

## ABSTRACT

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CULTURAL INTERSECTIONS OF VOCAL  
MUSIC AND HISTORY IN THE REPUBLIC  
OF GEORGIA**

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Drawing on varied sources and personal fieldwork, data suggests the use of Georgian traditional music as a way for modern Georgians to reclaim and re-imagine the past. The history of Georgia and Georgian perspectives of history both gives context for the music and illustrates many modern Georgians' sense of being under siege. Within Georgian ethnomusicology and within the dominant Georgian culture itself, two concepts, "traditionality" and "ancientness," play prominent roles in perspectives of Georgian traditional vocal music and identity formation. After describing traditionality and ancientness in the Georgian context, we explore several roles they play in the formation of Georgian identity. Many current Georgians, in choosing to practice traditionality with their musical performances and perceptions, draw close to their imagined, idealized past. Furthermore, ancientness of Georgian traditional vocal music helps defend the border against the "theoretical other" – whether geographic neighbors or historical oppressors – through difference-making.

ANCIENTNESS AND TRADITIONALITY: CULTURAL INTERSECTIONS OF  
VOCAL MUSIC AND HISTORY IN THE REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA

By

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Advisory Committee:  
Professor Robert C. Provine, Chair  
Professor J. Lawrence Witzleben  
Professor Elizabeth Papazian

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## Acknowledgments

Though this work is attributed to me, a long line of family, friends, professors, as well as many welcoming and patient Georgians deserve credit for this project. First, I am endlessly appreciative of my wife Susan Foutz for her loving encouragement, critical evaluation of my theories and ramblings, and general support while I traveled (physically and mentally). Because of her, my son (Evan), and my family (in Ohio, Indiana, and church), I was able to stay both grounded in reality and focused on the task at hand. Their understanding and prayers made this project possible, and any success is no doing of my own.

My committee also was a source of help and encouragement. Without their input, close readings, and thoughtfulness, the arguments and claims of this paper would have suffered greatly. My advisor, Dr. Robert Provine, was a veritable fountain of insight and wit during this process, both in meetings and seminars. His questions and clarity helped sharpen my ideas, both in conception and presentation. Dr. Provine's aversion to concrete definitions informed much of my approach to the project, along with the cited works. Dr. J. Lawrence Witzleben provided much of the ethnomusicological foundation for this project through seminars, and his approach to different epistemologies became vital as I delved into Georgian ethnomusicologies. With her multifaceted knowledge of the Soviet Union, Russia, and many aspects of post-Soviet countries, discussions with Dr. Elizabeth Papazian were another source of inspiration. She asked questions from different angles which served to refine my arguments further.

Two other groups of people deserve special recognition for their efforts – archival staff and visiting professors. The staff at the American Folklife Center at the Library of

Congress and the staff of the Ralph Rinzler Archive at the Smithsonian assisted by providing me with hands-on archival experience and with access to rich audio materials. I specifically thank Todd Harvey, Ann Hoog, Bertram Lyons, and Jeff Place. Along with the rest of the staff at both institutions, they go far beyond the common conception of librarian or archivist. My short (but intense) learning experiences with Dr. Jonathan Dueck and Dr. Eliot Bates should not go unmentioned. My approach to ethnomusicological and anthropological theory and fieldwork is informed from seminars they designed and the honest, analytical, and challenging in-class discussions.

Though I mention them last here, my Georgian friends and informants are the central players in this project. Without the help of Archbishop Malkhaz Songulashvili, Misha Songulashvili, Megi Nakhutsvishvili, Nino Khutsishvili, Bishop Rusudan Gotsiridze, and Achiko Mamiashvili, I might still be wandering around in Tbilisi looking for the right metro stop or waiting for a bus that never comes. They had no reason to teach me about Georgia or assist with translations other than my genuine curiosity and their genuine hospitality. As they all said at one time or another, guests are a gift from God, and they certainly treated me as such (much to my continuous embarrassment). Because of their efforts and the willingness of all my informants, I know and understand far more about Georgia and Georgians while paradoxically realizing how much I will (in all likelihood) never understand.

But perhaps that is how it should be. As with anything worthwhile, it is the process that is most useful for learning and growth, not some unattainable endpoint. This project, in many respects, is just beginning with the conclusion of my thesis.

# Table of Contents

## Contents

Acknowledgments.....	ii
List of Figures.....	v
List of Illustrations.....	vi
Note on Transliteration.....	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Description of Project Data.....	6
Theoretical Touchstones.....	12
Chapter Two: One Nation, Under Siege, Indivisible.....	17
Perceptions of History.....	20
Christianity in Georgia.....	25
Golden Age of Georgia.....	28
Turning Point: Russia.....	33
On the Edges of Empires.....	45
Chapter Three: “Let’s Go Forward – Forward to Our Ancestors!”.....	47
Traditionality in Georgian Traditional Vocal Music	
A Brief Description of Georgian Traditional Vocal Music.....	48
Description of Traditionality.....	51
Traditionality: Notation and Aural Traditions.....	52
Traditionality: Polyphonic Thinking.....	66
Traditionality: Forms of Performance.....	68
Traditionality: Just a Closer Walk with Thee.....	71
Chapter Four: Ancientness in Georgian Traditional Vocal Music.....	74
Description of Ancientness and Examples in the Data.....	75
Examples of Ancientness in Georgian Traditional Vocal Music.....	81
Ancientness in Polyphonic Texture.....	88
Kilo and Ancientness.....	91
Chapter 5: Conclusion: Intersections.....	102
Whose “Identity”?.....	102
Traditionality, History, and Identity Formation.....	105
Ancientness, History, and Defending the Border.....	107
Appendix A.....	112
Appendix B.....	115
Bibliography.....	118

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of Georgia in context with its immediate neighbors .....	1
Figure 2: Map of Mongol empire 1300-1405.. .....	32
Figure 3: Map of the Ottoman empire in 1461-1683.....	33
Figure 4: Basic System .....	60
Figure 5: Small Perfect System.....	61
Figure 6: “Tskhenosnuri” .....	66
Figure 7: “Elesa” .....	86
Figure 8: “Erekle’s Mravalzhamier” .....	91
Figure 9: An example of Gamshvenebuli kilo in “Ghirs ars ch'eshmarat'ad” .....	93-94
Figure 10: An example of Sada kilo in “Romelni kerubinta” .....	95-96
Figure 11: An example of Namdvili kilo in “Romelni kerubinta” .....	97-100

## List of Illustrations

Illustration 1: St. Andrew and St. Simon.....	35
Illustration 2: St. Nino.....	26
Illustration 3: Church of St. Nino .....	27
Illustration 4: Picture for the New Year.....	39
Illustration 5: Article on Soviet history containing photographs of Stalin and Beria.....	44
Illustration 6: Article on Soviet history containing photographs of Stalin and Beria.....	44
Illustration 7: Neumes in a manuscript of hymnographer Mikael Modrekili .....	56
Illustration 8: Two choir members rehearsing before the service.....	62
Illustration 9: Sacrifice at Father Gabriel’s grave.....	84
Illustration 10: Ceiling of Svetistkhoveli Cathedral, Mtskheta .....	89

## Note on Transliteration

With all Georgian and Russian terms, titles, and names in this project, I follow the Library of Congress system of transliteration. I provide the Georgian or Cyrillic letters for the first occurrence, and then use the Romanized version in subsequent appearances. With regards to capitalization, the first letter of Georgian proper nouns is capitalized here for clarity, although there is no capitalization in Georgian.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

When I first stumbled upon Georgian vocal music nearly six years ago, there was a sense of serendipity and an undeniable aural attraction. In searching for music that used nontraditional vocal harmonies online, I found a clip of the quintessential Georgian sacred song, *Chakrulo* (ჩაკრულო), and was instantly captivated. I soon found myself reaching for any information I could find on what was, to me, an unknown country. Just as fascinating as the music was the history of Georgia and its peoples as they interacted with a tremendous variety of cultural forces.



**Figure 1: Map of Georgia in context with its immediate neighbors**  
(Public domain from Library of Congress Map Database, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/gmdquery.html>)

Even at this relatively early stage of investigation, it was readily apparent that Georgian traditional vocal music (which includes pre-Christian, Christian, and secular music) could be a productive field of learning for ethnomusicological studies. This music is entangled with Georgian identity, history, and culture. Certainly, there are many groups and subgroups that interact in a dialogic and/or causal manner with their music(s). In this case, however, the connection occurs at a deep and, as some Georgians describe it, genetic level. Simply put, it is not just about the musical object itself, but everything the music represents.

Why is this the case? Or, to paraphrase Anthony Seeger, why do Georgians sing? Drawing on my current understanding, this connection I observed between Georgians and what is truly “their” music originates at the intersection of Georgian music, Georgian history, and Georgian culture. In examining this nexus, my analysis of the data mapped out several sites of interest, but one site seemed impossible to ignore. In reading, listening, and discussing Georgian music, history, and culture, I encountered a perception by Georgians of being under siege throughout nearly all of their history. This sense of being under siege has taken a variety of cultural, martial, political, and economic forms over the Georgia’s three thousand year history. Furthermore, Georgian traditional vocal music has served as a cultural portcullis in defense against encroaching others by preserving and promoting the Georgian language and Georgian culture. While music has many roles and functions in Georgian culture, Georgian traditional vocal music currently continues this role, making it a dialogic shaper of identity for current Georgians.

Many elements within Georgian traditional vocal music make this possible, and these elements seem to coalesce around two concepts I call “ancientness” and

“traditionality.” In various mediums, modern Georgians emphasize the “ancientness” of their traditional vocal music. Within Georgian ethnomusicology and within the larger Georgian culture itself, the concept of ancientness has a prominent role in their musical discourse and, I assert, in the perception and practice of “traditionality” in Georgian traditional vocal music. Taken together, ancientness and traditionality help to produce and reinforce modern Georgian identity. These ideas will be described and explored in detail in chapters three and four, respectively.

Analyzing possible cultural interactions is daunting business, even if one “belongs” to the cultural group in question. In discussing ethnomusicological insiders and outsiders, Nazir Jairazbhoy makes several points which partially ease my mind in presenting my analysis. He states that no ethnomusicologist would claim to possess “the deeper intuitive grasp” of their subject matter than the people themselves.<sup>1</sup> Let me be clear – I will forever lack the understanding of Georgian music, history, and culture that comes only with life experience as a Georgian. Jairazbhoy suggests, however, that the outsider can “bring to bear a different perspective and approach which might help to illumine certain musical phenomena,” offering potentially “ingenious ideas and approaches.”<sup>2</sup> How does the culturally-sensitive, post-modern, historically-aware, relativist ethnomusicologist successfully undertake the task of representing what is, for all intents and purposes, a foreign ethnomusicology? The pithiest answer may be that he neither succeeds nor tries to do so. Instead, he presents a partial understanding, with as much description and detail as possible. In this manner, I mean merely to offer suggestions and outline a web of interactions and likely possibilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy, “Ethnomusicology in the Indian Context,” *National Centre for the Performing Arts Quarterly Journal*, v. 13, no. 3 (Sept. 1984): 37.

<sup>2</sup> Jairazbhoy, 37.

Another potential stumbling block that must be addressed involves the almost pathological need in cultural studies to exhaustively define concepts. In this project, I suggest that ancientness and traditionality should be conceived not as rigid definitions but as a field of probabilities. In this approach, I draw upon the work of Brian Massumi. In his book, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Massumi uses an approach to description and “definition” based on the idea that a concept can be “abstract-but-real.”<sup>3</sup> He uses the example of Zeno’s arrow to show that the flight of the arrow can only be perceived at its conclusion and endpoint. By defining things in concrete terms, their endpoint is reached, freezing the concept and, in many cases, ignoring its path or journey to that end point. This does not imply that the concepts discussed here are completely subjective, but that the flight path is perhaps more important than the terminus. To freely paraphrase Massumi, a definition is the place where nothing ever happens.<sup>4</sup> As such, my goal is to share information directly from the collected data and avoid (as much as is possible) defining these terms in the traditional academic sense.

With this approach to terminology in mind, “Georgian traditional vocal music” in this thesis covers a somewhat broad and expansive expanse of linguistic landscape. The phrase is not used directly in Georgian ethnomusicological literature, but it is certainly compatible with the current research. It was encouraging to hear a Georgian ethnomusicologist went out of his way to express his support of the encompassing term

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<sup>3</sup> Brian Masumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 5-16. Though Masumi expansively discusses this approach, my advisor Robert Provine independently promoted it as well in meetings and in seminars.

<sup>4</sup> Masumi, 27.

“Georgian traditional vocal music.”<sup>5</sup> In describing it here, however, I do not intend to proscribe or define the musical term for others or for Georgians.

Just as the mountains and lowlands together help to describe Georgia’s incredibly varied geography, sacred and secular songs lend some detail to the cartographic product here. Sacred songs primarily include pre-Christian songs and songs of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Songs of other Christian denominations, such as Georgian Baptists, also fall into this category. Georgians refer to these pre-Christian sacred songs as *ts’armartuli* (წარმართული) or *k’erp’taq’vanis simgherbi* (კერპთაყვანისმცემლური სიმღერები) (pagan songs) and Christian songs as *sagaloblebi* (საგალობლები) or *galoba* (გალობა) (sacred chant). Secular songs are referred to as *kharkhuri simgherebi* (ხალხური სიმღერები) (folk songs) and include *naduri* (ნადური) or *shromis simgherebi* (შრომის სიმღერები) (group work songs), *urmuli* (ურმული) or *kalouri* (კალოური) (solo work songs), *mgzavruli simgherebi* (მგზავრული სიმღერები) (travel songs), and many others. *Supruli simgherebi* (სუპრული სიმღერები) (table songs) are included on this musical map as well, and they can be either sacred or secular and are often a mixture of both. The strong familial connections between Georgian sacred and secular songs are well-documented in Georgian ethnomusicology.<sup>6</sup> These songs are principally unaccompanied by instruments and performed by solo or by a small group (two to seven singers), although the exact number varies.

An important element that I am purposefully avoiding in describing the term “Georgian traditional vocal music” is the infamously problematic aspect of tradition.

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<sup>5</sup> Interview subject B007, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Edisher Garakanidze, Joseph Jordania, Joan Mills, eds., *99 Georgian Songs: A Collection of Traditional Folk, Church and Urban Songs from Georgia* (Aberystwyth, Wales: Black Mountain Press, 2004), xii.

Suffice to say it is a complicated and nuanced area of concern and deserves more space to stretch its legs (say, a whole chapter) in connection with the term “traditionality.” Until then, we can describe this element as a style generally associated by Georgians with the past in regards to vocal tone, harmony, subject matter, language, polyphony, tonality, rhythm, group size, and/or meter.

## Description of Project Data

Data for this project include a variety of materials from a variety of time periods: ethnomusicological and historical selections by Georgians and other scholars; my field recordings of music, religious services, and interviews from the summer of 2009; published music recordings from 1907-2010; photographs taken during my fieldwork of people and locations in Georgia; and photographs I collected of Georgian newspapers from the early twentieth century.

Naturally, the goal of my research was to find as many ethnographic, historical, and cultural sources from Georgian scholars as possible, which brings us to the problem of language. The Georgian language is notoriously difficult, and it was not feasible as part of this project to find the resources or the rare instructor needed to gain much facility.<sup>7</sup> Admittedly, this adds a potentially limiting factor on the selection of works because the written sources cited as part of this project are in English or in English translation. Two factors make this less problematic. Firstly, these works include many respected and emerging Georgian scholars and seem to be, by all accounts, a representative sample of Georgian scholarship. Secondly, the translations are done by

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<sup>7</sup> Even referring to “the Georgian language” is a simplification, as there are multiple dialects that have existed and that still exist. The phrase is used in the general sense in this project.

Georgians and, sometimes, by the scholars themselves. Certainly neither of these factors means that there are not works relevant to this study that are missed, but it seems very likely that the main concepts and ideas are represented in this sizable English language sample.

During the summer of 2009, I designed a qualitative interview instrument and conducted twenty-three in-depth interviews (approximately fifty hours total) with Georgians from all walks of life including musicians, non-musicians, and scholars.<sup>8</sup> Each interview was between one and two hours long and were conducted either in English or in Georgian with the help of translators.<sup>9</sup> Interview subjects were selected using a snowball sampling method, where each interview subject would suggest other potential subjects.<sup>10</sup> The sample was comprised of ten females and thirteen males between the ages of twenty-two and seventy-eight. Most subjects lived in Tbilisi, Mtskheta, or Telavi and were interviewed in their homes, in public parks, or at restaurants. While I believe these interviews can illuminate aspects of Georgian culture, they alone do not describe Georgian culture. Together with the other data sources, the interviews support a more complete understanding of Georgian musical culture and perspectives for the outsider and, perhaps, highlight new elements for insiders.

Other field recordings collected in the summer of 2009 include a variety of Georgian Orthodox and Georgian Baptist church services in the cities of Tbilisi and Mtskheta. All observations, with the exception of the initial service at the First Baptist

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<sup>8</sup> The interview instrument is included in Appendix B. To preserve their privacy, interview subjects were assigned a number to be used in this project in accordance with the University of Maryland Institutional Review Board standards.

<sup>9</sup> When the interview was in Georgian, I relied on the skills of two translators, Misha Songulashvili and Megi Nakhutsvishvili, to whom I am forever grateful. Didi gmadlobt, chemi megobari!

<sup>10</sup> Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 237-238.

Church, were unannounced ahead of time.<sup>11</sup> Most music recordings come from two Georgian Orthodox churches (the Anchistkhati Church in Tbilisi and the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral in Mtskheta) and two Georgian Baptist churches (the First and Second Baptist Church of Tbilisi). Many other religious services were observed, but they were not recorded due to potential obtrusiveness. There was not much in the way of observable traditional folk singing during the trip, and so there were no opportunities for collecting this type of recording. My translators and interview subjects independently mentioned that many people were away from the cities at this time of year (late summer) and were in the villages – implying that these people were more active in the folk singing arena. I will explore this topic in depth as part of chapter three. After traveling to the eastern villages surrounding Telavi, this explanation seemed probable.

Among written works by Georgians, reference is made in this paper to several collections concerning Georgian traditional vocal music. Two such examples are the five-volume collection of Georgian Orthodox vocal music edited by Malkhaz Erkvanidze and the analysis of the first sound recordings of Georgia by Anzor Erkomaishvili and Vakhtang Rodonaia.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the frequently detailed notes accompanying recordings are (perhaps surprisingly) a useful source of information.

Most fruitful, however, were the three publications from the International Research Centre for Traditional Polyphony in Tbilisi. Many of the research papers cited in this study come from the series of biennial conferences on polyphony supported by Tbilisi State Conservatory and the International Research Centre for Traditional

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<sup>11</sup> It is unlikely, in my experience, that any special or extraordinary musical show for a foreigner would be arranged in any case during these religious services. That was reserved for the dinner table!

<sup>12</sup> Malkhaz Erkvanidze, *Georgian Church Chant*, vol. 1-5 (Tbilisi: Tbilisi State Conservatory, 2006-2009). Anzor Erkomaishvili and Vakhtang Rodonaia, *Georgian Folk Song, The First Sound Recordings* (Tbilisi: Omega Tegi Print House, 2006).

Polyphony. The International Research Centre was established in 2003 at Tbilisi State Conservatory, with support from UNESCO and the Georgian government.<sup>13</sup> Beginning in 1998, a symposium has been held every two years in Tbilisi that centers on worldwide polyphony, though Georgian polyphony has been heavily represented. The papers are given in several languages and multiple translations. Few bound copies of the research papers exist in world libraries, but the papers from the first, second, and third symposia are available online at the website of the International Research Centre for Traditional Polyphony, along with more information regarding the research center.<sup>14</sup>

Though nearly every source that discusses Georgian traditional vocal music mentions (in varying amounts of detail) Georgia's history, certain works were central to this study. I repeatedly returned to four detailed historical accounts of Georgia for context and insight: *The Making of the Georgian Nation* and *Revenge of the Past* by Ronald Grigor Suny, *Georgian Culture* edited by Rusudan Tsurtsunia, Mariam Rukhadze, and Liana Gabechava, and *The Ghost of Freedom* by Charles King.<sup>15</sup>

Published music recordings of Georgian traditional vocal music are another rich source of all kinds of information.<sup>16</sup> Recording and publishing dates, publishers, location, and performer information, song titles, title variants, repertoire, performance practices, and alternate song texts can be cross-referenced and examined through published

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<sup>13</sup> In 2001, UNESCO declared Georgian traditional vocal songs a “masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.” See: “Georgia,” <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/worldwide/unesco-regions/europe-and-north-america/georgia/>, Internet, accessed Oct. 15, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Tbilisi Traditional Polyphony Center, “Tbilisi Traditional Polyphony Center – Symposium,” <http://www.polyphony.ge/index.php?m=518> (accessed May 11, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994). Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993). *Georgian Culture*, eds. R Tsurtsunia, Mariam Rukhadze, and Liana Gabechava (Tbilisi: Kandelaki's Foundation, 1999). Charles King, *The Ghost of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> An index of the recordings consulted for this project is included in the Appendix A.

recordings. All of these bits of information can be placed in context historically, politically, and culturally and tentatively traced to track change and interactions. These recordings include field and studio recordings from the early twentieth century to 2010. Some are commercially published by music record labels such as Melodiya, Harmonia mundi, Naxos, Shanachie, and Khelovneba, but many are self-published by the performers themselves. The explosion of recent recordings of Georgian traditional vocal music, combined with the recordings from a century ago, provide a special opportunity for research into the interactions between music, history, and identity.

