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**A COLLECTION OF WAX
CYLINDERS PRESERVED IN GEORGIA**

In their time wax cylinders rendered a great service to those studying the world of sounds. It was owing to the gramophone and phonophone recordings that the world found out about Georgian folk multipart singing.

My paper is intended to acquaint the audience with the project of transferring wax cylinders on to digital carriers, which was implemented last autumn (1995); I am sure it is very significant for studying the traditional Georgian singing culture.

Pre-History of the Project

For quite a long time the Department of Folk Music at Tbilisi Conservatoire has had in its possession greatly valuable relics of the past, wax cylinders and two no longer functioning phonographs. The condition they are in excludes the possibility of ever making them sound. As it seemed quite hopeless, until last autumn it had not even been known how many wax cylinders existed in Georgia, where and in whose possession they were.

Despite the assiduous attempts of the late Kukuri Chokhoniidze, the former head of the Georgian Musical Folklore Department and Anzor Erkomaishvili, owing to the lack of financing Georgian physicists were unable to build an apparatus for playing the wax cylinders. When all the hope was abandoned, on the initiative of the Centre of Polyphony, the Conservatoire turned for assistance to the Vienna Phonoarchives. This competent agency proved to be quick in responding and in June, 2005 sent its expert Mr. Franz Lechtleitner to Tbilisi to study the situation. A few months later in November, 2005, with the assistance of the Georgian Ministry of Culture it was possible to invite Mr Lechtleitner for a longer period of time (from Nov. 15 to Dec. 15); with the help of his apparatus he transferred the material recorded on the wax cylinders into the digital form. On our part we tried to collect and bring to the conservatoire all the available specimens of wax cylinders existing in Georgia. We know that there were collections of wax cylinders at Tbilisi Conservatoire, in the State Archives of Georgia, in the Georgian Museum of the Theatre, Cinema and Music and at the Georgian Ivane Javakhishvili Institute of History and Ethnology; to those were added the collections of the Georgian National Museum and Batumi Museum of Culture and Art. In this way 528 wax cylinders were collected, but, I think there must be more wax cylinders in some other places as well, such as Grigol Chkhikvadze's private Archives which we could not access.

The beginning of the project turned out to be dramatic. As Mr. Lechtleitner's apparatus was damaged during the transportation, for three days we could not be sure whether the project was ever to be implemented. November 23 brought the first success; it is the day when the Georgian Church observes the feast of St George, hence it was a holiday and there were only four of us at the Conservatoire – together with our guest

and our specialist Archil Kharadze who also was trying to make the wax cylinder sound; Maia Kachkachishvili and I stood by watching. At last luck was with us and work started, though the process of copying was not always successful; unfortunately the quality of the recordings on the wax cylinders brought about further complications, which, understandably, influenced the quality of the sounding of the transferred material. This is how the project, which was supported by the Georgian Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sports, was implemented, the project may be called “The Past that Sounds Again”.

Wax Cylinder Collection Preserved Outside Georgia

About the collections of wax cylinders preserved abroad there are publications by Anzor Erkomaishvili (1977, 1980), Ernst Emsheimer (1989), Susanne Ziegler (1989, 2003), Nona Lomidze (2006). A great contribution to this cause has also been made by Tbilisi International Symposiums on Traditional Polyphony. The last two papers mentioned above were presented at the 1st and 2nd symposiums. Susanne Ziegler’s paper of 2002 was dedicated to the collection preserved in the Berlin Phonogram Archive, in 2004 Nona Lomidze, a Georgian researcher living in Vienna acquainted us with rare recordings of Georgian songs at Vienna Phonogramarchive.

This year’s symposium (2006) is no exception, for the papers of the same scholars are dedicated to the new aspects of the recordings of the songs found in the Berlin and Vienna Phonogramarchives.

Thus, according to the available data there are following collections of the wax cylinders outside of Georgia today:

1. **A Collection of Berlin Phonogramarchive** where, according to Ziegler, 109 wax cylinders bear specimens of Georgian music. The first collection comprises 38 cylinders recorded in 1909-1913 by Adolph Dir during his expeditions to Georgia. On a certain number of them there are Abkhazian, Laz, Megrelian, Svan and Ossetian songs (others bear folk music of Tartars and Turks), as Ziegler notes on four cylinders the Abkhazian, Ossetian and Svan multipart songs are recorded. In the second collection, which Georg Shöneman recorded from prisoners-of-war in 1915-1918, there are 71 wax cylinders with “the music from Georgia”, of which 38 cylinders bear solo songs, two have men’s songs, on seven cylinders there are songs of a male trio from Samegrelo, on 19 there is “a Gurian choir”. About five cylinders there is no additional information. It may be these five cylinders which can explain the discrepancy between the numbers provided by Schöneman and Ziegler (69 and 71 respectively) (Ziegler, 2009:523/530).

