

INTRODUCTION

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Chants for Great Lent, Holy Week, and the Ascension of Our Lord

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Some of the most distinct and distinguished chants of the Georgian Orthodox calendar year occur during Great Lent and Easter. Beginning in the early Middle Ages (9th century), Georgian hymnographers composed special melodies for these services, helping us to glorify the Holy Trinity with the words: “Save us, O Lord, your chanters. Alleluia!”

Davit Machabeli (19th century philosopher) said: “The people of Georgia, (which is one of the first Christian countries), developed an appropriately tasteful and uniquely Georgian church-chant. In those times when Christianity flourished in Georgia, several thousand wise and gifted holy fathers, inspired by the Thirteen Fathers,¹ gathered to perfect the chant of our church” (*Tsiskari Journal*, 1864, #5).

Some people would believe that Georgian chant is not ancient, and dismiss it because of its polyphonic nature. Though these voices grow ever stronger, we believe it is God’s will that Georgian polyphonic chant is reviving now at the beginning of the 21st century.

The following five points illustrate the opinions of the editors on the functions and peculiarities of Georgian chant:

1. Georgian chant is an inseparable part of the Divine Liturgy;
2. Georgian chant is an important source of linguistic study;
3. Georgian chant is unique in its polyphonic nature, and the connection between the three voice parts and the Holy Trinity is strong.
4. Georgian chant is the vehicle for addressing the Lord, angels, and saints. It is the conversational language of prayer.

There are six qualities needed for the conception and creation of an original chant:

¹ Thirteen Syrian monks built monasteries in the Tbilisi area during the 6th century, firmly planting the seed of monasticism in Georgia.

a) a bright mind, b) a willing heart, c) exceptional musical talent, d) an infatuated love of God and man, e) the grace of God, and f) the forethought of God. On this last point, we believe that Georgian chant is truly a reflection of the Holy Trinity and God's forethought for the Georgian nation.

The sanctity of Georgian chant is being threatened today by the attempts of certain groups who are artificially setting Greek monophonic chant melodies to Georgian sacred texts. This action is supported by some scholars who argue that early Georgian chant melodies originated in Greece. Following, we would like to reiterate several points on which we have a difference of opinion: supporters of monophonic chant who say that it is the only canonical church chant have yet to produce a single authoritative Georgian or non-Georgian historical source stating that polyphonic chant was prohibited in liturgical practice. Neither has it been proved that there is a history of monophonic chant in Georgian liturgical practice.

The banning of polyphonic chant has never been expressed or ratified at any world or local ecclesiastical gatherings of holy fathers, or in an any anti-Catholic catechism. Catholics have been criticized for introducing various innovations such as the organ into liturgical practice, but nothing has ever been said about west European polyphonic chant. Interestingly, Greek-Byzantine chant is not only monophonic, but contains elements of multi-voice singing within the form of the *ison* bass drone. This form of multi-voice singing –the verbalized melody voice *mtkmeli* over a text-less bass continuum— is also observed in pagan ritual and work songs from eastern Georgia such as *Chona* and *Namgalo*.

With these points in mind, supporters of monophonic chant might look more fruitfully at Old Russian *znamén* chant, Roman Catholic *Gregorian* chant, or Armenian monophonic chant. These chant systems are monophonic, while true monophonic chant does not exist in Greece today. Where monophonic chant supporters in Georgia falsely seek canonical chant in Greece, right here our Georgian chant expresses the profound principle of three in one, in direct analogy with the Holy Trinity.

Regarding the origin of Georgian chant, it is under debate whether Greek melodies were adapted to Georgian texts, or whether distinctive Georgian melodies were created from the beginning (translation work into the Georgian language began in the

early fifth century in Palestine). One problem centers on when and how Greek liturgy was even introduced to Georgia, given that early Georgian sources date from the first Jewish psalmody texts that prevailed in the early Christian church.

