

# №28

The  
V. Sarajishvili  
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B U L L E T I N

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## **Ethnomusicological Life of Georgia**

(January-June, 2020)

### ***Lectures, Seminars, Meetings, Workshops, Presentations, etc***

**20.01.2020** – Folklore Hall was opened in the second building of the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia.

**28.01.2020** – Ensemble Rustavi participated in the presentation of the three-volume publication “Georgia, History, Culture, Ethnography” (editorial group headed by Anzor Erkomaishvili) at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

**24.02.2020** – Screening of the documentary “Jvarioni” dedicated to the revival of a Tushetian-Khevsuretian tradition at the State Folklore Center of Georgia.

**18.03.2020** – Online Open Day at Giorgi Mtatsmindeli Higher School of Chanting.

**30.03.2020** – The State Folklore Centre of Georgia launched a social campaign “Folklore for You”. As part of “Stay at Home” the campaign called for singers to challenge each other by singing and posting videos on social media.

**04.04.2020** – Giorgi Mtatsmindeli Higher School of Chanting launched a social campaign “Spread a folk song, not a virus” on FB.

**10.04.2020** – Ensemble Shavnabada and the First Channel of Georgian Television released a multi-voiced music message to the world – “You are not alone” in 40 languages. The video features the message in 40 languages of the world and the employees of the First Channel singing “Mravalzhamier” together with Shavnabada.

**01.05.2020-18.05.2020** – On the occasion of the International Museum Day, the Museum of Georgian Folk Song and Instruments of the Arts Palace launched a social campaign “Play the exhibit”. As part of the campaign, the videos of 11 instruments were uploaded to the museum's Facebook page, where the performers told the story of particular instrument and played it.

**12.06.2020** – Student Scientific Seminar “The Issues of Christian Theology and Musicology” dedi-

cated to the memory of Manana Andriadze – well-known Georgian musicologist at Giorgi Mtatsmindeli Higher School of Chanting.

**16.06.2020** – Presentation of the first audio album of trio Khelkhvavi from Ozurgeti municipality (Guria region) was held in village Dvabzu.

Through the Zoom platform Ethnomusicologist Nino Naneishvili conducted online master classes on the following topics:

**09.05.2020-10.05.2020** – Georgian lullabies

**16.05.2020-17.05.2020** – Georgian wedding rituals, traditions and songs

**05.23.2020\_24.05.2020** – Rituals and songs for weather management

**30.05.2020-31.05.2020** – Rituals, dances, symbols and songs related to the sun

**06.06.2020-07.06.2020** – Work songs and rituals

**13.06.2020-14.06.2020** – Sacred hymns

**20.06.2020-21.06.2020** – Urban songs

**27.06.2020-28.06.2020** – Christmas traditions, sacred hymns and folk songs

**17.05.2020** – Joint installation “Sacral Technology” of ensemble Ialoni and Czech writer-designer Adéla Součková.

### ***Concert Tours***

**09.01.2020** – Ensemble Gorda's solo concert at Lithuanian National Philharmonic as part of the 16<sup>th</sup> International Festival “Orthodox Christmas in Lietuva”.

**10.01.2020-17.01.2020** – Male ensemble Eles of Keda municipality participated in the festival for Exchanging National Traditions and Customs in the city of Kremenets (Ukraine) at the invitation of the mayor Alexei Kovalchuk.

**29.01.2020-06.02.2020** – At the invitation of “Drahim Association” singer-chanters choir Sathanao participated in the realization of two basic musical projects in Israel: four workshops in Galilee, one concert in Khaifa and one concert in Tel-Aviv.

**30.01.2020** – State Ensemble Basiani participated in the 2020 CTM Festival in Berlin with a new project “Chela”, realized specially for the festival together with electronic music performer Beste Aydin.

**13.02.2020-17.02.2020** – Ensemble Me Rustveli performed two solo concerts in Panevezis (Lithuania ) as part of the events for the Independence Day of the country.

***Concerts, Evenings, Exhibitions, Jubilees***

**10.01.2020** – Concert of ensemble Paatara Kakhi at Telavi Theatre.

**12.01.2020** – Concert of Tbilisi folk ensembles in the First Republic Square as part of New Year concerts.

**17.01.2020** – Exhibition “Folk instruments in Miniature Art” at the Museum of Folk and Applied Arts of the Arts Palace.

**26.01.2020** – Evening of Megrelian folk music at the Museum of Georgian Folk Song and Instruments of the Arts Palace as part of the project “Singing Georgia”.

**26.01.2020** – San Domenico Theatre in the city of Crema hosted a solo concert of Song and Dance Ensemble Nanila at St. Nino Church Florence.

**28.01.2020** – The Folklore State Centre hosted performance-presentation “Christmas traditions of foreign countries” of a female studio (dir. Tatiana Megrelidze) of the Chanting University.

**02.02.2020** – Evening of sacred hymns dedicated to Saint Ekvtime (Kereselidze) the Confessor at the Hall of Davit Gamrekeli Mtskheta School of Art.

**02.02.2020** – Concert of Ambrolauri Choirmaster’s school choir dedicated to the Day of Saint Ekvtime (Kereselidze) the Confessor at Ambrolauri Centre of Culture.

**12.02.2020** – 16<sup>th</sup> reporting concert of Ilia University student choir at the Hall of Ilia State University.

**26.02.2020** – Presentation of the Audio album “Discover Georgia through Traditional Music” and concert with the participation of folk ensembles Adilei, Anchiskhati, Didgori, Conservatoire ensemble, Patara Kakhi, Sakhioba and solo performers at the Grand Hall of Tbilisi State Conservatoire.

**28.02.2020** – Reporting concert of ensemble Rekheuli at the Hall of Ozurgeti Folklore Centre.

**19.03.2020** – State Ensemble of Folk Song Basiani held a live online solo concert on its Facebook page.

***Publications***

Georgian Chanting Foundation published *Catalogue of instruments* of the State Museum of Georgian Folk Song and Musical instruments



**Trio Khelkhvavi’s first audio album** was released with the financial support of **Ozurgeti Municipality City Hall**



**Ensemble Shavnabada** released the collection *Easter Chants* notated and recorded by individual voices



*Prepared by*  
**Sopiko Kotrikadze**

## *Grandmasters of Georgian Folk Song are Slowly Leaving Us*

### **Andro papa**

*Andro Simashvili a well-known and beloved by all, a great master of Georgian folk song and a true beneficent of Kakhetian song, passed away a few months ago, in December 2019. Fortunately, his work has worthy successors who will never forget Andro Papa's heritage ... Among them are brothers Beka and Gocha Bidzinashvili, who devotedly serve Kartli-Kakheti folk music and thereby worthily continue the traditions of the great teacher. We find **Beka Bidzinashvili's** recollection very interesting; Beka developed into a serious singer in Andro Papa's hands and was by his side until the last day of his life...*

I first saw Andro Papa on TV, I was a little boy then and didn't sing folk songs yet. That was a meeting with old singers, my mother called us: "Look what great people." I remembered Anzor Erkomaishvili, Levan Abashidze (later my first teacher of folk song) and Andro Simashvili. Then I couldn't even imagine that in a few years they would become my closest people and great teachers, that life would connect me so closely with them. In 1999 I started singing in the Telavi Boys' Folk ensemble "Patara Kakhi" under the direction of Levan Abashidze (I will write a memoir about him in future), From 2001, I was a chanter at Alaverdi church choir, where Andro Papa taught us singing from 2002. From the very beginning, folk songs meant more to me than just music. Performing the song well was not an end in itself; on the contrary, it was then that something important began what I didn't realize then. Later, relations with people like Andro Papa made me realize that singing is a way of life; it is the highest form of relations and a source of great love, joy, hope and encouragement.