The collection of Vienna Phonogramarchives where one copy of Adolph Dir’s Berlin collection is preserved (38 wax cylinders) and Robert Lach’s 49 wax discs, recorded in a POW’s camp in 1916. Unfortunately the speaker provided only general information, so we have no more detailed data about Lach’s collection.

2. **The Collection of St Petersburg Institute of Russian Literature** (Pushkin’s House); songs of the collection recorded on magnetic tapes (or magnetic copies of the Petersburg collection) are preserved in the Georgian State Archives. So it may be

conjectured that the collections of the Georgian State Archives provide more or less complete information about the richest collection of wax cylinders existing outside Georgia.

In the 1970s Vladimer Babilua, a renowned conductor, head of the Phonodepartment of the State Archives, copied the collection. Subsequently, when looking for the gramophone matrices of the Georgian songs, Anzor Erkomaishvili came across this collection of wax cylinders. It was there that he learned about Babilua's having copied the collection, though, as he himself writes, in Petersburg he made a new copy of the cylinders on magnetic tapes (Erkomaishvili, 1980).

Accordingly there are two descriptions of St Petersburg collection, one as a register of the State Archives, which includes every cylinder, and Anzor Erkomaishvili's catalogue, where every song of the cylinders is entered. Their collation reveals definite discrepancies. Erkomaishvili's catalogue seems to be more complete, because it is based on the material he copied himself from the Leningrad collection of wax cylinders. It gives us sufficient ground to think that Vladimer Babilua may have copied the songs from the cylinders selectively. It follows therefore, that, fortunately, in contrast to Berlin and Vienna collections the material recorded on the cylinders of the St Petersburg collection is available to Georgian researchers.

This collection comprises:

a) Nicholai Derzhavin's Recordings

According to the entry in the register there are 14 cylinders recorded in Guria by Derzhavin in 1910, there is no information as to where and from whom the Gurian songs were recorded.

Erkomaishvili's catalogue includes only 12 cylinders.

b) Joseph Schillinger's Recordings

According to Erkomaishvili's catalogue Schillinger recorded 28 cylinders in 1927, during his expeditions to Georgia, namely in the Dusheti district and Batumi; of 15 cylinders there are Khevsurian and Mokhevian songs, and on 13 cylinders there are the songs from Guria. Like Derzhavin Schillinger also refers to the province the performers are from, not mentioning their names. Here there is a great divergence between the two descriptions – the register of the Archives mentions only eight cylinders.

c) Evgeny Gippius' Recordings

According to Erkomaishvili's catalogue the collection comprises 57 cylinders with the recordings made in the years 1930 and 1935.

In 1930 Gippius recorded the choirs of Artem Erkomaishvili, Kirile Pachkoria and Mikha Jighauri (20 cylinders).

In the 1935 collection there are 22 songs, quite new at that time, performed by Ermalo Sikharulidze, Theopile Lomtadze, Ushangi Shevardnadze, Mikheil Koroshinadze (conducted by Vladimer Berdzenishvili), recorded by "the technology" invented by Gippius (37 cylinders); as there were no multi-channel recording facilities at the time, three-part songs were simultaneously recorded on three phonographs, each part separately. In the register of the Archives 53 items are indicated, besides, the names of the songs do not coincide with one another.

d) Shalva Aslanishvili's Recordings

According to Erkomaishvili the collection consists of the material recorded by the scholar in the village of Glola (38 cylinders) during his expedition to Ratcha in 1928, the performers are not named.

e) Ioseb Megrelidze's Recordings

According to Erkomaishvili the recordings comprise six wax cylinders recorded in the village of Chokhatauri during the expedition to Guria in 1932. Ioseb Megrelidze was a prolific man, active in many fields, he personally took part in the expeditions. As is clear from M. Lobanov's reminiscences (Lobanov, 2005) of Ermsheimer, I. Megrelidze was associated with the recordings made by Gippius in Leningrad in the 1930s. In the 1970s it was Megrelidze whom Emsheimer contacted in order to obtain a written permission for working on Gurian songs. Lobanov also writes that it was Emsheimer's duty to write down in musical notation the songs recorded by Gippius, which he failed to do at that time but 30 years later he was ready to fulfil it.