Addressing the possibility that Greek monophonic chant spread to Georgia and was later harmonized into the polyphonic chant we now have, we will consider the historical development of other church music systems. There are cases, for example the *cantus firmus* tradition in Western Europe, and the harmonization of Russian *znamennaya* chant, where additional voice parts were added to canonical melodies. In both cases, the original melody is preserved in the middle voice part, while additional parts are added above and below. This is a natural development when harmonizing any melody, and within this model, the melody is not restricted in its movement or range, but maintains its melodic integrity.

Georgian multi-voiced chant does not follow this developmental structure of having a canonical melody that is harmonized with additional voice parts. The melody is in the upper voice, and defines the movement of the other two voice parts, but is in no way independent. The Georgian upper voice –*tkma*, was not created independently and does not exist separate from the other two parts. The consideration of the function of the second and third voice parts is demonstrated in the limited range of the first and upper voice, which differs from the harmonized melodies of the West European and Russian traditions (this analysis considers the earliest known forms of Georgian chant, in other words the *Sada Kilo* chant, or Plain Mode). The function of the upper voice cannot be discovered when it is sung independently of the other two voices, and the same can be said for any of the voices that are sung divorced of their three-part context. The secret of Georgian chant is only revealed when all three voices are sung together and one hears and understands the nature of Georgian chant as a manifestation of the mystery of three in one; the mystery that we understand as the Holy Trinity.

When Greek melodies were first introduced to Russia, both traditions sang monophonically. One century after this initial ‘translation,’ the Greek melodies were adapted to the tastes of the Russian people, who developed a monophonic chant system unique from the Greek melodies. This proves that adaptation of original Greek chant is natural and possible. However, adaptation of Greek chant in this manner did not occur in

Georgia. Single melodies did not develop with harmonic voice parts added later, as can be seen by the co-dependent nature of each voice part. Furthermore, why would Georgians have harmonized Greek chant? Greek monophonic chant bears its own integrity as a unique chant system, therefore there was no reason to harmonize or adapt it in Georgia, and there is no evidence that this occurred.



Volume IV of *Kartuli Galoba* (Georgian Chant) includes the required hymns for the cycle of Fasting-Great Lent. The selections contained in this volume originate from manuscripts collected and notated by Saint Ekvtime Kereselidze, two collections of chant transcriptions by Pilimon Koridze published in the 1900s, and transcriptions from Razhden Khundadze published in 1911. The process of preparing these manuscripts editions for publication is difficult, and demands scrupulous attention to discover and interpret the many inaccuracies in the transcriptions. The rest of this introduction will deal with a discussion of the procedures by which we have attempted to present an accurate, unbiased edition of Georgian chant.

The following editing procedures have taken place:

1. Problems in metric measure-marking in original transcriptions:

Pilimon Koridze (who transcribed nearly 5000 chants into western notation) was a man with a European musical education and was less familiar with the specifics of Georgian chant. He took it as dogma to document music in a specific metric-measuring format, such as 3/4, and 4/4, which was later copied by Kereselidze and Khundadze. The correct rhythm of the chant was often sacrificed in order to fit it within this structure. The rhythm of Georgian chant is organized by stanza, or short musical phrase, and does not fit into a 3/4 or 4/4 schema. As a result, we find many examples of incorrect rhythmic figuration in the transcriptions published at the turn of the 20th century.

2. Problems connected with modulation inconsistency within the mode:

According to the modal theory of Georgian chant, certain modulations must occur in certain ways at certain times (Tone 4 chants must modulate down a whole step on the final phrase). In some transcriptions, modulations were notated incorrectly, for example, in the case where the final phrase of a Tone 4 chant was modulated two whole steps lower than the original key, instead of a single whole step, as is common in other chants of this type. Changes have been made to the original transcriptions based on these inaccuracies.

3. Problems of tempo:

Discussed in Example 3.

4. Adjustments to melody:

Based on dozens of comparable samples, certain canonical melodies are well known. Occasionally, we have corrected errors that were notated when transcribing into five-line western musical notation (see examples of this in the introductions to previous volumes in this series of chant books).