Of course, from the very beginning, I could not understand the greatest personality of Andro Papa. During lessons, in many cases, his approaches seemed unacceptable to me because

he taught us on a completely different principle than I had known. All of this slowly became understandable to me, and only now do I realize that his approach was very correct and natural, that was exactly how the song was transmitted from generation to generation in old days. Thanks to my relations with him, I also realized what a great person he was, how much love he had for his country, his ancestors, his traditions and folk songs. I must say that it is thanks to Andro Papa that I connected my life with Georgian songs and chants. By his personal example, he showed me the great importance of this work, and I will always be grateful for that to him.



**Andro Simashvili**

From 2011, after I finished my studies in Tbilisi and returned to Kakheti I was with him all the time. Over these years, I remember his anniversaries when, thanks to him, his cousin Lily Simashvili, nephew Givi Simashvili and other relatives, the unique musical traditions of Simashvili family came to life in front of me.

Andro Papa loved to tell interesting stories. It seemed to us that sometimes it was too much. It was difficult for us to hear the same story several times, however, now I realize that he told the story, especially the one about a song, from different angles and always added something new and important, which further deepened my knowledge. He taught singing on the same principle. Therefore, I know several variants of the songs that he taught. He possessed most



interesting secrets of the folk song and great performing diversity, he was an amazing improviser, but he rarely used this talent. When singing, he led in the way to help you and make you feel good ... He was like that in life too. Once, when we were singing “Artanul Alilo”, I started ornamentations from the second stanza, and overdid. The more I did, the more he did too. In the third stanza we got very excited, I could feel that he was giving me freedom and following me, it was then that I most of all felt his ability to improvise. He made the ornaments that I had never heard of before and added amazingly elevated mood to the song. When we finished he said: “This is singing with ornamentation.”



**Andro Simashvili with Beka Bidzinashvili and the Ensemble Shilda**

Andro Simashvili was devoted to his country and people; his vision always was large-scale and universal, at the same time, he was extremely humble, simple, modest and forgiving, had an amazing sense of humor. Along with inner purity, he was also very religious. He loved church, had great respect for the Patriarch. In last years he received the Eucharist several times. After receiving the Eucharist, when we no longer had any hope of his recovery, I witnessed the bedridden man get up and even sing. He loved life immensely; he was a man of principles, with a fighting spirit. He had a special respect for Anzor Erkomaishvili, trusted him. I did not see his similar attitude towards anyone else. He greatly appreciated Erkomaishvili’s contribution to folk song and it was a great lesson for me too.

I well remember that Andro Papa’s 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated in the house of his son Elizbar in Telavi. There also was his other son Avto, who devotedly and patiently looked after him until his passing. As always, Andro Papa himself was a tamada at the party. He drank a little, moderately. Among the guests, there was 89-year-old Ushangi Sharvashidze – an excellent top voice, Andro’s singing partner in recent years. I will never forget their long “Kakhuri mravalzhamieri”, which, that day, they sang amazingly with a completely different feeling. It was his last birthday which we celebrated together.

Along with being an excellent singer and choirmaster, Andro papa was a distinguished tamada and a good connoisseur of Georgian table tradition. He preserved and transmitted to us the great culture and traditions of his ancestors. It was the Simashvili family who preserved Prince Karalashvili's singing manner and style. He had the greatest respect and gratitude of the Karalashvilis for their care about his grandfather and uncles. His subtle attitude towards his grandfather and other family members deserves special mention.

I spent almost twenty years with Andro Papa, I learned a lot from him and I think he fulfilled his mission, transmitted to us the lively singing tradition of Artana, and left this world having done his duty.

I would like to express my gratitude to Mrs. Nana Gotua and Mr. Vano Chkhartishvili for everything they did for Andro Papa. In the last years, it was thanks to their support that Andro Papa could come to rehearsals from Artana to Telavi, for which he was grateful.

Years ago he told us: “If you ever revive folk song in Artana, I will never die. In his face, a greatest beneficent of Kartli-Kakhetian song left us. To be honest: I didn’t think I would miss him so much and grieve over his passing. As time goes on, I become more and more aware that I no longer have a big supporter beside me, a man who loved the folk song “more than I do.” His last words were: “Don't forget songs.” It is his self-sac-

rificing love and devotion that gives us – young people the strength to do more and more and serve folk music suitably.

I would like to thank the Municipality, Culture Service and the Cultural Center of Telavi, on whose initiative Andro Simashvili's star was opened in Telavi in the summer of 2019, and children's folklore circle has functioned since January 2020, in Andro papa's native village of Artana, the generation trained there will duly continue the rich singing heritage of Artana, brought to us thanks to Andro Papa's great effort.

### *About One Publication*

## Catalogue of Instruments

Catalogue of instruments is a joint publication of the Georgian Folk Song and Instrument Museum of the Art Palace and the Georgian Chanting Foundation. This bilingual book was prepared by the efforts of Georgian and foreign specialists. The book consists of two parts; the first part is a photo album, and the second – the catalogue. The photo album comprises over 370 photos of 150 instruments. We did our best to present in the album the instruments of all kinds, groups or subgroups preserved in the museum. However, sadly, the format of the publication did not allow to include all the instruments. When classifying the instruments, we were guided by the classification of famous ethnomusicologists – organologists: Erich von Hornbostel and Curt Sachs. Accordingly, the instruments were divided into the following groups: idiophones (producing the sound itself), membranophones (instruments with membrane), chordophones (string instruments), aerophones (wind instruments). A separate group consisted of the collection of mechanical instruments.

The second part of the publication is the catalogue, which provides the data on all instruments (286 units in total) preserved in the Museum of Georgian Folk Song and Instruments. These are: serial and registration numbers of the

instrument, identity of the master, date and place of creation, material, dimensions and current condition of the exhibit. Interested readers can see the complete information about the instrument in the second part of the publication according to the catalogue number indicated in parentheses next to the photo of the instrument in the photo album.



The book comprises Georgian, Oriental and European instruments. From the fund of Georgian Instruments here presented are salamuri, larchemi, soinari, buki, pilili, doli, दौरا, chianuri, changi, chonguri, panduri..... It is noteworthy that among them is diplipito from Ilia Chavavadze's family; and chonguri from Akaki Khorava's private collection. The museum also holds many instruments of ethnic minorities living in Georgia: zarb, shofar, saz, tar, kamancha, oud, zurna, duduki, etc. From the fund of European instruments presented are a portable piano, player piano (pianola), pump organs, Russian balalaikas, Russian and Italian mandolins, also a collection of mechanical instruments – orchestrions, musical chests and various barrel organs.

