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Perspectives of Religious Art in Georgia

Georgia is an ancient Christian country and also it has a great pre-Christian cultural history.

Foundation and development of Georgian professional music is connected to the spread and establishment of Christianity which was announced as the state religion in the 4th century.

The formation of Georgian Church culture carried on in the Georgian monastery schools in our country and abroad as well (Palestine, Mount Sinai, Mount Athos, Jerusalem). We can find first important information about Georgian liturgical practice from the Will of Sabbas the Sanctified (439–532). From this will is known that in the 6th century the Georgian had their own church in the territory of the Sabba the Sanctified Holy Lavra and some parts of the divine services were read on the native language. Georgian ecclesiastical figures actively worked and translated Byzantine liturgical literature. All of the manuscripts which written in the st. Sabbas the Sanctified monastery in the 8th -9th c.c. were taken to the Mount Sinai. As a result, more than 100 Georgian manuscripts are still kept at the library on the mount Sinai. The peculiarities of translation and cultivation of typicons and hymnographic monuments are discussed in the Khatuna Managadze's article.

From the 9th century, alongside the translation process original hymnographic activities intensively developed and reached the pinnacle in the 10th century. The Georgian neumatic notation represents one of the oldest phenomena in the musical paleography. The first neumatic collection are dated back at the latest of the 10th century. Similar to the chant of other orthodox music culture, the main musical system in Georgian chant is the Ochoechos. About Georgian musical sign - Neumos you will find useful and interesting information in Eka Oniani's article.

Since 11th to 13th centuries Georgia celebrated the period of the renaissance, so called Golden Era. There were two Theological Academies in that time, where Georgian and foreign theologians were working. Theological academy in *Gelati* was founded in 1106. The second also important academy was founded in the same period in *Ikalto*. Both academies were established by initiative of king of Georgia David the Builder (1125-1177). Both academies taught subjects from *Trivium and Quadrivium* ed-

educational cycle. The medieval Georgian monument Skhalta's painting is discussed in the following paper.

Important national principle of Georgian music is polyphony¹. A significant work of famous Georgian philosopher and leader of Gelati Academy Ioane Petritsi *Commentary on the philosophy of Prokles Diadochos and Plato* (11th century) provided the information about the polyphonic nature of Georgian chant. He indicates the names of three voice-part *Mzakhri* - the beginner i.e. – the leader, *Zhiri* - the second part, *Bami* - the bass part and compared them to the principle of the understanding of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Tamar Chkheidze's article represents how national Identity is Revealed in Georgian Liturgical Music. As well as in the structure of hymographic works, systems of musical writing, musical texture and liturgical, chanting traditions.

Since the end of Georgian cultural renaissance's epoch, the political situation in Georgia started worsening. From 13th to 18th c.c. Georgia was invaded by different conquerors –including Mongolians, Persians, Ottomans. During this hardship a lot of traditions were lost and forgotten including the tradition of reading neumos, Georgian Chants were orally passed from generation to generation.

From the end of 18th c. Georgia was occupied by Russian Empire. After the abolition of the autocephalous status of the Georgian Church (1811) and introduction of the Divine liturgy in Russian language (with Russian chanting) Georgian Chant faced hardship to forgot.

Considering this situation, from the 80s of 19th c. *The Committee for the revival of Georgian Church Singing* was established. As a result of the effort of this committee, on the verge of the 19th - 20th c.c. tradition of the oral chants were transmitted on the five-line System. The several thousands of chants transcribed by them are preserved at the National Centre of Manuscripts. From this period started the development Georgian classical music.

During 1918-1921 years Georgia had receive the independence. But in the 1921 again was under the pressure of Soviet Russian occupation for 70 years. During this period 1305 churches were closed; Hundreds of monks were killed; Georgian Chants have been banned again.

¹ Georgian polyphonic singing was relisted on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008. An important part of Georgian culture, including the Georgian alphabet were granted the national status of intangible cultural heritage in Georgia and inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016. During history 3 writing systems (scripts) were used in Georgia: Asomtavruli (1st to 11thc.c), Nuskhuri (9th to 18th) and Mkhedruli (from 11th c till nowadays).

Only 80th of 20th c. interest toward Georgian chants was renewed. There was Anchikhati Choir established. The members of the choir were students of Tbilisi State Conservatoire. They studied old Georgian manuscripts and performed there in the church divine services. Today the study of Georgian chants has a long-term tradition.