Using commercial recordings as research material requires some caveats and clarification, primarily due to concerns of mediation and outside influence. Caroline Bithell offers a clear summary of frequently raised concerns with the commercial recording medium in her article “Polyphonic Voices: National Identity, World Music, and the Recording of Traditional Music in Corsica” by creating a binary comparison between commercial recordings and field recordings.<sup>17</sup> In her analysis of the Corsican recording situation, “most obviously [commercial recordings] represent a deliberate, self-conscious act. Choices have been made by the performers and the record company in terms of content, style and presentation.”<sup>18</sup> I assert, however, that the making of field recordings is also a deliberate, self-conscious act, and the performer and field worker also make decisions regarding content, style, and presentation. Bithell then comes at the issue from another direction, noting the “clear intention to promote something” with the

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<sup>17</sup> Caroline Bithell, “Polyphonic Voices: National Identity, World Music and the Recording of Traditional Music in Corsica,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 5 (1996). In a recent conversation with Bithell in October 2010, she clarified that she was talking only about the Corsican case and that her views are more nuanced than presented in this early article. It should also be noted that, despite the views presented in her article regarding commercial sound recordings, Bithell readily acknowledges that such recordings are productive sources of information.

<sup>18</sup> Bithell, 47.

commercial recording.<sup>19</sup> It would be hard to say field recordings are not trying to promote something, ranging from nationalistic or religious ideologies to the advancement of careers. She presents one more commonly-voiced distinction between commercial and field recordings: “A degree of originality is required as justification for producing the recording in the first place: the singers are expected to be artists of proven talent, not just anyone. Field recordings do not make this demand...”<sup>20</sup> Few people would assert that the selection process for informants in field work is objective, and Bithell is not one of them despite the implications presented in this article. In declaring our intentions as ethnomusicologists to our subjects, we are directed to informants who are established as knowledgeable performers or “artists,” if the term applies within that culture. The recent interest in earlier forgotten or inaccessible field recordings further complicates definition. At some point, many of these field recordings are rediscovered and re-presented through the varied efforts of the performer, the researcher, the archive, the record companies, or even the government.

It is my assertion that instead of a clear definition of commercial recording, we have not one definition but rather a descriptive continuum that relies on context. Therefore, when I speak of commercial recordings in the context of this project, the concept must be flexible and broad to allow for nuanced meaning. Thus, I describe commercial recordings as those collected by parties other than a researcher, intended to be reproduced and distributed physically by a third party, to be strongly informed by the represented culture, promoting the represented culture, and possibly benefiting the artists and/or publisher. Do we ignore these aspects of commercial recordings? Of course not—

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<sup>19</sup> Bithell, 47.

<sup>20</sup> Bithell, 47.

we identify them as much as possible for ourselves and our audiences and temper them with context.

Visual materials are also a source of data for this project. Approximately 1,300 photographs were taken as part of my research. Primarily, the collection focuses on Georgian architecture, landmarks, churches, and public life in Tbilisi, Mtskheta, and Telavi. With help from one of my translators and guides, Mikheil Songulashvili, I also captured images of early twentieth-century newspapers around pivotal dates in Georgia's history. These newspapers are housed in the central library in Tbilisi and are a largely untapped resource for cultural information. As such, the analysis of these materials as part of this project was preliminary because of language barriers and time constraints in the field.

## Theoretical Touchstones

Following the advice of those far wiser than I, it was my goal to approach my research as free from preconceptions as possible. In fact, this was one of the first things one of my subjects told me about Georgia: “Two pieces of advice as you plan to go to Georgia: forget everything you have learned from books about Georgia and be ready for all sorts of surprises.”<sup>21</sup> Of course, I cannot empty my head and unlearn all the theories and facts from my education thus far, nor is that the intention of such statements. I approached Georgia with an open mind, waiting to see how my experiences and observations (and those of the Georgians I talked, ate, laughed, and sang with) organized themselves (or didn't) as I grappled with the enormity of my subject.

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<sup>21</sup> Interview subject B000, personal email communication, June 23, 2009.

Besides the work of Brian Massumi already mentioned, I found several theoretical touchstones emerge as this study progressed. This musical study involves a complex and compelling network of historical and religious cultural elements. It is an attempt to understand Georgian culture, if only partially, as the “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capacities or habits acquired by man as a member of society” as put forth by Edward Tylor.<sup>22</sup> More specifically, this approach invokes the “musical anthropology” approach of Anthony Seeger, as explored in his classic ethnography *Why Suyu Sing*.<sup>23</sup> Seeger promotes accessing and studying society and its workings from the perspective of musical performance. Part of this approach is the assumption that “musical performances create many aspects of cultural and social life.”<sup>24</sup> As already mentioned, the interpretation data in this study supports the idea that interactions between music and the other parts of culture are dialogic. While different in flavor, this does not present a fundamental change in regards to the musical anthropology approach in regards to this study.

To examine Georgian music through this multifaceted lens seems natural and complete, in regards to Tylor and Seeger, as Georgian music exists as a dialogic force within and upon the numerous moving parts of Georgian culture. Though it is frankly more than a little daunting, I optimistically reference Tylor again:

Every possible avenue of knowledge must be explored, every door tried to see if it is open. No kind of evidence need be left untouched on the score of remoteness or complexity, of minuteness or triviality... To despair of what a conscientious collection and study of facts may lead to, and to declare any problem insoluble because difficult and far off, is distinctly to be on the wrong side in science; and he who will choose a hopeless task may set himself to discover the limits of discovery.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (London: Murray, 1871), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Anthony Seeger, *Why Suyu Sing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), xiii.

<sup>24</sup> Anthony Seeger, xiii.

<sup>25</sup> Tylor, 24.

Another useful model of such a musical study can be found in Jocelyne Guilbault's book, *Governing Sound*.<sup>26</sup> Guilbault describes a pervasive "entanglement" between calypso and the colonial/post-colonial history of Trinidad. Specifically, Guilbault focuses on describing the cultural, economic, and political situations as they pertain to how calypso was implemented in shaping an evolving sense of what it meant to be Trinidadian. This is particularly applicable to this study of Georgian perspectives of polyphony as both situations are entwined with the political, religious, and historical elements of their respective cultures. Furthermore, both locations had relatively easy access to recording technology which has created an audio imprint encompassing the last one hundred years.

Identity and the Georgian construction of identity is also an important part of this paper, and there are several works in ethnomusicology and anthropology that inform the approach to identity within this project. The exploration of identity is a well-trodden path in both fields, though it would appear to be so trampled as to make the path inscrutable. As noted in Stuart Hall's discussion of ethnicity, the word is too frequently associated with multiculturalism or as a substitution for race,<sup>27</sup> and as a result, this lack of clarity renders it a needlessly nebulous term. This study describes identity as the "essential nature" of a person or a group, as Tim Rice states in his article on practices of the field,

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<sup>26</sup> Jocelyne Guilbault, *Governing Sound: The Cultural Politics of Trinidad's Carnival Musics* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities," in *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony D. King (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 1991), 41-42.

“Disciplining *Ethnomusicology*.”<sup>28</sup> Particularly, this project addresses aspects of personal and group identity formation through boundary creation and maintenance, as informed by the work of Martin Stokes<sup>29</sup> and Fredrik Barth.<sup>30</sup>

In connection with identity, another reoccurring theme that emerged was the defensive and necessary act of difference-making. As I learned about Georgian and Georgian traditional vocal music, two collections by Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*<sup>31</sup> and *Essays on Religion*,<sup>32</sup> rose out of the depths of my graduate seminar experiences to underscore and add another layer to my observations. In both, Simmel explores some of the forces at work in the act of difference-making as part of identity formation that relate cogently to the Georgian context. Two main types of difference-making are especially relevant in the work of this social theorist. Firstly, he describes spheres of influence/organization in *Essays on Religion*. Religion is one of the great spheres or “great forms of existence,” as Simmel states, organizing everything else within its body of beliefs and creating an independent hierarchy of ideas. He asserts that as we interact with “personal or material forces,” they are mostly made subordinate to the whole of our life as it currently exists.<sup>33</sup> Naturally, different cultures may have different organizing spheres of existence. Furthermore, if forces are sufficiently disruptive or “urgent,” they can only be acknowledged and resolved by a reorganizing of life elements

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<sup>28</sup> Timothy Rice, “Disciplining *Ethnomusicology*: A New Approach,” *Ethnomusicology* 54, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2010): 322.

<sup>29</sup> Martin Stokes, “Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music,” in *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place* (New York: Berg, 1994), 1-27.

<sup>30</sup> Fredrik Barth, ed. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969).

<sup>31</sup> Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, ed. D. N. Levine. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

<sup>32</sup> Simmel, *Essays on Religion*, ed. and trans. Horst Jürgen Helle and Ludwig Nieder (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977).

<sup>33</sup> Simmel, *Essays on Religion*, 137.

in which the disruption becomes the primary sphere.<sup>34</sup> As will become evident, religion has been and is a major organizing force in Georgian culture and society and has caused its fair share of reorganization and disruption in Georgian history.

The great spheres also relate to interactions on a smaller scale, illustrating another side of difference-making. Simmel notes that the greater the parties' similarity with each other, the more of themselves as "whole persons" comes into play in relationships. This creates a deeper and more violent hostility because the actors are habitually investing their whole self.<sup>35</sup>

All of these data points will be integrated in the exploration of the topic and in the presentation of the data. Chapter two will serve as an overview of Georgian history, focusing on Georgia's rise as a country and as a nation, its adoption of Christianity, and Georgia's interactions with its neighbors. Chapter two will give a brief musical description of Georgian traditional vocal music and discuss the traditionality of Georgian vocal music. As part of this discussion, I will attempt to contextualize the first Georgian vocal music recordings and the primary changes and functions of subsequent recordings. In chapter three, I will explore ancientness and difference-making in Georgian traditional vocal music. The interactions and entanglements of these elements with Georgian identity will be outlined in the conclusion. Together, these discussions strive to explore and answer, if only in part, why Georgian traditional vocal music remains the powerful force within Georgian culture it is today.

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<sup>34</sup> Simmel, *Essays on Religion*, 137.

<sup>35</sup> Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*, 91.

## Chapter Two: One Nation, Under Siege, Indivisible

History, from the Georgian perspective, presents a problem of scale for those of us used to thinking in decades or centuries. It becomes hard for this type of person to discuss, classify, trace, and even contemplate a country that feels its roots lie in the first millennium BCE. For Georgians, this scale seems commonplace, or at least a common mode of thinking. The difficulty in presenting an overview of such a swath of time is apparent; the scope is broad and the risks lie in making sweeping generalizations, and conversely, failing to sufficiently honor the complexity of history.

It is a great relief, then, to lean on the wonderful work done by recent history scholars and to cite Georgian historical perceptions directly from my fieldwork interviews. Using the interviews as a starting point, I will outline the historical events that resonated with the Georgians that participated in the research project. In doing so, the goal is to give the reader insight into Georgia's development as country (and later, as a nation-state), the rise of Christianity in Georgia, and some key interactions Georgia has had with its geographic neighbors. Through this exploration of history and what is valued in Georgian's perception of their history, what unfolds is a sense of being under siege throughout their history and pride in their resiliency – a sense which is reflected and reinforced by their traditional vocal music.<sup>36</sup>

Before beginning on this daunting jaunt through Georgian history, the authors of the primary historical sources should be introduced to provide context. Ronald Grigor Suny is an author and editor of multiple books concerning Caucasian history in general

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<sup>36</sup> I would be remiss not to note that the common greeting in Georgia, “Gamarjobat” (გამარჯობა) refers to an old phrase which means, “Congratulations on the victory.”

and Georgian history in particular. In this study, his works *The Revenge of the Past*, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* and *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change* were vital in providing detailed historical and anthropological analysis and a broad range of information. According to interview subjects B007, B017 and B019, some Georgian scholars have a strong dislike for Suny's depiction of Georgian history. Noting that many Russian scholars also dislike Suny's interpretation, interview subject B019 joined the others in expressing respect for his works.

Through detailed examination and translation of Georgian manuscripts, historiographer Stephen H. Rapp provides much needed access to documents that illuminate the earliest history of Georgia. His translation and commentary in *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography: Early Texts and Eurasian Contexts* was particularly useful, as it is the only English translation of the *Kartli tskhovreba* (კარტლი წხოვრება).<sup>37</sup> The *Kartli tskhovreba*, or Georgian chronicles, are a series of manuscripts written in Old Georgian, which is quite different from the modern Georgian language. These manuscripts are believed to be written accounts of oral histories and were previously thought to date from the eleventh century. Rapp's analysis, however, points to the mixture of forms and styles referenced in large sections of the collection. He suggests that the earliest sections of *Kartli tskhovreba* are from between the seventh and ninth centuries CE. Taking a multidisciplinary approach, Rapp carefully compares the manuscripts in context of other historical sources as well as cultural and economic influences in Transcaucasia. Stephen Rapp is currently an Assistant Professor of History

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<sup>37</sup> Stephen H. Rapp. *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography: Early Texts and Eurasian Contexts* (Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 2003).

at Georgia State University, Atlanta, and is the founding director of its program in world history and cultures.

One of the most prominent current Georgian ethnomusicologists is Joseph Jordania.<sup>38</sup> Jordania has published extensively on Georgian music in many languages including Georgian, Russian, and English. He holds doctorates in ethnomusicology from Tbilisi University and Kiev State University (Ukraine) and is a frequent attendee of Society of Ethnomusicology meetings. Besides writing the extensive *Garland Encyclopedia* entry on Georgia,<sup>39</sup> he has written numerous articles and books concerning the possible origins of Georgian traditional vocal music and polyphony in general.

Another influential Georgian ethnomusicologist and historian is Rusudan Tsurtsunia, who currently serves as the Doctor of Arts, Professor of Music History Chair, Vice-Rector at V. Saradjishvili Tbilisi State Conservatory. She has authored many works in Russian and Georgian on “Georgian music history, the originality and value orientation questions, composers’ relations with national traditions, interrelations of old Georgian secular and sacred music and sociological problems of folklore.”<sup>40</sup> Together with Jordania, Tsurtsunia founded the International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony at Tbilisi State Conservatory.

The work of Charles King is another source for historical information regarding the Caucasus. Though he has written several books regarding the area, his book, *The Ghost of Freedom*, is the most applicable to this study. *The Ghost of Freedom* primarily

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<sup>38</sup> For curriculum vitae, see: Joseph Jordania, “Joseph Jordania,” <http://www.mdw.ac.at/ive/emm/jordania.htm> (accessed Aug. 21, 2010).

<sup>39</sup> Timothy Rice, James Porter and Chris Goertzen, eds., *The Garland World Encyclopedia of Musical Cultures. Vol. 8 Europe* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), s.v. “Georgia,” Joseph Jordania, 826-849.

<sup>40</sup> Conservatoire – Rusudan Tsurtsunia, “Rusudan Tsurtsunia,” [http://www.conservatoire.edu.ge/index.php?sec\\_id=542&lang\\_id=ENG](http://www.conservatoire.edu.ge/index.php?sec_id=542&lang_id=ENG) (accessed Aug. 21, 2010).

focuses on the pursuit of self-determination of Georgians and Armenians. Starting in the late eighteenth century, King examines and analyzes the interactions between these two groups and the Russian and Soviet governments and prevalent ideologies. Instead of merely presenting the cloying binaries of the tragic or triumphant character of Georgia, he lays out evidence of shifting politics and identities over the last two hundred years in the southern Caucasus region. King is currently a professor in the International Affairs and Government department at Georgetown University and has previously served as chair of the faculty of Georgetown's Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service.

The historical account by the Georgian historian Marika Lordkipanidze in *Georgian Culture* aligns with mainstream Georgian perspective of history, in keeping with my informants' responses. Her chapter on early Georgian history primarily is a summary, though it does contain some analysis and certain turns of phrase that give insight into Georgian views of their history. Lordkipanidze is a respected historian in Georgia and is a professor at Tbilisi State University.

## Perceptions of History

One of my first questions in the interviews conducted in the summer of 2009 asked subjects to identify important events or pivotal moments in Georgia's long history; events that were frequently or emphatically stated are explored below. Though they are presented in chronological order for clarity's sake, this is not meant as an exhaustive retelling of Georgian history. Based on my research, the Georgian historical narrative focuses on recurring themes of national and geographic unity, the importance of Christianity, and a perception of being under siege. These themes are thoroughly

entwined with Georgian traditional vocal music and, and the primary interactions between music and history will be explored in chapters two and three. To even begin to understand these interactions, first we must find our footing in the foundational moments of Georgian history.

One of the most frequent responses, although given almost in passing, involves Georgia's founding. This is more nuanced than it initially appears, as the respondents are referencing the establishment of the kingdom of Kartli-Iberia of the first millennium BCE. The primary importance of this event with regards to this study goes beyond that of a mere starting point. In examining their beginnings, a narrative arises that tells of the braiding of many disparate threads to form what would become a group of people called *kartli* (ქართველი), known later as "Georgians."

Just as it is difficult to trace the individual strands in high quality braided rope, attempting to ascertain the origins of the Georgian people is a trying task. Few documents are extant that offer much information about life in Transcaucasia between the first millennium BCE and the first millennium CE. The historical studies by Georgians encountered during this project as well as Ronald Suny's portrayal seem to indicate a straight lineage from past tribal groups. After examining the available sources, I am more in agreement with the more nuanced assessment presented by Stephen Rapp:

It is not at all certain when the first peoples we might characterize as "Georgians" lived. Though modern observers have often sought to forge a direct, unbroken link to remote antiquity, we have no historical evidence for any ancient tribe or people considering itself "Georgian" in its medieval or modern formulations. Too often modern concepts of identity have been project back onto the remote past, and not just in the case of the Georgians. But that is certainly not to say that later Georgian peoples, like the K'art'velians, were not heirs (in some fashion) to earlier Caucasian, Anatolian, and Near Eastern cultures.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Stephen H. Rapp. *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography*, 9.

Even if these origins are historically murky (and understandably so), they give us flashes of context into why this union of Colchis and Iberia is so pivotal to the modern conception of Georgian history.

According to Georgian scholars, the country recognized now recognized as Georgia began when two southwestern tribes called the Diauehi and the Colchis (or, Egrisi) in the twelfth century BCE formed a “confederation.”<sup>42</sup> Georgian historians also lay claim to two other Phrygian tribes from the same time period, the Mushki and Tibal, the names the Assyrians called them. Until 845 BCE, this coalition was a strong organizing force for the southern Caucasus area and successfully defended itself against repeated attacks by Assyria. A series of what Suny characterizes as “fragile” pseudo-empires followed.<sup>43</sup> The Assyrians and the Urartu forced the Diauehi and the Colchis to pay tribute until the sixth century BCE when the Median empire dismantled the Assyrian and Urartian empires. Though some details are unknown, there seems to be general consensus that the remnants of the Diauehi and Colchis settled in modern western Georgia and that the Mushki and Tibal tribes migrated to the Kura Valley of eastern Georgia, centering around the city of Mtskheta.<sup>44</sup> As described by Georgian historian Marika Lordkipanidze, these proto-Georgian groups were following their “characteristic feature” of forming a “unified state.”<sup>45</sup>

Even at this juncture, these proto-Georgian tribes were on the borders of the Persian empire, one of the first “world” empires. Classical sources, such as those by Herodotus and Xenophon, are the sources for the little information available regarding

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<sup>42</sup> Marika Lordkipanidze, “History,” in *Georgian Culture*, 9.

<sup>43</sup> Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 7.

<sup>44</sup> Suny notes (p. 345) that there is some disagreement as to whether the Mushki were proto-Georgians or proto-Armenians. While the distinction could be historically interesting, it does not impact this study.

<sup>45</sup> Marika Lordkipanidze, “History,” in *Georgian Culture*, 9.

the time period from the sixth to fourth centuries BCE. Suny cites the description by Herodotus of various provinces of the Persian empire which included the Mushki and Tibal tribes and the kingdom of Colchis as an autonomous vassal state.<sup>46</sup> As the Persian hold on these outlying regions loosened in the fifth century BCE, the Greek soldier and historian Xenophon describes the Greek army's destructive march through Colchis. These attacks helped to shatter the kingdom into separate fortified settlements, but they also gave Xenophon the opportunity to observe the Colchians and another proto-Georgian tribe, the Mossynoeci (Greek for "dwellers in wooden towers"), near the Black Sea. Sometimes referred to as Mossniks or Mossiniks, they are not to be confused with the Mushki tribe of the eastern Kura Valley.

Xenophon's comments are often singled out as a central piece of evidence for the existence of polyphony in the musical practice of these proto-Georgian tribes. Most Georgian scholars and scholars of Georgian music cite Xenophon's description of Mossynoecian song as a "specific," "peculiar," or "distinctive" manner of singing. In the English sources, the specific citation of this description is sadly omitted, but it is presumably from the fifth book of Xenophon's *Anabasis*. Using the translation favored by Suny, the passage describing this march song is below:

After they had formed their lines, one of them led off, and the rest after him, every man of them, fell into a rhythmic march and song, and passing through the battalions and through the quarters of the Greeks they went straight on against the enemy, toward a stronghold which seemed to be especially assailable.<sup>47</sup>

In researching various translations of this passage, this translation by O.J. Todd seems consistent with other English translations. Interestingly, this passage lacks any of the

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<sup>46</sup> Suny, *The Making of a Georgian Nation*, 9. Autonomous vassal states denotes a type of relationship in which one group sends resources to another group in exchange for various degrees of freedom.