This is the first such publication in Georgia. We think that this book will be an important acquisition for researchers and performers, for people interested in traditional music and museums. The material collected here will contribute to the popularization of Georgian as well as other musical instruments and instrumental music common in Georgia and will help to incorporate

the collections of the Museum of Georgian Folk Song and Instruments into scientific circulation.

**Sopiko Kotrikadze**

*A compiler of the catalogue  
an employee at the Museum of Georgian  
Folk Song and Instruments of the Art Palace*

### ***New Traditional Ensemble***

#### **Quartet Ranina**

*Quartet Ranina is only 2 years old, but has already attracted listeners' attention and gained their love. Soso Kopaleishvili, the leader of the quartet, talks about the group.*

**M.K.** – What made you decide to create an ensemble?

**S.K.** – First of all, thank you for your interest in us. The reason for creating our collective may sound trivial, but let me tell you that great love of Georgian traditional music, and good music, in general, the desire to popularize it. Obviously, this idea had long driven each of us individually and, in the end, connected us to each other. Our source of inspiration was and is Georgian traditional music and the style of American barbershop quartet. This is why Ranina's repertoire and performance style are diverse – includes examples of Georgian folk songs and sacred chants, as well as Georgian urban folklore, pop songs in retro style and jazz compositions.

**M.K.** – When and how did it all start?

**S.K.** – Before becoming an ensemble, we participated in various events that led to the desire to form a group and establish a high performance standard. This is how quartet Ranina was created in early 2018. Initially with different, but currently – stable membership. During these 2 years we meet almost every day, expand and refine our repertoire, often participate in concerts, salon evenings, TV and radio shows, we go on concert tours; this has already brought recognition to our young quartet.

**M.K.** – The name of the ensemble is a glossolalia, widely encountered in Georgian traditional music ... What can you say about it?

**S.K.** – The idea of calling the group Ranina belongs to Nikoloz Kirvalidze – a well-known singer, a member of ensemble Shvidkatsa. We wanted our name to justify our work and, at the same time, be easy to pronounce. For some reason, we think that of all Georgian glossolalia, *ranina* best expresses the character of our ensemble and that is why we like this name very much.

**M.K.** – Please introduce the members of the ensemble, their profession.

**S.K.** – The members of the quartet Ranina are not strangers to the folklore community. Our average age is 25-35 years. We are all united by a close connection with Georgian traditional music since an early age, which has determined our professional interests.

The first voice of the ensemble is Tornike Kandelaki. He is 29 years old; Bachelor in church music by education. Despite his age, he is a very experienced choirmaster and director of church choir.

I, Soso Kopaleishvili am second voice, oldest member of the ensemble, theologian, bachelor of church music, director of folk ensemble and church choir, manager.

Saba Peikrishvili, the youngest member of the quartet, is 26 years old, good baritone. By profession he is a folk and church choirmaster and conductor.

Our bass Beka Kemularia is a culture manager by profession; accordingly, he deals with material and technical issues in the ensemble.

**M.K.** – In terms of stylistic diversity, what do you prefer when selecting the repertoire?

**S.K.** – First of all, I would like to say that we are attracted to old, authentic, as well as new, modern songs. This explains the diversity of Ranina. Along with famous or lesser-known Georgian folk songs, sacred chants and urban music, our repertoire also includes the examples of modern composers. As mentioned above, we also perform songs in the style of American barbershop quartet; however, here too, we try to offer listeners

good and more polyphonically developed examples, often with our own interpretation.



**Quartet Ranina**

**M.K.** – As far as I know, you were a member of several folk ensembles in the past. Did this affect main direction of your group?

**S.K.** – Yes, it is true, at different times each of us was and some still are members of various Ensembles, such as ensembles: Sakhioba, Erisioni, Didgori, Varazi, Aghsavali, Lasharela, Ertoba, Mdzlavari, Odoya, M. Balanchivadze State Choir and others.

Naturally, the years spent in such ensembles brought us a great experience and played important role in the professional development for each of us.

**M.K.** – Please tell us about Ranina’s creative life.

**S.K.** – As I have already noted, Ranina has been very active during these 2 years. We meet very often and rehearse for hours directly as well as remotely. In this short period of time, we have held many concerts private and public, commercial and charitable both in Georgia and abroad. The latter gives us special joy, because with the meetings and small concerts held at nursing homes or penitentiary institutions, we, to some extent, bring joy into the lives of people in need. I would like to emphasize our close relations with foreigners, for whom we often hold concerts and

master classes; deliver lectures to help them get familiarized with traditional music.

We have shot some small and one big clip.

It can be said that a very interesting CD album was born, with the creation of Ranina. It reflects the diversity of our repertoire, as much as possible, the enclosed booklet contains complete information on Georgian traditional music in two languages. I think this album will be an interesting acquisition, especially for our foreign listeners.

**M.K.** – Since foreigners who come to Georgia are so interested in your work, you probably have invitations from abroad.

**S.K.** – Yes, the ensemble has already had several invitations. We performed almost 10 concerts in two weeks in Aachen (Germany). Our presence at the Art Festival there was followed by an unusual resonance – a larger-scale step has been planned further, which will include several dozen concerts and various cultural activities in Central European countries. We also have invitations from the US and Cyprus. We were supposed to travel to Budapest in May, but the planned activities were cancelled due to the global pandemic.

**M.K.** – Do you also have sacred hymns in the repertoire or do you chant at the church?

**S.K.** – Yes, we all chant at church. We chanted in the choirs of Mama Daviti church on Mtatsminda, at Kashueti church, Metekhi church of the Mother of God. At this point, sadly, we have stopped under global pandemic. From the day we met, we agreed that from time to time Ranina would take part in the Divine services of various dioceses or parishes. Which we already did in Khoni, Bolnisi, Ghoubani Monastery in Tetrtskaro Diocese and Saba Gantsmendili Monastery in Tbilisi ... By the way, we also chanted during the service at the church of a penitentiary institution... Given current reality, we continue to take similar steps, though, eventually, we will probably select one parish, one church.

**M.K.** – I know it is difficult in such a situation, but what do you plan to do after the situation is resolved?



**S.K.** – We had very big plans (still have). But COVID-19 left a serious mark on us. Currently, it is very difficult to predict the activities planned for 2020 and 2021. But let me tell you one thing for sure: we will not stop. We want to enrich the repertoire, make interesting clips and create compositions tailored to us. By the way, when composer Marika Kvaliashvili listened to us, she suggested creating a song, which we look forward to.

**M.K.** – We wish you success!

*Interviewed by Maka Khardziani*

### *Foreign Performers of Georgian Folk Music*

## **Knight family Ensemble from Canada**

*Foreigners' interest in Georgian traditional culture counts long history, however, in recent decades Georgian folklore has attracted an unprecedented number of foreign musicians, researchers and singers. Among them is Matthew Knight, a Canadian ethnomusicologist who shared the love of Georgian song with his family and continues Georgian tradition of family music-performance with great love in Canada.*

Gamarjoba, I'm Matthew Knight, an ethnomusicologist from Canada. In 2019, I received my Ph.D. from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign after writing a dissertation about music tourism in Svaneti. My wife Yok and I lived in Georgia with our daughter Rosa for most of 2015 and 2016. I already introduced myself and my research in issue 21 of this Bulletin, but I've been asked to describe my family and our adventures with Georgian music.

