

Joseph Jordania (2006). From the book: **WHO ASKED THE FIRST QUESTION? The Origins of Human Choral Singing, Intelligence, Language and Speech**. Logos, 2006

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Part 1.

World styles

of traditional polyphony

FOREWORD

Despite the lively interest towards the issues connected to the traditional polyphony among ethnomusicologists, there are surprisingly few works dedicated to the worldwide distribution of vocal polyphony. Works dedicated to the different regional polyphonic styles are relatively common, particularly in cultures where vocal polyphony is considered to be an important element of national musical culture, but the works where all the available data would be gathered worldwide are extremely few. In fact, apart from the book of Marius Schneider “History of Polyphony” and my own book, “Georgian Traditional Polyphony in the International Context of Polyphonic Cultures: The Origins of Polyphony” I do not know any other work on this subject with the worldwide detailed review of the polyphonic traditions. M. Schneider’s book was published first in 1934-35 as two volumes, and then in 1969, as one revised volume, combining two earlier published volumes and adding one new chapter in it. Both publications of Schneider’s work were in German and have never been translated in English. My book was published in 1989, twenty years later after the second publication of Schneider’s book. It was published in Russian (with a small English summary) and has never been translated into English as well. Therefore this chapter seems to be the first work, published in English and dedicated to the worldwide distribution of vocal polyphony.

I think there are few objective reasons for such neglect in studies of such a popular and intriguing topic as the worldwide distribution of the tradition of vocal polyphony:

- Since the WW2 the mainstream interest of ethnomusicologists were occupied by local traditions, and major comparative studies dedicated to the study of any global phenomenon of traditional music (such as traditional polyphony) vanished from the pages of most of the ethnomusicological journals.
- Following the worldwide scholarly trend, most of the ethnomusicologists try to be experts of a very limited number of regions (usually one culture or one local area) and try to conduct their research mostly based on their own fieldwork materials.

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- To do a research on a worldwide distribution of any element of traditional culture, ethnomusicologist cannot escape incorporating materials collected by other scholars. The result of such a research, which is not based (mostly) on the original materials collected by the researcher, is very much discouraged.

In this chapter I will discuss the distribution of the tradition of vocal polyphony in different parts of the world. No hypotheses and no theories, just what we know today about the worldwide distribution of vocal polyphony.

Of course, it would be naïve to hope that all the existed regional styles of traditional polyphony will be represented in this chapter. Despite the fact I have been intensely interested in distribution of traditional polyphony for more than 25 years, have been organizing a number of special international conferences entirely dedicated to the problems of traditional polyphony, had been preparing for the publications materials (abstracts, extended abstracts and the full papers) of these conferences and Symposia, and have been it touch with number of leading experts of traditional polyphony from around the world, the picture of the distribution of traditional polyphony on our planet is by no means complete. There is no doubt that there are still plenty of unknown traditions of vocal polyphony in many regions of the world. I have few reasons for this belief:

- There is a tendency in national scholarly traditions to be occupied with a “trademark” phenomenon of the certain musical cultures (like raga in India, gamelan in Bali, vocal polyphony in Georgia, or mugam in Azerbaijan). This tendency does create a convenient basis for the study of these “trademark” traditions, but at the same time most of the “non-mainstream” cultural phenomena often fall into neglect. That’s why I expect that some pockets of traditional polyphony could be still concealed under the shadow of the stereotype of so-called “monophonic cultures”.
- Big part of the ethnomusicological production is still published in national periodicals, and mostly in national languages. This factor severely limits their accessibility to the Western reader (and not only).
- Even if the results of the work of scholars from different countries reach the Western reader, there is a chance that these results will not be easily compatible with the other existing studies. Ethnomusicology is still suffering from the lack of unified methodology and terminology in many areas, including traditional polyphony.

Question of terminology and classification

Before we start discussing polyphonic traditions of different parts of the world, I would like to discuss briefly the terminology that I am going to use in this book. Unfortunately, as in many other spheres, ethnomusicology does not have the commonly accepted set of terms in this field that everyone could follow easily without much misunderstanding.

Quite a few different terms had been used in ethnomusicology to denote the phenomenon of singing in more than one part. “Polyphony” seems to be the most widely used term, although not universally accepted. “Multi-part music” is maybe the next most popular English term used widely in ethnomusicological publications. “Polyvocality”, “plurivocality” and “multiphony” also made appearances. They denote generally the same phenomenon and could be used as the uniting word for this phenomenon.

Let us pay attention to the most popular term – polyphony. Traditionally it has been used in two – general and narrow meanings. “Those ethnomusicologists who accept the very general etymological meaning of the term often tend to call all multi-part music, whether vocal or instrumental, ‘polyphonic’ even if there is no obvious organization. In itself, the concept of polyphony thus embraces procedures as diverse as heterophony, *organum*, homophony, drone-based music, parallelism or overlapping. The shared characteristics of all these procedures is that they all relate to multipart phenomena” Arom, 1985:34). Arom himself prefers the more neutral term “multi-part music”.

To find the most convenient term, we should know what for we need this term for. I suggest that we need a uniting term, the one to use conveniently as the “family name” for the extended “polyphonic family”. This term in its broadest meaning should unite whole set of types and subtypes of this “family”.

The very wide general meaning of the term “polyphony” (as Arom described it) seems to be very convenient to use in this context. I suggest using the category of “polyphonic family”, with subsequent division on types (heterophonic polyphony, drone polyphony, parallel polyphony, contrapuntal polyphony etc.) and sub-types of polyphony (unison-heterophony, pedal and rhythmic drone, tonally unconnected and tonally linked parallelism etc.). In search of the better alternative for the uniting wide term for the whole “family”, we could use the term “multi-part music”. This word is not so much “contaminated” by the extensive use in musicology and ethnomusicology for few centuries, and could make a good alternative for the term “polyphony”. At the same time, as three-word-composition (“multi-part music”) this term might not be the most convenient and practical to use as a “family name”. When I imagine myself (or my colleagues) using the terms to denote the further sub-types of polyphony (for example, “heterophonic multi-part music”, “drone multi-part music”, or “canonic multi-part music”), I feel there will be a certain resistance in implementing this kind

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of terminology. Therefore, I believe that the use of the term “polyphony” as a “family name” leads to more practical and convenient terminology to denote different types and sub-types of polyphony.