Plausibly, it is another collection of four cylinders that is preserved in the State Archives as is proved by the names of the songs entered in the register.

f) Grigol Chkhikvadze's Recordings

According to Erkomaishvili altogether there are 43 cylinders in his collection, 24 recorded in Guria in 1933 and 19 recorded in Pasaauri (Eastern Georgian highlands) in 1934.

The list presented in the Archives register is incomplete; it includes only 37 cylinders. The names of the songs coincide with Erkomaishvili's catalogue.

And finally, apart from these collections in the register of the State Archives there is and accordingly is preserved a magnetic copy of one more collection, registered as belonging to Schöneman; it is unknown as how it found its way to Georgia, presumably from St Petersburg like others. This issue deserves a special study, but it is quite possible that on these magnetic recordings the POW's voices recorded by Schöneman in 1916 were preserved. This is further corroborated by the fact that in the register and in Ziegler's information there are one and the same names of the performers – the soloists Nalikrishvili, Machaidze; there is also a note referring to two men in connection with the Megrelian song, though Ziegler does not name them; but here there are the names – Khubulava and Kekelia. In short this collection too, like other collections, preserved in the Archives need a thorough study. But so far it may be said, that

j) Schöneman's Recordings

This is a collection consisting of 16 cylinders, on which, according to the register, six polyphonic Gurian, nine solo (mainly urban songs) and one Megrelian song are recorded.

Summarizing all the above, beyond the borders of Georgia there are 193 + 38 + 71, or 302 wax cylinders in all and 49 wax discs.

Phonographic Recordings of Georgian Scholars

In Georgia from the beginning of the 20th century until the year 1952 folk songs were being recorded on phonographs.

The history of recording folk songs has not been studied duly in Georgian

ethnomusicology. Until recently we have had much more information about the collections outside Georgia than about the material preserved within this country.

As far as I know Anzor Erkomaishvili was the first to get interested in the issue (1977); a couple of years later Grigol Chkhikvadze was also attracted by the problem (1979, 1981).

According to the existing data, Dimitri Araqishvili was the first to use the phonograph in 1901, though recording folk songs in Georgia had begun long before the earliest use of a phonograph. The first manuscript of church hymns put down in notation by David Chijavadze in 1863 is preserved at the K. Kekelidze Institute of Manuscripts. The first collection of folk songs for children “Samshoblos khmebi” published by Mikheil Machavariani, dates to 1878. It is the time when folk songs were recorded by the only available at that time method – writing down in music notation by the ear. This is why both Georgian and non-Georgian musicians had had to overcome many obstacles before the phonograph was invented. Then the epoch of phonographs set in. From 1900 until 1915 Dimitri Araqishvili transcribed the material he had recorded by phonograph in musical notation, and afterwards published them in the works of the Musical-Ethnographic Commission of Moscow University. Zacharia Paliashvili, after returning from Moscow in 1903, travelled all over Georgia with a phonograph, and in 1909 he published a collection of transcribed music of the Georgian traditional polyphonic songs.

In Europe Edison’s phonograph was used until the 1930s. In the technologically backward Soviet Empire, whose part Georgia was, the phonograph was used until the beginning of the 50s. The latest available materials of the fieldwork date back to 1952. Unfortunately, neither does this material provide sufficient information about the scale of the work fulfilled by the Georgian scholars with the help of the phonograph. Judging by the discovered collections of the wax cylinders the phonograph was used by Shalva Mshvelidze, Shalva Aslanishvili, Ioseb Megrelidze, Grigol Chkhikvadze, Tamar Mamaladze, S. Zhghenti, though very little or almost nothing is known about the contribution made by other Georgian musicians, composers and musicologists. Some information, though not systematized, is given in G. Chkhikvadze’s unpublished works, preserved at the Conservatoire (at the Department of Georgian Traditional Music). It comes to light that, after the Sovietization of Georgia, in 1927 work on recording specimens of Georgian folk music on the phonograph became very intensive in all the provinces of Georgia; for instance, in 1927 under the supervision of Larisa Kutateladze, deputy director of the Conservatoire, the students Shalva Mshvelidze, a composer, and Shalva Aslanishvili, a musicologist, travelled all over Svaneti, visiting the villages of Becho, Pari, Kala, Lenjeri, Lakhamura, Ushguli, Latali, Etseri and Mestia. In the same manner Georgian composers and folklorists visited Khevsureti, Mtiuleti, Tusheti, Khevi, Gudamaqari, Kakheti, Kartli, Adjara, Meskheta, and Imereti in the period from the 1920s to the 1940s. Chkhikvadze also refers to the expeditions to Georgia organized by the All-Union Institute of Anthropology, Ethnography and Archaeology in the years from 1927 to 1934; taking part in the expeditions were Gippius, Evald, and Kushnaryov (1927), Shillinger (1927), Aslanishvili (1928), Gippius (1930), Megrelidze (1932), Chkhikvadze, El. Virsaladze, Dzidziguri (1933) and