Yok and I met in the music department at the University of Manitoba in our home city—she was studying piano and I wanted to become a choral conductor. We were both singing in our university's choir when we met, so music has

always been an important part of our life together. Rosa was born in 2013 and she heard all kinds of singing and music even before her birth. She also took part in music classes for babies that Yok taught starting when Rosa was two months old.



**Matthew Knight with his family**

We first came to Georgia together in 2014, when Rosa was just over one year and was starting to speak and walk. We visited Tbilisi as well as the home of Islam Pilpani in Lenjeri, Svaneti. Rosa made many friends, especially Islam's grandchildren, and we were excited to return to Georgia to live while I was doing fieldwork for my dissertation.

In 2015 and 2016, we had many wonderful experiences and met even more friends: the Changelianis in Lakhushdi, Svaneti; the Turmanidzes in Merisi, Achara; Nino Razmadze, Teo Lomsadze, Tako Jordania, Nino Naneishvili, and their families in Tbilisi, to name only a few. We found that Rosa was a great “ambassador” for our family, since so many people wanted to meet her, play with her, or offer her candy. During this time, I was studying folk songs and instruments with several different teachers, especially Islam Pilpani; Yok and I learned several songs together, and Rosa listened to music at many *supras* and music lessons. Rosa first performed on stage at a 2015 New Year's Eve concert in the Mestia town square, where she sang “Jingle Bells” with Eka Pilpani to a crowd of about 300 people. For smaller audiences, she loved to sing “Lazhghvash”

and “Suliko,” although sometimes our friends had to bribe her with chocolate or ice cream before she would perform.

Our second daughter Leah was born in early 2017, shortly after we returned to Canada. She has also grown up surrounded by music at home, in classes, and at concerts. Our family of four visited Georgia for a month at the end of 2018, and we also had the honour of hosting six of our friends from Didgori in June 2019 during their concert tour of Canada.

Yok and I enjoy singing songs together, including Georgian songs, although most of them require a third voice. Now that Rosa is a little bit older she has learned to sing her own part and we can perform some three-voice songs. Some of our favourites are “Khintskala,” “Shina Vorgil,” and “Sadavoi Kirialesa.” Leah also loves to sing and at the age of three, she can sometimes hold her own part alone while we sing harmony, although she usually prefers to sing along with Rosa.



**Knight family with Ensemble Didgori in Canada**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we were inspired to record a video for *Etnopori's* “Darchi Saxlshi” campaign, in which we sang the feasting song “Evrída Maspindzelsa” in the hope that one day we will all be able to celebrate at a large *supra* again. Since there are so many fantastic family ensembles in Georgia that are far more skillful and accomplished than us, we were embarrassed that our performance got so much attention, with thousands of comments and hundreds of thousands of views on Facebook after Ajara TV,

Radio Vinyl, and other pages shared our video. Imedi TV even called us for an interview. While Georgians are probably used to cute young children singing in harmony and to foreigners singing Georgian polyphonic songs by now, they may not have heard many foreign families with small children singing Georgian polyphonic songs.

Our family is not that unique or unusual, but I'm happy that we can find joy in singing together and hope that we will share this gift for the rest of our lives. We look forward to returning to Georgia one day!

### *Beneficents of Georgian Folk Song*

## **Avksenti Megrelidze**

Avksenti Megrelidze – one of the most distinguished figures of the first half of the past century, singer-chanter, director of folk and church choirs, creator of instrumental ensembles, collector and recorder of folk songs, composer of many folk-style songs, teacher, public figure and author of theoretical works on folk music.

Avksenti Megrelidze was born in 1877 in the village of Khrialeti, Ozurgeti district. He showed interest in singing and chanting at an early age. As a teenager, thanks to his enviable musical talent, he studied rich folk repertoire and became known as an excellent singer-chanter. In his youth years, in addition to musical education, he gained serious practical experience at Kutaisi Theological Seminary. Korneli Maghradze, his teacher of music and chanting, noticed his talent of a choirmaster, and 20 years old third-year student was appointed director of the seminary choir.

In 1900 Megrelidze moved to live in Poti and created a choir of Gurian-Megrelian song there. During his 18 years in this city, he created three choirs. Most distinguished among them was the 30-member male choir created on the initiative of N. Nikoladze, I. Meunargia, G. Kavtaradze, S. Khoshtaria, G. Sabakhtarishvili and others in

1912. The choir existed until 1914 and held many concerts in various towns and villages.

Avksenti Megrelidze's name is connected with the revival and popularization of *chonguri*. In 1927, he created a large ensemble of *chonguri* players in the village of Supsa (Guria). Two years later, the ensemble successfully performed at the Second Republican Olympiad.

After working in Guria and Batumi for 6 years, Megrelidze moved to Tbilisi in 1933. Here he created the ensemble of female *chonguri* players with the participation of Elene Chubabria, Margo Tediashvili, Nino Milorava, Elene Megrelidze, Ketevan Megrelidze and others.



Avksenti Megrelidze

Parallel to this, he created ensembles of *chonguri* players at many organizations and clubs, and appointed his students as directors. Triumphant was the performance of Megrelidze's female *chonguri* players' ensemble at the Decade of Georgian culture in Moscow, 1937, where they earned an honorary award.

In the 1940s Megrelidze created a folk ensemble at the Georgian Radio Committee. Its membership boasted performers from different parts of Georgia, which gave the choir a special colouring. Recordings of this ensemble are preserved in the Golden Fund of Georgian State Radio.

Avksenti Megrelidze collected and transcribed folk songs all his life, and taught these examples to his choirs. At different times he recorded songs from famous Gurian song masters such as: Samuel Chavleishvili, Ivliane Kechakmadze, Aleksandre Makharadze, Erko-maishvili brothers, Ermalo Sikharulidze, Kotsia Khukhunaishvili, Melkisedek Nakashidze, Aleksandre Mgeladze, Salukvadze brothers, etc. The choirmaster also notated several examples from his family members. Musicologist Nato Moistsrapishvili collected the examples transcribed by Avksenti Megrelidze and published them as a collection in 2005.

Avksenti Megrelidze is also the author of the songs composed in a folk style. Most of them are mainly on Soviet themes. The choirmaster had to submit to Soviet ideology and wrote songs about the party, the leaders, Soviet life, such were: "Akh, traktoro", "Simghera Leselidze", "Simghera Lursmanashvilze" and others. Nevertheless, noteworthy is the high artistic value of the songs.

In 1951, Avksenti Megrelidze was conferred the title of Honored Artist. The merited choirmaster passed away in 1953. He is interred at Vake cemetery.