So, although both terms (“polyphony” and “multi-part music”) actually mean the same (the first one in a long ago dead ancient Greek language, and another in very much alive and the most widespread contemporary English) we have in one case the one word-term (“polyphony”) and in another case complex three-word-combination to denote the same phenomenon (“multi-part music”). This simple fact works in favor of the practical use of one-word-term “polyphony”. [As a matter of fact, the term “polyphony” also contains two words “poly” and “phony”.] So, without insisting that this is the only correct way of naming this family, type and sub-types of music, for the sake of practicality I will be using in this book the term “polyphony” as a “family name” for all types and sub-types of music, where more than one pitch is heard simultaneously.

So, according to this model, we have one big family of polyphonic music, and this “family” consists of several different types of polyphony:

- (1) Parallel polyphony,
- (2) Drone polyphony,
- (3) Canonic polyphony,
- (4) Contrapuntal polyphony,
- (5) Ostinato polyphony,
- (6) Heterophonic polyphony,
- (7) Overlapping polyphony,
- (8) Chordal polyphony
- (9) Array of Synthesis polyphonic subtypes;

- (1) Parallel polyphony is based on parallel movement of parts and can be divided further into at least two sub-types (these two sub-types were distinguished and described in Marius Schneider’s 1934-35 book):
 - a. Tonally linked parallelism, or when parallel movement of different parts is united into one tonal system. As a result, intervals do change occasionally, for example, parallel fourths sometimes change into isolated thirds, or fifths (as this happens in some sub-Saharan African traditions), or, in other case, minor and major thirds follow each other in a tonally specified succession (this kind of parallelism is very popular in most of European and some African traditions);
 - b. Tonally unconnected parallelism, or when two or more parts are singing the same melody in parallel movement, keeping all the time the same interval. In most cases this means that parts are singing without the unifying tonal system. Vocal parts singing without the shared tonality may indicate that this is a case of “thick unison”, or when singers intend to sing in unison, and sometimes they believe they are singing in unison, but in reality they start from different pitches and proceed as they started – maintaining the

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initial interval throughout. This kind of singing is usually present in monophonic cultures. As a matter of fact, maintaining the same interval throughout the whole melody is an arduously difficult task for the representatives of polyphonic cultures, as they tend to unite different co-sounding parts into a shared tonal system. If the reader of this book tries to sing, together with any of musically gifted friend, the melody of the Beatles “Yesterday”, or any other well known melody, say, in parallel fourths, or even in major thirds, you will soon see how difficult this is. At the same time, at least for some representatives of monophonic singing cultures this task does not seem to be difficult at all, as they seem to follow the logic or horizontal melodic line, ignoring the vertical coordination of parts and therefore, they are singing without the interference of the desire to sing all parts into one shared tonal system. Russian musicologist Viktor Sergeevich Vinogradov told me how surprised he was when his friend, choir master, working with the choir in one of the Central Asian republics (where singing traditions are strictly monophonic), showed him how easily his students could sing quite a complex classical melody in parallel fourths, fifths, sevenths, or even seconds and augmented fourths (personal communication from 30 January, 1986). Hugh Shields gave another interesting anecdote of the accidental two-part organum in parallel fourths, because the professional French singer (France is one of the most monophonic singing cultures in Europe) was unable “to adjust his pitch to his Parisian grandson’s accordion. The effect might be described as a two-part equivalent of heterophony; while contributing a lower part, of pitch at times uncertain, the singer seems to have perceived the whole as a strictly monophonic” (Shields, 2000, 542-543).

These two sub-types of parallel polyphony could be further divided into two-part, three-part etc. subtypes of both tonally linked and tonally unconnected parallelism. This is a very interesting topic by itself, although I am not going to discuss this issue (classification of polyphonic types) into more detail.

(2) **Drone polyphony** is definitely one of the most important “members of the polyphonic family” and has one of the biggest numbers of the subtypes among all the types of polyphony. Without going into the detailed description of all possible subtypes of drone polyphony, let me give you some feel of the wealth of the different subtypes of drone polyphony:

- a. The first level could be a division of a drone into pedal drone and rhythmic drone subtypes. Despite an obvious difference between these two drone subtypes, sometimes in the same village ensemble some sing the pedal, and some the rhythmic drone in the same song at the same time.
- b. Each of them (I mean “pedal” and “rhythmic” drones) would further divide into single note drone and moveable drone (with the

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- possibility of further division of moveable drone into “two-pitch drone”, “three-pitch drone” etc.).
- c. Moveable drone can be further divided into “narrow range moveable drone” (secondal pitch changes in the drone only, characteristic mostly for traditional archaic drone traditions, like in Balkans, Caucasia, Baltic region or Polesie), and “wide-range drone” (fourth and fifths pitch changes in the drone, characteristic for European traditional polyphonic traditions, mostly influenced by the European professional harmonic system, like in Alpine region or the new polyphonic singing style in Balkans);
 - d. Secondal changes in the drone could be (1) leading to modulations (like in East Georgian Long Table Songs), or (2) leading to functional changes within the same tonality, without the key change (for example, like in Latvia, or western Georgia);
 - e. The same way the rhythmic drone can have “one-pitch” and “moveable” versions, further divided into “the drone with secondal changes” and “the drone with fourth-fifths changes”.
 - f. The whole new set (or, more precisely, two new sets) of drone polyphony subtypes emerge when we take into account that drone does not have to be the lowest part of the polyphonic texture (base), that it can well be in the middle of the polyphonic texture, or even on the very top of the texture. Here I must say that having a drone in the middle or on the top of polyphonic texture is much more common for traditional polyphonic cultures, than for the European professional music. Both of these new sets of subtypes (“drone in the middle”, and “drone on the top”) would go through all the abovementioned subtypes (pedal and rhythmic subtypes; one pitch and changeable subtypes; secondal and fourth-fifths changes subtypes; modulating and non-modulating subtypes etc.).
 - g. This is not the end. We could add here another factor of drone performed by the group (this is mostly the case), or by an individual singer (much more rare); The same way we need to consider a very important factor of simultaneous use of different types of drones (for example, pedal and rhythmic drones together, like in western Georgia); or still another important factor of double (triple, etc.) drones. And of course, all these double and triple drones will come with further division according to the different intervals between the drones.