<sup>47</sup> O.J. Todd, trans., *Xenophon, Anabasis, Books IV-VII* (New York: Loeb Classical Library, 1922), 123.

adjectives cited by other scholars of Georgian music, and there is not any other part of Xenophon's seven-volume account that discusses this tribe.

Due in large part to this destructive Greek incursion into Colchis, the second union of proto-Georgian tribes proved to be more influential on the Georgian perception of their history. While under Persian rule (546-331 BCE) and while the Colchis were busy fighting the Greeks and each other, the Mushki and Tibal tribes merged with the local tribes and carved out their own settlements. These groups became known as Iberoi (Iberians) by the Greeks. With the Colchis in a state of disarray in the third century BCE, the Iberians stepped in, preventing a possible Greek takeover. Suny cites the accounts of the first king of Kartli-Iberia, King Parnavazi (პარნავაზი, also called Farnavazi and Pharnabazus) as recorded in *Kartlis tskhovreba*, the Georgian chronicles.<sup>48</sup> In addition to uniting the two roots of the modern Georgian nation in 3 BCE, Parnavazi also is credited with the creation of the written Georgian language and the establishment of the foundations of feudalism.<sup>49</sup> According to the chronicles, Parnavazi was also a descendent of K'artlos (კარტლოსი or Kartlosi), who is the mythical ancestor of the Georgians, son of Torgahmah, and the grandson of Noah.<sup>50</sup> This is not an odd bit of trivia, as Rapp points out, as K'artlos is likely a "contrivance though he came to be regarded in the medieval epoch as a real historical figure and the genuine founder of the K'art'velian people."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 11.

<sup>49</sup> Suny, 12.

Lordkipanidze, "History," in *Georgian Culture*, 10.

<sup>50</sup> Rapp, *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography*, 131. Interestingly, Torgahmah is listed as an early shared ancestor of several Caucasian peoples and is mentioned in the work of Josephus and the apocryphal *The Book of Jubilees* from the second century BCE. Rapp is unsure if the writer(s) of this section of *kartlis tskhovreba* was familiar with these works.

<sup>51</sup> Rapp, 427.

As the tribes united, they enjoyed some political success and defended their lands, which is certainly important but is not the only relevant element here. It is also interesting that the founding of Georgia occurred under the guidance of the progeny of their shared ancestor, K'artlos. The importance of this event also could be connected with naming themselves as *kartli* and their country *Sakartvelo* (საქართველო, or “land where the Karts dwell”), though *kartli* was not originally meant as an all-encompassing term for the inhabitants of the area now known as Georgia.

## Christianity in Georgia

The rise of Christianity in Georgia in fourth century CE is considered to be a foundational event in Georgian history. Not only was it mentioned by every Georgian I interviewed as an important moment in Georgian history, it was often stated to be the most important. Two representative responses are below:

We are considered to be a Christian country and we have really a long Christian history. This is also really Georgian to be a Christian, and to be orthodox also. Christianity helped, I think, and contributed to how this nation lived its life through the centuries. Many enemies would invade Georgia, but still there are many stories about defending their belief in Christianity and many would die because of Christianity and for their country.<sup>52</sup>

We have a big responsibility from God, our homeland, and our people. [Our] first responsibility is to be [Georgian] Orthodox because Georgia is filled with Orthodox culture, history, and traditions.<sup>53</sup>

Two complementary accounts regarding this time help to place this event in a Georgian cultural context: the conversion of King Mirian III by St. Nino and the expansion of newly Christianized Roman empire.

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<sup>52</sup> Interview subject B002, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>53</sup> Interview subject B007, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

During my fieldwork interviews and discussions, the genesis of Christianity in Georgia was tied to three people – St. Andrew, St. Simon, and St. Nino. Though the disciples Andrew the First Called and Simon the Zealot are venerated through icons and religious services for their preaching in Georgia (Illustration 1), the event of “Georgia’s conversion” to Christianity is credited to a woman in the fourth century now called St. Nino (Illustration 2).



**Illustration 1: St. Andrew and St. Simon**  
(Sameba Georgian Orthodox Cathedral, Tbilisi;  
photo by the author)



**Illustration 2: St. Nino**  
(Sameba Georgian Orthodox Cathedral, Tbilisi;  
photo by the author)

After telling the Kartli-Iberian queen, Nana, about Christianity, healing her, and converting her, Nino was brought before King Mirian (or Mirean) to share her faith. Having no materials to make a cross to illustrate her faith, she used tree branches and her own hair to fashion a cross. Initially rejecting the Christian God and Nino’s teaching, the king went on a long hunting trip and became lost in the darkness. In his despair, he called on “the God of Nino” to show him the way home, and the darkness lifted. After King Mirian returned home, he proclaimed his conversion and made Christianity the official

religion of the kingdom in 334 CE.<sup>54</sup> Even today as seen in the picture below, the silhouette of St. Nino arches towards Tbilisi from the village of Digomi, though it is difficult to tell if it is in blessing or whether she is entreating modern Georgians to remember their Christian faith (Illustration 3).



**Illustration 3: Church of St. Nino**  
(Digomi, Tbilisi; photo by the author)

The other account of Kartli-Iberia's conversion is less about miracles and more about political and economic influence and benefits. Suny describes the kingdom as under pressure from both the Roman and Persian empires as Kartli-Iberia sat on the border of both. He cites mid-twentieth century Soviet Georgian historian V.D. Dondua, who gives a number of reasons for why a conversion to Christianity was the politically expedient path: "In the first place, it strengthened their alliance with the Roman empire, where Christianity had also been victorious against the Persians; second, it untied the hands of the kings in the struggle against the pagan priesthood, which possessed immense

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<sup>54</sup> Interview subject B008, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

landholdings and great wealth.”<sup>55</sup> Distrust of the Zoroastrian priesthood, the political need to preserve the kingdom, potential economic benefits for developing resources, and their geographic placement between two competing empires presented the rulers of Kartli-Iberia with a choice: align with Rome or with Persia. In choosing a Roman alliance, they also chose the religion of their allies.

Regardless of the exact reasons, by choosing Christianity and a Roman allegiance, King Mirian III and his successors helped define the region as a borderland between various empires for the next millennium. Kartli-Iberian lands and allegiances shifted back and forth as the power of the Byzantine empire and Arab kingdoms pulsed in opposition to one another, but the people primarily remained Christian regardless of who ruled at the time. Following her account of the coming of Christianity to early Georgia, Lordkipanidze reflects a more straightforward perspective of Christianity’s connection with these early Georgians: “Throughout centuries the Georgian people fought against foreign invaders with the cross in their hands and the Georgian church always supported the Georgian state.”<sup>56</sup> What is missing from this interpretation is that, according to other scholars discussed below, Christianity did not prevent bitter infighting, nor was the Georgian church so steadfast in its loyalty to the Georgian state.

## Golden Age of Georgia

The “Golden Age” (ოქროს ხანა) of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was the second most common answer to my interview question about what was the most

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<sup>55</sup> Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 21.

<sup>56</sup> Lordkipanidze, 11.

important time in Georgian history, and the primary rulers – Davit II Aghmashenebeli (დავით აღმაშენებელი, also known as Davit IV, David the Builder, and David the Rebuilder) and “King” Tamar (ტამარ or, Queen Tamar) – were frequently mentioned in nearly all the interviews. Respondents cited three main reasons for the importance of this time: 1) the reclamation of former Kartli-Iberian lands, 2) the reunification of the eastern Iberian and western Egrisi kingdoms, and 3) the surge of literature, art, and music.

As noted previously, the idea of unity is a common thread in the Georgian perception of their history. It was only after both Davit (1089-1125) and Tamar (1184-1212) that the term “*sakartvelo*” transitioned to its modern meaning, referring to all Georgian peoples and the country itself.<sup>57</sup> However, it was not until the Byzantine and Turkish Seljuk empires were preoccupied with fighting each other in the late eleventh century that Davit could launch his military and political campaigns to truly unify the country. As one of my informants stated:

Georgia is a very little country. And Georgian history does not really depend on Georgia, mainly... The geographic and geopolitical position of Georgia is, we are so, so small. Everything that was happening in our country was somehow something was happening elsewhere in the world. Even the time of David the Builder and in the twelfth century, its was the time of the crusaders, so the world was kind of preoccupied with different things, so Georgia found its own way to develop... He could find his way in the political setup. My teacher of theology would say that the hero must coincide with the time, and then the great things happen. If there is [a] hero but the time is not the right time, then the hero is a tragic person – he cannot change anything... In the case of David the Builder, it was time and hero together.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> There is some disagreement about when the term *sakartvelo* was used in this way. Suny places the date after Bagrat III inherited both the Abkhazeti and the Kartli-Iberia kingdoms in 1008 (Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 32). I am more inclined to follow Rapp, who finds widespread official usage of the term in this all-Georgian manner in the thirteenth century (Rapp, 439-440).

<sup>58</sup> Interview subject B016, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

Davit's reclamation of lands from Byzantine and Seljuk forces is well-known among Georgians, but there is a difference in emphasis between some of the sources cited in this project. Suny notes that Davit and the Kakhetian king, Aghsartan II, had multiple battles in 1105 that occurred as part of unifying the surrounding lands, and that Davit instituted oppressive crackdowns on his political opponents and the nobility.<sup>59</sup> These battles and power struggles with other Georgian peoples were not mentioned by informants or by Georgian scholars. Lordkipanidze paints a different picture of Davit as a clear hero against a foe that defeated everyone else:

In the 11<sup>th</sup> century they [the Seljuk Turks] conquered Iran, Albania, Armenia and Mesopotamia. The Byzantine empire was defeated by the Seljuk Turks and was forced to give up its eastern provinces. Georgia was left alone face to face with the strong, numerous, well-organized and well-armed enemy... King David, who was called David the Builder, restrained the feudals' disobedience, carried out some reforms... in order to centralize the power and to strengthen the military might.<sup>60</sup>

Suny states that Davit, as part of these reforms, took control of the Georgian church, "purged the clerical hierarchy of his opponents," and placed his most trusted advisor into a newly created church position to serve as a powerful political guardian.<sup>61</sup> Along with Suny, another scholar of early Transcaucasian history, Peter Golden, points out Davit's invitation to large groups of various outsiders (such as the Qipchak Turkish warriors and Cumans) to settle in Georgia and fight as part of his armies.<sup>62</sup> These foreigners quickly converted to Christianity and assimilated into the native population. Using his centralized and expanded political and military might, Davit captured Tbilisi from the Seljuk Turkish

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<sup>59</sup> Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 33.

<sup>60</sup> Lordkipanidze, 15-16.

<sup>61</sup> Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 35.

<sup>62</sup> Suny, 35-36.

Peter B. Golden, "The Turkic Peoples and Caucasia," in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism, and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 59-60.

forces and moved the capital of the kingdom to the “liberated” city, which had been an Islamic city for nearly four hundred years.

In discussing Queen Tamar, additional differences in historical perspectives exist between scholars and informants. Suny and Golden describe considerable domestic strife under Queen Tamar, though Georgia’s economic prosperity continued.<sup>63</sup> As explained by most informants, Tamar was so “strong” that she was called “King Tamar.” Another informant stated:

King Tamar’s time...She is considered to be a very good ruler and governor because even nobody was, how to say, punished or sentenced to death when she was running the country. As it is said and written, because she was such a good governor, that there were no [sic] such big crimes in the country, and people had good conditions in those times.<sup>64</sup>

Describing this time of growing political and economic power, Lordkipanidze echoes these sentiments, stating that “forms of governing the country became more perfect.”<sup>65</sup>

Though this was a period of nearly constant military campaigns by both Davit and Tamar, informants and written sources agree that Georgian culture flourished during this time. Secular and Christian literature developed distinct forms influenced by (yet set apart from) their geographic neighbors, as read in stories of early Georgian saints and the ubiquitous *Vepkhistiqaosani* (ვეფხისტყაოსანი, or “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”) by Shota Rustaveli (შოთა რუსთაველი). At Mtskheta, Davit oversaw construction of the majestic Svetitskhoveli Cathedral and the Gelati monastery in Kutaisi. This cathedral became the honored burial site of Georgian kings and the place associated with Georgia’s adoption of Christianity. To many Georgians, it is the center of Georgian Orthodoxy. As

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<sup>63</sup> Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 39-40. Golden, 60-62.

<sup>64</sup> Interview subject B002, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>65</sup> Lordkipanidze, 16.

a center of learning and music, the Gelati monastery was home to several paragons of Georgian culture, such as Ioanne Petritsi (იოანე პეტრიჭი) and the Patriarch Arseni (არსენი IV).

The arrival of the Mongols on the steppes of Transcaucasia in 1220 was the beginning of the slow decline of Georgia's power and its fragmentation into separate provinces. This five-hundred-year period was rarely mentioned by my informants, except to say that Mongols and, later, Ottoman Turks, Iranians, and Russians kept control of the fractured, feuding, and fading feudalistic areas. Once again, Georgians were caught between empires.



**Figure 2: Map of Mongol empire 1300-1405. The red line outlines its borders as of 1300.** (Public domain map from William Shepherd, *Historical Atlas* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), 92.



**Figure 3: Map of the Ottoman empire in 1461-1683.**

(Public domain map from William Shepherd, *Historical Atlas* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), 124.

## Turning Point: Russia

Through only four of twenty-three informants talked about it directly, the depth of their feelings surrounding the Russian-Georgian Treaty of Georgievsk in 1783 makes it an event worth exploring. The treaty made the Georgian kingdom and its people subjects of the tsar in exchange for protection. A person involved with the recently reopened Museum of Soviet Occupation in Tbilisi made a point to emphatically correct me during an interview, saying that the occupation began in 1783 with the “mistake of King Erekle

II” (ერეკლე II) and that the museum was expanding to include this time period.<sup>66</sup> Also calling the treaty a mistake, another informant noted that Erekle sought help from his fellow Christians, but that more damage was left in the wake of the Russians than when Georgians were under Islamic rule. After pausing a moment, this informant said, “The relationship between us and Russia is most tragic for me.”<sup>67</sup>

In retrospect, it does seem baffling that Georgian leaders believed that the Russian tsars would fulfill their part of the bargain. Beginning with Tsar Fedor Ivanovich in 1589 and continuing with Peter the Great in 1722 and Catherine the Great in 1769, the Russians repeatedly failed to attempt to protect their Georgian allies, despite explicit promises to do so. After he fought to create a fragile united kingdom, King Erkele seemed to be reviving Georgia. Charles King suggests that Erekle II saw the agreement as similar to those struck with the Persian empires. Furthermore, King asserts that the treaty was a direct result of the realization of Erekle that he faced loss of his pseudo-autonomy at the hands of the Qajars, a rising power in the Ottoman empire.<sup>68</sup>

Regardless of Erekle’s motivations and hopes, the treaty inflamed relations with the Ottoman empire and the pattern of Russian infidelity continued. When the second Russo-Turkish war started in 1787, Catherine recalled her forces from Georgia and sent them to the Balkans. Later, in the face of Iranian aggression lead by Shah Agha Mohammad Khan in 1795, she refused to send troops to Tbilisi. As a result, the shah easily razed and decimated the city. Even when troops were finally sent by Catherine in 1797, her son, Paul, recalled the soldiers. In a feat of arrogance three years later, Tsar Paul annexed Kartli-Kakheti, and his son, Tsar Alexander I (1801-1825), abolished the

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<sup>66</sup> Interview subject B023, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>67</sup> Interview subject B008, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>68</sup> King, 26-27.

kingdoms entirely in 1801. To highlight the enormity of the affront, Suny cites a particularly pointed letter from Prince Garsevan Chavchavadze (გარსევან ჩავჭავაძე) to his family in Tbilisi, in which Chavchavadze wrote that the Russians had “not fulfilled [even] one of King Giorgi’s requirements. They have abolished our kingdom...No country has ever been so humiliated as Georgia.”<sup>69</sup> It is then especially ironic that Georgia was reunited when the Russians completed their annexation of Georgia with the occupation of the mountainous province of Svaneti in 1857.

Russification, a social policy started by Alexander III (1881-1894), was another frequent topic of conversation among informants when discussing Georgian history. The policy was implemented to bring stability to the troublesome region after multiple failed Georgian uprisings. Essentially, its purpose was to re-make the identity of a variegated Russian empire into one unified primary identity. This affect was to be accomplished through promotion of the Russian language, the Russian Orthodox church, and Russian power as embodied in the tsar. Through examining historical contexts of language policy, religious oppression, and loyalty to the tsar/Soviet leadership, we will establish a foundation to assess potential influences on Georgian traditional vocal music in chapter four.

A complete accounting of the influence of Russification in Georgia under both the tsars and the Soviet government is beyond the purview of this project. A policy such as Russification cannot be said to truly succeed or fail. Yet perhaps it is to be expected that there is a strong sense of pride in Georgian resistance when discussing Russification efforts. Through a translator, a prominent Georgian scholar put it this way: “Of course the

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<sup>69</sup> Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 59.

Russians and Soviets were not able to influence everyone – they relied on military strength and were not strong enough. If you want to be influential and make that influence natural, you must be better than the other...and they are a very young country.”<sup>70</sup> As a follow-up to these statements, a Georgian college student remarked,

I don't like this story, but it exists. In twelfth century, when Georgian people have *Vepkhistqaosani* [*The Knight in Panther's Skin* by Rustaveli], it was great poem, with many good human ideas about everything, about gender which came to us in our renaissance. And at that time, the Russian country does not exist. When they tried to make influence, to make people what they want – maybe our country is very small, and they catch many small countries – but cultural changes [are] very difficult for them. It is difficult when someone comes to your country and catches you, and he is very down [i.e. less developed] than your culture. It is very difficult to adapt to this situation, and you always have protests.<sup>71</sup>

Since about 1860, the Georgian language has been a point of pride and a strong marker of identity in Georgia, so it is not surprising that the supremacy of the Russian language under Alexander III chafed the collars of many Georgians. Directly prior to this time, Russian was the language of learning and scholarship.<sup>72</sup> A slow but steady resurgence of interest in Georgian literature between 1860 and 1890 was driven by gifted writers such as Alexandre Chavchavadze (1786-1846), Grigol Orbelani (1800-1883) and Iia Chavchavadze (1837-1907). Georgian literacy programs spread, based on textbooks like *Deda ena* (დედა ენა, “Mother Tongue”).<sup>73</sup> Unfortunately for the Georgian literature movement, Russification policies even outlawed the printing of the word “Gruziia” (Грузия, or “Georgia” in Russian) in the mid-1880s.<sup>74</sup> Despite this and other restrictive

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<sup>70</sup> Interview subject B004, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>71</sup> Interview subject B009, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>72</sup> Lordkipanidze, 22.

<sup>73</sup> Suny, 133.

<sup>74</sup> Suny, 140.

practices on the Georgian language, the “national liberation movement” and “the awakening of national consciousness” continued.<sup>75</sup>

As part of this interest in Georgian culture, broader interest in traditional vocal music grew around this time. Suny notes that the first officially recognized Georgian choir was formed in 1885 by Lado Agniashvili (ლადო აგნიაშვილი).<sup>76</sup> However, research and preservation efforts had been underway for over two decades. Established in 1860, the “Chant Reviving Committee” worked to preserve Georgian traditional vocal music for the younger generations through musical education and transcription of songs.<sup>77</sup> From 1880 to the 1910s, researchers and composers such as Filimon Koridze (ფილიმონ კორიდზე), Polievktos (პოლიევქტოს) and Vasili Karbelashvili (ვასილი კარბელაშვილი), Razhden Khunadze (რაზჟდენ ხუნადაზე), and Ekvtime Kereselidze (ეკვტიმე კერესელიძე) transcribed approximately five thousand Georgian traditional songs from various performers into Western notation.<sup>78</sup> This flourishing of interest was soon arrested, however, as tendrils of Russification restrained sacred vocal music performers and teachers.

Religion was an area of difference that was continuously a place of conflict as part of the Russification program. As noted earlier, the Georgian Orthodox church had been a central part of what it meant to be Georgian since the fourth century. As part of early efforts of control in 1811, Tsar Alexander I placed the Russian Orthodox church as

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<sup>75</sup> Lordkipanidze, 22-23.

<sup>76</sup> Suny, 133.

<sup>77</sup> Davit Shughliashvili, “Georgian Chanting Schools and Traditions,” in *The First International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony*, eds. Rusudan Tsursumia and Joseph Jordania (Tbilisi: International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony of Tbilisi State Conservatory, 2002), 433.

<sup>78</sup> Shughliashvili, 432.

the leader of the previously independent Georgian Orthodox church.<sup>79</sup> The Georgian liturgy was replaced with the Russian text and, many times, Russian music. Through a translator, one Georgian ethnomusicologist stated that beginning in the late nineteenth century, “when the Russian kings occupied Georgia, it was not forbidden to go to our churches, but the Georgian language was forbidden. They were putting their own songs into our churches.”<sup>80</sup> The lack of autonomy of the Georgian Orthodox church was a primary point of contention for the next one hundred and thirty years; it was released from Russian control in 1943.