*Prepared by Sopiko Kotrikadze basing on the materials of Nato Moistsrapishvili and Lado Gegechkori*

## Student Folk Choir of Ilia State University

*Student folk choir of Ilia State University counts 8 years of history, and is arguably the most stable and well-known creative group at this large educational institution. Here is an interview with the director of the choir, ethnomusicologist Tamaz Gabisonia, an associate professor at Ilia State University.*

**R.K. – Where did the idea of the choir come from and what was the purpose of its creation?**



**T.G.** – I had long wanted to create a student ensemble; only with student membership, without invited singers. Where, everyone could spend his creative energy as much as possible. In 2011 from Tbilisi State Conservatoire I moved to work at Ilia State University and soon realized that creating a choir at such a multi-student institution should not be associated with great difficulties. Besides, I wanted not to single out a few singers, but to collect a large choir of girls and boys which would help young people make their student life more colourful. That was and is the choir's main goal.



Student folk choir of Ilia State University

**R.K.** – When was your ensemble (choir) formed and how many members are there today?

**T.G.** – Indeed, our group is more of an ensemble – according to its size, but we still consider the members of all time as a choir. We first met in the fall of 2011 and had our first concert in February 2012. Since then, the choir follows the so-called rotation principle – new students join every semester, and graduates leave us, but not all of them – many still manage to stay and sing with us. Currently, three young ladies and a young man from the first membership still attend rehearsals.

I can never indicate exact number of members. The Facebook group called “We” counts 130 members. As I calculated recently, over 100 of them can still sing successfully in any folk ensemble. One disadvantage in this regard is that girls are much more active than boys.

**R.K.** – How often do you hold report

**concerts?**

**T.G.** – Report concert is the main activity of our choir. It is held twice a year – at the end of each semester, traditionally – in February and early July. We have already held 17 concerts. And it should be said that at every concert, most of the 22-25 examples are newly studied songs. Only at the last three concerts we sang a few old songs. Before that, we performed only new repertoire.

**R.K.** – What is the ensemble's repertoire like, what kind of songs do you perform, and does it include songs in a foreign language?

**T.G.** – At each report concert we try to equally present the musical dialects of Georgia. Each time in the repertoire we also have a newly learned urban song (mostly in the form of pot-pourri), a sacred hymn, and an example of foreign folklore. At the last concert we sang Hawaiian Aloha accompanied by Ukulele. We are currently preparing a Korean Arirang song in four voices.

**R.K.** – Do you participate in folk festivals and other public events?

**T.G.** – I must say that the choir cannot boast active concert tours. In our work, we focus on participation and not so much on improving the mastery of performance. There are members in the choir who have chosen this activity on credit and they are also given the opportunity to perform a song or two at concerts – despite different levels of singing experience. But still, noteworthy are the choir's two successful performances at Batumi International Festival, successful participation in Student Days (reaching the final), performances in Rustaveli avenue on 26 May and at charity events, activities on TV and Radio, a successful concert tour (3 concerts) at the Days of Georgian Culture in Krakow (2016), and, most importantly, two first places (gold and silver medals) in song and sacred hymn nomination at the 2019 Competition of Georgian Children's and Juvenile choirs.

I cannot but mention here that on Christmas Eve this year several choir members participated in Alilo ritual in the street named after the late ethnomusicologist Edisher Garakanidze in Avchala.



**R.K. – Please tell us about the work process. What methods do you use in teaching unfamiliar songs that abound in your repertoire?**

**T.G. –** Naturally, presenting diverse repertoire at 17 concerts needs a laborious selection of songs. I must admit that there are songs that students can't "put their heart into", in this case, the decision is made in their favour. It should also be noted that sometimes when learning a melody or bass part, we try different options and choose the best one together. I teach songs to my little friends mostly by ear, without notes. I do not impose recordings on them either, although of course, we listen to the originals. Everyone learns the song together (their own voice-parts), but, a month before the concert, we start distinguishing soloists in the songs, also considering several options (reserve). I always find it difficult to select soloists (I often replace them) and this process is always a big fun. We sing most of the songs antiphonally, thus, almost everyone is able to participate as a soloist (except for some sharply expressed basses). Here I'd like to mention a very pleasant process for me: in many cases, during the 2-3 semesters of student's membership in the choir I observe a sharp increase in his auditory experience, performance skills and strength of the voice.

**R.K. – What is the attitude of the members to each other and the common cause?**

**T.G. –** The choir members are students of different professions, only a few of them are musicians; however this does not affect their interest to folk music.

I am very pleased that the students are delighted to be the choir members, here they make friends, we have three married couples as well. After concerts, we always have a "cultural section", a sort of "continuation of the concert".

It is delighting that: even though over 100 members took an active part in the choir, I don't remember any case of strained relations between the choir members, or between them and me.



**Concert poster of Ilia State University Student folk choir (2014)**

**R.K. – As for collaboration with foreign ensembles, we know that in recent past you held a joint concert together with several foreign ensembles. Please, tell us about this interesting collaboration.**

**T.G. –** Yes, we had joint concerts with the Polish choir Edukatus, the youth choir from Dresden, Dutch Barber and Bishops (twice), we joint examples. However, the return tour failed due to various reasons, including the size of our choir.

**R.K. – I can't help but remember the folklore expedition to Akhalkalaki, in which I was a participant. It was a very good experience in this field. I wonder if you plan to organize similar expeditions again for other members of the choir.**

**T.G. –** We had really interesting days in August 2019 in Akhalkalaki, where three members of the choir were with me in an ethnomusical expedition. Even though we worked from morning to night, I know that the girls had an unforgettable impression. At the concert this winter we even performed a few songs recorded in Akhalkalaki. We also had a presentation about this expedition prepared by the students.

Of course, we intend to continue this activity in the future.

**R.K. – What are the choir's future plans?**

**T.G. –** Recently I collected several experienced members of the choir and we want to test

the forces separately as an ensemble Ilielebi (the Illians), but both the ensemble and the choir were prevented from this by the pandemic, however, we have an offer to participate in the festival in Serbia, we are also in talks with the Kiev Conservatory to hold a concert there. Due to current situation, at the moment we have studied only 10 songs by the method of combining individual vocal parts. If we can't get together this semester, we're going to have an online concert and make music videos with three soloists.

*The interview was recorded by  
Rusudan Korkotashvili,  
a member of the choir*

### *Foreign Polyphony*

#### **Katajjaq – Inuit Throat Singing**

The world-renowned overtone singing samples known around the world includes Homei – predominantly Mongolian tradition, which implies production of two different-timbre sounds of quite a distant register by one person: Low-pitch low-drone throat sound and overtone pentatonic movement high-pitched whistling voice. It's a kind of solo two-part singing.

Overtone singing is also common among other peoples of the world: the Chukchis, the Tuvans, the Buryats, the Bashkirs, it is also documented in Japan, Tibet, Xhosa (aka Kosa) people of Africa, Sardinia, etc. But, now we will focus on a different type of overtone singing, in the performance of which polyphony is manifested not so much by the simultaneous production of two or more sounds, but by the alternation of two singers. This is a tradition of a Canadian Inuit women duet singing (Katajjaq). In different groups of the Inuit this tradition is known under different names, mostly referred to under general name “games done with sounds or with noises” (Nipaquhiit). Such “vocal games” of women's duet (“songs with breathing”) was

documented On Alaska and Canadian Arctic in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At one time, Christian missionaries forbade Inuit to do this. But from the 1980s katajjaq became increasingly popular.