As I have already mentioned, I am not going to discuss here all the existing types and subtypes of drone polyphony, although even from this short survey it is clear that drone polyphony has incredible amount of subtypes (see also the classification of different types of drone polyphony in Brandl, 1976).

- (3) **Canonic polyphony** is based on the principle of imitation of the lead singer’s melody by another vocal part (or parts). If we do not consider the

large body of responsorial songs, where the leader and the following chorus sing the same (or related) musical phrases, as examples of canonic polyphony (and I believe we should not), then we will find that true canonic forms of polyphony are quite rare in traditional music. Although they do exist and there are incredibly interesting polyphonic cultures based on the use of canonic polyphony (in the survey of polyphonic traditions later this chapter we will discuss canonic polyphonic traditions like “sutartines” in Lithuania and polyphony of Ainus from North Japan). Canonic type can be further divided into subtypes according to the moment of joining of the next singing part with the same melodic material (early entry, late entry), and could be divided into monotonic and even polytonal canons (like this is a case in Lithuanian “secondal sutartines”). Unlike the great European professional school of polyphony, overshadowed by the giant figure of J.S.Bach, which was mostly based on imitational polyphony, most of the folk polyphonic traditions are based on non-imitational polyphony.

- (4) **Contrapuntal polyphony**, or as it is sometimes addressed, “free polyphony”, or “polyphony in the narrow sense”, is the type of polyphony where all different vocal parts are independent from each other. Well, I actually do not find this popular definition of contrapuntal (or free) polyphony justified, because both in European and traditional polyphonic music separate parts are actually never “independent” from each other. As a matter of fact, from the extensive talks and experiments during the fieldwork with Georgian singers it became clear to me that even in the most saliently independent contrapuntal western Georgian polyphonic “trio” songs (discussed later) singers intensely listen to each other and are *very much mutually dependant*. It would be more precise to say that in contrapuntal (or free) polyphony *there is no hierarchy between the parts*, as none of them can claim to be more important than the other parts. So, I would suggest, that contrapuntal polyphony is not “free”, or “independent”, but rather “egalitarian”. Another fruitful idea would be to divide contrapuntal polyphony into two subtypes – (1) imitational polyphony and (2) non-imitational, or contrast polyphony. As I wrote above regarding canonic forms of polyphony, professional polyphony uses more imitational forms, and folk polyphony mostly uses non-imitational forms of polyphony.
- (5) **Ostinato polyphony** is based on the constant repetition of a relatively short musical phrase (phrases) in one or several parts. As repetition is one of the key elements of traditional polyphonic cultures, ostinato is present in most of the polyphonic traditions, both in vocal and instrumental music. Ostinato can be present in one part, in two parts, etc. The most widespread form of ostinato contains a repetitive phrase in one of the voices. Ostinato is mostly present in the base, but it can be in the top part as well, and in rare cases in the middle of the texture. Like a drone, ostinato creates a powerful pitch reference point for other parts, but unlike the drone,

ostinato is more melodically active. It is a powerful “engine” and the point of reference both for the melodic and metro-rhythmic development of the song. One of the most colorful and specific techniques of the use of ostinato in a top voice is yodel. In some polyphonic traditions (particularly in dance genres) ostinato principle becomes so dominant (in all parts), that no space is left for any other compositional principle of polyphony in the entire polyphonic texture. In such cases the whole texture is filled up with continuous ostinato phrases. Gabisonia calls this subtype of ostinato polyphony “total ostinato” (Gabisonia, 1988:9). Sub-Saharan African music is filled with ostinato phrases. According to Arom, “all the polyphonic and polyrhythmic procedures used in Central Africa... [could be described] ... as *ostinatos with variations*” (Arom, 1991:39).

- (6) **Heterophonic polyphony** takes place when members of the singing group sing different versions (variants) of the main melody. Another term – “variant heterophony” seems even better describing the essence of this type of texture. In a certain sense, heterophony is a “shadow of the unison”, as in every culture with traditional unison singing there always a possibility of some elements of heterophony appearing. Although heterophony is present in most of the major regions of the world, East European region with three Slavic peoples seems to be the kingdom of very interesting (and sometimes very complex) forms of heterophony. In heterophonic texture unison and polyphonic sections usually alternate. Subtypes of heterophonic polyphony mostly differ from each other according to the quantity and quality of the differences between the versions of the main melody, sung by different performers. Heterophonic polyphony differs from all other types of polyphony, because it can belong to

(a.A.a) Polyphonic family (when the differences between the versions are well defined), or it could also belong to

(a.A.b) Monophonic family (when the deviations from the unison are minimal). As it often happens in similar cases, where the difference is purely quantitative (and not qualitative), we could also distinguish the third subtype, strategically positioned between the “polyphonic” and “monophonic” subtypes. Adler suggested classifying heterophony alongside homophony and polyphony as a third stylistic category (Adler, 1908:24). So, heterophony is strategically positioned in-between two great families of musical cultures: polyphonic and monophonic. Particular interest towards heterophonic singing was expressed by the scholars interested in problems of historical musicology, when discussing the practical ways of the emergence of the initial rudimentary forms of polyphony from the “primordial monophonic” singing tradition. As the discussion of the problem of the origins of polyphony (and defining the place of

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heterophony in this process) is one of the aims of this book, I will be addressing this topic in the second and third parts of the book.

(a.A.c) In some polyphonic traditions of East Slavic peoples (and some of their neighbors, see in a section discussing polyphonic traditions of Russian minorities) there is a tradition of “thick” heterophonic performance of the main melody, contrasted by only one singer on top, who sings a functionally different from the main melody part (often a drone).

(7) **Overlapping polyphony** takes place when two different parts, instead of following each other in antiphon, start overlapping. This means that the new part comes in while the previous part has not yet finished its turn. Strictly speaking, overlapping is not an ordinary compositional principle. All the other polyphonic types are based on a certain principles of (1) melodic development of a part (drone and ostinato are in this group), and (2) vertical, or harmonic coordination between the parts (parallelism, canon, counterpoint, chordal polyphony and heterophony would be in this group). Overlapping polyphony does not belong to any of these categories.

(8) **Chordal polyphony**, or homophony is a type of polyphony where parts are moving in a steady progression of chords. Chordal polyphony mostly (but not always) develops in a slow or medium tempo. All the parts here follow the same rhythm, and the overall sound is very full. Subtypes of chordal polyphony could be distinguished according to the harmonic language, based on

(a.A.a) Chords with the triadic structure, or

(a.A.b) Chords with non-triadic structure.

