

ACHARA-SHAVSHETIAN *MAQRULI* (BEST MEN'S) SONGS

Historically Achara and Shavsheti are provinces located in the western part of Southwestern Georgia. Today, too, Achara remains a part of southwest Georgia. According to the present territorial and administrative division Achara includes the Khulo, Shuakhevi, Keda, Khelvachauri and Kobuleti districts. Though, historically Kobuleti does not belong to Achara (Vakhushti, 1941:175, 176). It is a constituent part of the neighbouring province Guria (Sakhokia, 1950:17). As regards Shavsheti, this province is located beyond the borders of Georgian territory and is a part of contemporary Turkey (Sixarulidze, 1986).

For certain reasons Georgian ethnomusicologists have had no opportunity to organize fieldworks in Shavsheti. We have only been acquainted with a small portion of Shavshetian folk music. An American ethnomusicologist Peter Gold recorded it in 1968. In 1979 a Georgian film director Guram Pataraya also made some recordings.

Shavshetian and Acharian folk songs so greatly resemble each other that a Georgian ethnomusicologist Edisher Garaqanidze considers them to be parts of a single dialect (Garaqanidze, 1990:149). The best men's songs recorded by Peter Gold in Shavsheti bear obvious resemblance to the similar Acharian specimens of the same genre (Ex. 1).

My research of the Achara-Shavshetian best men's songs was based on the so far unpublished audio recordings I have put down in notation. They are preserved in the Archives of the Georgian Folk Music Laboratory of Tbilisi State Conservatoire. I also used unpublished audio materials and notated specimens both published and in manuscripts (from various music collections and research papers).

I also took part in the 2005 folklore fieldwork to the Khelvachauri district of Achara, organized by the International Centre of the Research in Traditional Polyphony (fieldwork was led by Natalia Zumbadze).

The fieldwork recorded *maqruli* (best men's) songs. Besides the musical materials the study includes published literature on musicology, ethnography, history and philology.

The name *Maqruli* (best men's song) comes from the word *maqari* (person, a man, accompanying the groom), which is of Arabic origin. In Old Georgian its equivalent was *dzmadi* (brethren) (Sulkhan-Saba, 1993:355). The existence of the word *dzmadi* is not attested either in Achara or in Shavsheti. The old Georgian word must have been gradually superseded by a borrowed foreign word *maqari*.

Maqruli is often used as the name of "a bride's song". The song has other names besides *Maqruli*, such as: *Orira*, *Vorira*, *Orirama*, *Vorirama*, *Didi Vorirama*, *Oriloi*, *Voriroda*. The majority of these names come from the first nonsense syllable that opens the song.

The Acharian researcher Alexandre Mskhaladze suggests that the names of best men's songs in Achara vary according to the names of different gorges. If *Maqruli* is

called *Orira* in one gorge, in another one it is called *Dedophlis Simghera* (“Bride’s Song”, lit. “Queens Song”) and so on (Mskhaladze, 1969:64).

At Acharian and Shavshetian weddings *Maqruli* was assigned a special place and special time to be performed. As a rule the best men sang the song either on the way to the bride’s or the groom’s house or when already having arrived there.

The best men’s songs were performed in two ways – while standing or walking. Their performance is connected with being on the road. This is why ethnophores call best men’s songs “travelling songs”. It is noteworthy that in different parts of Georgia travelling songs often have the features characteristic of the best men’s songs. This similarity between the best men’s songs and travelling songs cannot be a mere chance.

As a result of the study of the Achara-Shavshetian best men’s songs the following characteristics common to these songs have been revealed.

The metric aspect: all the best men’s songs are of duple-metre (4/4 dominates).

The rhythmic aspect: in best men’s songs the prevailing rhythms are the quavers (and the punctuated durations) and the rhythms of a march are prevalent. At the same time, despite the independent rhythmic development sometimes the voices (particularly in two-part variants) are shifted simultaneously. During such a movement specifically the fifth parallelism of the interval character occurs;

The performance tempo: best men’s songs are performed in a moderate, reserved tempo.