Two women stand very close, facing each other, with their mouths close to each other's and make different noises – non-verbal (sounds of animals and birds, sounds of nature), sound experiments (noisy inhaling-exhaling, sort of snoring, alternation of low and high sounds), speech morphemes (archaic words, ancestral names, animal names, toponyms, objects that they see at that moment), short motifs, including lullaby (aqausiq), etc. Women often hold hands and follow rhythmic movements.

One soloist offers the other, to continue the intonation of a certain rhythmic pattern and original timbre, to which the latter responds similarly, however, still in her own way. The responder should immediately repeat the intonation offered by the beginner soloist. In the past, the performers stood so close to each other that the responder's mouth served as a resonator to the soloist. The performers' voices are so organically combined in the duet that one ostinato two-part singing is heard continuously, sometimes even with the effect of three voice-parts.

Today the followers of this exotic sound sometimes perform on stage as solo performers (for example, the famous Tanya Tagaq). It is also common to use the sounds of this timbre in pop, folk, rock and other genres of rhythmic music.

Today this strange performance is only a show, it can be held at any time and, for the most part it has a competitive function among soloist women – who is the first to provoke the other to make a mistake. The competition lasts about 2-3 minutes and most often ends with the laughter of the “loser” woman. It is clear that, in the past, this tradition had a different function, which has been transformed. It is suggested that this was one of the most popular forms of entertainment for Inuit women – when the husbands who went hunting left them for a long time. According to other supposition, such an action had a kind of shamanic function – via making such a magical effect on

the souls, women helped their husbands in hunting and protected them from evil spirits.

Another tradition of Katajjaq, which belongs to another group of the Inuit –Pirqusirtuq, is relatively homogeneous; however, some of its types also include story texts – ballads.

It should also be noted, that the Chukchi women also have inclination to make different sounds, these are people whose ancestors managed to cross the Bering Strait and get to the American continent, and then disseminated throughout the United States. Let's recall that in the 1870s famous psychologist and ethnomusicologist Carl Stumpf confirmed that the proximity of the musical data indicates the kinship between the peoples of Siberia and North American Indians.

Interestingly, Japanese Ainu people /from Hokkaido, (also residents of Sakhalin in the past) have similar tradition called Rekuhkara. Here, as well, two women are involved in the action; they make sort of tubes with their hands and fists and thus sing basic repetitive sound distanced in a certain interval or a different intonation into each other's mouths. A fairly close tradition is also encountered in Vietnam.

**Tamaz Gabisonia**

*Associate professor at Ilia State University*

### ***One Regional Ensemble***

#### **Female Folk Ensemble Iagundi from Achara**

*Existence of regional ensembles is one of the necessary conditions for the preservation of national folklore. Folk examples torn from everyday life, despite their secondary nature, retain more or less authenticity mostly through the performance of tradition bearers. Fortunately, there still are regional ensembles in many parts of Georgia; they collect and perform folk examples from their native*

*regions. In this issue of the Bulletin, we would like to present female folk ensemble Iagundi from Keda district, Achara. Lia Makharadze, director at Keda Cultural Centre, a folklorist, talks about the collective.*

The need to create a women's folk ensemble was conditioned by the lack of female ensembles in Georgia. The idea belonged to Irakli Sirabidze, a young choirmaster at Achara Centre of Culture, head of male folk ensemble Elesia. Initially the ensemble was named Kharatuli (I am the author of this title). Kharatuli is a type of Acharan cradle, which is painted in various colors (Kharatuli – painted). As far as cradle is traditionally associated with woman's life, this name was well suited to the women's ensemble, created at Keda Cultural Center in 2008 under the direction of ethnomusicologist **Ketevan Nagervadze**.

Initially, the ensemble had 9 members, their age ranged from 25 to 41 years. Among them were three professional musicians: Ketevan Nagervadze a graduate of Zakaria Paliashvili Batumi Conservatory majored in ethnomusicology, Marina Jijavadze from Zakaria Paliashvili Batumi Music School, Lela Dumbadze – from Revaz Laghidze Batumi Music School N2. The rest of the girls were from singers' families. Afterwards the ensemble membership changed several times. It is natural, because, along with elder singers there also were younger members in the group, some of whom married and left the ensemble, new members joined. Currently the ensemble has the fourth generation; however, some of its members come from the first generation. Current membership of Iagundi is as follows: Marine Jijavadze, Bulbuli Beridze, Tsitsino Baramidze, Lela Dumbadze, Linda Devadze, Tinatin Devadze, Shorena Jijavadze, Anzhela Beridze and Natia Sirabidze.

From the day of its inception, the ensemble performed women's repertoire from Achara and different parts of Georgia. But due to its regional affiliation, of course, Acharan folklore was preferred. Ketevan's goal was to revive the traditions associated with women's ancient songs, in which Keda municipality is quite rich.



**Ketevan Nagervadze**

Ketevan often met tradition bearers, recorded songs from them and enriched the ensemble's repertoire with these examples. However, she also used archival recordings. It is noteworthy that currently Iagundi mainly performs the songs found by her. However, recently, particularly since 2018, the ensemble's repertoire has been enriched with men's songs from Upper Achara.

One of the ensemble members, Ia Beridze, unexpectedly passed away in 2012. After that, at the initiative of Shorena Karanadze, director of the Cultural Center, and with the girls' decision, ensemble Kharatuli was renamed Iagundi or Ia's choir.

In 2015, the ensemble suffered another disaster – the tragical death of its leader Ketevan Nagervadze, which was an unrecoverable loss for each member. Ketevan Nagervadze was the loss not only for Iagundi, but for the entire region! It was her merit that 6 months after its creation, the ensemble won a prize at Kobuleti International Festival. Together with me and Leila Bezhanidze, Ketevan worked not only on folk music, but also on ethnographic materials. She researched the domestic traditions (especially folk crafts) surviving in the villages of Keda and planned to revive them. Unfortunately, she had many ideas left unfulfilled. By the way, after Ketevan, Iagundi, practically continues its activities without a director.

Besides, From the day of its creation ensemble Kharatuli (Iagundi – since 2012 ) has actively participated and still participates in folk and public celebrations. Also in charity concerts and actions, both municipal and regional. In 2010 it participated in the festival “Shen khar venakhi” in Kakheti, in ArtGeni Festival (2011, 2013), several times in the programs “Stsena” and “Etnopori” on Achara TV. In 2013, the girls participated in “Bayar Tour”, led by famous singer Bayar-Shahin Gundaridze in the Republic of Turkey. Iagundi is a frequent participant of annual Giorgi Garakanidze Batumi International Festival of Folk and Church Music.



**Ensemble Iagundi at the 2015-2016 Georgian National Folklore Festival**

The 2015-16 Georgian National Folklore Festival, organized by the State Folklore Centre of Georgia was successful for Iagundi, it became a laureate. In 2016, Gorgian Chanting Foundation awarded Iagundi with a special diploma and a cash prize for its contribution to the popularization of Acharan traditional song. Last year, the same foundation recorded the ensemble's songs and plans to release them as a CD. Currently, the administration of Keda Cultural Center (Director Jambul Surmanidze) is trying to find a decent choirmaster for the ensemble, who will expand the scope of Iagundi's creative work and diversify its repertoire.