Chordal polyphony often uses drones in different parts.

(9) **Synthesis polyphony**. As usual, real life is much more complex than any theoretically constructed classification scheme. The same is the case with the classification scheme of polyphonic types and subtypes. In regards of Georgian traditional polyphony Gabisonia suggested using the notion of “synthesis” types of polyphony for the cases when polyphonic texture contains more than one compositional principle (or type) of polyphony (Gabisonia, 1988). Simultaneous use of drone and parallel polyphonies, or contrapuntal and ostinato polyphonies, or the combination of pedal and rhythmic drones together with the contrapuntal or ostinato polyphonies are only very few of existing synthesis types of polyphony. I am not going to discuss all the wealth of existing (and potentially possible) synthesis combinations of polyphonic subtypes in traditional musical cultures, but it is clear that they can easily outnumber all the “non-synthesis” polyphonic types and subtypes taken together.

Now we are ready to start discussing polyphonic traditions of different regions of the world according to the available information. We will start with the polyphonic traditions of African continent.

Vocal Polyphony in Africa

African continent is traditionally divided into two geographically and culturally different zones: (1) sub-Saharan Africa and (2) North Africa. Most of the African polyphony is concentrated in the sub-Saharan zone. North Africa is in fact one of the most monophonic regions of our planet. Desert Sahara, the biggest and the most inhospitable arid region of our planet, which plays the role of the buffer zone between these two zones, in my opinion must be distinguished as a third culturally separate region. Musical culture of Tuaregs, dwellers of Sahara desert, shows some unique features, different from both sub-Saharan and north African musical traditions. Comparative prospects of the polyphonic traditions of these three African zones will be discussed in the second part of this book, as for the survey of African polyphonic traditions in this chapter, I am going to discuss three different zones in Africa: sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and the Sahara Desert.

Interest towards African music has been tremendous since it first came to the notion of Europeans. In his bibliography, completed in 1964, Alan Merriam lists more than 1000 LPs of African music issued by more than seventy companies and organizations involved in the distribution of long-playing records (see his annotated bibliography *African Music on LP*, published in 1970). Alan Lomax declared Africa as “the best recorded of continents” (Lomax, 1968:xvi). Interestingly, out of the wealth of publications about African music (about 1700 authors by 1965) only less than 4% of the authors were native Africans themselves. Another interesting fact is that out of this huge amount of European writers about African music less than 2% were professional musicologists. Although European scholars still play an important role in studying African traditional music and polyphonic singing, the number of native scholars is steadily increasing. Europeans that greatly contributed to the recording and research of African music were Hugh Tracey, Klaus Wachsmann, Andre Schaeffner, Gilbert Rouget, John Blacking, Alan Merriam, David Rycroft, Simha Arom, Hugo Zemp, Robert Gunther, Nicholas England, and Gerhard Kubik, to name only few of them.

The number of native musicians and musicologists who studied African music has been increasing since the first professional studies by George Ballanta and particularly Ephraim Amu (an influential scholar and prolific teacher, who's former students in Ghana became leading scholars in African ethnomusicology). The most influential scholar of African music of the 20th century, Ghanaian Kwabena Nketia was one of Amu's students.

It is clear that it would be unrealistic to try to give the detailed analyses of the wealth of African vocal polyphony in a brief review. I will try first to discuss few important components of sub-Saharan African polyphony, and then I will briefly review the polyphonic traditions of the main regions of sub-Saharan Africa (eastern, central, southern and western regions of Africa).

Sub-Saharan Africa

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It would be quite safe to say that sub-Saharan Africa is the biggest and the most active polyphonic region of the world. Although generalizations are always volatile and it is always better to avoid them, I would say that there is hardly a musical tradition in sub-Saharan Africa that does not employ a vigorous group musical activity.

“All African melodies are constructed upon harmonic background” declared arguably the first influential native African musicologist George Ballanta (Ballanta, 1926:10). Of course, the bold generalizations like this are almost always to be found incorrect, and these words are often cited in ethnomusicological scholarly publications as one of Ballanta’s obvious inaccuracies (Nketia, 1998:20). There is a certain historical importance in these words though, acknowledging the immense importance of part-singing in African traditional music. “To some extent, most people in African communities are expected to perform music and dance at a basic level. Performing is considered as normal as speaking. In many areas, social puberty is marked by singing and dancing, as young people display their accomplishments in token of their maturation” (Stone, 1998:8).

Performance practice in most of African societies can be considered as a social model of traditional polyphonic performance, where all the members of society are actively involved in the process of performance, without any division of the society on “performers” and “listeners”. Going to the music performance is a different experience for native Africans in Africa than for most of the Europeans in Western Europe. “People do not go to ‘listen music’, they make music together” (Arom, 1991:15). Alan Merriam write that in Africa the “Distinction between the artist and his audience ... are not so sharply drawn as in our own [European] culture. In some parts of Africa the cultural expectation involves almost everyone as potentially equal in musical ability, although this is not the case everywhere” (Merriam, 1962:129). In some sub-Saharan traditional societies there is no profession of a musician at all (see for example, Arom, 1991:12).

Before we discuss the type of polyphony in sub-Saharan Africa, we must mention two very important aspects of African traditional musical culture: (1) immense importance of rhythm in African music, and (2) intimate relationship of music and dance in African traditional culture.

Rhythm. There is nothing unusual in a special appreciation of rhythmic element of music in sub-Saharan Africa, as rhythm (together with pitch) makes up the two the most important elements of any music. And still, the extraordinary importance of the rhythmic component in African music goes beyond our (western) appreciation of this element of music. Scholars noted, that in some regions of Africa (for example, in South Africa) rhythmic component of music (and the resulting meter) is considered to be more important than the pitch. Therefore, rhythm alone without the pitch (for example, drumming, or reciting) is considered music, whereas the vocalization without meter in South Africa is not considered as music (Kaemmer, 1998:701).

Rhythm in sub-Saharan Africa is generally clearly pronounced and strictly followed. Duple rhythm is dominating. According to another famous generalization of George Ballanta, “duple time is the only time used in Africa” (Ballanta, 1926:11).

