

KETEVA MANJGALADZE

VARIETIES OF *KRIMANCHULI* (YODEL) IN WEST GEORGIA'S FOLK SONGS

The richness of polyphonic forms and the diversity of singing styles of Georgian folk songs resulted in the creation of a rich musical terminology, where a particularly important place is ascribed to the names of the parts. Georgian musical practice has preserved a great number of terms designating voices. Due to the incomplete sources these names exceed 50 in number. They are: *mtkmeli*, *damtsqebi*, *mtsqebeli*, *tsamomtsqebi* (all the listed terms denote different variants indicating the leading part); *shemkxmobari*, *modzakhili* and *momdzakhneli* (the voices accompanying the lead voice - the second part); *maghali bani* (a high bass); *ertiani bani* (a stable bass part); *khmieri* (bass part); *bani*; *dvrini* (drone); *shemdegi*, *dubi*, *gebi* and *zili* (a high-pitched part – discant, a high voice); *bokhi* (low-pitched voice); *krimanchuli* (yodel), *gadadzakhili* (call and response); *chamomrtmevi* (a cut-in substituting part); *tsvrili* (a high-pitched voice); *krini* (the voice more high-pitched than *zili*); *gamqivani*, *gamkivani*, *qivani*, *kivani*, *kivan* (high-pitched voices in the dialects of different provinces of Georgia); *pirveli khma*; *meore khma*; *momgherali mgalobeli*; *tsinamdzhvari khma*; *tsinamdzhvari mgalobeli*; *mtavari mgalobeli*; *melekse*; *shemghighinebeli*; *kapia*; *tavi*; *mechipashi* (*metsvrile*); *gamachqapali*; *zevani* «*mazhogh*» (a lead voice); *meubne*; *chipe*; *mechem*; *zhimubne*; *damtsqebiti khmai* (a lead voice); *pitskhi khmai*, *shemodzakhili*; *tsqeba* . . .

The purpose of this study is to manifest the essence and timbre characteristics of *krimanchuli* (yodel). *Krimanchuli* is a guttural voice creating melodic figurations and jumps depending on the performer's wishes and his ability to keep the breath. In the songs of west Georgian provinces, Imereti and Samegrelo, *Krimanchuli* seldom occurs and it never occurs in Abkhazia and Svaneti. The most unique specimens of polyphonic singing are represented by Achara and Guria's folk songs, some part names of which are still preserved. They are: 1. *Krini*, *krimanchuli*, *tsvrili*, *gamqivani* (different degrees of high-pitched voices); 2. *Mtkmeli*, *damtsqebi*, *mtsqebeli* *modzakhili* (variants of a leading, mostly a middle voice); 3. *Bani* (bass, the lowest part) 4. *Shemkxmobari* (pedal drone, sounding mostly around the same range as the second, leading voice).

While listening to a music piece one is first of all attracted by the melody mainly performed in high-pitched voices. The basis of Guria's folk songs is contrasting polyphony. Every melodic line and every peculiarity of each voice is distinctly distinguished. The well-known principle of imitation is never present here. Of all the voices *krimanchuli* stands out most clearly and makes a special impact on the listener.

Scholars, travellers and ethnographers of the 19th and 20th centuries often voiced their opinions about this high-pitched voice. A famous traveller, Gvaramadze by name who lived for a number of years in the village of Makvaneti which was considered to be a "cradle of singers", observed the Gurians' customs and devoted a remarkable essay to the subject in the bulletin *Mogzauri* (Traveller) in 1901. He wrote: "The extraordinary quality of Gurian songs can be ascribed to the singing of local birds: thrushes, nightingales and others rejoicing in nature by their whistling, twittering and chanting incessantly day and night in May and charming the Gurians' ears. And the overwhelmed listeners imitate them delightedly" (Gvaramadze, 1901:574).

According to an ethnographer Apolon Tsuladze *krimanchuli* occupies a special place in a Gurian song. *Krimanchuli* or *kirkantuli* as the best connoisseurs of it profess is a lead voice, but like *ghighini* (humming), *krimanchuli* is sometimes performed individually. A youth left alone sang *krimanchuli* on the road, in the field, in the forest. *Krimanchuli*

helped when a person felt lonely and frightened; it drove away fear, boredom. When a youngster was sent on an errand at night he was told: "Go to the place you're bound to and *krimanchuli* on the way".

Krimanchuli was sometimes sung by a shepherd. If his peer echoed him from the opposite side, it sounded like a contest of two shepherds playing the *soinari* (west Georgian panpipe) or *salamuri* (a pipe). *Krimanchuli* was very fascinating to listen to, especially in a moonlit night" (Tsuladze, 1971:13). It should be specially stressed that *krimanchuli* has sometimes been performed individually, that is, it has been performed by one person not accompanied by other voices. It can supposedly be individually performed nowadays. However we do not possess any record of it either in collected essays or in any other written sources. This kind of performing *krimanchuli* was used to express human emotions and had a certain purpose. It is supposed that people used gestures for communication and a dialogue was carried out by a call and response dialogue performed by shouting to each other especially at a long distance. Primitive man at an early stage acquired musical sounds on the imitative basis, on the other hand bio-physiological moments were of great significance. "Joy, fear, pain, grief were expressed by means of producing corresponding sounds" (Gruber, 1960:5).