## Percussion Instruments Disseminated in Georgia

In ancient times there were many percussion instruments in Georgia. These include: *doli*, *daira*, *diplipito*, *tsintsila*, *lini*, *ezhvani*, *bobghani*, *tablaki*, *spilendz-churi*, *rattles* and many others, which have different function in people's everyday life, but unfortunately, some of these instruments has disappeared, some has only survived as a museum exhibit. Until recently, percussion instruments in Georgia are represented by *doli*, *daira* and *diplipito*.

The function of *doli* and *daira* is to emphasize the rhythmic pattern during dancing. They are common in lowland regions of Georgia, in the mountains, they are replaced by clapping.

In general, Georgian dances are unimaginable without clapping. Even dancing is accompanied with clapping along with percussion instrument. Clapping emphasizes the rhythm of strong timing and enhances vitality of the dance. According to the opinions expressed in scientific literature the function of the first percussion instrument was to enhance the production efficiency of human natural rhythmic sound-making, which a man did with his own hands.

The term *tashi* (lit. clapping in Georgian) is of Arabic origin (Arab: "dash") and means a stone. From here Grigol Chkhikvadze concludes, that in olden times, collective labour process and magical movements were accompanied by rhythmic strikes of one stone against another. This interesting custom has survived in some Georgian villages. For instance, a few decades ago, in the village of Khashmi (Kakheti province) during a dance, people would strike stones against each other instead of clapping. Along with stones and clapping, the so-called *toshi*, documented in in East Georgian Mountains (Khevsureti, Pshavi) can be considered ancient percussion instrument. This was striking a dagger, a knife or a stick against a wooden plank.

*Toshi* is a transition stage from clapping to percussion instrument. According to the narra-

tors, dancing in Khevsureti was impossible without *toshi*. In Pshavi, *toshi* accompanied playing a dance tune on *panduri*. According to a Khevsuretian narrator, for dance *toshi* was needed more than singing. In terms of function, *toshi* is the same as clapping, but more effective. It is, an intensified clapping. During *toshi*, the dynamic strength of clapping is enhanced by beating two solid objects against each other.

**Doli.** *Doli* is common in Georgia's lowland regions. It is a hollow wooden cylinder, with leather stretched on both ends, which is tightly attached to the instrument with metal rings.

*Doli* is played with hands or sticks. Sometimes the stick has an enlarged end. *Doli* is held under left arm-pit or hung. It is played in seated position. Sometimes the player dances himself.



**Doli**

When playing the *doli* with sticks, one stick is hit against on one end (the skin) and the other against the other. The sticks have loops, with which they are attached to the player's hands. Trills, tremolo, grace notes can be played on *doli*. For the effect of **forte**, *doli* is played in the middle, for the effect of **piano** – on the edges.

*Doli* is mostly played by men; during the dance it emphasizes the rhythm. It is often played in ensemble with another instrument, e.g. *chonguri* or *chiboni*, rarely *salamuri*.

The function of *doli* is to emphasize the rhythmic pattern of a dance. Its musical part is based on ostinato rhythmic movements.

In Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani's dictionary, *doli* is referred to as *dapdapi*.

**Daira.** *Daira* is a frame drum with jingles – thin and round small plates and bells hanging

from the inside. The frame is encrusted with mother-of-pearl and black bone.

When playing, *daira* is held with both hands. Big fingers leaning against the frame, the other fingers produce the sound on the membrane. More often left hand fingers are motionless. *Daira* is played with right hand fingers; sometimes whole hand is hit on the membrane. It is played in the center of the sound surface with all four fingers, individual fingers, occasionally hitting the instrument with a wrist, waving the instrument to make the jingles produce sound.



**Daira**

*Daira* is widespread in Kartli-Kakheti, Tusheti, Samegrelo and Racha. *Dairas* from different parts of the country are similar in appearance. They differ in material. In Tusheti, sheepskin was used for *daira* and coins were hung on the frame. In Kakheti – first stomach of a bull was stretched on the frame.

*Daira* is mostly played by women, when dancing. Several *dairas* are never played simultaneously. *Daira* is often included in instrumental ensembles; e.g. together with panpipe in Samegrelo, with *panduri* in Kakheti, etc. In Racha, men play the *daira* during the game of “Tskhenkatsuri, and women – when dancing “Berkaluri”.

Like *doli*, the function of *daira* is to accompany dancing and emphasize its rhythm.

In Sulikhan-Saba Orbeliani’s dictionary *daira* is referred to as *dapi*.

*Diplipito* is a percussive instrument common in ancient Georgia, however, Asia is considered to be its homeland. The instrument consists of two small clay jars of the same height and dif-

ferent width, with the skin of a kid or a calf stretched on them. Because of their different size, they produce different pitch sounds. The jars are tied with a string and painted on the outside. *Diplipito* was played with two small sticks. In order to enhance the sound, leather was to be stretched, for this the jars were heated on a grill, if leather needed to be loosened the jars were slightly moistened.

*Diplipito* is known by various names. In olden times it was called *naghara*. According to Sulikhan-Saba Orbeliani “*naghara* is not a Georgian word; Georgian name of the instrument is *samviki* or *dumbuli*”. *Dumbuli* was a military instrument in ancient times. It was also used during hunting. Currently, *diplipito* is no longer used and has become a museum exhibit.

Traditional Georgian instrumental ensemble consists of two instruments: one is a string or wind instrument and the other is a percussion. The latter can be combined with any instrument when playing dance melodies. In fact, the repertoire of instrumental ensemble consists of dance melodies. Combination of *chonguri* and *doli* as an ensemble is confirmed in Achara, combination of *daira* and *panduri* was a common practice in Kakheti and Tusheti, *larchemi* and *daira* – in Samegrelo.... Of wind instruments *chiboni* makes an ensemble with *doli*. Such an ensemble is encountered in Achara.

The so-called *tash-pandura*, can be considered the prototype of Georgian instrumental ensemble; it is an “instrumental ensemble” composed of string (*panduri*) and percussion (clapping) instruments.

Georgian instrumental ensembles are not large. Several instruments of the same kind can never be found in it. One of its component parts must definitely be a percussion instrument.

*The material was prepared by*

**Maka Khardziani**

*basing on Manana Shilakadze’s work*

*“Georgian Folk Instruments and Instrumental Music”.*

**Labour songs in Guria**  
(part III)  
**A-Gidela and Aguna**

A-Gidela and Aguna were sung in honour of the wine cult – Bacchus. These two songs are related to each other. A-Gidela is a labour song; Aguna is a song for New Year and the mother of wine – abundance of grapes.

50-60 years ago, all over Guria, from the Black Sea coast to village Tavsurebi, there were primitively cultivated *maghlari* (lit. the vine plant which grows upwards along the trunk and branches of the tree) vineyards. Cultivation of a vineyard did not require much labour and mastery; a Gurian would dig the ground with a hoe or a shovel at the foot of a tree, plant a quickset of the vine plant in it slantwise, and level the ground with a foot. The vine planted this way gave fruit in three years. Then the only labour it needed was to pick and press the grapes, pour the juice into the *churi* (a clay vessel for keeping wine), take out and drink.... Most of the vineyards lacked “care,” but they gave a plentiful harvest. There still are old people who have witnessed that old *Chkhaveri* was poured out and new was poured into the vessel. There was such abundance that wine was very cheap and they could not use it for themselves. They did not drink hard in the past, but they still consumed a lot of wine. A corn-field worker always brought wine with him. In a word, if a Gurian had wine in *churi*, he was not afraid of the guest, on the contrary, he was delighted to host one. Having wine made him feel proud, having no wine – made him feel disgraced. There was always something to eat with wine. When someone was referred to as a good host, somebody would specify: what the host has to do with it, the wine was a good host.