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Later studies found the misleading simplicity of Ballanta's overgeneralization, although we may say that duple time does play the leading role in most of the sub-Saharan African musical traditions. Arom presented an excellent survey of African rhythms and works connected to them (Arom, 1991).

African drums have found followers all across the cultures (particularly in the western world), and the appreciation of African sense of rhythm became a common place in popular accounts about African music and African musicians. If the reader of this book has ever attended a workshop of African traditional drumming, she (he) would already learnt the most important lesson, that the extraordinary complexity of African drumming ensemble sound is based on the simultaneous repetition of several layers of relatively simple drumming patterns. This phenomenon is known as "polyrhythmic" (see Arom, 1991).

Unity of singing and dancing is another crucial feature of African traditional musical life. As a matter of fact, most of the music in sub-Saharan Africa involves dance and body movements. Ruth Stone wrote: "Honest observers are hard pressed to find a single indigenous group in Africa that has a term congruent with the usual Western notion of "music". There are terms for more specific acts like singing, playing instruments, and more broadly performing (dance, game, music); but the isolation of musical sound from other acts proves a Western abstraction, of which we should be aware when we approach the study of performance in Africa" (Stone, 1998:7). This primordial syncretic unity of singing and dancing, which is well documented from the most archaic layers of traditional cultures, is still a very active part of traditional cultural and social life of sub-Saharan African peoples.

Tone languages and polyphony

One of the important issues that fundamentally affect African music (and traditional polyphony as well) is the *tone* (or *tonal*) character of most of African languages. According to Pike's classical study (1948), all the languages of Africa "west of Ethiopia and south of the Sahara" are tone languages. Despite the fact that more than half of human languages of our world today are tone languages, it is amazing how little are they known among the general public. Every year, when I start discussing tone languages among my students at the University of Melbourne, only one or two students out of the group of twenty or twenty-five students usually know something about them.

In tone languages tone modulation (rising or falling of the pitch) during their speech have lexical (and sometimes grammatical) significance. In more simple words, if you pronounce a word with a rising intonation, and then pronounce the same word with the falling intonation, this word will have two totally different meanings in tone languages. According to the number of tones and their combinations, the number of different meanings of the "same word" can exceed half a dozen.

In case of grammatical use of the tone, if you, for example, pronounce a sentence, and then pronounce the same sentence, but on a higher pitch, this could mean the same content, but in a past tense. So, if you want to learn a tone language, you would need to pronounce not only the correct mix of consonants and vowels, but you would need learn and maintain the certain melodic contour and the duration of

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each syllable as well. Therefore, ordinary everyday speech of tone language carriers contains musical qualities. “The languages are themselves pregnant with music” (Senghor, 1964:238) Africa is not the only region where tone languages are spoken. Two other major regions of the distribution of tone languages are southeastern Asia and languages of southwestern Mexico and the USA. As a matter of fact, in a contemporary world there are more tone, than non-tone languages.

The implications of the character of the tone languages are crucial for the musical traditions. Kirby was possibly the first to point this out: “Speech-tone of the Bantu has not only influenced his melodies, but has also directed the course of his polyphonic thought in a direction analogous to that taken by the polyphonic thought of the peoples of Europe during the early years of Christian era” (Kirby, 1930:406). This idea is generally accepted (see, for example, Arom, 1991: 22)

Therefore, the use of tone languages must be responsible for the first (and the most important) feature of sub-Saharan African traditional polyphony: the ample use of *parallel* movement of the different parts. The basis of this feature seems quite obvious: as soon as the group of the singers pronounce the same verbal text, they are bound to move the same directions, in a parallel melodic movements (otherwise the meaning of the text will be completely changed or become obscure).

Characteristics of sub-Saharan polyphony

Scholars described sub-Saharan African polyphony with different terms with a subsequent difference of the meanings behind these terms: organum (Kirby, 1930, Schaeffner, 1936, Jones, 1959, Kubik, 1968), harmony (Jones, 1959, Kubik, 1968, Brandel, 1970), homophony (Arom, 1991), parallel homophony (Nketia, 1972), tonally linked parallelism (Schneider, 1934-35, 1969). Arom (1991:22) considers the term used by Schneider (“tonally linked parallelism”) the best describing the peculiarities of sub-Saharan polyphony, and these links between the tonal systems and the parallel polyphony in sub-Saharan Africa was later confirmed in influential works of Austrian ethnomusicologist Gerhard Kubik (Kubik, 1968, 1986, 1988). Without going into the detail (for example, details of the use of different portions of the series of natural harmonics in different cultures), we can point to the following characteristic features of sub-Saharan polyphony:

- The first feature would be, as I have already mentioned above, the *parallel movement* of parts. This is natural when the population speaks tone language.
- The second important issue concerns the *distance* between two parts. (In music the distance between two notes is called *interval*). In the case of polyphonic music we are talking about the *vertical distance* between two simultaneously sounding pitches. According to ethnomusicologist Gerhard Kubik, if you want to count the vertical distance between any two simultaneously sounding notes in sub-Saharan polyphonic music, you should “skip one step” on a scale. So, say, if we are in “C major” scale (white keys starting from “C” to the next “C”), and if we have someone singing the pitch “C”, the other (top) voice would be singing note “E” on top of “C” (as we

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need to skip “D” which is next to “C” – you remember, we need to skip the next note), or, if we want to sing a lower harmony, we need to sing “A” below the same “C” (again, we need to miss the next note “B” below the “C”). In this kind of scale we will always have the same vertical distance. In music this particular distance (between “C” and “E”, or between “C” and “A”) is called “third”. To be more precise, the third can be “major” or “minor”, but I think we can skip this technical detail from our current discussion (more saw in traditional music the third if often between the major and minor thirds and is sometimes referred as “neutral” third). As a matter of fact, the existing system of labeling the intervals as “second”, “third”, etc. is mathematically controversial. The distance between “A” and “C” is actually “2”, not “3”, so it would be more correct to call “A-C” distance as “second” not the “third”. The same way the distance between the same notes is “0”, not “1”. I sometimes jokingly tell my students that “musicians are the worst mathematicians, because in music $3+3$ equals 5 ” (try to put two “thirds” together on a piano and you will get the “fifth”). The same way according to the “musical logic” $2+2=3$ (because two seconds together make up a third). All mathematical equations are incorrect using the existing incorrect numeral names of the musical intervals. Russian composer Sergey Taneev, who actually was the first to record and transcribe the traditional polyphonic songs of North Caucasians in the 19th century, and who is best known as the teacher of Russian composer Tchaikovsky, suggested to use another, mathematically correct name-numbers. For Taneev the same note distance (unison) is “0”, the distance between “A” and “B” is “prime”(1), the distance between “A” and “C” is “second”(2) etc. Of course, this brings us to the mathematically more coherent system and suddenly all the equations become correct (like $2+2=4$), but, unfortunately, the force of tradition prevailed (once again!) against the sound argument, and we still call “A-C” interval as a “third”. Of course, Taneev was by no means the first to pay attention to this odd arithmetic of musical intervals. This has been a topic for discussions from Guido d’Arezzo and Boetius (11th and 13th centuries).