5. Adaptation into three voices where parts are missing:

Due to time constraints, Pilimon Koridze often notated only the first voice of chants that had standard second and third voice harmonizations. For example in manuscript Q-692 (Ekvtime Kereselidze's handwriting), containing *sada kilo* (plain mode) examples of Irmos from Easter, only the first voice is recorded. However, in deacon Razhden Khundadze's transcriptions of the 9th Irmos from the service of Great Thursday, we have examples of these chants in three voices. The editors have transferred these basic harmonizations to the Easter Irmos melodies from the Q-692 manuscript.

6. *Gamshvenebuli kilo* chants simplified (Colorful mode chants):

Considering the current chant practice in Georgia, all three voices of several chants have been simplified from the complex *gamshvenebuli kilo* variants (see *Razhams Didebulni* (When the Nobles) and *Serobasa Mas Saidumlosa* (At the Last Supper).

7. Setting liturgical texts to music:

We could not find several liturgical chants in the manuscripts, for example *Ghvtismshobelo Kaltsulo* in Tone 4 (Hail O Virgin Mother) that is sung at Vespers during ‘Cheesefare Week’. However, given that we have many examples of Tone 4 music, we set the text to the music of the ‘Troparion for Saints Peter and Paul.’ Other chants that we have had to set to music include the prokeimenon of Vespers during Cheesefare Week, the sticheron ‘Now and Forever’ during Good Friday Vespers, and others.

8. Correcting transcription errors in the five-line stave notational system

Let’s discuss several examples by looking at the original transcriptions and publications. Here is the 9th Irmos of the second Sunday after Easter in Tone 1, *Shen Didebulo Kalts’ulo* (You, Glorified Virgin).

Example 1:

This chant is typical of other Irmos in Tone 1 for Easter from the Gelati chant-school in central Georgia, in terms of melodic phrasing and modulation placement. It is interesting to note that the chant does not show characteristics of the Shemokmedi school of chant more common to the Gurian region where it was transcribed (by Pilimon Koridze from master-chanter Anton Dumbadze).² There are several problems within this transcription that have required careful scrutiny. First, the chant is presented without a key signature, and second it is recorded in 4/4 meter but neglects to place a bar-line at the end of any of the four stanzas where it might logically be placed. Third, the last syllable in bar three, *de-*, is notated as having a length of a quarter beat instead of an eighth beat, which is a clear misprint used to fill the 4/4 meter bar. Where this phrase is found in other chants, such as the Easter Irmos *Dideba Maghaliani*, this rhythmic phrase always begins and continues with an eighth note.³ As noted above, when the chant is divided into strict bar lines, there has been a tendency by transcribers to make the melody ‘fit’ within the bar line. For example, in bar seven of the original, the third beat is not a necessary

² see *Kartuli Galoba* [Georgian Chant], Tbilisi, 2005, Volume III.

³ see correction on page 220, beginning of second barline.

component of this melody and is a mis-transcription. As a result, the upper voice gets behind the two lower voices and arrives at the cadence a beat late.⁴

The next example, an excerpt from *Serobasa Mas* (Of Thy Mystical Supper), highlights similar mistakes caused by adherence to a strict meter structure.

Example 2

There are two mistakes here that we can identify based on comparative analysis with other Troparion in Tone 7. In the original, the length of the syllable, *zi-*, lasts for three beats where it should correctly have four beats.⁵ Likewise the chord on the third beat of the syllable *she-* should last three beats instead of the notated two beats.⁶

These types of mistakes are common in the manuscripts, and are not always easily identified. Where we have common, easily distinguished melodies from the Eight Tone system, we can compare chant melodies for correct rhythm and pitch. However, when there is a lack of comparable chants, as in the collection of Irmos by St. Andrew of Crete, it is difficult to identify transcription errors.

In other situations, cross comparison may show that a seeming anomaly is actually the most likely form of a chant. Sometimes, we have deemed it necessary to change certain anomalies anyway, for the sake of performance practice. For example, in the chants *Serobasa Mas Saidumlosa* and *Dumenan Qoveli Khortsi*, there is a rapid tempo shift in the middle of the chant. This oddity seems like a mistake, but because we have found similar accelerations in the same place in other chants, we must assume that this particular feature is the premeditated result of careful consideration.