**Apolon Tsuladze**

A Gurian was proud to be “baptized”, i.e. to be a Christian – wine was also a symbol of Christianity. A Christian should drink wine, and as Gurians said those who did not drink wine were unbaptized. Wine was *zedashe* (wine for donation) and Eucharist. Both were the fulcrum of Christianity. When someone passed away, if the family of the deceased served good wine, the soul of the deceased would be saved. This is why an old man, who loved *zedashe*, would supply this wine in his lifetime – leaving the will to drink the wine at his funeral. Since wine was so revered, it is not surprising to say that old Gurians used to have the *churi* (clay vessel for keeping wine) personalized and planned in the wine-cellar; knowing which vessel to open and when: on St. George Day, Archangel Day, Virgin Mary Day, at Transfiguration, etc. *Churi* bore the name of the patron Saint of the church whose parish its owner was. There also was also an “ignorance” *churi*. A fanatical believer asked a priest to conduct the service and entreated the God to forgive him the sins he had committed without knowing.

Similar to entering the altar, a woman was forbidden to enter the wine-cellar and take wine from *churi*. If the host was not at home, or there was no man in the family, a neighbor man was asked to get some wine. Wine-cellar was always taken care of as a sacred place ... If a pig accidentally walked over the *churi*, the hosts immediately brought a priest to sprinkle it with holy

water. Wine was taken from the *churi* with purity and hope, respect and reverence for God.

Of course, the first glass was drunk in the glory of God with the words: Glory to God; glory to God. May God bless you all! This was also the first lesson for a child who had just started to speak and those who did not study it were not allowed to drink wine – he was said not to know how to give blessing – which was considered an expression of age and lack of talent.

A Gurian was a fanatical follower of the wine cult and each time tried to please the God of wine. This respect was probably expressed through songs as well. These songs are “A-Gidela” and “Aguna”.

A-Gidela is a vintage song. Maghlari and especially the most famous Chkhaveri needed to be collected after hoarfrost. Because light frost would make the fruit sweeter. Collecting grapes was a lot of fun – the big and small all did the job suitable for the age and sex. Everybody did it with great pleasure and diligence.

Children were especially joyous. They knew that *pelamushi* (dessert made of grape-juice) would be boiled to make *janjukha* (a traditional candy). With gluttonous eyes they watched *janjukha* being made from hot *pelamushi*. 9-12-year-old boys were also happy that they would be involved in collecting grapes. If they couldn't go up the tree and pick the grapes, they would help change the *gideli* (basket – ed.). The picker would lower a full *gideli* from above with a rope, accompanying the process with the word “A-Gidela” in a cheerful and bold voice in a singing manner ... The person who was in charge of replacing *gideli* was attentive, with an empty *gideli* he would head to the direction from where the voice was heard, replace full *gideli* with the empty one on the rope, wish the picker a safe descent and empty the *gideli* into a large basket.

Grape harvest was preceded by a variety of work and preparation. The winepress, the vessels, vessel-washing tools, etc., had to be ready.

Thus, when everything was ready, grape harvesting started, strangely, on the same day. Everyone harvested the crop on his own piece of

land, but since the pieces of land were closely located, grape picking was a collective activity, like *nadi*. Either the host himself invited *nadi*, or asked someone to do this for him. Frequently *nadi* (30-60 or more people) was invited from other villages. Naturally there was more fun with *nadi*. The work started early in the morning and neither hands nor jaws had a rest until the sunset. In Guria no rest for jaws meant not only eating, but singing and joking as well.... This was an opportunity for people to meet, talk, and compete in singing, buffoonery, tell comic verses. When a Gurian would lower a full *gideli* and accompany this joyously singing *a-a-a-a- gidelaaa-io!* He was immediately joined in by a neighboring picker and another one and yet another. Thus, singing quickly involved everyone up to the mountain villages.

*A-a-a-a- gidelaaa-io...* was heard everywhere like sweet music. If sometimes singing *A-gidela* stopped, another entertainment started instead. This would be a competition in telling comic verses between the villages.

**Aguna.** For Gurians Kalanda – New Year is the “fate day”. In ancient times the Gurians were deeply convinced that whatever they wished on Kalanda they would be secured for, all the year round until next Kalanda. So from midnight they started making wishes, and that it lasted for at least 6 days – until the Epiphany ... Family members started uttering their wishes at the dawn – during the blessing, at dinner, and in the evening – when singing Aguna.

It is noteworthy that the Gurians, who loved hosting guests, would always stay far from the neighbors on Kalanda day. On this day they strictly advocated family closure, according to their belief, this may have contributed to the strengthening of private property ... On Kalanda Day everything was individual - family, all aspirations and desires were only for family and did not go beyond the yard.

At dusk, male members of the family – old and young – would bring a tray with a pig's head, a khachapuri for Aguna and a jug of wine to the wine cellar. Head of the family would put the



tray on the *churi* in the middle of the wine cellar, light three candles on different sides of the tray, turn the tray in clockwise direction three times, pray aloud to the God: “to give the year of peace to his family, abundant harvest of wine and fruits of all his other kinds of labor.....” He would drink a glass of wine, eat a piece of khachapuri and a slice of pork, after toasting each member of the family personally they began to sing Aguna. The family would stand around the wine press; the soloist sang his part on the background of bases: “kho-kho-kho-kho-kho-io”, who rhythmically struck sledgehammers on the wine press.... The

soloist would hang on the vine plant with his hands and a little son on his back (by this expressing his desire that the vines had the same heavy clusters as the load on his back) and continue singing.

This song-call lasted almost an hour – Aguna would encompass entire Guria. The neighbors would join in singing, performing stanzas in turns after each other. Thus, singing, striking, basses were rhythmic and harmonious.

The material is taken from  
**Apolon Tsuladze’s** book “Ethnographic Guria”

# Aguna

ა - გუ - ნა ა - გუ - ნა გაგ - მე - ია - რე - - - ო - ჰო - ჰო - ო  
a - gu - na a - gu - na gad - me - ia - re - - - o - ho - ho - o

ბა - ვი და ას - კა - ნა გაგ - მე - ია - რე - - - ო - ჰო - ჰო - ო  
bax - vi da as - ka - na gad - me - ia - re - - - o - ho - ho - o

ცენს ე - ზო - სი ყურ - ზე - ნი - - - ო ო - ჰო - ჰო - ო  
Cvens e - zo - Si yur - Ze - ni - - - o o - ho - ho - o

სხვის ე - ზო - სი ყურ - ცე - ლი - - - ო ო - ჰო - ჰო - ო  
sxvis e - zo - Si fur - ce - li - - - o o - ho - ho - o

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