➤ One of the difficulties of this system is that the scale that we just used for the counting of the vertical distance – C-major scale (the set of seven white keys from “C” to the next “C”) – is only one (and not the most popular) possible scales, used in sub-Saharan Africa. Scales in Africa (as in some other regions of the world) often have less than seven notes. Imagine, for example, to have the same C-major scale, but instead of the whole set of the seven white keys (C, D, E, F, G, A, B) omit the “B” and have only six keys in a scale (C, D, E, F, G, A). Now, if we use the same sub-Saharan African principle of the distance between the keys (“skip the next key” principle) in this new

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scale without “B”, on top of the “C” key we will have the same “E” key, but the lower harmony from the same “C” will be now different, because now there is no “B” in a scale. So, the lower harmony for “C” now will be “G” (as there is no “B”, we will need to skip “A” key, as “A” is now the next from “C”). As a result, in this scale we will have not only thirds, but couple of fourths as well. If you now imagine that there are only five keys in a scale – omit two keys from the set of seven white key between “C” and the next “C” (most likely the omitted keys will be “F” and “B”. Other versions are also possible). We will have now the scale C, D, E, G, A. This is so-called *pentatonic*, or *anhemitonic scale* [“penta-tonic” means “five tones”; and “anhemitonic scale” means a scale that does not have any half between any of the keys. Name “pentatonic” is generally more popular for this scale]. Many cultures of the world (including Chinese and Scottish) are mostly based on this (pentatonic) scale. Now, if we try again to put harmonies to a melody in this five-tone pentatonic scale (with the same principle “skip the next note”), we will soon find out that we will have the interval fourth almost all the time (there will be only one third – between the “C” and “E”). This scale is dominating, for example, in Central African Republic, where polyphony mostly consists of two parts. As if this is not enough, there are also scales with the less than five (four) keys in a scale as well. They are called “tetratonic scales”. In this scale you would have fourths and fifths in the harmonies, and in this scale number of parts do not exceed two.

Of course, as every generalization, this characteristic of African polyphonic music by no means covers all the diversity of polyphonic forms in African music. For example, there are singing traditions where the verbal text is not used at all (or used only as nonsense-syllables). This frees the melodic movement of different parts, so no parallel movement of parts is necessary. For example, this is the case with the wonderfully developed tradition of *yodeling* in some African musical cultures (yodels are always free of meaningful verbal text). The abovementioned characteristic of African polyphony (based on parallel movement of parts and using vertical harmonies by “skipping the next note”) will serve only as a rough guide as the main (or the most widely distributed) form of sub-Saharan African vocal polyphony.

Another very important feature of sub-Saharan African vocal music is the crucial role of *responsorial singing* – based on the alternation of the leader’s call and the group response. Responsorial singing is so widespread and so well documented in all regions of Africa (and in fact in the whole world) that I do not feel the need to provide any prove for the crucial importance of this phenomenon in sub-Saharan Africa.

Another uniting feature of sub-Saharan African cultures could be the live interest of native African populations towards the European choral (polyphonic) music. Although the original Christian hymns were very often changed according to

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the local traditions, it has been frequently noted in musicological literature that the work of Christian missionaries was very much aided by the strong interest of Africans in Christian choral music (most likely the result of wide distribution of tradition of polyphonic singing among sub-Saharan African populations).

Jones divided sub-Saharan polyphonic traditions into two big groups: “Generally speaking, all over the continent south of the Sahara, African harmony is in *organum* and is sung either in parallel fourths, parallel fifths, parallel octaves, or parallel thirds” (Jones, 1959:217). According to Jones, Africa can be divided into two groups: (1) certain peoples sing in thirds, and (2) other peoples sing in fourths, fifths and octaves (Jones, 1959:219).

After this brief general characteristic of sub-Saharan African traditional polyphony, let us now briefly discuss the *regional* styles of sub-Saharan African polyphony: east, central, south and west, finishing with the island of Madagascar.

East Africa

We are talking about the region, which contains countries south from the Red Sea, from Ethiopia and Somalia through Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi, up to Zambia. Three different groups of peoples live in this area: (1) nomadic and pastoral peoples (including Turkana and Maasai), (2) sedentary agriculturalists (Nilotes and Bantu-speaking peoples), and (3) Cushitic-speaking peoples of Ethiopia and Somalia. Proliferation of Islam in East Africa continues, although this process has been mostly connected to the long tradition of trade with the Arab world (more than the conquest). Well-known tendency of the prohibition of the musical practices by Islam, so important and strict in many countries, has very little effect in Africa (including East Africa). In the areas that have an Arab influence, frame drums and kettledrums are widely used for singing accompaniment.

The most widely used scale system in East Africa is pentatonic (C,D,E,G,A – the five-tone scale system that we have already discussed). Therefore, as we have mentioned before, the polyphonic singing will be mostly based on the use of parallel fourths, and occasional (or as Kubik mentions, “isolated”) thirds. Traditional music is mostly purely vocal (particularly in the regions without much of Arabic influence). Singing is usually aided only by the hand clapping, or feet stomping and dancing. “Though call-and-response form is ubiquitous in Africa, among pastoralists the choral response tends to be longer than the call, and sometimes overlaps the soloists’ parts to produce simple part singing, or includes ostinati, creating harmonies of fourths and fifths” (Cooke, 1998:605). Maasai singing is quite typical for this region: group unison ostinato on the syllables “ho-la-le-yo” against the melodic line of a soloist (Kavyu, 1998:623).