In securing loyalty and power for the tsar, the creation of a new nobility added to the growing discontent of Georgians, as much of Georgia’s new nobility was not, in fact, Georgian. Through years of abduction, assassination, and war, the nobility of Georgia was decimated. To manage the now vacant lands, the Russian government appointed Armenians and Russians as the new nobility. Wealthy Armenians in particular were in position to buy what were essentially estates in foreclosure – more importantly, estates that had belonged to the Georgian nobility for generations. Suny aptly describes Russia’s deliberate obfuscation below:

The slowly maturing national consciousness of Georgians clashed with the revival of Russian chauvinism, and the governors of the Caucasus attempted to repress, or at least contain, expressions of nationalism while at the same time diverting Georgian hostilities toward the Armenians. Nationality was made a consideration in recruitment.<sup>81</sup>

King gives an example of the success of this diversion by relating an account by a British ambassador, Oliver Wardrop in the 1880s:

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<sup>79</sup> Suny, 84.

<sup>80</sup> Interview subject B007, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>81</sup> Suny, 140.

Only those who have lived the life of the people in Trans-Caucasia know the curse the money-lending community are. A local proverb says, “A Greek will cheat three Jews, but an Armenian will cheat three Greeks,” and the Georgian, straightforward, honest fellow, is but too often cruelly swindled by [them]. When the fraud is very apparent the Armenian often pays for his greed with all the blood that can be extracted from his jugular vein.<sup>82</sup>

These sentiments illustrate what the Georgians perceived as ethnic discrimination by the central Russian government and discrimination by Georgians and Russians against minority populations within Georgia. One of my informants called this an “ethnic bomb” devised and primed by the Russian and Soviet governments.<sup>83</sup> It just so happens that this bomb itself was not so discriminating. By emphasizing difference, the Russians added more fuel to the fire of nationalism and a home-grown Marxist revolution, which became a double edged sword. The outlook for the country was stated emphatically in Illustration 4, entitled Picture for the New Year (ახალი წელი ნახატი):



**Illustration 4: Picture for the New Year**

(From newspaper *Sakartvelo*, January 1, 1917; photo taken by author)

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<sup>82</sup> King, 148.

<sup>83</sup> Interview subject B019, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

When that revolution came in October 1917, some Georgians rejoiced, thinking that their country was finally free from tsarist rule. On May 26, 1918, Georgian Mensheviks (Russian word meaning “minority”) essentially fled Moscow and declared an independent Georgia.<sup>84</sup> My informants did not point out this event, perhaps because this freedom was all too brief. The Bolsheviks’ (Russian word meaning “majority”) reassertion of control starting in 1921 was brutal, and bloody attempts to break Georgia continued for nearly two decades. The tenor of this hateful ferocity is captured in a translated quote from Stalin, frustrated with the slow progress in Georgia: “You hens! You sons of donkeys! What is going on here? You have to draw a white hot iron over this Georgian land!...Impale them! Tear them apart!”<sup>85</sup> All informants acknowledged the Soviet period, and in particular 1921-1956, as a time of tremendous importance to Georgian identity and culture. Rarely was a specific event mentioned by the informants, but the Soviet period was generally separated into two segments: Stalin and post-Stalin.

Even in early discussions between Bolshevik leaders, the subject of nationalism was a contentious subject with little common ground. In his book, *Affirmative Action Empire*, Terry Martin draws together a variety of historical analyses as he describes the Soviet government’s struggle and approach to its extremely ethnically-diverse population. In the introduction, Martin outlines arguments put forth by early Soviet leaders regarding nationalism and self-determination.<sup>86</sup> Martin notes that Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924) believed that “nationalism was fueled by historic distrust” and that “only the

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<sup>84</sup> King, 161-163. A concise summary of the difference between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks can be found here as well.

<sup>85</sup> King, 189.

<sup>86</sup> Terry Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

right of self-determination could overcome that distrust.”<sup>87</sup> Martin clearly lays out the Bolsheviks’ fear of nationalism and the implementation of the precarious principle of self-determination as a tool for and against the bourgeois. Nationalism, as viewed by most Bolsheviks, was a stage of development and caused by chauvinistic tendencies of powerful governments. Based on his early life experiences in Georgia, however, Josef Stalin (1879-1953) saw how the incendiary propellant of ethnicities promoted “local nationalism.”<sup>88</sup> This experience and viewpoint informed Soviet cultural policy well after Stalin’s death.

The potential power of music and musicians was recognized by the new Soviet government which increased the pressures of Russification. Perhaps the most frightening example of this horrific process is the *Bolshaya chistka* (Большая чистка, or Great Purge) or *Yezhovshchina* (Ежовщина, or “Yezhov Regime”).<sup>89</sup> This period of the late 1930s was meant as “an insurance policy” to identify potential saboteurs and enemies of the state in order to prepare for a time of war.<sup>90</sup> Stalin and the Soviet government oversaw the killing of nearly seven hundred thousand people, and the imprisonment of two million others.<sup>91</sup> Caroline Brooke describes its effect on musicians of all nationalities, noting that the oppression was even more severe in non-Russian republics:

The years of the Terror saw a great many accusations of bourgeois nationalism leveled at members of the arts bureaucracies in the non-Russian republics and, if the Arts Committee reports on the subject were to be believed, regional and republican arts administrations and music institutions were almost totally saturated by enemies of the people.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Martin, 3.

<sup>88</sup> Martin, 7-8.

<sup>89</sup> Yezhov was the head of the Soviet secret police, NKVD (Народный комиссариат внутренних дел *Narodnyy komissariat vnutrennikh del*, or People’s Commission for Internal Affairs).

<sup>90</sup> Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007), 239.

<sup>91</sup> Figes, 234.

<sup>92</sup> Caroline Brooke, “Soviet Musicians and the Great Terror,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 54 (3): 404.

The new Russification came to mean more than being a part of a larger whole. During the Great Purge and for many years afterward, it became a matter of survival. During an interview in 2009, one informant described a reoccurring and agonizing scene he witnessed in 1985. As a young child, he would watch his grandfather, a leading archeologist and historian, get dressed in his best suit and pack a bag in the middle of the night. Aside from jumping at the passing car headlights, his grandfather would stoically wait by the door to be picked up by KGB operatives and disappear, just as many of his colleagues had done. Though his grandfather was not taken, the effect and lesson were quite obvious to the grandfather and to the rest of the family.<sup>93</sup>

After the re-conquering of the Caucasus in the 1920s and 1930s, Russification in terms of ethnicity shifted to an “indigenization” or focus on certain local, non-religious traditions, dress, and symbols. The Soviet government re-introduced some of these “indigenous” elements in through schools – schools that still were required to be conducted in Russian. Stalin’s thoughts on the subject are quite clear even in 1929, as noted by Terry Martin: “We are undertaking the maximum development of national culture, so that it will exhaust itself completely and thereby create the base for the organization of international socialist culture.”<sup>94</sup> The guiding principle throughout the lifespan of the Soviet Union was unity, but whether that meant homogenization or a more complex, multi-ethnic identity varied with each new perceived threat or crisis.

As briefly explored above, Soviet Georgian history is tragically tied to one of their own, Josef Stalin (or Iosep Dzhughashvili). Several informants talked about the rise of the cult of Stalin in the Soviet Union and the particular admiration many Georgians

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<sup>93</sup> Interview subject B008, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>94</sup> Martin, 5.

had (and, to a lesser extent, continue to have) for their prodigal son who never returned.<sup>95</sup>

As we discussed music and the strangeness of these feelings by some Georgians, one informant, a Georgian sociologist, stated: “It is a well-known and common social-psychological phenomenon that fright is transformed to love. It is a defense mechanism. You cannot live in total fear. And it was the situation that any words, any sign of protest, meant physical death. It was absolutely impossible to protest...during the entire Stalin reign.”<sup>96</sup>

To assist this process, Stalin had to recast and, in many cases, completely rewrite history. Though his war on history began long before his famous speech retelling the rise of the Soviet Union, the Stalin cult and Stalin-esque message were enthusiastically enforced in Georgia by Lavrenti Beria, another Georgian. Photographs taken of newspapers of the time help to illustrate the complex and contradictory feelings Georgians held for Stalin and his policies, as well as the pointed feelings for Beria (Illustrations 5 and 6).

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<sup>95</sup> Interview subjects B005, B017, B019, and B023 discuss this at length.

<sup>96</sup> Interview subject B005, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.



**Illustration 5: Article on Soviet history containing photographs of Stalin and Beria, with Beria's photograph defaced**  
 (From newspaper *Lit'eraturuli sakartvelo*, or ლიტერატურული საქართველო, January 15, 1937; photo taken by author)



**Illustration 6: Article on Soviet history containing photographs of Stalin and Beria, with Beria's photograph defaced**  
 “Stupid idiot” is written on Beria's forehead in Georgian (From newspaper *Lit'eraturuli sakartvelo*, or ლიტერატურული საქართველო, May 13, 1937; photo taken by author)

When asked about this disparity, one informant was especially pithy: “Stalin was far away. Beria was here, abusing us.”<sup>97</sup> Another informant described how Stalin’s legacy brought about the principle fall of the Soviet ideology in Georgia:

Stalin was loved here because he was Georgian, and not because he was the builder of Soviet communism. In 1956, there was a big demonstration here...which included a shooting. About two hundred people died. After that, all the belief in Soviet ideology was lost, lost and broken. The people began to think that there is no sense to struggle against the Soviet system. But you can cheat it. You can say, “Yes, long live Communist party”, and under this slogan, you can build your little happiness.<sup>98</sup>

## On the Edges of Empires

Aside from very basic information about Hammurabi’s code and ancient Mesopotamia, I was embarrassingly ignorant of the history of Transcaucasia and Russia. Curiosity sparked by Georgian traditional vocal music drove me to find some sort of context for the music and text that seemed to be so separate from my experience. After devouring book after book, I initially tried to envision the breadth of Georgian history. In doing so, two thoughts coalesced in my overwhelmed consciousness: 1) a sense of awe that people called Georgians still exist as a culturally and linguistically distinct group, and 2) that the Georgian people and the country have been on the edge of empires, under siege, for nearly their entire history. Since the first thought is on the philosophical side, let us turn our attention to the second.

As seen in the historical perspectives outlined above, Georgia has operated on the periphery of greater powers and empires from its very beginnings. The modern-day land

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<sup>97</sup> Interview subject B008, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>98</sup> Interview subject B005, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

known as Georgia served as outposts of Assyrians, Byzantine, Persian, Turkish, Iranian, Mongol, Russian, and Soviet empires, with few short periods of relief. Though informants rarely volunteered the phrase, “under siege,” when I asked if they thought Georgians felt under siege, invariably the response would be a firm “yes” without hesitation. One informant, a revered historian and professor, said through a translator that Georgia has been under siege always, dating back to the sixth century BCE.<sup>99</sup>

Most informants were not as specific, but they would elaborate further regarding their perceptions. In discussing Russian and Soviet interactions with Georgia over the centuries, an informant emphatically said, “Do you understand, our culture was always under attack? Yeah, it [the Russians and Soviet governments] could not go without a sign on our culture. It is very big wound on Georgian culture, I think.”<sup>100</sup> Another informant spoke for over an hour (barely stopping to allow any translation), detailing the ways in which Georgians have been under siege or under attack since the tsarist period.<sup>101</sup> As will be seen in the succeeding chapters, this sense of being under siege and operating on the edges of empires has a direct influence on primary meanings and functions of Georgian traditional vocal music in Georgian culture and in the construction of modern Georgian identity.

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<sup>99</sup> Interview subject B004, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>100</sup> Interview subject B008, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>101</sup> Interview subject B019, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009. Because the informant would only pause for translation every ten-fifteen minutes, a word for word account is not available at this time. He had plenty to say on the subject.

## Chapter Three: “Let’s Go Forward – Forward to Our Ancestors!”

### Traditionality in Georgian Traditional Vocal Music

As mentioned in the introduction, tradition is a troublesome concept to grasp and define in nearly every culture. Yet, in all its various permutations, the structure (however ephemeral or concrete) it provides for our lives is largely indispensable. We, as human beings, generally like some degree of predictability in our lives and a sense of continuity – which tradition helps provide. The problem comes when we attempt to analyze tradition and communicate about tradition. A sizeable part of the difficulty in understanding and defining tradition lies in attempting to define it in the first place. Combined with differences in perception of tradition between cultures, subcultures, and even members of the same cultural group, “tradition” becomes less and less clear.

Given the frequent lack of clarity and troubles of interpretation by researchers, the word “traditionality” appears to be a better fit in the Georgian context. Three instances of the term can be found in connection with musical studies. However, in two of those occurrences, the authors assume a meaning or description of “traditionality” and the term is not central to the subject at hand.<sup>1</sup> In her dissertation on *matsuri-bayashi* festival music, Linda Kiyo Fujie focuses on how and why various groups deploy and promote this festival music, not on the term “traditionality” itself.<sup>2</sup> In anthropological and educational literature, the term is most commonly used in connection with roles within families and social groups and is thus not applicable to this project.

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Schuyler, “Music and Tradition in Yemen,” *Asian Music* 22 no. 1 (1991): 51-71. Rebecca Bryant, “The Soul Danced Into the Body: Nation and Improvisation in Istanbul,” *American Ethnologist* 32 no. 2 (2005): 222-238.

<sup>2</sup> Linda Kiyo Fujie, “*Matsuri-bayashi* of Tokyo: The Role of Supporting Organizations in Traditional Music” (Ph.D diss., Columbia University, 1986).

My application, description, and development of the term “traditionality” of Georgian traditional vocal music are part of an attempt to describe practices and the attitudes surrounding these musical practices. The goals of this chapter are twofold. First, I will outline some elements of Georgian traditional vocal music. Second, I will describe traditionality in the Georgian case using data from fieldwork interviews and recordings, Georgian scholarship, and Georgian traditional vocal music. Through analysis of this data, I suggest a primary function of traditionality in the Georgian context is to draw modern Georgians closer to their imagined national past and their ancestors.

### A Brief Description of Georgian Traditional Vocal Music

At the risk of essentialism, a rough sketch of the music of this study is needed for the reader unfamiliar with Georgian traditional vocal music.<sup>3</sup> Just like a useful cookbook, a few basic elements and ideas will give the reader some facility and form to engage the musical material. It is reassuring that Georgian scholars themselves struggle with the task of explaining musical elements to those unfamiliar with Georgian traditional music, as a publication was just completed by the faculty of the Tbilisi State Conservatory last year for their music students.<sup>4</sup> Both the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* and the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* have accessible entries on some fundamental musical aspects of Georgian vocal music, though they take a slightly Eurocentric approach (perhaps due to the intended audience).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For a basic audio primer on Georgian traditional vocal music, see the starred items in Appendix A.

<sup>4</sup> This publication is only available to limited students of the conservatory and is in Georgian.

<sup>5</sup> Jordania, “Georgia.” Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 9 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), s.v. “Georgia,” Leah Dolidze, Christian Hannick, Dali Dolidze, Grigol Chkhikvadze, Joseph Jordania, 665 -680.

Georgian traditional vocal music, at its core, places value on the individual through polyphony and improvisation. Though it will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter, Georgian polyphony describes three independent parts within the space of (at most) a Western octave and a half. Most sacred songs, whether pre-Christian, Georgian Orthodox, or Baptist, are homophonic, while the voices in secular songs typically are more rhythmically independent.<sup>6</sup> Another important element of the polyphony is in the fact it is not conceived as vertical harmony. Adjacent voices typically cross each other. As a noted Georgian music scholar put it, the harmonies are created horizontally, vertically, and diagonally.<sup>7</sup> These harmonies are created with various levels of improvisation.

Improvisation in Georgian traditional vocal music can be roughly described as patterns of ornamentations around a melodic skeleton. These patterns must coincide not only with certain patterns acceptable for that geographic region, genre, and song, but also with the other voices as well. A shining example of this is the song “Chven Mshwidoba” (ჩვენ მშვიდობა, “Peace to Us”).<sup>8</sup> The improvisations frequently occur in the upper two voices, though in “Chven Mshwidoba” all three voices are improvised to varying degrees. Georgian Orthodox and Baptist vocal songs are not improvised, at least in current practice and understanding. Though traditional Western harmonic analysis is not very enlightening nor applicable to the Georgian perspective of the music, the Georgian equivalent of melodic intervals such as minor and major seconds, fifths, and sevenths tend to dominate.

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<sup>6</sup> Georgian scholars tend to use the term “homorhythmic.”

<sup>7</sup> Interview subject B004, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>8</sup> An example of this song is included on the supplemental compact disc.

This type of polyphony relates to certain performance values in Georgian traditional vocal music. As is the case with many musical practices, the musical terminology is a semantic Gordian knot. Joseph Jordania illustrates this tangled mass, noting that there are over seventy names alone for the three voices, each denoting a performance style and/or lineage.<sup>9</sup> As this is not the focus of this project, I will sidestep this issue and refer to them in a generic fashion as high, middle, and low. The upper two voices are performed by one singer each, while as many as ten singers deliver the lowest voice. In most cases, the middle voice is the carrier of the main text, though all voices are considered by Georgian performers and scholars to have equal importance. Vocables frequently serve as textual elements in the highest and lowest voices. The lowest voice can be either more static, in the case of drone polyphony, or very melodically and rhythmically active as in the case of songs from the region of Guria.

Dynamics, tone, and tempo in Georgian traditional vocal music are more straightforward. Vocal tone is full, ringing, and forceful with the exception of certain sacred songs, such as “Romelni kerubinta” (რომელნი კერუბინტა, “Secretly as Cherubs”) and “Batenebo” (ბატენებო, performed for healing purposes), or lullabies, such as “Nanina” (ნანინა), which are sung with a covered tone and at quiet dynamic levels. Every song included in this study maintains the tone and dynamic levels established at the beginning of the song. There is little variation in tempo, with the exception of some work songs which gradually increase in tempo and some circle dance songs. Commonly performed examples of work songs that include this type of tempo change include “Elesa” (ელესა) and “Odoia” (ოდოია).

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<sup>9</sup> Jordania, “Georgia,” 828.

There are plenty of regional differences in Georgian traditional vocal music that could be of interest, but delving into this topic is beyond the scope of this paper. In many cases, there is also some debate in what makes a certain song characteristic of a certain area of the country.<sup>10</sup>

## Description of Traditionality

In the context of this project, traditionality refers to a flexible concept of what constitutes a musical tradition. In developing this concept, I refer to Jocelyne Guilbault's use of the works of Alasdair MacIntyre and Raymond Williams in her discussion of tradition in her book, *Governing Sound*. In Guilbault's interpretation of MacIntyre, tradition is "an historically extended, socially embodied argument."<sup>11</sup> Without the acceptance and participation of musicians, scholars, and other audiences in the historical practice of a behavior or action (such as Georgian vocal music), a tradition cannot be a tradition. Guilbault connects this idea with Williams's statements regarding "selective tradition" as "an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and pre-shaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification."<sup>12</sup> In other words, the attitudes of Georgian ethnomusicologists

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<sup>10</sup> At the Fifth International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony (2010), Simha Arom and Polo Vallejo attempted a pseudo-scientific experiment using limited and skewed data (one book of song transcriptions) to determine a electronically-derived harmonic system for songs from Samegrelo/Mingrelia (western Georgia). Approaching the music from a purely Eurocentric vertical harmonic standpoint, Arom and Vallejo presented four harmonic progressions (via unrehearsed performance by members of a respected Georgian ensemble, Basiani) to the participants in the hope that the third selection would be recognized as indicative of harmony from Samegrelo. The poorly-conceived experiment failed, as there was nothing approaching consensus despite the presenters' impressions or assertions otherwise. Georgian scholars present questioned the utility of such a system, though the English translations of these remarks were more magnanimous.

<sup>11</sup> Guilbault, *Governing Sound*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Guilbault, 6.

surrounding their polyphonic vocal music illustrate the affective power of history on their perceptions of Georgian traditional vocal music. Traditionality, then, describes a flexible practice of belief that asserts a direct link to the past and to one's ancestors. This allows musical changes – especially those that might have occurred prior to the Soviet Union – to be accepted and treated as a continuous tradition. Furthermore, the practice of traditionality suggests a closeness or proximity to events, people, and locations that might otherwise be far removed from the present.

The application of traditionality to the Georgian case does not suggest a lack of authenticity. Instead, traditionality acknowledges potential influences and obstacles that nearly anyone or any culture would experience as they repeated a particular practice. As the data for this project was put into cultural context using the approaches mentioned in the introduction, a description of traditionality in a Georgian musical context emerged and took its current and rather amorphous shape. Principally, this project describes traditionality through three musical aspects: 1) the relationship between written and aural traditions, 2) polyphonic thinking, and 3) form of performance.

### Traditionality: Notation and Aural Traditions

Throughout all different types of data collected, read, and analyzed as part of this project, Georgians describe their vocal music as an ancient oral tradition. For the purposes of clarity and specificity, I am inclined to follow the lead of noted ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl and musicologist Charles Seeger by referring to such practices as “aural” traditions because the sounds and information must be heard to be

understood.<sup>13</sup> As we will explore the “ancientness” of Georgian traditional vocal music in chapter four, let us first briefly address the situation surrounding aural transmission and, in particular, the mainstream perspective of Georgian aural transmission.

Though aural transmission and communication make many ethnomusicologists salivate with scholarly delight, it is not so simple to separate the written from the aural in modern times. As Nettl notes, classification of written and aural sources “loomed as a major definitional paradigm.”<sup>14</sup> How can we, as researchers, delineate these two modes of communication? How can we, as performers, say with certainty, “I learned this song from my friend/family member/teacher, just as they did before,” on and on into the impenetrable mists of time, instead of from a written source? Perhaps, we, as ethnomusicologists, should accept that this transmission occurred and analyze what such an event means in the context of the culture.