Chkhikvadze (1934). Chkhikvadze also informs that among the recordings there were Gurian, Ratchian, Khevsurian, Mtiuletian songs and instrumental music, recorded on 196 phonograph cylinders. These must be the same cylinders which are currently held in the collection of Pushkin's House and whose copies are preserved in the Georgian State Archives.

As for the wax cylinders of this period 12 cylinders, recorded by D. Araqishvili in 1910, have come down to this day, as for the rest of the collection, no information is available about their whereabouts.

It is possible to suppose that after putting down in notation the songs recorded on the wax cylinders the cylinders were destroyed. Grounds for such note made in the composer Shalva Mshvelidze's expedition journal in 192(?) provides a conclusion: "I have deciphered the song and then destroyed the cylinder". As Nana Mshvelidze, the composer's daughter says, Shalva Mshvelidze's explanation of the fact was very simple, as the phonograph he had was of a very low quality and the cylinders could be played only three times, after which the sound was not audible, and accordingly there was no sense in keeping them. The fact that this approach was wrong is clearly shown on the example of the Berlin and Vienna Phonoarchives, but it is difficult to reproach Georgian musicians that they ought to have foreseen technical progress and foretold the possibility of playing any source of sound half a century later.

Now I am going to present the largest collection of the phonograph recordings of Georgian scholars, discovered in Georgia, which with the support of Vienna Phonoarchives and thanks to our project was transferred on to the digital carrier.

The Georgian Collection of Wax Cylinders

It comprises 528 wax cylinders of which 474 have been transferred on to the Lazer discs without the computer processing, their quality being varied. 54 cylinders appeared to be damaged, broken or blank. As Mr Lechtleitner says after restoration it will be possible to use a certain number of them.

The originals were returned to the owners, each accompanied with one copy of the digital recording. One copy was handed to the Vienna Phonoarchives, with which the Georgian Ministry of Culture, Protection of Historical Monuments and Sports has already signed an agreement about the owners' rights.

As for the collections the situation is as follows:

The Conservatoire's Collection (recorder unknown).

Of the existing 55 cylinders 40 are copied (15 are damaged). The recordings were made in the following provinces: Khevsureti (10), Mta-Tusheti (1), Meskhet-Javakheti (11), Kakheti (8, the year 1928), Samegrelo (6, the year 1950), Guria (1), Svaneti (5, 1 is recorded in 1928, 4 – in 1950); 1 cylinder without any information.

The Collection of the Museum of Theatre, Cinema and Music, Recordings by Shalva Mshvelidze and Dimitri Araqishvili

Of the 199 cylinders 191 are copied, of Araqishvili's collection there are 11 cylinders, those of Mshvelidze's collection amount to 180 (8 cylinders are broken, blank or damaged)..

Araqishvili's Collection, 11 cylinders in all, Ossetian songs are recorded in Roky region, in 1923; there is no information about the performers.

Shalva Mshvelidze's Collection, 180 wax cylinders in all, of which 180 are copied. They are from different provinces of Georgia: Tianeti – (17, 1929), Khevsureti (7, 1929), Pshavi (5, 1929), Kakheti (40, 1929), Guria (69, 1931), Achara (18, 1932), Meskhet-Javakheti (21, 1933), Svaneti (1).

The time of recording, place and the name of the performer are referred to. Besides, there are Mshvelidze's Expedition journals as well, which complements the information.

The Collection of the Institute of History and Ethnology, Recordings by Shalva Aslanishvili, Tamar Mamaladze and Sergi Zhghenti.