Very specific is the scale system and the harmony of the tribe Wagogo (Central Tanzania). They use the scale C, E, G, Bflat, (and adding C and D) which effectively is a tetratonic scale [“tetra” means four. “Tetratonic” is a scale that uses only four steps within an octave.] (See Kubik, 1968). Wagogo people are also well known among ethnomusicologists for the unique for the Africa tradition of *overtone singing* (the elements of this tradition within Africa is found also among Xhosa from South Africa).

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Christian missionaries found very appreciative listeners among Africans when they introduced richly harmonized Christian Hymns after the 1850. Later, during the 20th century, African local composers started creating their own Christian hymns (replacing the old European ones). These new African Christian hymns are mostly based on the traditional call-and-response style. One of such composers, Ugandan Benedicto Mubangazi composed a very popular hymnbook for the Catholic Church (published in 1968) (Cooke, 1998:607).

The choral scene is thriving in East Africa. Let us listen to the ethnomusicologist Peter Cook who wrote the introductory article about the East African music in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*:

“In Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, school-music festivals have stimulated the production of innumerable secular and religious compositions in quasi-traditional style, staged alongside the performance of traditional tribal songs and dances, European scholastic songs, madrigals, and Christian spirituals. Arrangements of traditional songs are now part of repertory of village cultural societies which meet to rehearse and perform traditional songs and dances of the community in new contexts, grouped and sometimes acted as miniature dramas” (Cooke, 1998:607)

Contemporary East African *popular music* (equipped with the ubiquitous electric instruments) is also heavily influenced by the traditional polyphonic tradition. This influence (particularly active after the 1970s) is evident “with much part-singing and call-and-response patterns using local languages” (Cooke, 1998:608).

Central Africa

This region consists of Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and (partly) Angola. This a highly polyphonic region, dominated by the unique tradition of polyphonic singing of the first dwellers of Central African rainforests – Pygmies.

“The music of African Pygmies has held a special place in ethnomusicological imagination. In the writings of Colin Turnbull (1962), Alan Lomax (1976), Robert Farris Thompson (1989), and Simha Arom (1978, 1985), the yodeling and hocketing of pygmy singing has served as an icon of social and musical utopia” (Kisliuk, 1998:688).

Although Pygmies today live only in several pockets of the Central Africa, scholars believe that around 3000 B.C. Pygmies inhabited most of the Central African rainforests. They were pushed into several isolated pockets, deep into the Central African jungles, by the carriers of early Bantu languages, who migrated southwards from the western Cameroon and eastern Nigeria about 1000-500 B.C. Scholars still try to find the remnants of the original Pygmy language, which must have been lost when the Bantu languages replaced their native language (Kubik, 1998:657). Therefore, despite the obvious cultural, social and physical differences, linguistically there is no difference among Pygmy and non-Pygmy peoples in Central Africa today, as both speak Bantu languages. Despite the fact of losing their native language to the newcomers, the music of Pygmies survived the cultural assimilation and still has a tremendous influence on the musical culture of the neighboring countries. Let us listen to Gerhard Kubik what he has to say about the Pygmy polyphony:

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“Pygmy music distinctively combines a polyphonic style of singing with an extremely developed technique of yodeling. These traits appear in the music of Pygmy groups in widely separated areas, as shown by a comparison of recordings: in the Ituri Forest, Zaire (Tracey, 1973); among the Bangombe and Manbenjele of the Upper Sangha, Central African republic (Djenda and Kubik, 1964, 1966, Phonogrammarchiv Vienna); and among the Banbenjele (Ba-Benzele) and the Aka, south of Bangui (Arom, 1967). Even outposts of Pygmy culture prove the persistence of a Pygmy musical style, as witness recordings by barely a dozen individuals staying at Ngambe (in the Cameroon grasslands), and associating with the Tikar chief of that town (Kubik, 1963-1964: B 8650) ... The strength of Pygmy musical culture also shows in the fact that the Pygmies’ neighbors have almost invariably borrowed, however imperfectly, the Pygmies’ vocal polyphony. In one musical genre or another, these neighbors adopt a pygmy style of singing, which quite often associates with hunting songs. Bantu-speakers such as the Mpuems and Mpompo, in the southwestern Central African Republic and southeastern Cameroon, have adopted Pygmy musical traits; but so have semi-Bantu-speakers, such as the Tikar, notably in a dance called *Ngbanya* and in hunting songs called *nswe*. The Mangbetu, speakers of a Central Sudanic language in northeastern Zaire, have also adopted some elements of Pygmy polyphony. Therefore, on finding Pygmy-style vocal polyphony among any sedentary population in Central Africa, a listener can conclude there has been Pygmy contact in the past, even if none occurs at present.” (Kubik, 1998:658).

Pygmies do not have professional musicians. Instead, all of them are expected to perform traditional polyphonic songs. Their musicality and ability to sing naturally in parts is quite astounding. “When two or three Pygmies are gathered together, they always sing polyphonically; I have never heard Pygmy choral singing in unison” wrote Rouget in 1959. Polyphony up to seven parts had been documented among pygmies (Grimaud & Rouget, 1957). Even among the black Africans, whose outstanding musical and rhythmic sense has been highly revered by Europeans, Pygmies are considered to be much more skillful and talented musicians. According to Lomax, “Even today Congo Pygmies are regarded by their Negro neighbors as master entertainers who can outperform them on their own drums and in their own dances” (1968:18). Interestingly, most of the borrowings by the Pygmies from the neighbor’s musical cultures were those of different musical instruments. As for the vocal style, and particularly the tradition of polyphonic singing, Pygmies had a tremendous impact on the musical style of the whole Central Africa.

Vocal polyphony of non-pygmy populations of Central Africa is very close to the East African polyphonic traditions. Their polyphony is based mostly on pentatonic and hexatonic scales [five-note and six-note scales respectively – we discussed them earlier], and they employ parallel movement of melodic parts and the vertical coordination of parts according to the above-described principle of “skipping one step”.

The same way, as in East Africa, Christian missionaries found great interest in local populations towards the Christian religious polyphonic hymns. European hymns were later replaced by the compositions of the native composers (such as Joseph Kiwele. Kubik, 1998:671). Changes did not stop at that. “In some churches even

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dances has been introduced [obvious courtesy to the strong local tradition of the unity of singing and dancing. J.J.], and the interior of the church adapted accordingly (Mapoma, 1980:20:630. Cited in: Kubik, 1998:671).

