქერუბიმთა“

Example 4. “Let Us the Cherubim” of the Shemokmedi school restored according  
to the simple ornamented Cherubim”.

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line with the lyrics "რო - მელ - ნი ძე - რუ -". The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment. The music is in a simple, homophonic style with a clear melodic line in the voice.

I ვარიანტი Version I

The first variant of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line with the lyrics "ზი - მ - თა". The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment. The music is more ornate than the first system, with more complex rhythmic patterns and melodic flourishes.

II ვარიანტი Version II

The second variant of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line with the lyrics "სა - ი -". The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment. The music is highly ornate, with many trills and grace notes, and a more complex rhythmic structure.

The third variant of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line with the lyrics "ღუშ - ღუშ - ღუშ". The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment. The music is highly ornate, with many trills and grace notes, and a more complex rhythmic structure.

First system of musical notation. It consists of three staves: a vocal line (top), a piano accompaniment line (middle), and a bass line (bottom). The vocal line contains the lyrics "მგაყ სე-ა-ე" (Mgaq se-a-e) with a dash indicating a long note. The piano and bass lines provide harmonic support with chords and moving lines.

Second system of musical notation. It consists of three staves. The vocal line contains the lyrics "ნით და ცხო-ბ-ო - ველს - მყო -" (Nith da tsho-b-o - vels - mqo -). The piano and bass lines continue the accompaniment.

Third system of musical notation. It consists of three staves. The vocal line contains the lyrics "შე - ლო - ხა - ა - ა" (She - lo - xa - a - a) with a dash indicating a long note. The piano and bass lines continue the accompaniment.

Fourth system of musical notation. It consists of three staves. The vocal line contains the lyrics "ხა - მე-ა-ე - ზი - ხა" (Kha - me-a-e - zi - kha) with a dash indicating a long note. The piano and bass lines continue the accompaniment.



The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, the middle is the right piano accompaniment, and the bottom is the left piano accompaniment. The music is in a key with two sharps (F# and C#) and a 3/4 time signature. A vertical dashed line is placed between the first and second measures of the system.

The second system of the musical score includes lyrics in Georgian. The lyrics are written below the vocal staff and are aligned with the notes. The lyrics are: და - ვუ - ტე - ვო - ა - თ - თ ზრუ ნ - და - ვუ - ტე - ვო - ა - თ - თ ზრუ ნ - . The music continues with the same three-staff format as the first system.

The third system of the musical score continues the three-staff arrangement. It features a complex piano accompaniment with many sixteenth notes. A vertical dashed line is placed between the first and second measures of the system.

\* დედანში ეს ფრაზა ორჯერ სწრაფად წერია  
\* In the original this phrase is written twofold faster