Shalva Aslanishvili's Collection, 97 cylinders in all, of which 87 are copied (10 cylinders are broken or damaged). They are recorded in different provinces of Georgia: Svaneti (16, 1932), Mta-Tusheti (8, 1947), Pshav-Khevsureti (19, 1946), Khevi (16, 1949), Mtiuleti – (6, 1949), Gudamaqari (3, 1949), Racha (19, 1949).

Tamar Mamaladze's Collection, 56 cylinders in total, of which 54 are copied (2 cylinders are damaged). They are recorded in Kakheti (28, 1950; 26, 1951).

Sergi Zhghenti's Collection, includes 4 cylinders with Khevsuretian funeral dirges, recorded in 1940. The place of recording - Tbilisi, the Marr Institute.

In this collection there are 2 cylinders recorded at the religious celebration of Alaverdoba, the recorder unknown. 1 cylinder is damaged.

The Collection of the State Archives, the recorder and date of recording are unknown (9 are broken or blank). There are presented Guria (10) and Kakheti (10). Also the well known urban song *Suliko* (1), performs the author Varinka Tsereteli and Various (33, fragments of operas and instrumental music).

The Collection of the Simon Janashia Georgian National Museum. The names of the recorders are unknown. Of the 17 cylinders 15 are copied (2 damaged). They are recorded in Kartli (the date is indicated only on one cylinder – the year 1934).

The Collection of the State Museum of Culture and Art of Achara Autonomous Republic. In the notes say: "Transcribed by Ale Partskhaladze", which may mean it was him who had made the recordings. Of the existing 30 cylinders 27 are copied (3 are blank). There are recorded folk songs from Samegrelo (19, 1929) and Achara (6, 1934). Also 2 cylinders, with the fragments of the classical music.

As it can be assumed from the survived collection of wax cylinders, in the period from the 1920s till the 1950s, Georgian musicians, with phonographs in their hands, visited every province, every corner of Georgia, recording everything beginning from the simple specimens finishing with the most complicated multipart songs, in this way representing the whole dialectal multifariousness of the national musical thinking.

The Future Perspectives of the Project

Bringing the sound of the wax cylinders of the Georgian collection to life must lay a foundation of a systematic study of the history of the phonorecordings of Georgian folk songs. It will mean continuing the activities of Anzor Erkomaishvili on a new level, since without such research it is impossible to create a valuable electronic database of our national heritage, and this is what the present demands. The 21st century is the century of informatics. It is not a mere chance that lately interest in

archives audiorecordings has increased so much all over the world, neither is it a coincidence that the UNESCO has stepped up its activities as to taking inventory of the intangible material heritage.

Georgia can boast of numerous published collections of songs, quite a lot of manuscripts and very rich audiomaterial. They bear witness to the multifariousness of Georgian traditional music, which the Georgian people had preserved up to 20th century. It is one thing to preserve it in a live, everyday practice, another and, perhaps, the most important is its function as a means of realizing the former, revealing its diversity, studying it and placing it at the disposal of general public.

From this viewpoint it is very important to systematize the material recorded on wax cylinders, writing it down in notation, collate the specimens with the corresponding ones in the already published music collections or with the expedition materials recorded on magnetic tapes. In a perfect database there must be information available not only about this particular song, but about its different existing versions and their location as well. Apart from the possibility of comparing one and the same specimens recorded at different times in one and the same province, existing material provides excellent possibility for the study of development of the social aspects of ethnomusical research, also for the study of folklore and accordingly of the socio-dynamics of public life as well. Work in this direction has already started – with the support of the Georgian Ministry of Culture, Protection of Historical Monuments and Sports, the International Centre of Traditional Polyphony is preparing for publication a complete catalogue of the Georgian collection of wax cylinders and the first collection of music with an audio-supplement from Shalva Mshvelidze's collection of wax cylinders¹.

In 1989 Emsheimer wrote how inadequately German travellers visiting Georgia perceived Georgian multipart singing in the 18th-19th centuries; Susanne Ziegler noted that their ideas of Georgian music were gradually getting rid of prejudice which she explained by studying the Archives recordings of Georgian music. I am quite sure that making available the new collection of wax cylinders will promote shaping new, adequate ideas among the ethnomusicologists of the world.

Note

¹The "Catalogue of Wax Cylinder Collections in Georgia" and a part of the audio materials – four discs – were published in 2006; the following four discs were issued in 2007. We schedule to publish rest of six discs in 2008.

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