The performance manner: the performance manner of the best men’s songs is traditionally antiphonic. The manner is indicated by various terms. *Orpiri* (antiphonal), *gadabmulu* (linked), *gamortmeuli* (taken over), *chamortmeuli* (taken over), *gakidebuli Simghera* (chase-singing), or *partiad simghera* (singing in two groups).

The structure: best men’s songs consist of variants of changing stanzas (mostly 8 + 1 bars) connected by overlapping cadences.

Starting of a song: single voice starts the song. In two-part singing it is the top voice and in three-part singing it is the middle voice. The initial intonation (from the fourth of the scale) is a descending melody, accompanied by the glossolalia *Orira*.

The main melody: the main melody, conveyed by the top voice in the two-part specimens and by the middle voice in the three-part specimens, is quite clear. It develops within the range of the fifth or the sixth. Changes to the minor keys are quite frequent. The melody is of a “contacting character” (when the central tone or sounds below it emerges in the melody before the end of the stanza. See Chokhonelidze, 1987:68).

The bass: the bass part of the best men’s songs comprises the 7th, 6th, 5th, 4th and sometimes 3rd grades placed below the central tone of the scale. In all the specimens there are characteristic bass melodic intonations 7th-6th-5th- 7th- 4th.

The Verbal text: in best men’s songs nonsense-syllables dominate over the lyrics. *Orira* and *vorira* are quite frequent. These vocables are currently devoid of any meaning but in the past they must have been the only text in these songs.

Special mention should be made of the characteristic features of Achara-Shavshetian best men’s songs that can be heard in the audio recordings only, though in the notated specimens they do not occur frequently (particularly in earlier collections of songs). These features are:

1. Gradual ascending of the tonal centre of the song from the starting key of the song (without modulation, sometimes called “emotional modulation”). The rise of a key often reaches a tone and a half.

2. The occurrence of frequent changeable grades, particularly the 3rd and the 6th steps of the scale (resulting in the appearance of major, minor and neutral steps).

3. Embellishing the tune with ornaments during singing.

4. The antiphonal singing.

The issue of part-singing and the names of the best men’s songs should be dealt with separately. The voice performing the chief tune, one who begins the song is often called *qivani* or *kivani* (a sort of high-pitched yodelling, from *kivili* – “screaming”, or “shrieking”). The same voice is referred to as *melekse* (“the one who recites the verbal text”, from *leksa* – “lyrics”), *damtsqebi* (“the beginner”) or *tavi* (“the head”); the performer of the *bani* (bass) part is called *mobane*, or sometimes “bass”, and the highest voice has the names of *tsvrili*, *tsrili* (“thin”), *moqivleba* or *sheqivleba* (“scream”, “shriek”).

Most of the Achara-Shavshetian best men’s songs are two-part (this is a general feature of Achara-Shavshetian songs, unlike most Georgian traditional songs, where three-part singing dominates), though there are three-part songs in Achara-Shavsheti as well. This fact is corroborated by the Achara-Shavshetian ethnophores and the researchers of their folk music.

The two-part best men’s songs were mainly recorded in the Khulo and Khelvachauri districts, also in “Turkish Georgia” (parts of neighbouring Turkey with a Georgian population). The songs recorded in Shuakhevi and Khelvachauri are three-part. In Achara-Shavshetian best men’s songs the evolution of the multipart singing from two-part to three-part singing is quite clear. In this connection one Acharian best men’s song recorded in the Khulo district deserves special attention. The song remains two-part up to the last stanza where another, the highest voice, joins in. It may be assumed that the performers must have traditionally sung the song in two voices and in the last stanza they displayed the possibility of performing this song in three voices. Therefore, in this song the tradition of performing the best men’s song in two parts is emphasized, and at the same time the possibility of turning a two-part song into a three-part one is displayed (Ex.2).

In three-part Acharian best men’s songs the formation of the highest voice on the principle of a “high bass part” can be traced. Quite often in rhythmically emphasized passages the highest part is built on the bass part, but an octave higher. On other occasions the highest voice coordinates with the bass by the fifth. In three-part best men’s songs there may be two-part sections where the highest voice is excluded. This is especially characteristic of the best men’s songs recorded in Keda (Ex.3).