Krimanchuli is often compared to a cock's cock-a-doodle-doo. Imitating a bird is not accidental. The first part that might have sounded in human consciousness was a high pitched sound produced by an animal, particularly by a bird. It is essential to note that the musical sounds directed to heaven are called chanting. In modern Georgian the word chanting (*galoba*) is associated with birds: it is also connected to the sacred music.

The problem of the term *krimanchuli* was first addressed in a publication by Pilimon Koridze: "The word *krini* (discant) indicates a woman's high-pitched voice, tenor. It is produced in the chest, when this voice goes beyond its boundary, it turns into *krini* and turns, twists, swirls while producing the high-pitched sounds and this is the reason why it is called *krimanchuli*" (Koridze, 1901:3).

The interpretation of *krimanchuli* by Koridze as a twisting *krini* coincides with popular opinion. The term *krimanchuli* itself must belong to a much earlier date.

Ivane Javakhishvili in his groundbreaking work "Main Issues of the History of Georgian Music" gives a deep insight and well-grounded analysis of the etymology of *krimanchuli* as a high-pitched voice of a song. The author proves that *krimanchuli* originates from *krini*. The old Georgian *krini* must be a modification of *knini*, which means small, thin. If we recall that the name of the lowest-pitched voice *dvrini* (humming) ends in the syllable *ni*, it may be concluded that in both cases *ni* does not belong to the root of the word but is a formative; thus *kri* should be asserted as being the root of the word.

Therefore, concludes Javakhishvili, *kri* is the root and *krini* means "thin"; (Javakhishvili, 1938:299-300).

On a closer inspection we can see that the word *krimanchuli* is composed of two words. *Kri* – denoting a high-pitched voice; *krinav* hardly producing a sound (Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani Dictionary), *krinti* means producing a sound, a short one (there are some Georgian phrases illustrating the meaning: *Krinti* – Don't you utter a word; *krinta* means a small piece of salt or sugar and also denotes a small quantity, *kricha* – means jaws, *manchva-grekha* (the verb distort/twist/turn) according to the Georgian explanatory dictionary are the terms connected with mimicry, the interpretation of which is accorded a great deal of attention in the process of a song's performance. Meanwhile it should be mentioned that *manchia* is a white-necked bird turning its neck all the time" (Ghlonti, 1984:344).

The 94-year-old peasant Lomineishvili (bass) says: "Why does it have this name? You should just look at a man's face who sings *krimanchuli* what he looks like. How he twists and turns his voice. One can't guess what he is up to and why" (Fieldwork Diary of

the International Centre for Georgian Song and the International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony, May of 2004). *Tsrialeba* – “They call their parents with *tsriaki* - the sounds produced by chickens (Abuladze, 1973:550) and *kriakhi* - cackling of frightened chickens and the sounds produced by some birds” (Chikobava, 1986:270). As regards to *gamqivari*, this term denotes a very high-pitched voice and the performer has the same name as the voice. The performer of *krimanchuli* and *gamqivani* is the same person (Chikobava, 1951:937). The voice has a specific timbre, a formula of a small range, ostinato, spontaneously rising call and response character summoning people to help with harvesting or other kind of field work.

Krimanchuli differs from *gamqivani* mainly in the range. *Krimanchuli* contains jumps at long intervals (usually fifth plus a third, resulting in a frequent use of seventh intervals). The proximity of *krimanchuli* to *gamqivani* causes the performer to shift from *krimanchuli* to *gamqivani* or vice versa depending on the performer.

All the formulae represent the example of harmonious ostinato. The clearly cut sounds (fifth, or fifth + third below) create a harmonic frame in a three- or four-part polyphonic texture. Vertically intense polyphony is created; that is in a three-part song the impression of a five-part singing is achieved, and a four-part song sounds like a six-part one. According to Akhobadze, *krimanchuli* joins the song when the low-pitched voice – *bani* (bass) - becomes the active performer of the melodic line, that is, the *bani* loses the function of a harmonic basis whereas *krimanchuli* restores the harmonic basis of the song by means of specific ornamental embellishments from above. According to J. Jordania, *krimanchuli* joins the song not only when the base loses the function of a harmonic basis, but it can be frequently heard with another stable voice simultaneously. For example, in *naduri* (harvest) songs *krimanchuli* goes together with *shemkhmobari* (a specific pedal drone in the middle of the four-part polyphonic texture) (Jordania, 1989:144).

Gamqivani and *krimanchuli* are performed without a text, as a combination of syllables or vowels: *i-a*, *u-a*, *a-i*, *uru-a*, *-ho*, *tir-tir-tir*, *rim-ti-ri*, *ri-a-ho*, *voi-i-ai-hoi*, *vo-ia*, *a-ri-a*, *i-ri-a*, *i-ri-ai-ho*, *ur-va-ho*, *ir-va-ho*, *i-si-a-ho*, *i-ni-a*, *rim-ti-ri*, *rim-di-ri*, *o-ia* and others.