Though many scholars wrestle with the tension between aural and written sources, three ethnomusicological scholars in particular explore the topic in a way that relates directly to traditionality in Georgian traditional vocal music. Nettl devotes a chapter to the issue in his canonical work, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: 31 Issues and Concepts*. Another point that Nettl makes that is pertinent to this project is the “relative dynamics of oral/aural and written tradition.”<sup>15</sup> He notes two conflicting analyses in ethnomusicological works: 1) written traditions are slow to change because of the tangibility of the physical record and aural traditions change “almost involuntarily,” and

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<sup>13</sup> Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: 31 Issues and Concepts* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 291. Charles Seeger, “Oral Tradition in Music,” in *Funk and Wagnall’s Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*, eds. Maria Leach and Jerome Fried (New York: Funk and Wagnall, 1950): 825-829.

<sup>14</sup> Nettl, 291.

<sup>15</sup> Nettl, 300.

2) written traditions change quickly because of the “very sophistication of their apparatus” and the straightforward context of the aural traditions make them “inert.”<sup>16</sup> In my experience so far, the Georgian case seems to favor the second option, though the degree and perception of musical inertia is part of the description of traditionality. Examining the interactions between written and aural transmission in Georgian vocal music is more productive than sorting out the exact (and likely unobtainable) communicative provenance of a song, as suggested by Charles Seeger.<sup>17</sup>

The musicologist Kofi Agawu places questions concerning aural and written sources in an oral cultural context. In his book, *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions*, Agawu ambitiously discusses concerns revolving around non-Western ethnomusicology, representing a performance tradition in a written format, and the ways in which knowledge production influences identity.<sup>18</sup> Though Agawu is frequently (and purposefully) inflammatory in his prose, he presents several key points about “orality” and writing. First, he classifies both types of sources as part of a cultural archive, equal in importance.<sup>19</sup> Agawu proceeds to blur the line between the two, noting that the written text can just as easily be misinterpreted (intentionally or not) as the oral “text” can be distorted by memory or perception. In his view, they are dependent upon one another, as “written sources frequently require oral knowledge to come alive.”<sup>20</sup>

It is my assertion that, in the Georgian case, the written and the oral musical sources are now thoroughly intertwined due to historical and cultural necessity. Even if

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<sup>16</sup> Nettl, 300-301.

<sup>17</sup> Seeger, 829.

<sup>18</sup> Kofi Agawu, *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Agawu, 24.

<sup>20</sup> Agawu, 25.

King Parnavazi created the old Georgian written language in 3 BCE, as outlined in the Georgian chronicles, *Kartlis tskhovreba*, widespread adoption and education of written language would have been slow. The same would likely be true of written musical notation. The adoption of Christianity in the fourth century, the subsequent need for religious education (musical and otherwise), and King Davit the Builder's establishment of multiple centers of learning in the twelfth century greatly promoted the Georgian language among the elite of medieval Georgian society. In their book on the first recorded music of Georgia, revered Georgian ethnomusicologists Anzor Erkomaishvili and Vakhtang Rodonaia cite Georgian musical historian Ivane Javakhishvili's belief that "by the ninth century, if not earlier, there already existed a system for teaching church hymn singing."<sup>21</sup> This system, however, is not defined as either written or aural.

Ongoing manuscript studies suggest the existence of well-developed notational and oral systems for transmission of polyphonic vocal music dating back to the tenth century. Church chanters and composers developed several forms of notation and systems of musical transmission, based on a system of neumatic symbols. An example is found in a tenth-century manuscript (Illustration 7). In this example, the neumes are the small symbols in red above and below the text, as seen in the enlarged section in the top left corner.

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<sup>21</sup> Anzor Erkomaishvili and Vakhtang Rodonaia, *Georgian Folk Song, The First Sound Recordings*, 112.



**Illustration 7: Neumes in a manuscript of hymnographer Mikael Modrekili**  
(Courtesy of International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony, Tbilisi State Conservatory)

Building upon the work of other Georgian scholars, Manana Andriadze and Tamar Chkdeidze discuss these possibilities in their paper about specific systems of musical notation in Georgian sacred music called *chreli* (ჩერლი, “multicolored”). In this frequently-cited study, they acknowledge the possibility that *chreli* were used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a replacement for forgotten Georgian neumes, but conclude through comparisons between manuscripts that *chreli* existed as parallel systems to the neumes at least as far back as the thirteenth century.<sup>22</sup>

Forms of neumatic notation were still in use by some Georgian singers in the early twentieth century, but much of the meaning of all of the neumatic and *chreli* systems of notation are lost. Pavle Ingorokva, a Soviet linguist working on this issue, claimed success in 1962. However, musicologist Peter Jeffery suggests that Ingorokva wrongly assumed each neume represents a specific pitch and that they are organized by

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<sup>22</sup> Manana Andriadze and Tamar Chkdeidze, “System of *Chreli* in Georgian Sacred Music,” in *The First International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony*, eds. Rusudan Tsurtsunia and Joseph Jordania (Tbilisi: International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony of Tbilisi State Conservatory, 2002), 452-454.

system similar to the modern Western scale.<sup>23</sup> The work of Georgian ethnomusicologists, such as Davit Shugliashvili and Malkhaz Erkvanidze, also refute Ingorokva's assumptions as they continue to decipher these musical symbols. An example the nature of such progress can be read in an article by another Georgian ethnomusicologist, Zaal Tsereteli.<sup>24</sup> In his article, "Deciphering the Old Georgian Neumatic System and ways of Re-Introducing it into Practice," he uses the text of the chant to discover a direct correlation between seventy canonical hymns (*heirmosi*, ხეობმღვთის) in the tenth century Georgian neumatic system and certain nineteenth century manuscripts that use Western notation. Tsereteli uses this data as confirmation that at least these seventy chants are unchanged from at least the tenth century to the nineteenth century, and that certain neumes in combination with certain old Georgian words indicates a certain melodic shape.<sup>25</sup> While this study is encouraging, he briefly mentions several facts which illustrate some remaining gaps in understanding this system: 1) the neumes do not exactly represent melodic shapes by themselves, 2) early scribes (such as Mikael Modrekili) and later chanters wrote different variants of the neumes and different settings of the same text, 3) the existence of different but related chanting schools, 4) the increasing ornamentation of later chants, and 5) the "natural negative role" of an aural tradition which allowed alteration to the chants.<sup>26</sup> Mention or discussion of this "negative role" was not encountered elsewhere in the available Georgian scholarship or in the fieldwork

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<sup>23</sup> Peter Jeffery, "Earliest Christian Chant Repertory Recovered: The Georgian Witness to Jerusalem Chant," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 47, no.1 (1994), 27.

Pavle Ingorokva, "Lost Hymns of Georgia," *UNESCO Courier*, no. 5 (May 1962), 24-27.

<sup>24</sup> Zaal Tsereteli, "Deciphering the Old Georgian Neumatic System and ways of Re-Introducing it into Practice," in *The Fourth International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony*, eds. Rusudan Tsurtsunia and Joseph Jordania (Tbilisi: International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony of Tbilisi State Conservatory, 2008), 522-530.

<sup>25</sup> Tsereteli, 525-526.

<sup>26</sup> Tsereteli, 523-524.

interviews – most times the opposite was the case. Even in this article, the aural tradition seems to be necessary in order to fully realize the music.

As outlined in chapter two, many parts of early Georgia were geographically isolated and political strife was common in Georgia's history. Many times, people and their written forms of knowledge were scattered and destroyed. Towns, cities, and monasteries were repeatedly sacked and burned, even as late as Stalin's rampages of the 1930s. Combined with the agrarian and, later, feudalistic lifestyle of most Georgians until the twentieth century, these facts help to account for the (somewhat paradoxical) stability and privileging of oral language and aural musical traditions in Georgia for most of its history.<sup>27</sup> Even though written chant traditions existed, the focus remained on the aural tradition. This assertion is supported by numerous discussions of the importance of *sruliglobelni* (სრულიგლობელნი, "master chanters") in the works of Shugliashvili, Erkvanidze, and Erkomaishvili.<sup>28</sup> Secular vocal music lacked a native system of notation for transmission until the introduction of Western notation by European, Russian, and Georgian scholars in the late nineteenth century.

Knowledge of Georgian neumatic systems and access to Georgian music manuscripts waned due, in large part, to repeated conflicts and expanding Russian influence in the nineteenth century. The aural tradition of Georgian vocal music also began to be affected during this time, as Georgians were separated, alternatively by

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<sup>27</sup> Interview subject B004, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

The existence and survival of multiple dialects of "the" Georgian language (such as Mingrelian, Svanetian, and Kakhetian dialects) serve as evidence of this assertion.

<sup>28</sup> A brief sample of these discussions:

Davit Shugliashvili, *Georgian Church Hymns, Shemokmedi School* (Tbilisi: Artem Erkomaishvili Archive, 2006), 1-2.

Malkhaz Erkvanidze, *Georgian Church Chant*, vol. 5 (Tbilisi: Tbilisi State Conservatory, 2008), xxii-xxiii.

Anzor Erkomaishvili and Vakhtang Rodonaia, *Georgian Folk Song, The First Sound Recordings*, 111-113.

choice and by force, from their previous homes and lifestyles. Driven by desires to preserve the vocal traditions of Georgia and by Russification efforts, Georgian and Russian-trained composers and scholars began to transcribe Georgian sacred and secular vocal songs using Western notation, as mentioned in chapter two.

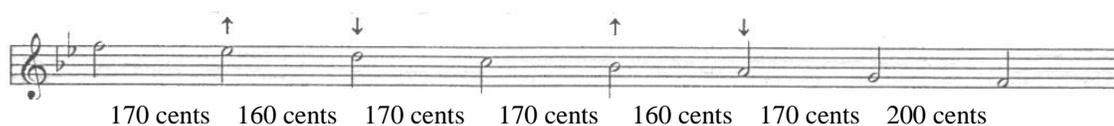
Perhaps the most famous written collection that illustrates this case is that of Pilimon Koridze, which includes over five thousand chants and song fragments. As other scholars and cultural leaders, such as Koridze and Ilia Chavchavadze, died or were murdered, the collection was left disorganized and incomplete, with missing harmonies and shorthand notes that, most likely, required the input of an aural tradition. In a recent presentation in Tbilisi, musicologist John Graham gave further insight into these events.<sup>29</sup> Ekvtime Kereselidze, a supporter who later became a Georgian orthodox monk, hired Razhden Khundadze, a priest and *sruligalobelni*, to help him harmonize the melodies in the collection. As part of his presentation, Graham showed pictures of erasures on the manuscripts (Q688 and Q689) and correspondence from Kereselidze. Unhappy with many of the harmonizations, Kereselidze hired another priest and singer, Ivliane Nikoladze, to continue the work. The second priest verified some harmonizations and corrected others. Kereselidze then recopied, organized, and preserved the collection from destruction at the hands of the Soviets as he fled various monasteries. In 1936, two archivists from the Georgian national archives (who were killed in 1937 by the Soviet government) came to visit Kereselidze and placed the collection in their holdings. Scholars like Graham and Erkvanidze credit the survival of Georgian chant in large part to the combined efforts of this small group of people. The outsider must wonder,

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<sup>29</sup> John Graham, "Pencils and Erasers: Harmonizing Georgian Chant in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century," International Symposium of Traditional Polyphony, Tbilisi State Conservatory, Tbilisi, October 5, 2010.

however, at the cognitive dissonance between the unchanging nature of chant and knowing that changes were made to this important collection.

Even so, the surviving written records of Georgian vocal music depend upon aural transmission, and the primary example of Georgian traditionality with regards to notation involves the musical concept of *kilo* (კილო). It is a central element in Georgian traditional vocal music, but, as Erkomaishvili and Rodonaia note, “no one can agree on a single definition for *kilo* to this day.”<sup>30</sup> When talking with one informant, his description of *kilo* was completely baffling to the translator.<sup>31</sup> To some, it is a system of organization of songs and sounds but to others it is more akin to melodic formulae. The current experts in *kilos* are Erkvanidze and Shugliashvili, and they explain it in terms of “mode,” stating that Georgian *kilos* are somewhat related to the Byzantine church modes.<sup>32</sup> The problem that presents itself is the fact that Western notation cannot represent most of the Georgian modes because these modes are not tempered in the Western fashion. Based on early audio recordings by Gramophone and Georgian ethnomusicologists, Erkvanidze suggests two directions in representing Georgian traditional vocal music in Western notation: the basic system (Figure 4) and the small perfect system (Figure 5).<sup>33</sup>



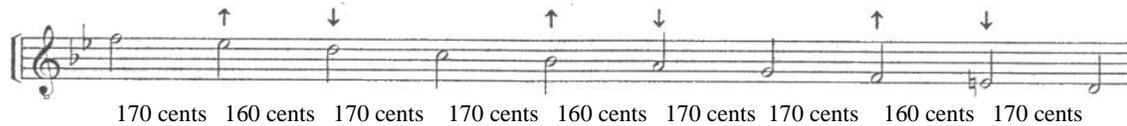
**Figure 4: Basic System**

<sup>30</sup> Erkomaishvili and Rodonaia, 27.

<sup>31</sup> Interview subject B012, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>32</sup> Malkhaz Erkvanidze, Davit Shugliashvili, and John Graham, “Georgian Music Lecture and Presentation,” (lecture, Library of Congress Jefferson Building, November 17, 2005).

<sup>33</sup> Erkvanidze, *Georgian Church Chant*, vol. 5, 155. Audio examples of these tuning systems are included on the supplementary compact disc.



**Figure 5: Small Perfect System**

My current understanding of *kilo*, based on all of these sources, is that it is a system that describes mode, ornamentation (*chreli*), and polyphonic texture, and that certain *kilos* are more thoroughly described than others. Most likely, this is another effect of the lack of understanding of Georgian neumatic systems and the death of aural tradition holders in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although *kilo* is most often used to describe Georgian Orthodox chant, presumably secular songs use a similar system as well due to their previously-stated close relationship to chant.

Current methods of musical transmission offer another example of traditionality. During my observations of Georgian Orthodox church services in the summer of 2009, the temperament aspect of the *kilo* varied among the singers at various churches. At several Georgian Orthodox churches, such as Mama-Daviti (მამა-დავითი) and Anchiskhati (ანჭიშხათი) in Tbilisi, the primary chanters sang from memory and employed Georgian tempered scales. The self-described less experienced singers at the Anchiskhati Cathedral used Western tempered scales and used books of songs with Western notation. It should be noted that the musical approach of the choirs in both of these cathedrals is informed by the work of their musical leaders, Erkvanidze and Shughliashvili. The Georgian Orthodox singers at Svetistkhoveli Cathedral in Mtskheta also used Western tempered tuning and printed notation during the service. Georgian Baptists, however, never used any notation during the service. I observed two rehearsals of two Georgian Orthodox choirs (secondary mixed choir at Anchiskhati and female

choir at Svetistkovele; Illustration 8) and two Georgian Baptist choirs (First and Second Baptist Churches, Tbilisi). All choirs used handwritten or printed scores of Western notation, alongside aural instruction from the choirmasters.



**Illustration 8: Two choir members rehearsing before the service**  
(Svetistkhoveli Cathedral, August 2009; photo by the author)

The increasingly prevalent influence of Western temperament and the major third melodic interval have made reclamation of Georgian *kilo* understandably difficult. Combined with historical forces, mostly incomprehensible neumes, and Western notation, determining the exact nature of the different *kilos* (or even how many there were) is a herculean task. Not surprisingly, Georgian scholars have differing opinions on this subject, but they agree that the research is necessary. Furthermore, some scholars

perceive current work as restoration and reclamation, fully recognizing the challenges involved. Most notably, this perspective is outlined by Erkvanidze.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the challenges, many Georgians that I interviewed asserted that Georgian traditional vocal music – especially sacred vocal music – is unchanged and originates in the distant past. A choirmaster at a Georgian Orthodox church said (through a translator) that though it is impossible to know the exact origins of Georgian traditional vocal music, she asserts that it dates to the beginning of Georgia, before Christ, as this music was such an integral part of Georgian life. As she put it, when they mourned, they sang. When they were happy, they sang. When they worked in the field, they sang. She also expressed faith in the Orthodox church, and in the patriarchs specifically, in preserving this “treasure of Georgia,” despite its transcription into “international” notation. Later in the interview, she stated that sacred music is unchanged from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, with the exception of some variations of tonal modes, thanks to careful, deliberate oral transmission and because of the faithfulness of the Georgian people to Christianity.<sup>35</sup>

Most likely, there were choices made about which songs and *kilos* to teach, transcribe, and record, and access to some musical practices were probably limited for a variety of reasons. Initially, it would seem a safe assumption to conclude that some of the original character of the collected songs has been lost due to standardization through the use of Western staff notation and deterioration of written documents and audio recordings. While specific points of Georgian scholars differ, as would be expected nearly anywhere, the surviving traditional vocal music is accepted by all Georgians I

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<sup>34</sup> Malkhaz Erkvanidze, *Georgian Church Chant*, vol. 4 (Tbilisi: Tbilisi State Conservatory, 2009), xvii-xviii.

<sup>35</sup> Interview subject B011, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, August 2009.

have encountered so far as authentic, with all the heavy baggage that accompanies that term.

Traditionality is practiced through Georgian perspectives of the recorded song record of Georgia, stretching back over a century. A vital part of song research relies on recordings by Gramophone from the early twentieth century, recordings from 1949 made by master chanters, Artem Erkomaishvili (არტემ ერკომაისჭვილი) , Dimitri Patarava (დომიტრი პატარავა), Varlam Simonishvili (ვარლამ სიმონისჭვილი), and solo recordings of all three voices by Artem Erkomaishvili in 1966.<sup>36</sup> Tellingly, the large Gramophone collection includes only five sacred songs. Despite Russification and Soviet “cultural” programs, violence on the part of the Soviet government, and other turbulent events surrounding these recordings, all Georgian musicians and scholars uniformly and clearly denied any substantive influence. To them, the recordings represent an incorruptible version of Georgian traditional vocal music.

Another way traditionality is practiced is through *kilo* interpretations on Georgian song recordings. On the early recordings of 1902-1917 and the groups directly influenced by Erkvanidze (Anchistkhati and Sakhioba choirs), Georgian tempered tunings are prevalent, and fewer “urban songs” from the last fifty years appear on the records. The majority of modern choirs that published recordings, whether focusing on secular or sacred vocal music, primarily feature performances that use Western tempered tunings. One Georgian performer and ethnomusicologist asserted that respected choirs of the 1970s Rustavi and Shivgatsa were not authentic, and “far from folk spring.”<sup>37</sup> The prevalence of these choirs led to confusion for the famous ethnomusicologist, Edisher

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<sup>36</sup> Artem Erkomaishvili could not read Western staff notation, though he did use his own neumatic system.

<sup>37</sup> Interview subject B017, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interviews, Summer 2009.

Garakanidze. As related by the same informant above, during Garakanidze's first expedition to northern Georgian in the early 1980s, he felt that the songs he encountered were broken and twisted songs and somehow handicapped. After he played his recordings to his professors at conservatory in Tbilisi, however, his teachers told him they were hardly handicapped and were, in fact, the best examples he could have found.<sup>38</sup>

Based on the points above, Georgians practice traditionality in their musical behaviors regarding written and aural transmission methods. First, there is a continuation of a historical relationship between written and aural musical practice. Georgian choirmasters use both written music and demonstration to teach the songs. The notation is descriptive and clearly not prescriptive, though the earliest recordings seem to be prescriptive in their use. Reclamation of Georgian temperament systems and ornamentation continue, but this implies a loss of some kind, presumably due to challenges regarding notation and aural practices and historical events – something which several informants denied strongly.<sup>39</sup> One influential music scholar did concede that “the science was very young, so it is possible there were mistakes.”<sup>40</sup> Lastly, if these *kilos* are so vital, why are Georgian traditional music recordings dominated by Western tempered tuning? Just as notation and aural practices are tinted by traditionality, the recordings of the last fifty years are another site of traditionality.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Interview subject B017, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interviews, Summer 2009.

<sup>39</sup> Interview subjects B006, B011, B015, B022, interviews by Jeremy Foutz, personal interviews, Summer 2009.

<sup>40</sup> Interview subject B004, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Georgian scholars note that the 1966 recordings of the last master chanter, Artem Erkomaishvili, represent the most recent published performances of Georgian tuning systems, though this is sure to change as research progresses.

## Traditionality: Polyphonic Thinking

In Georgian musical scholarship, the phrase “polyphonic thinking” is used to describe both their approach to harmony and to musical texture. One of the most famous examples of Georgian polyphony is the traveling song from Imereti, “Tskhenosnuri” (ტხენოსნური). Keeping the challenges with transcription mentioned above in mind, a transcription and translation from Georgian ethnomusicologist Edisher Garakanidze’s collection, *99 Georgian Songs*, is shown in Figure 6:

The image displays a musical score for the song "Tskhenosnuri". It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line in the upper staff and an accompaniment line in the lower staff. The vocal line is written in a single melodic line, while the accompaniment is written in a more complex, multi-voiced style. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The first system starts with a forte dynamic marking (f). The lyrics for the first system are: "a - di - lo a - di - lo di - la - va - di - la - vda a - la - lo i - vli a - la - lo, di - lo - de - lo". The second system continues with: "a - di - lo a - di - lo di - la - va - di - la - vda a - la - lo i - vli a - la - lo,". The third system starts with: "di - lo - de - lo a - di - lo a - di - lo di - la - va - di - la - vda a - la - lo i - vli a - la -". The fourth system ends with: "lo, a - di - lo a - di - lo di - la - va - di - la - vda a - la - lo i - vli a - la - lo." The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 6: “Tskhenosnuri”<sup>42</sup>

I am sitting on my horse, on my black horse. I feel I am part of the saddle.  
I left Chiatura behind and arrived in Tbilisi.<sup>43</sup>  
I loved you, I thought you were mine, but now you have turned your back on me.