Such traits of the Achara-Shavshetian best men’s songs as the number and the names of voices, metre, rhythm, the manner of singing, structure, the pitch gradually ascending from the initial tone, shifting grades ornamenting the melody and vocables occur in the songs of other genres of this dialect. Therefore they cannot be considered to be typical traits of the best men’s songs. But in best men’s songs we come across other specific traits that are characteristic of only this genre. They are: the initial

intonation, the basic tune and the bass part with a characteristic melodic intonation.

The common musical regularities and the characteristic manner of the performance make the Acharian and Shavshetian best men's songs so close to one another that they may be perceived as numerous versions of the same song.

The study of the Achara-Shavshetian best men's songs corroborate the genetic affinity of these songs. Their musical and textual regularities are characteristic of the best men's song genre proper. Further research into this issue in other Georgian dialects may yield interesting results.

Translated by Liana Gabechava

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მაგალითი 1. "დედოფლის სიმღერა"
Example 1. "Dedoplis simghera"

I

გე-იე-რე და გა-მე-ია-რე ხე-მი გუ-ლი გა-ია-ხე-რე შე-ნი ღა - მა-ნი ხე-ლე-ნი
ge-ia-re da ga-me-ia-re che-mi gu-li ga-ia-khe-re she-ni la - ma-ni khe-le-ni

ჰო ჰო ჰო ჰო ჰო ჰო ჰო
ho ho ho ho ho ho ho

ჩემ - სა გულ - სა და - მა - ვა - რე ჰეი ჰეი ჰე ჰე ჰე - ი რე - რო ვო - რე - რა,
chem-sa gul-sa da-ma-va-re hei hei he he he-i re-ro vo-re-ra,

ჰო ო ჰო ჰოი ჰე ჰე ვა ზა ზა ჰე ა ვა ჰე
ho o ho hoi he he va za za he a va he

ა - ბა ვო-რე-რა ვო - რა - და ო ი ა-ვო რე - რა ო - ვო
a-ba vo-re-ra vo-ra-da o i a-vo re-ra o-vo

ო ვა ჰა ვო ვა ჰა ჰე ო ჰო ჰო
o va ha vo va ha he o ho ho

II

წის - ძვილ პუ - რი და - ვა - ვა - რე, სხ - რე - კე - ლი გოგ - გე - ბო - და
tsis - kvil pu - ri da-va-va-re, sa-re-ke-li gog-de-bo-da

ჰო ჰო ჰო ჰო ჰო ჰო
ho ho ho ho ho ho

იერ-თი ფა-ტი-ა მი-ყვარ-და, არ მე-კოც-ნა მოკ-დე-ბო-და, იერ-თი ფა-ტი-ა მი-ყვარ-და,
ier - ti pa - ti - a mi - qvar - da, ar me - koc - na mok - de - bo - da, ier - ti pa - ti - a mi - qvar - da,

ჰო ჰო ჰე ჰე ვა ჰა ჰა ჰე ა ვა ჰე
ho ho he he va ha ha he a va he

არ მე-კოც-ნა მოკ-დე-ბო-და, ვა ჰა ჰა ვო - რე-რო რე - რა
ar me - koc - na mok - de - bo - da, va ha ha vo - re - ro re - ra

ვა ვა ია ვა ვა ჰა ჰე ე ჰე ჰე
va va ia va va ha he e he he

მაგალითი 2. "მაყრული"
Example 2. "Maqruli"

I

ო ო რი-რო-ვო ო - რი-ვო ო რე - ჰო
o o ri - ro - vo o - ri - vo o re - ho

ს ს რი - რს - ვს ს - რი - ვს ს რს - ხს
s s ri - rs - vs s - ri - vs s rs - xs

ა ა ი ს - რე-რა
a a i s - re - ra

ე ი ე და ა - ბა - რე - რა ჰე ო რე რო
e i e da a - ba - re - ra he o re ro

რა - ნი - ნა ო ო - რე - რა ო - რე - რა
ra - ni - na o o - re - ra o - re - ra

რს - ხს რს - ხს რს - ხს რს - ხს რს - ხს რს - ხს
rs - xs rs - xs rs - xs rs - xs rs - xs rs - xs