Similar to Georgian *krimanchuli*, a yodel is also performed on vowels and syllables in different part of the World: Europe, Asia and Africa. The tradition of singers from Switzerland, Austrian Tyrol and pygmies from Central Africa rainforests deserve a special attention.

Back in 1897, when Tyrolese singers arrived in Georgia from Salzburg, the striking resemblance between the yodel and *krimanchuli* was noticed. “It is amazing that the songs we heard today performed by the Tyrolese singers bear a striking resemblance to the Gurian songs” (Anonymous author, 1897:3). The chords are constructed in European major-minor harmonic system.

In the course of centuries the reserve of the river Moya (central Switzerland) was comparatively isolated. This ensured the preservation of the yodel tradition. Scholars remark that originally the yodel began as a vocal imitation of alphorn music, in other words, people imitated the sound of the instrument while labouring. Shepherds communicated by means of the alphorn. A phenomenon similar to *krimanchuli* is characteristic of the African Pygmies who are considered to possess a specific and rare singing culture even within Africa. The vocal yodel in their music is connected with rhythmic polyphony and is performed accompanied by percussion instruments or clapping. The polyphony of the Pygmies is based on the principle of imitation. This principle comes from the yodel technique. An interesting analysis and conclusions are given in a short article by a French scholar Pier Salle “The Collection of Live Traditional Music” (The article was written by the researcher in 1966 on the basis of recordings of songs performed by Gaboni Bibeac pygmies).

“As it is known, according to the yodel principle the voice is divided into two registers. The singer carries out two chest shifts, the forward and backward movements of falsetto is unchanged in two registers of the vocal possibilities. This sequence of sounds opposed in height and even more so, in timbre (a softer falsetto) ends in a successive fall and rise of the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh’s intervals” (Salle, 1975). Of the materials obtained by us the most interesting ones are ritual entertaining songs connected with hunting and the collecting of honey. For example: an entertaining song recorded at a forest camp near Digbo. The mentioned specimens corroborate the fact of existing the similar phenomenon on different continents of the world: – in the middle of Euro-Asia (Guria-Achara – *kriman-chuli*) in mountainous regions of Europe (yodel in the Alps), and in Africa among the Pygmies. This fact may become the object of thorough study in the future.

Translated by MARINA KUBANEISHVILI

References

- Abuladze, Iliia (1973). *Dzveli Kartuli Enis Leksikoni* (The Dictionary of Old Georgian Language). Tbilisi: *Metsniereba* (in Georgian)
- Anonimous author (1897). *Teatris Matiane. Sokhumi* (History of Theatre. Sukhumi). Newspaper *Tsnobis Purtseli* (in Georgian)
- Chiqobava, Arnold (editor). (1951). *Kartuli Enis Ganmartebiti Leksikoni* (The Explanatory Dictionary of the Georgian Language). Tbilisi: *Sakartvelos SSR Metsnierebata Akademia* (in Georgian)
- Chikobava, Arnold (Editor in Chief) (1986). *Kartuli Enis Ganmartebiti Leksikoni* (The Explanatory Dictionary of the Georgian Language). Tbilisi: *Sakartvelos SSR Metsnierebata Akademia* (in Georgian)
- Glonti, Alexandre (1984). *Kartul Kilo-Tkmata Sitqvis Kona* (The Dictionary of Georgian Modes and Idioms). Tbilisi: *Ganatileba* (in Georgian)
- Gruber, Roman (1960). *Vseobshchaia Istorია Muziki* (The General History of Music), part 1. Moscow: *Muzgiz* (in Russian)
- Gvaramadze, Konstantine (1901). *Guria* (Guria). *Mogzauri* (The Traveller), ## 6-7:573-574 (in Georgian)
- Javakhishvili, Ivane (1938). *Kartuli Musikis Istorია Dziritadi Sakitkhebi* (Main Issues of the History of Georgian Music). Tbilisi: *Federatsia* (in Georgian)
- Jordania, Joseph (1989). *Gruzinskoe Traditsionnoe Mnogogolosie v Mezhdunarodnom Kontekste Mnogogolosnikh Kultur* (Georgian Traditional Polyphony in the International Context of Polyphonic Cultures. Problem of the Origins of Polyphony). Tbilisi University Press (in Russian with English summary)
- Koridze, Pilimon (1901). *Kartuli Musikis Shesakheb* (On Georgian Music) The *Iveria* newspaper, # 96, p. 3 (in Georgian)
- Pataridze, Ramaz (1980). *Kartuli Asomtavruli* (The Georgian Script) Tbilisi: *Nakaduli* (in Georgian)
- Sale, Pier (1975). *Jodel et Proc Edes Contrapunctiques des Pygmees* (Yodel and Contrapuntal Performance among Pygmies). The article was translated from French into Georgian by Nino Kalanadze in 1999 (manuscript from the Archive of Tbilisi State Conservatoire)
- Tsuladze, Apolon (1971). *Etnograpiuli Guria* (The Ethnographic Guria). Tbilisi: *Sabchota Sakartvelo* (in Georgian)