<sup>42</sup> Garakanidze, *99 Georgian Songs*, 81.

<sup>43</sup> Chiatura is a village in Imereti.

The Georgians I interviewed and Georgian music scholars connect three-part polyphony with the Christian Trinity. Nodar Mamisashvili puts it this way, in the preface to a five volume set of songs by Malkhaz Erkvanidze:

This is why Georgian chant came to be expressed in three-part harmony with the particular scales, melodies and polyphony close to the Georgian musical sensibility. The unique polyphony of chant was created to express the perfection and unity of the Divine Trinity. The foundation of universal harmony is based on, as Ioane Petritsi called it, “the principle of unification and merging.”<sup>44</sup>

Although several scholars, including Tsurtsunia and Jordania, assert that polyphony arose from secular traditions among proto-Georgian tribes, traditionality allows other Georgians to use all polyphony and polyphonic thinking to assert Georgia’s Christian identity. Furthermore, in unifying three independent parts through polyphony, the modern Georgian interpretation seems to symbolize the historical unifications of Georgia as well.

According to scholars such as Mamisashvili, polyphonic thinking is something that exists within all Georgians, regardless of their engagement with Georgian traditional vocal music. One informant described Georgian traditional vocal music and this polyphonic thinking as “non-activated memory.”<sup>45</sup> Two Georgian students that I interviewed and several other Georgians that participated in informal conversations expressed the opposite view, stating that though they liked Georgian traditional vocal music, they had little musical knowledge or facility to appreciate the polyphony.<sup>46</sup>

With that point in mind, there is the acknowledgment in Georgian ethnomusicological literature and in my interviews that some polyphonic elements of their vocal music practices have been lost or changed by various degrees. One such

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<sup>44</sup> Malkhaz Erkvanidze, *Georgian Church Chant*, vol. 2 (Tbilisi: Tbilisi State Conservatory, 2006), xxiii.

<sup>45</sup> Interview subject B017, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>46</sup> Interview subjects B001 and B008, interviews by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

example of this commonly encountered loss is the fact that remaining descriptions of the Svetitskhoveli school of sacred chant are few and tenuous.<sup>47</sup> Schools of chant refer not only to the *kilos* used, but also the polyphonic texture employed in the sacred chant (among other things). This particular school of chant has a strong connection to Georgia's historical identity. The eleventh century Svetitskhoveli Cathedral is located in the former capital city of Mtskheta, one of the oldest cities in Georgia, dating back to at least the first millennium BCE. Mtskheta was the honored burial site of Georgian kings and the place associated with Georgia's adoption of Christianity. To Georgians who are Orthodox, it is the center of their religion. As such, the mysteries around the Svetitskhoveli school of chant are particularly intriguing.

In asserting the universality (within Georgians) of polyphonic thinking, some Georgians apply traditionality to their fellow citizens, assuming similar Christian values and a perfect unity through vocal song between the regions and peoples of Georgia – both of which, thus far, were unobservable as part of the research for this project.

## Traditionality: Forms of Performance

Early in this chapter, I presented some basic elements of Georgian traditional vocal music. One important point that arose many times in discussions and interviews was the tension between traditional performance practices and practices influenced by Russian and Soviet ideology. As mentioned in chapter two, the Russians and Soviets in particular were quite interested in exerting control over elements of culture as part of

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<sup>47</sup> Davit Shughliashvili, "Georgian Chanting Schools and Traditions," in *The First International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony*, eds. Rusudan Tsursumia and Joseph Jordania (Tbilisi: International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony of Tbilisi State Conservatory, 2002), 432-433.

controlling the people. Examples of potential obstacles and influences upon Georgian traditional vocal music by these governments include: the drastic increase in ensemble size, removal of improvisational harmony, adoption of Western tonal modes, changing of texts to better fit the Soviet ideology, moving the folk songs into the public performance context, and frequent suppression of sacred chants.

These practices most likely linger in some form, whether in opposition or in more subtle ways, even as recovery efforts continue. In discussing this influence and the rise of the “urban folksong,” Tamar Maskhi notes:

Despite the contemporary re-evaluation of the Soviet ‘modern folklore’ it is impossible to exaggerate its role in twentieth century cultural life...Side by side with the people’s traditional culture of ancient origin appeared a folklore of new formation, inspired by the ideology of the times. A circle of song samples with a new meaning and different musical language was established, visibly reflecting the pulsation of socialism, the world outlook changes of the important historical period, and the interests and principles cherishing it.<sup>48</sup>

Some of the lingering influences of the Russian and Soviet governments can be traced as far back as the first “professional” choir of Lado Agniashvili in 1885. Unlike other choirs or informal groups, this male choir had a conductor, Joseph Ratali from Czechoslovakia. Other deviations included changes in harmony to reflect a Western European normalized tuning system, altering the vocal part texture to avoid crossing voices, and drastically increasing the group size (to thirty) as well as performers per part. The choir learned their parts from a transcribed score of unknown origin, further discouraging improvisation. Despite these changes, the first concert of this choir on

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<sup>48</sup> Tamar Maskhi, “On Georgian Traditional Music During the Soviet Period,” in in *The First International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony*, eds. Rusudan Tsursumia and Joseph Jordania (Tbilisi: International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony of Tbilisi State Conservatory, 2002), 499.

November 15, 1886 in Tbilisi was warmly received. Iliā Chavchavadze, fervent nationalist, newspaper editor, and promoter of Georgian culture, wrote in his newspaper, *Iveria*: “One highly gladdening and new event happened... a Georgian choir sang Georgian songs at a Georgian concert held at the Georgian theatre.”<sup>49</sup> Though he gently criticized the performance (“I cannot say all the Georgian voice parts were transcribed well”), his enthusiasm was probably more connected with the suppression of the Georgian language at the time. What makes this event so meaningful is that other professional and informal groups copied this style. The Soviet-owned record label, Melodiya, included many of these altered songs as part of their catalog.<sup>50</sup> One Georgian performer and ethnomusicologist made the bold statement that most choirs were following these principles even until the 1990s,<sup>51</sup> which Jordania seems to echo.<sup>52</sup>

As restrictions under the Soviets decreased with the weakening of the Union in the 1970s, research into the earlier forms of Georgian traditional vocal music began anew. Georgian scholars could more freely conduct fieldwork in secluded villages and search for singers. Although research into chanting practices remained a dangerous pursuit as late as the 1980s, young singers studied available manuscripts and recordings. One such group of singers eventually became the Anchiskhati Choir (based at Anchiskhati Cathedral, one of the oldest cathedrals in Tbilisi), led by Erkvanidze and Shugliashvili.

The return to pre-Soviet musical practices, however, was not greeted with open arms by the Georgian public. One pioneering male group founded in 1980, *Mtiebi*, was

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<sup>49</sup> Iliā Chavchavadze, “Kartuli Khalkhuri Musika,” *Iveria*, December 1886.

<sup>50</sup> Melodiya took over Gramophone’s vacated offices in Tbilisi after the October Revolution of 1917 and were the primary distributor of recordings in Georgia.

<sup>51</sup> Interview subject B017, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>52</sup> Jordania, “Georgia,” 837.

led by Georgian ethnomusicologist Edisher Garakanidze. *Mtiebi* performed songs from field expeditions led by Garakanidze, going so far as to include traditional forms of dress and dance. A female group, *Mzetamze*, had similar aims, forming in 1986.

Understandably, the public was accustomed to the Soviet style of Georgian song and presentation in costumes and military outfits. As an informant stated, “The public were removed from tradition. *Mtiebi* wanted to show the full face of Georgia.”<sup>53</sup> Video examples of this group available on the internet illustrate some of the presentation methods that are being used in pursuit of this goal.<sup>54</sup> Over the last thirty years, the work of performing groups such as *Mtiebi*, *Mzetamze*, and the Anchiskhati Choir increased public knowledge and understanding of Georgian traditional vocal music.

### Traditionality: Just a Closer Walk with Thee

Similar issues of what I call traditionality arise in Ellen Koskoff’s work, *Music in the Lubavitcher Life*, in which she describes the music of a specific Jewish subgroup, the Lubavitchers. The exact meaning and reality of this claim of tradition varies depending on age and religion. Just as there were differences in musical practice within the Lubavitcher community,<sup>55</sup> there are differences in perceptions and practice of traditionality among Georgians. Though these differences will be explored in depth in future studies, the main focus here is that traditionality allows flexibility, even among a (relatively) small cultural group that is surrounded – perhaps passively or actively under siege – by other cultural groups.

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<sup>53</sup> Interview subject B017, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>54</sup> *Mtiebi*, [http://mtiebi.com/?page\\_id=10&lang=en](http://mtiebi.com/?page_id=10&lang=en) (accessed November 2, 2009).

<sup>55</sup> Ellen Koskoff, *Music in Lubavitcher Life* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

Many specifics regarding the performance traditions and the songs themselves have been preserved and revived. Thankfully, research into vocal traditions of specific chanting schools and other forms of traditional vocal music continues through the work of scholars and musicians. In many cases, the work of the scholars directly informs the musical performances, such as in Ensemble *Sakhioba*, Ensemble *Mtiebi*, and in many Georgian Orthodox church choirs. Field recording expeditions are used to help preserve and increase understanding of Georgian traditional vocal music, as heard in the work of Ensemble *Mzetamze*.

Be that as it may, change has occurred and will continue to occur in unexpected ways. In a somewhat despairing tone, an informant described such an unforeseen development below:

I know of people nowadays as well, though there are just a few maybe, but they are people who live for singing in villages, who can't live without singing. These people call their friends who are singers [on the phone]... They are gathered together [on the phone] and they are sitting without any ritual purpose, aside from singing.<sup>56</sup>

The title of this chapter (“Let’s Go Forward – Forward to Our Ancestors!”) is taken from a book by Temur Chkualesi, the leader of the vocal ensemble, *Georgian Voices*. It presents a desire for a return to the times of one’s ancestors, just traditionality within Georgian traditional vocal music helps to push modern Georgians forward into closer relationship with their past. In my interpretation of this title and the data of the project, going forward into the future to access to past is an acknowledgement that the past must be, if not recreated, rehabilitated in order to be of use to modern Georgians. Put

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<sup>56</sup> Interview subject B017, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

another way, distance can be just as important as closeness to the past, as I will attempt to argue in the next chapter.

## Chapter Four: Ancientness in Georgian Traditional Vocal Music

“If it is not old, then Georgians aren’t interested,” quipped one of my informants, a Georgian sociologist and jazz aficionado. “Look at our buildings, our churches, our music.”<sup>1</sup> We were discussing the cultural importance of Georgian traditional vocal music, talking loudly over the Russian music videos that were blaring overhead in a fashionable bar on Rustaveli Avenue in Tbilisi. Of course, “old” is a nebulous term, but coming from a Georgian, the word has a different connotation than from most people in Western Europe or North America. It is worth noting that in modern Georgian, “old” and “ancient” as adjectives are expressed by the same word, *dzweli* (ძველი).<sup>2</sup> Though rudimentary linguistics offers some insight, the musical and social application of “ancientness” is a more productive site for deeper examinations of Georgian musical culture.

As outlined in chapter two, many modern Georgians emphasize certain elements of their history, producing (among other things) an historical narrative of ancient unity, a faithful and longstanding devotion to Christianity, and a sense of being under siege. At the risk of simplification and implying linearity of Georgian perception (*akhma*, აზმა, “perception”), this chapter explores ancientness in connection with Georgian traditional vocal music. Following the method of description suggested earlier by Massumi, I use data from fieldwork and Georgian ethnomusicological literature to describe ancientness.

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<sup>1</sup> Interview subject B019, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>2</sup> This information was verified via several dictionaries and, most importantly, by two professional translators in Georgia employed by Tbilisi State University. There is another word used in modern Georgian that corresponds to “archaic” (*arkaruli* or არქაული), but this is rarely used unless referring to time periods before the third or fourth century BCE.

Lastly, I share my interpretation of information from Georgian scholarship that identifies musical elements that describes ancientness to the Georgians I encountered.

## Description of Ancientness and Examples in the Data

In describing ancientness, the focus is not simply on the perception of time. By my interpretation of the data, in the Georgian sense ancientness is a flexible idea – as distant as the pre-Christian age and as close as the pre-Soviet days. More than simply implying extreme age, the data of this project describes ancientness as a perception of considerable distance or space in terms of time and in terms of life experience. Put another way, ancientness describes a contingently historical approach to Georgian traditional vocal music.

Georgian leaders frequently mention Georgia's long history as a nation, despite the rather murky waters of history, as discussed in chapter two. As part of a welcoming speech to the United States Vice President Joe Biden on July 23, 2009, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili stressed the resilience of Georgia as a nation that is three thousand years old.<sup>3</sup> Former Georgian President Shevernadze and the Patriarch of All-Georgia and Mtskheta Iliia II have also made similar statements, in print and in person.<sup>4</sup>

Assertions of an ancient character of Georgia are not limited to statements by public figures, however. In reading Georgian ethnomusicological works, it would seem that Georgian scholars are heavily invested in making a logical and empirical claim to the ancientness of Georgian traditional vocal music. Throughout the vast majority of articles,

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<sup>3</sup> Mikheil Saakashvili, Welcome speech, Tbilisi, Georgia. July 23, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Eduard Shevardnadze, "Greeting," in *National Treasures of Georgia*, ed. Ori Z. Soltes (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 1999). Patriarch Iliia II, Welcome speech, Tbilisi, Georgia. October 4, 2010.

lectures, and sound recording liner notes on Georgian music, vocal polyphony is described as the most ancient of all Georgian music. Much of its cachet in this regard derives from the frequently-cited observations of the Greek historian Xenophon in 401 BCE, as discussed in chapter two. Other prominent Georgian scholars, such as Rusudan Tsurtsunia, lay claim to this ancient nature through asserting a polyphonic influence of folk vocal music on sacred vocal music. After relating the account from Xenophon, she continues:

And really, it is impossible to assert that by this “specific way” the Greek historian meant polyphony, but it can be presumed that already, by that time, the Georgian song was polyphonic because a few centuries later, this “specific” singing culture conditioned the originally polyphonic character of the Georgian polyphonic chanting within the initially monodic Christian world.<sup>5</sup>

Another informant, a performer and ethnomusicologist, went even further back in discussing early descriptions of Georgian vocal music

As you know, Georgia is a very old country, and Georgians are a very old people. And this singing also is very old with this people. The first description of Georgian singing is from the eighth century BCE from King of Urartu [i.e. Assyria] – Sargon, maybe...He describes singing during the work. But you know, it was not a description exactly of folk singing. He was describing his fighting, how many cows he took from this land, how many slaves he took, and in this little place he says, “Here people are singing very funny songs during their work,” and then continues with “take here, take there” [laughter].<sup>6</sup>

Ancientness in the temporal sense is stressed in Georgian literature through the frequent examination of possible origins and evolution of vocal polyphony. As mentioned in chapter two, Manana Andriadze and Tamar Chkheidze place *chreli* at least as far back

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<sup>5</sup> Rusudan Tsurtsunia, “Polyphony: A Category of Georgian Traditional Musical Thinking,” in *The First International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony*, eds. Rusudan Tsurtsunia and Joseph Jordania (Tbilisi: International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony of Tbilisi State Conservatory, 2002), 97.

<sup>6</sup> Interview subject B017, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009. This account is also found in Joseph Jordania, “Georgian Folk-Singing: Its Sources, Emergence, and Modern Development,” *International Social Science Journal* 101, UNESCO vol. XXXVI (3), 1984, 537.

as the thirteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Anzor Erkomaishvili and Vakhtang Rodonaia, in their book on the first recorded music of Georgia, mention analyses that situate the origin of Georgian folk song polyphony between the third and second millennia BCE and the beginning of polyphonic chant around 6 CE.<sup>8</sup> Evsevi Chokhnelidze also investigates origins of polyphony in the Georgian context. In his article from the First Symposium, he explores the intersection of “pagan” and Christian religious cultures in the fourth and fifth centuries and the subsequent rise of the individual – both in religious practice and liturgical vocal polyphony.<sup>9</sup> Chokhnelidze asserts that early Christianity helped increase individuality in religious expression compared to pre-Christian practices, which contributed to the development of independence of parts in vocal polyphony.

The prominence given to this individual factor caused significant changes resulting in the appearance of different structural types of polyphony, stimulated polyphonic thinking development and the counter-movement of parts.<sup>10</sup>

Tamaz Gabisonia, a professor at the International Research Center of Traditional Polyphony, discusses the origins of Georgian vocal polyphony in his article from the Second International Polyphonic Symposium. Furthermore, Gabisonia states that it is “our duty, the duty of Georgian musicologists, to select the most solid and best-substantiated models of development of Georgian traditional polyphony out of existing

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<sup>7</sup> Manana Andriadze and Tamar Chkdeidze, “System of *Chreli* in Georgian Sacred Music,” 452-454.

<sup>8</sup> Anzor Erkomaishvili and Vakhtang Rodonaia, *Georgian Folk Song, The First Sound Recordings*, 24. The exact sources of these analyses are not enumerated.

<sup>9</sup> Evsevi Chokhnelidze, “On an Important Period of A Qualitative Shift in Georgian Musical Thinking,” in *The First International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony*, eds. Rusudan Tsurtsunia and Joseph Jordania (Tbilisi: International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony of Tbilisi State Conservatory, 2002), 107-108.

<sup>10</sup> Chokhnelidze, 107.

hypotheses.”<sup>11</sup> These attempts to address what is, in all likelihood, an unanswerable question, indicate the importance of this question for Georgian musical scholarship.

Nearly all of the Georgian scholars discussing the origins of vocal polyphony point to ancient elements present on recordings, manuscripts, and in current performance practice, which will be discussed later in the chapter. Joseph Jordania has written extensively on ancientness and polyphony in his book, *Who Asked the First Question?*, drawing from a wide body of knowledge including biology, historiography, manuscript studies, linguistics, speech pathology, and history in a truly multifaceted, ethnomusicological fashion.<sup>12</sup> He challenges the hypothesis that polyphony arose from monophony and posits that most vocal traditions are moving towards monophony. Using quite varied data (including Georgian traditional vocal music), Jordania gives great weight to Marius Schneider’s conclusion that “vocal polyphony was invented in Southeast Asia and it reached Europe via South Asian and Caucasian route[s].”<sup>13</sup> This hypothesis receives further support from another scholar, Izaly Zemtsovsky, who also attests to the ancient character of Georgian polyphony.<sup>14</sup>

Similar attitudes regarding ancientness are found in my interview data. One particularly illuminating comment came from a social psychologist:

You know, for example, in the advertisements I know of the Western sort, you always advertise this is new. Georgians [in advertisements]

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<sup>11</sup> Tamaz Gabisonia, “Hypotheses about the Process of the Formation of Georgian Polyphonic Singing,” in *The Second International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony*, eds. Rusudan Tsurtssumia and Joseph Jordania (Tbilisi: International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony of Tbilisi State Conservatoire, 2004), 73.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Jordania, *Who Asked the First Question? The Origins of Human Choral Singing, Intelligence, Language and Speech* (Tbilisi: Tbilisi University Press, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Jordania, *Who Asked the First Question?*, 382. Jordania also praises Schneider’s bravery, noting that Schneider’s theory was highly unpopular in his native Germany of the 1930s. The two volume set, *Geschichte der Mehrstimmigkeit* (Berlin: Borntraeger, 1934-1935) made multiple appearances at book burnings.