ღუ-ღუ ჳუ-ღუ-ღუ ჳუ-ღუ-ღუ ო - ჳუ-ღუ რა - ნი-ნო ო ო - რე-რა ო - რე-რა
de - li va - da - li vo - di - la o - de - lo ra - ni - na o o - re - ro o - re - ra

და და ჰო. ჰო.

ო ი ა ჰო ო რი ვო ჰო ვო ო რი რო
o i a ho o ri vo ho vo o ri ro

ქა-ლი მოგვ-ყავს ნა-თე-ლი-ო ჰე ო - რე-რა და გაგ-ვი-ნა-თეს სან-თე-ლი-ო
ka - li mogv - qavs na - te - li - o he o - re - ri da gag - vi - na - tet san - te - li - o

ო ი ო - რე-რა რა - ნი-ნო ო ო - რე-რა ო - რე-რა და ჰო.
o i o - re - ra ra - ni - na o o - re - ra o - re - ra da ho.
ო - რი ო - რე-რა ნა - ნა ო ო - რე-რა ო ი ო ჰო.
o - ri o - re - ra na - na o o - re - ra o i o ho.

მაგალითი 3. “ორირა”
Example 3. “Orira”

I

გა - ვი - არ გა - მო - ვი - ა - რე, ჩე - მი გუ - ლი გა - ვა - ხა - რე -
o ga - vi - ar ga - mo - vi - a - re, che - mi gu - li ga - va - kha - re -

ო .ო - - - - ა .ო .ო - ი - და,
o ho - - - - a ho ho - i - da,

ჩემ - თან ჩე - მი გუ - ლი გა - ა - ხა - რე, ვო - რე - რო რა - ნი - ნა შა,
chem - tan che - mi gu - li ga - a - kha - re, vo - o - re - ro ra - ni - na ha,

ჰო ჰე ჰე - ი ვა - ხა - ხა ჰე - ა ვა - ხა - ხა
ho he he - i va - ha - ha he - a va - ha - ha

ო - რ - ი - ა - ა - ლა - ლო, ა - ხა რე - რო რე - რო, მო - რი - რო ვო - რე - რო -
o - r - i - a - a - la - lo, a - ha re - ro re - ro, ho - ri - ro vo - re - ro, -

ვო ჰე .ო - .ო - ჰე -
vo he ho - o - ho - ho

II

გა - ვი - ვა - ნე
ga - vi - qva - ne

ო ჰე ჰე - ა ჰე ჰე ჰე - ა
o he he - a he he he - a

ვო - ი დე-ლა ვო-ი დე-ლა, ვო-ი-ო, ვო-ი-ო, ვო-ი-ო, დე-ლო,
 vo - i de-la vo-i de-la, vo-i-o, vo-i-o, vo-i-o, de-lo,
 დე-ლა დე-ლა ვო-ი დე-ლა შე შე შე-ა ვო-ო-შე-ა ჰო, - - - -
 de-la de-la vo-i de-la he he he-a vo-o-he-a ho, - - - -
 შე შე შე შე შე შე-ა ა-ბა შე შე - ა - ვა - შე
 he he he he he he-a a-ba he he - a - va - he

ვო - ი ვოი ვო - რი ვო - რი ვოი, ვო - რი - რა ვო - რე - რო ჰო.
 vo - i voi vo - ri vo - ri voi, vo - ri - ra vo - re - ro ho.
 ვო - ი ვო - რე - რო ა - ბა - რე - რა რე - რო, ვო - რი - რა ვო - რე - რო ჰო.
 vo - i vo - re - ro a - ba - re - ra re - ro, vo - ri - ra vo - re - ro ho.
 ჰო შე ჰო - ი ო - ჰო - ჰო ჰო.
 ho he ho - i o - ho - ho ho.