Example 3 (a, b)

Because of the difficulties in performance practice required by this sudden doubling in tempo, we have halved the transcribed tempo in these locations to preserve

⁴ See corrected version on page 220, 2nd system, just before first solid bar-line.

⁵ See corrected version on page 122, seventh note of the 3rd system

⁶ See corrected version on page 122, beginning of 4th system

continuity throughout the chant.⁷ However, tempo change has historic precedent in Georgian liturgical repertoire, being a characteristic feature of *gamshvenebuli kilo* (colorful mode) chant, and therefore deserves continued research and discussion.

Next, an example of an incomplete transcription of the melody is corrected when compared with two other manuscripts of the identical chant. In one collection of liturgical chant transcribed by Pilimon Koridze, the chant *Sasupevelsa Shensa* (In Thy Kingdom) is presented as follows.⁸

Example 4

In this example, the first voice ascends from *a* to *c* on the words *netar iqvnen*, and continues the chant text on the *c*. However, this creates an unnatural Lydian mode chant tune, which is unusual in Georgian chant. We know from two other transcriptions⁹ of this chant that the melody should rise from *a* to *d* and continue the melody on *d*, thereby alleviating the modal discrepancy.¹⁰

Notes:

Several chants that should rightfully be included in this collection have been omitted because of their appearance in previous volumes of this series. These include:

-- All of the chants for Palm Sunday, Ascension, and Pentecost, included in *Kartuli Galoba* (Georgian Chant), Volume II, Tbilisi, 2002;

-- Also omitted are several Great Lent chants, including:

- 1) *Shendami Ikharebs* (sung instead of *Ghirs Arsi* (It is Meet) during the St. Basil Liturgy; see *Kartuli Galoba* [Georgian Chant], Volume I, Tbilisi, 2004, p. 273 and *Kartuli Galoba* [Georgian Chant], Volume III, p. 270).
- 2) *Shoba Sheni Ukhrtsnel Ars* (9th Irmos for the Vespers of Holy Tuesday; see *Kartuli Galoba* [Georgian Chant], Volume II, p. 185).

⁷ For example a), compare to corrected version on page 123, 3rd system, syllable *-bors*. For example b) see corrected version at the top of page 140 on the word *sach'mlad*.

⁸ *Kartuli Galobis Partitura #1* [Scores of Georgian Chant #1], Tbilisi, 1895

⁹ See Razhden Khundadze's collection, *Kartuli Galoba, Liturgia* [Georgian Chant. Liturgy], Tbilisi, 1911, p. 4, and another of Pilimon Koridze's manuscripts, *Shekhvetiliani*, manuscript Q-686, p. 94

¹⁰ See the corrected version on page 31, 3rd system

- 3) *Mtvirtvelman Gamoutsdelad* (9th Irmos for the Vespers of Holy Wednesday; see *Kartuli Galoba* [Georgian Chant], Volume II, p. 166).
- 4) *Razhams Shtakhed Saplavad* (Troparion on Holy Tuesday; see *Kartuli Galoba* [Georgian Chant], Volume I, Tbilisi, 2004, p. 122).

-- Also, in Volume II of *Kartuli Galoba*, one can find *Raodenta Kristes Mier* (As Many as are Baptized) in *namdvili kilo* (true mode), and other chants of the Great Feasts.

-- For the convenience of scholars and performers, we have noted the letters *g.k.* above those chants in the collection that are in 'colorful mode' (*gamshvenebuli kilo*).

-- English translations for the chant titles were found in two sources:

- 1) Hapgood, Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic Church, Englewood, New Jersey, 1996
- 2) The website for the Orthodox Church of America; www.oca.org

The editors have attempted to present an accurate compilation of service chants for the Great Lent and Easter cycles through a comparative study with the original music and text sources. The next edition will include a musical analysis of this unique body of chant and further revisions. We ask forgiveness for the shortcomings of this publication and thank God for helping us to finish this work.

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