<sup>14</sup> Izaly Zemtsovsky, “Music and Ethnic History: An Attempt to Substantiate a Eurasian Hypothesis,” *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, vol. 22 (1990), 20-28.

very often would say, it is old. The old *vojovi*, the old vine, the old – even coffee, etcetera, etcetera. So the direction of thinking is not future, but more past. It is again a kind of defense mechanism. The future is unpredictable. The past is well-known, and we were powerful in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to the temporal distance, there is also a description of an experiential distance in the manner modern Georgians perceive their past. As we discussed how singing was integral to the life of Georgians of the past, one Georgian ethnomusicologist used the example of *naduri* (harvest work songs). Instead of people singing as they worked in the fields as they did in the past, the machines now do the singing. “Material and technical progress,” as he described with an ironic smile. When I pointed out his smile, he elaborated: “It was not progress, but regress. It was the people’s choice. People like to more comfortable, to have cars – it was [a] big mistake in my opinion.”<sup>16</sup> He went on to note that in many villages, these experiences are still present and are preserved, and that people try to reconnect to village life even in urban areas. I referenced the folk song, “Tskhenosnuri” (as presented in chapter three), which is about traveling on horseback, and knowingly asked a somewhat irreverent question: Why not sing or write songs about riding – or waiting – on the *marshrutka* (მარშრუტკა, a Russian word for a small bus)? After laughing, he countered with the assertion that in the past, people sang as a community, and who could claim the riders of a *marshrutka* are a community? They are strangers to each other.<sup>17</sup>

In some parts of Georgia, such as in the mountainous and largely inaccessible region of Svaneti, Georgian ways of life were more resilient to the modernization policies of the Soviet government and globalization influences. While discussing the importance

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<sup>15</sup> Interview subject B005, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Interview subject B007, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Interview subject B007, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

of traditional vocal music to life in Svaneti in the 1980s, one informant said it was “burned into them” just as it was in the ancient past:

One famous Georgian composer, Dmitri Araqishvili, he says that life of Georgian is accompanied by music from birth to the death. And I continue this phrase, that life of Georgian is accompanied by music after the death, because the first anniversary remembering through ritual music. From my father’s expedition [in the 1980s], he knows that one group of people are singers. [He] comes and asks them please sing something, I want to record. They say, “We don’t know songs, we don’t know anything about singing.” [He] says, “I know you are singers.” They say, “No, we are not singers. What are you saying? We don’t know songs.” He says, “You don’t know ‘Alilo’ for example?” They say, “It is not a song,” and they start singing.<sup>18</sup>

Ancientness in traditional vocal music is a nuanced phenomenon, approaching at times an almost ahistorical character. One informant, a recently graduated student, said:

Our president’s slogan was, “Back to David the Builder’s time.” I don’t think it is good to go back, but it is good to maintain the real values and look forward... We are proud that we have a good past ...but still we have to go forward and maintain what is really valuable, what was really valuable in our culture. This music thing is still like, how to say, not past, not future but this is a constant thing. It was important in those times. It is still important for Georgia’s history and for Georgia wholly... It is something constant that has gone through the history of Georgia to today.<sup>19</sup>

One interview subject’s experiential view of Georgian history, via translator, was stated this way: History will never be objective. Though we all like to idealize the past, such as the time of David the Builder, we don’t know the problems of that time. It would be a regression. Of course, one cannot live without the past, without your ancestors, or without culture – you must find balance between past and future with an orientation towards to the future.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Interview subject B017, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Interview subject B002, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Interview subject B004, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

## Examples of Ancientness in Georgian Traditional Vocal Music

Though they perceive each song as a whole unit, Georgian ethnomusicologists tend to address three primary elements in Georgian traditional vocal music: text of the song, texture of the polyphony, and *kilo* (კილო, discussed in chapter three) of the song. Using these interconnected elements, they can identify some regional characteristics of songs and possible time periods of composition.<sup>21</sup> This is not to imply a single systematic and authoritative system for classifying songs – in fact, many Georgian musicologists are not convinced that such a thing is possible or even desirable. While there is lively and continuous debate and research in this area, by my understanding, Georgian scholars find some consensus in describing how the text, polyphonic texture, and *kilo* of songs endow them with an ancient character.

Often the most changeable and flexible part of the song, the textual content is nevertheless an indicator of ancientness for Georgians. Some songs preserve regional dialects of spoken Georgian language, such as songs from Svaneti, Mingrelia/Samegrelo, and Kakheti. Though language preservation is very important to Georgians, detailed discussion of that point would require greater facility with the languages and dialects in question. The focus here, however, is three cases of textual ancientness in vocal music: historical songs, pre-Christian songs, and experiential songs.

Historical songs, such as the ubiquitous Gurian songs, “Ali Pasha” (ალიფაშა) and “Khasanbegura” (ხასანბეგურა), give colorful and intriguing historical accounts of

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<sup>21</sup> In interviews and in published works, Georgian ethnomusicologists seem to present two ideas simultaneously: 1) These songs are ancient, and 2) we cannot know the exact date of the songs. To them, these ideas do not appear to conflict.

the nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup> As outlined in the previous chapters, allegiances in the Caucasus region have been historically fluid. During multiple conflicts between Russian and Turkey in the mid nineteenth century, the Georgian provinces of Guria and Achara were caught between the two powers. As might be expected by the more cynical/realistic among us, some people tried to turn the situation to their advantage. One such person was a Georgian noble, Khosro Tavgiridze (ხოსრო ტავგირიძე).<sup>23</sup> Fearing political repercussions, Khosro immigrated to Turkey and received a military post and title – the Turkish title *bey* – and became known in Georgia as Khasan-beg. He helped invade Guria during the Crimean War (1853-1854) and was quite successful until his forces were trapped by a sizable Georgian militia at the village of Shukhuti (შუხუტი), led by his brother.<sup>24</sup> Though some of the Turkish forces broke through the siege, Khasan-beg was killed. Despite Khasan-beg’s traitorous act, his brother found his body and laid him to rest in accordance with Georgian Christian burial rituals. The standard text is below, though variations and more extensive textual changes occur in early and modern recordings.

Khasan-beg Tavdgiridze who rejected God  
 Sought the Turkish title of *pasha*, completely forgetting God.  
 He entered Shekvetili, crying in Turkish, “I have come.”  
 We’ll allow him to pass as far as Lanchkhuti,  
 Then let him see what we do.  
 We, the militia, were on the road, and Russian troops were few.  
 The nine thousand-strong Turkish army encountered us and attacked,  
 They ran and hid, but we pursued them.  
 Of the nine thousand in the Turkish army, barely five hundred escaped.  
 We are Gurians. We had a battle near Shukhut-Perdi.  
 We defeated the enemy leaving no one to tell the tale.  
 I saw my brother, Khasan-Pasha, beheaded.  
 As he was my brother, I cried out, “Woe is me!”  
 The previous night he had fought us, snaring himself in the process.

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<sup>22</sup> Audio examples of these songs are included on the supplementary compact disc.

<sup>23</sup> Erkomaishvili and Rodonaia, 132.

<sup>24</sup> Some interview sources used a word translated as “cousin,” and in Georgia, the use of cousin is not limited to a familial sense. It can also mean that they were friends or acquaintances.

Because he was my brother, I buried him.<sup>25</sup>

In their book on the earliest records of Georgia, Erkomaishvili and Rodonaia note that some scholars assert that the music to “Khasanbegura” predates this text, though they do not elaborate.<sup>26</sup>

Pre-Christian sacred songs point to Georgia’s very beginnings with references to Hittite gods. Two common examples come from Svaneti. Several versions of the previously mentioned song “Lile” (ლილე) exist, and they typically praise the sun god.<sup>27</sup> The meaning of the word “*lile*” is lost, however, though Georgian scholars believe the song to be among the most ancient in the known repertory.<sup>28</sup>

Hoy, Lile, hoy  
We glorify you, Sun,  
We glorify sun with golden beams of light  
You are full of golden decorations.  
We glorify you, hoy, Lile.

The second example of pre-Christian sacred music is the song “Dala kojias khelghvazhale” (დალა კოჯას ხელღვაჟალე, “Dala on the Rock” or “Dala is Giving Birth on the Cliffs”).<sup>29</sup> This is a song about the goddess of hunting, Dali. Some modern Georgians in Svaneti continue the practice of seeking Dali’s blessing – both for a successful hunting trip and not to encounter and fall in love with the beautiful Dali.

Dali is giving birth on the rock, on the white cliffs,  
Ravens are watching from above, wolves are watching from below.  
Her firstborn will fall down.<sup>30</sup>

The texts of these songs are celebrated, though they are seemingly at odds with the majority of modern Georgians’ Christian identity. While clear delineation between

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<sup>25</sup> Erkomaishvili and Rodonaia, 132.

<sup>26</sup> Erkomaishvili and Rodonaia, 132.

<sup>27</sup> An audio recording of this song is included in the supplemental materials.

<sup>28</sup> Garakanidze, *99 Georgian Songs*, 81. Jordania, “Georgian Folk-singing,” 537.

<sup>29</sup> An audio example of these songs are included on the supplemental compact disc.

<sup>30</sup> Trio Kavkasia, Liner notes from *The Fox and The Lion*, Trio Kavkasia (Traditional Crossroads 780702-4331-2, 2006, compact disc).

Christian and pre-Christian practices exist for many Georgians, the blending of the two is more common than is apparent from initial observation and analysis. During my fieldwork, I witnessed a group of Georgians sacrificing a chicken outside a church – the church of St. Nino in Mtskheta (Illustration 9). Multiple Georgians from Orthodox and Baptist denominations confirmed that such practices are not uncommon, and that there appears to be passive acquiescence by the religious leadership.



**Illustration 9: Sacrifice at Father Gabriel's grave**  
with Orthodox Nun (top right) looking on  
(St. Nino's Church, Mtskheta, August 1, 2009; photo by the author)

More to the point of the text, one religious leader told me that some of their attendees believe the spoken language of certain Bible passages to be magical and capable of direct physical healing.<sup>31</sup> Similar beliefs regarding pre-Christian texts still exist in Svaneti (northern Georgia), Tusheti (northeastern Georgia), South Ossetia (eastern Georgia), and other mountainous regions of the country. Song text is not only important in its

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<sup>31</sup> Interview subject B016, Interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, October 2010.

communicative powers, but also in its capacity for creating spiritual and physical effects (as in the case of the song “Batenebo”, mentioned in chapter two).

The primary reason such beliefs exist is in the historical connection between these songs and life experiences. The texts of the songs represent a group of life experiences of Georgians that is far removed from the way of life of most modern Georgians. Two such examples are work songs and ritual songs.

The Gurian and Acharian work song “Elesa” (ელესა) was performed by men that were moving or carrying large objects, such as logs for wine presses. One version of the song is reproduced in Figure 7:

The musical score for "Elesa" is presented in five systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 6/8. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The first system starts with a forte (f) dynamic. The lyrics include: "e - le - sa - da e - le - sa e - le - sa he e - le - sa - da vo e - le - sa". The second system continues with: "o - i - e - le - si - o - da e - le - sai - da o - i e - le - sa o - i e - le - si - a - da". The third system has: "e - le - sai - da o - i e - le - sa vo - i e - le - si - a - vo e - le - sa - da". The fourth system contains: "o - i e - le - sa (da) vo - i e - le - si - a - vo e - le - sa e - le - sa". The fifth system concludes with: "e - le - sa si - a - vo e - le - sa - da e - le - sa e - le - sa he". There are some markings like "(d)" and "(8)" in the piano part.

Figure 7: “Elesa”<sup>32</sup>

The title and the majority of the song are untranslatable. The only text that has a known meaning translates to “and let us sing”, but Erkomaishvili and Rondonaia note that a Gurian choir’s 1907 performance contains modified Greek word, “*kirio.*” Together with the word “*elasa,*” they posit that traditional singers of *Elesa* were calling upon God for mercy (*kyrie eleison*).<sup>33</sup> Needless to say, hauling huge tree logs for winepresses is not a

<sup>32</sup> Garakanidze, Jordania, Mills, eds., 99 *Georgian Songs*. An audio recording of this song is included on the supplemental compact disc.

<sup>33</sup> Erkomaishvili and Rondonaia, 106.

frequent part of Georgian modern life. As noted by two informants, communal singing during work is unfathomable now.<sup>34</sup> “Are we going to sing on the combine? No, it is stupid.”<sup>35</sup>

The text of ritual songs are also a way that Georgian traditional songs embody a way of life associated with an ancient past. One example of this is the Kartli-Kakhetian song “Chona” (ჩონა). The translations of two variants of the text of the song are below:

Mother, I’ll tell you *chona* if you are not sad.  
God bless him who is lying in this cradle.  
*Alatasa, balatasa*, I will hang a basket.  
Mother, give us one egg. God will give you contentment.<sup>36</sup>

I was at *chona* – I saw *chona* but saw no profit.  
*Alatasa, balatasa* I put my hand into the basket.  
Girl, put an egg in it, and God will give you bounty.  
We have come to congratulate you on Easter.<sup>37</sup>

Though it was sang the night before Easter as the singers collected red dyed eggs, “Chona” references the nativity story with the red-dyed egg symbolizing new life and energy.

As stated earlier in this chapter, the majority of Georgians who participated in this research accept that the text of some songs can change. One informant, a student, stated that the lyrics were very influenced by the feelings about the historical situation of that time.<sup>38</sup> After some gentle prodding for specifics on this issue, one student replied, “If I hear a song from Achara, I will know this is an Acharian song. The style is, well, the Acharian style. [laughing] I can’t explain it! But I know it, you know? The words,

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<sup>34</sup> Interview subject B007, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>35</sup> Interview subject B017, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Ted Levin, Liner notes from *An Oath at Khidistavi*, Rustavi Choir, directed by Anzor Erkomaishvili (Shanachie 65014, 1998, compact disc).

<sup>37</sup> Erkomaishvili and Rodonaia, 128.

<sup>38</sup> Interview subject B001, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

perhaps, are in the different dialect.”<sup>39</sup> Despite (and perhaps driven by) untranslatable or unknown words, the texts of many songs nevertheless conjure visions of ancient worship, work, and ritual for many Georgians.

## Ancientness in Polyphonic Texture

Up to this point, the music of the Georgian Orthodox Church has not been directly addressed. This impressive body of songs serves as the best example of the connections between ancientness and polyphonic texture in Georgian traditional vocal music. Erkvanidze boldly states in his first volume of Georgian chant notations, “No chanting older than Georgian can be heard in the Orthodox world today.”<sup>40</sup>

The texture of Georgian Orthodox chant (*galoba*) is always three voices, symbolizing the Christian trinity. Continuing on this trope, the voices are also equal in importance in that Georgians perceive the voices as one unit, not as separate harmonic and melodic parts as in Western European “functional harmony.” Furthermore, all voices in this type of chant begin each song at the same time and end each song together in union, just as the three aspects of God as Trinity have always existed. In discussing this, one informant suggested a different reading of the beginning of the Gospel of John: “Instead of ‘First there was the Word,’ the phrase in Georgia is ‘First there was

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<sup>39</sup> Interview subject B002, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>40</sup> Malkhaz Erkvanidze, *Georgian Church Chant*, vol. 1 (Tbilisi: Tbilisi State Conservatory, 2006), xix.

singing.”<sup>41</sup> An example of this type of polyphonic texture can be heard my field recording from Svetistkhoveli Cathedral.<sup>42</sup>

By its very nature, the Georgians I observed and spoke with associate Georgian Orthodox chant with ancientness. Primarily, these songs serve as a worshipful act. But that act of worship is perceived to be similar (if not identical) to how Georgians have worshiped for nearly two millennia. Because each song ends in union (with a few exceptions), Georgian scholars and congregants (Orthodox and Baptist) claim it symbolizes not only the Trinity, but a unified Georgia, with all its independent aspects. This perception of unity refers not just to the recent past but also to all the historical instances of unity.<sup>43</sup> All of this takes place in cathedrals and churches that proudly bear the wounds not only of time but of Georgia’s turbulent past (Illustration 10).



**Illustration 10: Ceiling of Svetistkhoveli Cathedral, Mtskheta**  
(August 1, 2009; photo by the author)

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<sup>41</sup> Interview subject B018, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009. The passage in the Bible that is referred to here is John 1:1, presented here in the New International Version translation. “In the beginning, there was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

<sup>42</sup> An audio recording of this song is included in the supplemental materials. In this instance, this song is offered by the female choir as the priest walks the perimeter of the cathedral, visiting icons and blessing the space with prayers and incense.

<sup>43</sup> Most Georgians see Georgia as currently incomplete since the declarations of independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008.

Simply put, polyphonic texture represents the ancient for many Georgians. In his article discussing the origins of Georgian vocal music, Jordania uses the old Georgian word *aeleba* (აელება), which he translates to mean “harmonious polyphonic singing of birds,” as evidence of polyphony as an ancient aesthetic principal of the Georgian tribes.<sup>44</sup> Claims of the ancientness of Georgian polyphony are corroborated by medieval musicologist Peter Jeffery in his article, “Earliest Christian Chant Repertory Recovered.”<sup>45</sup> Through analysis of recently accessible manuscripts, Jeffery attests to correlations between known elements of earliest Jerusalem chants and Georgian chants of the first millennium. He does express doubt, however, in the stability of aural tradition of early Georgia and the direct relationship between these early chants and current Georgian chants. As supporting evidence, Jeffery points to the Georgian switch from the Jerusalem-based rites to the Byzantine liturgical rites in approximately the twelfth century.<sup>46</sup> In a recent presentation, Tamaz Gabisonia went to so far as to say that the simpler the polyphony, the older it is.<sup>47</sup> Simple polyphony in this case refers to drone or “bourdon” polyphony where the lowest voice is largely static.<sup>48</sup> An example of this type of polyphony is the song, “Mravalzhamier” (მრავალჟამიერ, “Years and epochs of happiness to you”), one version (of dozens) as seen in Figure 8.

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<sup>44</sup> Jordania, “Georgian Folk-singing,” 544. Jordania, “Georgia,” 810.

<sup>45</sup> Jeffery, “Earliest Christian Chant Repertory Recovered.”

<sup>46</sup> Jeffery, 27.

<sup>47</sup> Gabisonia, “The Beginning Voice Part in Georgian Polyphony,” Tbilisi State Conservatory, Tbilisi, Georgia, October 5, 2010.

<sup>48</sup> Jordania, “Georgian Folk-singing,”



Figure 8: “Erekle’s Mravalzhamier”<sup>49</sup>

Even so, most Georgians seem to be unaware of these manuscripts and research, and yet they still talk of Georgian polyphony as ancient.

### *Kilo* and Ancientness

As discussed in chapter three, there is some degree of uncertainty around the term *kilo*. Nevertheless, many Georgian ethnomusicologists state that certain *kilos* are older than others and some, like Malkhaz Erkvanidze, are more specific in their assertions. In his second volume on church chant, Erkvanidze places *Sada kilo* (სადა კილო, “plain mode”) as belonging to the seventh to eleventh centuries, *Namdvili kilo* (ნამდვილი კილო, “simple-true mode”) as characteristic of the eleventh to sixteenth centuries, and *Gamshvenebuli kilo* (გამშვენებული კილო, “colorful mode”) in the sixteenth to

<sup>49</sup> Garakanidze, *99 Georgian Songs*. This version is linked to Kakheti and King Erekle II of the late eighteenth century.

nineteenth centuries. Furthermore, these *kilos* represent a developmental arch.<sup>50</sup> Shugliashvili supports these general classifications and assertions,<sup>51</sup> and examples of each of these *kilos* are found in the manuscript collection of Pilimon Koridze (MS Q674). Although the methodology for determining these claims is not fully explained in English-language sources, Erkvanidze makes mention of comparative analysis of manuscripts and computer analysis of the earliest sound recordings.<sup>52</sup> Erkvanidze and Shugliashvili are universally respected and admired as scholars and performers, and I am prepared to accept their conclusions as details (and my own language proficiencies) unfold.

Specific songs which illustrate these *kilos* are relatively easy to find in the known repertory. For comparison purposes, I will present examples of each of these three *kilos* as represented in Erkvanidze's work. Audio examples with Artem Erkomaishvili performing all three parts will be included in the supplemental materials.<sup>53</sup> Most known examples performed today (and in the pivotal collection of recording by Artem Erkomaishvili, mentioned in chapter three) are in the more recent *Gamshvenebuli kilo*. This *kilo* is typically more ornamented and tonally migratory than *Namdvili kilo* or *Sada kilo*. An example of *Gamshvenebuli kilo* is the chant “Ghirs ars ch'eshmarat'ad” (ღირს არს ჭეშმარატად, “It is very meet and right”). A transcribed example is included as Figure 9.

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<sup>50</sup> Erkvanidze, *Georgian Church Chant*, vol. 2, xvii-xviii.

<sup>51</sup> Shugliashvili, 5.

<sup>52</sup> In the preface of the fifth volume (p. xxviii), Anzor Erkomaishvili notes: “It is noteworthy that he [Erkvanidze] rejected the European standards and applies his own method.” When asked what method Erkomaishvili was referring to, Erkvanidze smiled and said, “Ask Anzor.”

<sup>53</sup> Erkomaishvili recorded one vocal part, then had it played back as he performed the additional parts. As he was a bass, the songs are in a lower register than would commonly be performed.

ღირს არს ჭეშმარიტად  
It is very meet and right

მეგ. №12

169

Figure 9: An example of Gamshvenebuli kilo in “Ghirs ars ch'eshmarat'ad”<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Erkvanidze, *Georgian Church Chant*, vol. 5, 169-170.

Figure 9, continued: An example of *Gamshvenbuli kilo* in “Ghirs ars ch'eshmarat'ad”

While fewer in number, *Namdvili kilo* is represented by known songs such as “Romelni kerubinta” (“Secretly as cherubs” or “Let us, the cherubim”). Development of the polyphonic system can be observed in two versions of this song, one in *Sada kilo* and the other in *Namdvili kilo* (Figures 10 and 11). Another notable difference between these two variants is the different approaches to mid-song cadences and the approach to tonal shifts. In this example, *Sada kilo* always cadences on an open fifth interval, and while

*Namdvili kilo* also cadences on the same interval, the part texture varies. Lastly, *Sada kilo* has nearly uniform homophonic texture, while *Namdvili kilo* employs a more developed polyphonic approach.

რომელნი ქერუბიმთა \* (ბ.)  
Let us, the Cherubim

201

რო - მე - ჯ ნი ქე - რუ - ბიმ - თა სა - ი - დუმ -  
ro - mel - ni qe - ru - bim - ta sa - i - dum -

ლო - სა ვე - შსა -  
lo - sa ve - shsa -

ესე - ბი - თა  
ese - bi - ta

და ცხო - ველს - მუო - ვე - ღი - სა  
da tskho - vels - muo - ve - ghi - sa

\* ტექსტი ვაწყობილია „უბუნელუნი იოჯარბი“ მიხედვით.

247

Figure 10: An example of *Sada kilo* in “Romelni kerubinta”<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Erkvanidze, *Georgian Church Chant*, vol. 5, 247-248.

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Romelni kerubinta". It consists of four systems of music, each with three staves: a vocal line (soprano/tenor) and two piano accompaniment staves (treble and bass). The lyrics are written in Georgian script above the vocal line and in Latin transliteration below it. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

**System 1:**  
 Georgian: სა - მე - ბი - სა      სამ-გზის წმინ - და - სა  
 Latin: sa - me - bi - sa      sam - gzis ts'mi - da - sa

**System 2:**  
 Georgian: გა-ლო-ბა-სა შენ - და შევ-წი - რა      ავტ  
 Latin: ga - lo - ba - sa shen - da shev - ts'i - ra      avt

**System 3:**  
 Georgian: უა - ვი - ლი - ვი აწ - სო - ფლი - სა      და უ - ტე - ლთ  
 Latin: q'o - ve - li - ve ats' so - pli - sa      da - u - t'e - ot

**System 4:**  
 Georgian: ზრუნ - ვა      ა  
 Latin: zrun - va      a

248

Figure 10, continued: An example of *Sada kilo* in “Romelni kerubinta”

რომელნი ქერუბიმთა  
(გამსვენებული)  
Let us, the Cherubim

(კ.)

202

ro - mel - ni ke - ru - bim - ta

სა - ბა - ო - თა

სა - ბა - ო - თა

დუ - მ - ლო - სა

დუ - მ - ლო - სა

ვე - მ - გავ - სე - ბი

ვე - მ - გავ - სე - ბი

249

Figure 11: An example of Namdvili kilo in “Romelni kerubinta”<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Erkvanidze, *Georgian Church Chant*, vol. 5, 249-252.

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Romelni kerubinta". It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written in Georgian and Latin script below the notes. The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, time signatures, and dynamic markings.

Lyrics (Georgian):  
 ით და ცხო-ველს - მეო  
 შუი - ღი - ხა  
 სა - მე - ე  
 გაგრძელებით

Lyrics (Latin script):  
 it da tskho - vels - me'o  
 pe - li - sa  
 sa - me - e

Page number: 250

Figure 11, continued: An example of *Namdvili kilo* in “Romelni kerubinta”

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "Romelni kerubinta". It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The score is written in a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics are in Georgian and are written below the vocal lines. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with the lyrics "a bi". The second system continues with "sa sam-gob ts'mi-da". The third system has the lyrics "sa". The fourth system concludes with "a gu-lo ba sa shen-da shev-tsi". The piano accompaniment features a steady bass line and a more active treble line with various ornaments and dynamics markings.

Figure 11, continued: An example of *Namdvili kilo* in “Romelni kerubinta”



thousand possible answers, even at this very moment. By my analysis of the data and experiences thus far, however, there is one group of probable answers, and they can be found at the intersection of Georgian history, traditionality, and ancientness.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion: Intersections

From the beginning of this project, my experience and analysis of the data led me to examine the intersection of Georgian traditional vocal music, Georgian identity, and Georgian history. At first glance (and perhaps second and third), intersections in Tbilisi are fairly frightening places to be – whether on foot or in a vehicle. But in a city with few street signs and visible addresses, how else can one get their bearings then to find and attempt to comprehend intersections? Where else can a person see so many separate people, interpretations, and situations interact? Out of observations of the corresponding musical intersection arose descriptions of musical traditionality and ancientness and a perception of being under siege – culturally, politically, and continuously.

One confusingly labeled thoroughfare was conspicuously absent to this point of the project and that absence was by design. Though implied multiple times, identity deserves more than treating it as an assumed element of culture. After establishing a description of identity using Western ethnomusicological literature and Georgian interview data, I outline two primary products of the interactions between Georgian history and the ancientness and traditionality within Georgian traditional vocal music – identity formation and defense of the border.

### Whose “Identity”?

Many times during my fieldwork in Georgia, identity was a term that was lost in translation. To American ethnomusicologists this is hardly surprising, as American ethnomusicological studies and publications rarely present an overt definition (or

description) of identity. In his article on the subject, Kwame Appiah clearly and honestly lays out the problem, stating, “I am never quite sure what people meaning by ‘identity politics.’”<sup>1</sup> This frequently observed lack of clarity is the subject of a timely article by Timothy Rice, “Disciplining *Ethnomusicology*: A Call for a New Approach.”<sup>2</sup> Based on research on articles published in the journal *Ethnomusicology* with the word “identity” in the title, Rice asserts that identity (in the American scholarly sphere) has an assumed and highly contextualized meaning that is unconnected to other ethnomusicological or anthropological studies.<sup>3</sup> While other scholars find feasible faults with his research methods, the main thesis is solid. Even in a canonical book such as *Ethnicity, Identity and Music*, identity is described neither in general nor in specific cases and seems to be conflated with another troublesome term, ethnicity.<sup>4</sup>

Several authors, however, are clearer in their discussion of the term “identity” in ways directly applicable to this project. Thomas Turino addresses identity as he discusses hierarchal interactions between Peru’s dominant mestizo and the indigenous campesino cultures within the contemporary urban-mestizo *charango* instrumental tradition.

The second force, termed here “the identity factor” (akin to Linton's 1943 concept of nativism, see also Wallace 1956), comes into play when members of a socially and economically dominated group consciously draw upon symbols or cultural manifestations of their own group to buttress publicly their own unity, identity, and self-esteem in the face of oppression and prejudice.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, “The politics of identity,” *Daedalus* (Fall 2006), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Rice, “Disciplining *Ethnomusicology*.”

<sup>3</sup> Rice, 318-319.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Stokes, ed., *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Turino, “The Urban-Mestizo *Charango* Tradition in Southern Peru: A Statement of Shifting Identity,” *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 28, no. 2 (May 1984), 254.

In his article on instrumental *Jiangnan sizhu* performance, Witzleben uses repertory and genre (mandatory and selected) as markers of identity.<sup>6</sup> In his study, regions are musical style markers and co-operate as identity markers. This element of choice is also an important point in Turino's article, as mestizo are able to associate with the campesino despite cultural and lifestyle differences.<sup>7</sup> In the context of musical performance decisions, Gordon Thomas describes identity in terms of self-image of a caste in the Cāraṅs of Western India.<sup>8</sup>

Though all of these descriptions of identity contribute to this study, most salient to the immediate task at hand is the description of identity given in the previously mentioned article by Appiah. Though he does not cite the studies above or any other studies on identity (to Rice's chagrin), his approach seems to be informed by them.

'Identity' may not be the best word for bringing together the roles gender, class, race, nationality, and so on play in our lives, but it is the one we use. One problem with 'identity': it can suggest that everyone of a certain identity is in some strong sense *idem*, i.e., the same, when, in fact, most groups are internally quite heterogeneous, partly because each of us has many identities. The right response to this problem is just to be aware of the risk.<sup>9</sup>

Appiah breaks down the interdependent parts of identity, labeling them "ascription," "identification," "treatment," and "norms of identification."<sup>10</sup> To briefly summarize, ascription describes the criteria that must be ascribed to a person or group in order to be classified further. Identification refers to a more introspective process of self-identification and self-image. Treatment of the person or group by other persons or group

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<sup>6</sup> J. Lawrence Witzleben, "Jiangnan Sizhu Music Clubs in Shanghai: Context, Concept, Identity," *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 31 no. 2 (Spring-Summer 1987), 240-260.

<sup>7</sup> Turino, 266.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon R. Thompson, "The Cāraṅs of Gujarat: Caste Identity, Music, and Cultural Change," *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 35, no. 3 (Autumn 1991), 383.

<sup>9</sup> Appiah, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Appiah, 16.

also contributes to this description of identity. Lastly, the individual or group must choose to follow norms of behavior in order to belong to a certain group.

The implications of these studies for this project (which will be addressed below) are numerous and help to support its observations and analysis, but they alone do not describe identity in the context of this study. Here, I honor and refer to cogent descriptions of identity by Georgians themselves. One exchange with a Georgian historian and social scientist typified this challenge in an all-too familiar way. In this particular instance, the informant, my translator, and I wrestled with the translation of “identity” for nearly twenty minutes. To this informant, ethnicity was synonymous with identity.<sup>11</sup> A similar issue occurred with a Georgian ethnomusicologist. After repeatedly using the word *khasiatit* (ხასიათით, “character”), he finally said, “Character is who I am, culture is how I am.”<sup>12</sup>

## Traditionality, History, and Identity Formation

From my research, Georgian traditional vocal music is a vital part of Georgian identity formation. Multiple informants from varied backgrounds explicitly stated that Georgian traditional vocal music preserves and promotes Georgian values, and that primary national pride is in Georgian song.<sup>13</sup> Another informant stated, through a translator, that Georgians depend on traditional vocal music, and that this music is an

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<sup>11</sup> Interview subject B023, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Interview subject B010, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009. Though the word “character” frequently occurs in Georgian ethnomusicological literature, it would most likely be overreaching to say that “character” always equates to “identity” in Georgian thought without a more thorough linguistic analysis.

<sup>13</sup> Interview subjects B002, B005, B010, and B019, interviews by Jeremy Foutz, personal interviews, Summer 2009.

icon for Georgians, saving their identity.<sup>14</sup> This view is somewhat moderated by a Georgian ethnomusicology student who stated, “As always in the world, it depends on the person. Maybe for some, it will be as important as it is for me, but others won’t care. For people who love their country, the country folk music is the national identity for them – they are able to understand this music.”<sup>15</sup>

Georgian identity is greatly influenced by their perceptions of history, and, as outlined in chapter two that identity is greatly influenced by historical perceptions of unity, being under siege, and Christianity. As posited above by Turino, current Georgians’ practice of traditionality is, in part, a response to foreign dominance of Georgia, leading them to using elements of Georgian traditional vocal music to develop their identity. In chapter three, traditionality in Georgian traditional vocal music included such musical perceptions as a pure aural and written repertory, an assumed universality of polyphonic thinking, and glossing over changes in performance practices. To use Appiah’s terminology, this perceived stability ascribes a steadfastness and continuity as part of Georgian identity. Furthermore, the Georgians that participated in this project have made this part of their self-image, as stated by Thompson and Appiah, placing great importance in their culture and the cultural values in their songs.

It is my determination that many current Georgians, in choosing to practice traditionality with their musical performances and perceptions, draw close to their imagined, idealized past. The primary effect of traditionality is a perceived reduction in temporal and experiential distance. Traditionality in vocal music allows a deep

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<sup>14</sup> Interview subject B018, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Interview subject B015, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009. A similar attitude is presented by interview subject B010: “No Georgian can say they don’t like folk music, though few can experience the more authentic village style of polyphony, though the differences are small between them and professional singers.”

connection to a way of life that is both largely inaccessible and full of nostalgia for current Georgians. Georgians of today can then take part in the Golden Age of King David the Builder and King Tamar, as well as the brief periods of unity among proto-Georgian and Kartli-Iberian tribes. This is a conscious choice of identity by association, as put forth by Witzleben and Turino, and an example of Appiah's "treatment." Through their treatment of traditional vocal music, historical figures and events contribute to Georgian identity for many Georgians, emphasizing Christian values, familial loyalty, hospitality, and national unity.

### Ancientness, History, and Defending the Border

The other product of the interactions of ancientness and history also contributes a large part of identity formation – difference-making. As evidenced in the work of Georg Simmel outlined in the introduction, differences are just as important as finding similarity in identity formation. Ancientness in traditional vocal music creates distance and highlights difference between modern Georgians and their many of their neighbors and historical oppressors, asserting a rich culture and unified country reaching back at least three thousand years. In the more recent and painful context of Soviet rule, ancientness helps modern Georgians re-establish and strengthen Georgia's historical connection and identification with Christianity. As stated by one universally-esteemed informant, Georgian traditional vocal music has served as one of the guardians of Georgian culture.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Interview subject B004, interview by Jeremy Foutz, personal interview, Summer 2009.

Part of difference-making in identity formation involves an examination of how the values of certain cultural groups are organized. Incorporating the “great spheres” of Georg Simmel into my analysis of the data, I assert that ancientness supports (and represents) an agrarian and religious sphere of influence. In their perception, Georgian traditional vocal music organizes Georgian life around these themes in opposition to the other countries and cultures, asserting a different and distinct Georgian identity.

Because of its relative freshness in the Georgian psyche, the interactions between Russia and Georgia offer a clear example of conflicting spheres played out (if only in part) through ancientness and traditionality. Georgia’s history is filled with examples of the Russian and Soviet government’s push for a sphere centered on the tsar, or later, the cult of personality of Stalin. Evidence of this claim can be seen in Russification efforts through restrictions placed on the Georgian Orthodox church and even on the Georgian language itself. Georgian ethnomusicologist Tamar Maskhi gives this example:

If traditional folklore preached for generations against violence, evil, treachery and served philosophical didactics, in the new folklore repertoire these tendencies were replaced by the Lenin-Stalin cult, by the heroic-pathetic topics dedicated to collective farms and the Great Patriotic War against the capitalistic world.<sup>17</sup>

The strong claims of traditionality and ancientness of traditional vocal music in Georgia are especially important as part of this natural difference-making process. Erkomaishvili and Rodonaia note:

Today most people support the theory that Georgian polyphony developed without any outside influence. It is especially significant that Georgian polyphonic singing evolved surrounded by countries with monodic song traditions. Although folk song from the neighboring North Caucasus displays certain elements of polyphony, they are not

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<sup>17</sup> Tamar Maskhi, “On Georgian Traditional Music During the Soviet Period,” in *The First International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony*, eds. Rusudan Tsursumia and Joseph Jordania (Tbilisi: International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony of Tbilisi State Conservatory, 2002), 501.

strong enough to challenge the theory of the local origin of Georgian polyphony.<sup>18</sup>

Because of the Georgian perceptions of history, I suggest that the interactions between the spheres of the Tsarist/Stalin cult and the Georgian religious and agrarian spheres during the Soviet period has amplified the cultural power of ancientness and traditionality within Georgian culture and within Georgian traditional vocal music. These two concepts can be understood as a Georgian exercise of their identity, led by a desire to retain their culture in the face of oppression and perception of continuous siege. The modernization policies of Stalin and his frustrations with the “backwardness” of Georgia likely offered a secondary motivation for the development of behaviors that I have associated with ancientness and traditionality.

Georgian history and Georgians’ perception of their history illustrates the importance of comparatively small differences between otherwise very similar groups. The initial feelings of kinship with Russia began with the deep connections both countries had with Orthodox Christianity. As this religion was so central to their cultures, they shared many of the same core beliefs. Feudalism fueled both of their economies, making them more agrarian in nature. These similarities were trumped, however, by cultural differences and attempts to control them (as well as allowing Tbilisi to be sacked multiple times). With the rise of the Soviet Union, the bloody division between the Georgian mensheviks and the Georgian and Russian bolsheviks is another example of this theory. Though I would rather avoid diving into psychoanalysis, Stalin’s (and later, Lavrenti Beria’s) schizophrenic and violent relationship with their homeland could be understood to be related to this theory as well. In seeking to distance themselves from

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<sup>18</sup> Erkomaishvili and Rodonaia, 24.

Georgia and embrace the Soviet ideal, they violently oppressed their countrymen with whom they had previously shared so much.

This assertion is supported by Simmel's theories of difference-making and identity. Or, to take another angle, the parties involved collectively acted out only one of Appiah's elements of identity by ascribing the criteria to belong to the larger group. In this example, Georgians lacked self-identification, treatment, and the act of following norms of behavior in at least three identities: 1) as citizens of the Russian Empire or Soviet Union, 2) as part of the Russian Orthodox faithful or the atheist principles of the Soviets, and 3) performers and tradition bearers of Russian culture. Conversely, the ancientness and traditionality of Georgian vocal music helps to establish difference between Georgians and their geographic neighbors. Lastly, practicing traditionality helps Georgians draw closer to their past and identify with it as well as create temporal and experiential space between them and their most recent oppressors. In doing so, they also reclaim/reassert elements of an imagined, abstract-yet-real-past, creating cultural separation from various encroaching "others."

Do these assertions and connections place a deceptively neat and simple bow on the question of why Georgians sing? If so, this is not my intention. Traditionality and ancientness are, as I have stated in a variety of ways, flexible ideas that vary in degree among different social groups and sometimes within groups. Frequently and unpredictably, interpretations of music, culture, and history change or gain nuances and wrinkles. This creates confusing and colorful contradictions, but only in the mind of the outside researcher. This research will continue by investigating the connections and correlations between Georgian musical attitudes and performance across multiple

identities. Standing in the middle of these unsettling and exciting intersections will continue to be a productive site for studying Georgian musical culture – provided one can dodge the speeding *marshrutka*.

## Appendix A

- \*American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. Alan Lomax Collection, AFC 2004/004.
- \*Anchiskhati Church Choir. *Georgian Traditional Folk Songs*. Tbilisi, 2000. CD.
- Anchiskhati Church Choir. *Georgian Hymns*. Tbilisi, [200-]. CD.
- Andro Simashvili. Tbilisi: Folklore State Centre of Georgia, 2008. CD.
- [Akvsenti Megrelidze] აკვსენტი მეგრელობე, M30 46285 6. Tbilisi: Melodiya, 1986. LP.
- [Artem Erkomaishvili] ართემ ერკომაიშვილი, M30 48079 008. Tbilisi: Melodiya, 1988. LP.
- Before the Revolution: A 1909 Recording Expedition in the Caucasus and Central Asia by the Gramophone Company*. London: Topic Records, 2002. CD.
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- Chanters Group of The Church of S. Panteleimon the Healer, Badri Jimsheleishvili. *Georgian Folk Songs*. Tbilisi. CD.
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- Georgian Voices. *Memory*, CDBMR GV2. Czechoslovakia: Music Boheme, 1997. CD.
- Ilia Zakaidze. *Georgian Folk Songs*. Tbilisi: Folklore State Centre of Georgia, [200-]. CD.
- Kavsadzes. *Georgian Folk Songs*. Tbilisi: Folklore State Centre of Georgia, [200-]. CD.

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[Maro Tarkhnishvili] მარო თარხნიშვილი, M30 48159 004. Tbilisi: Melodiya, 1983. LP.

*Monitor Presents: Folk Songs from the Caucasus*, MFS 307. New York: Monitor Records, [197-]. LP.

Mzetamze. *Voices from the Black Sea*. Conshohocken: Cross Currents Records, 1997. CD.

[Noko Khurtsia] ნოკო ხურციას, M30 47951 000. Tbilisi: Melodiya, 1987. LP

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\*Rustavi Choir. *Alilo: Ancient Georgian Chorales*, SK 66823. New York: Sony Classical, 1996. CD.

Rustavi Choir. *An Oath at Khidistavi: Heroic Songs and Hymns from Georgia*, 65014. Newton, New Jersey: Shanachie, 1998. CD.

Sakhioba. *Folk Ensemble*. Tbilisi, 2008. CD.

Sakhioba. *Georgian Church Chant IV: Gelati School*. Tbilisi, 2009. CD.

[Sandro Kavsadze] სანდრო კავსადე. M30 46085-86. Tbilisi: Melodiya, 1986. LP.

\*Trio Kavkasia. *O Morning Breeze: Traditional Songs from Georgia*, 76014-2. New York: Naxos World, 2001. CD.

\*Trio Kavkasia. *The Fox and the Lion*, 780702-4331-2. New York: Traditional Crossroads, 2006. CD.

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## Appendix B

Questions are numbered, but they are not in a particular order (aside from starting with demographic information). Instead, the questions will be asked as part of conversation.

1. Demographic information
  - a. ID # for this project \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Age \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Male / Female \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Occupation \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Country of residence \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. In your opinion and experience, what does it mean to be Georgian?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Do you consider yourself as being from a certain geographic area? [i.e. Achara, Guria, Svaneti, or another country such as Turkey, etc.] If so, where? Why do you feel connected to that area?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Please describe your experiences with Georgian traditional vocal music.  
[**Prompt:** For instance, did you experience it while you were growing up? Is it a current part of your life? To what extent? Do you currently attend or listen to Georgian traditional vocal music performances? Have you done so in the past? Do you sing these songs yourself?]
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Do you consider yourself to be interested in this style of music? Why or why not?

6. Do you feel knowledgeable about Georgian traditional vocal music? How did you come by this knowledge?
  
7. In your view, what are some major types of Georgian music? Why do you believe this?
  
8. Do you feel knowledgeable about Georgian history? How did you come by this knowledge?
  
9. What are some major points in Georgian history? Why do you consider these points or events to be important?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Based on what you know, is there a relationship between Georgian history and Georgian traditional vocal music? **[If yes]** Can you describe this relationship to me? **[Prompt:** Do you think that history affects the songs more, or that the songs affect history more? Or do you think of this relationship differently?] **[If no]** Why do you feel they are unconnected?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What role, if any, do you feel Georgian traditional vocal music played in Georgia's history? **[Prompt:** For example, do you think it was important in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? Nineteenth century? Early twentieth century?] What, if anything, did the music offer Georgians of these times?

12. Has the role you described above changed in modern or post-Soviet Georgia? **[If yes]** In what ways do you think it has changed? **[If yes or no]** When do you think this happened, and why? Was there a specific event or series of events that helped or caused this change/stability?
13. Is Georgian traditional vocal music part of your identity/part of who you are as a person? **[Prompt:** Please describe what this music, as a whole, means to you personally.] Are these songs representative of something in your life and experience? Have they affected you in some way? Please describe.
14. In your view, is Georgian traditional vocal music part of the current identity of the Georgian people? Has this changed from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century? **[Prompt:** Please describe what you think these songs, as a whole, currently mean to the people of Georgia.] Are these songs representative of a bigger aspect to the people of Georgia? Please describe.

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