The contemporary pop-music scene in Central Africa is one of the most active and competitive in Africa. Ethnomusicologists note that it is not easy to put a clear border between the terms “traditional”, “popular” and “modern” in this region. Traditional singing practices are very much alive, and many local musicians are creating contemporary bands with electric instruments and are creating their own original music (for example, *zokela* style) using the wealth of the musical landscape of their environment, and trying to find their voices on the expanding local or world market. “In a flourishing and ever-changing expressive world, teenagers in Bagandou village enjoy performing the dances of their Bolemba pygmy neighbors, and the village children in turn inspire Aka pygmies in their forest and *zokela* musicians in the city to interpret similar styles – all to different, though thoroughly modern, rooted, and relevant ends” (Kisliuk, 1998:696).

Southern Africa

This region comprises countries south of Zambezi River: lower parts of Angola, Zambia, and Mozambique, as well as Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa. Native populations of southern Africa speak languages of two groups: (1) Khoisan languages and (2) Bantu languages. The name “Khoisan” comes from the names of two different peoples: “Khoi” (or “Khoikhoi”) for pastoral Hottentots, and “San” for the hunter-gatherer Bushmen. Both of these peoples differ physically from the rest of the people in other regions of Africa. It is believed that carriers of Khoisan languages lived on a much wider territory of the African continent before the advance of Bantu speaking peoples from the northern regions. Carriers of Bantu languages advanced in this region within the last thousand years and pushed the indigenous peoples of this region to more inhospitable regions (Phillipson, 1985:208)

The best known feature of Khoisan languages is the presence of specific clicking sounds (indicated traditionally in Western writing system by the exclamatory sign “!”). So, for example, to pronounce the name of one of the groups San people, !kung, you would need to make a clicking sound with your tongue, followed immediately with the syllable “kung”). Most of the Khoikhoi groups either disappeared or have been assimilated among the Bantu speaking populations. Regarding the use of speech tones scholars note, that singing traditions of south African peoples are not so highly dependent upon the speech tones as are, say, peoples in West Africa, so in South Africa the “match of speech tone with melody is more a matter of aesthetics than comprehension” (Kaemmer, 1998:701).

Like the Pygmies polyphony, which is crucial for the “musical profile” of the Central Africa, we may say that the “musical profile” of South Africa is mostly defined by the polyphonic traditions of the carriers of Khoisan languages.

The San live today in parts of Botswana, Namibia, and southern Angola. Polyphony is one of the central elements of their traditional music. Among the “eight principal traits” of San traditional music, distinguished by Kubik, the first deals with their polyphony, including their wide use of yodeling. Another interesting trait of San

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produced by the insect's buzzing" (Dargie, 1991:40-41. Cited from Kaemmer, 1998:706).

An important feature of South African traditional music is the clear indication of the importance of rhythm in their music: "Many people in southern Africa define music in terms of the presence of metered rhythm. This means that drumming alone is considered music, and chanting or speaking words is singing, so long as it is metrical. When the singing voice is used without rhythm, the resulting vocalization is not usually considered singing. Many of the groups have no word which would accurately be glossed as "music"; most of them have distinct words for singing, for playing an instrument, and for dancing" (Kaemmer, 1998:701). Group singing tradition is very important among other South African peoples (for example, Sotho people. See Kaemmer, 1998:707). Ethnomusicologists distinguish a specific "African tonal-harmonic belt" comprising southern part of Zambia, most of Zimbabwe, and central Mozambique. Musical practices here are quite distinct from the rest of Africa (although shows similarities to the polyphonic traditions of southern Africa). It is based on so-called "Principle of harmonic equivalence": according to this principle the tones, that can substitute each other (or can be performed simultaneously in vertical harmony), must belong to the same harmonic series (we have mentioned this principle in connection with San polyphony, first described by Blacking).

Christian religious hymns with European harmony found a good basis in polyphonic singing traditions of the local populations. African Methodist Episcopal Church, based in Philadelphia, sent missionaries in South Africa, where they set up schools and churches, and most importantly, taught the local populations American black spirituals. Tours of black American choirs started from the 1880s and the 1990s, and had a tremendous impact on southern African musicians. The word "choir" gave the birth of southern African term for a specific musical style *makwaya*. *Makwaya* uses jazz elements with the traditional responsorial forms of polyphonic singing, accompanied by drumming, dancing, marching and special costumes (Kaemmer, 1998:718). South African Native Choir had an extensive repertoire of *makwaya* songs (Coplan, 1998:765). Few native composers became very popular with their choral compositions: Reuben T. Caluza (from Natal), Benjamin Tuamzashe (Xhosa), Joshua Mohapeloa (Basotho). It is widely acknowledged, that "the old traditions of choral dance music, continuing to flourish in performances among black South Africans, played an important role in the mobilization of the antiapartheid movement" (Coplan, 1998:780).

West Africa

This region comprises large number of countries from Cameroon and southern half of Chad to Senegal. Out of the whole sub-Saharan Africa, West Africa shows the most signs of external influence (mostly from North Africa). Two geographic regions: (1) savanna and (2) forest are distinguished here (see DjeDje, 1998: 443). Savanna is geographically in between the arid northern regions and the forest coastal regions of West Africa.

Polyphonic traditions, showing obvious similarities to the rest of the sub-Saharan Africa is mostly present in the forest region. On the contrary, monophony

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plays the prominent role in Savanna region. Savanna region can be also characterized by the whole set of distinctive (from the rest of sub-Saharan Africa) features: great importance of full-time professional and semi-professional musicians, high pitched and tense singing style with specific melodic embellishments, and the importance of instrumental and vocal-instrumental genres. Other non-musical characteristics of savanna region are a higher proportion of urban settlements, dominance of Islam religion, and historically early establishment of states and social stratification.

Long tradition of trade with North Africa brought most of these unusual for the sub-Saharan Africa elements of social and musical life to the savanna regions of West Africa. It is important to take into account, that the actual influence, coming from the North Africa, was not homogenous, as it was connected at least to two different ethnic and cultural element: (1) Berber-Tuaregs, the indigenous populations of North Africa, and (2) Arabs, who spread in North Africa from the end of the 7th century and pushed Berber-Tuaregs towards the southern regions across the inhospitable Sahara desert. Presence of both Berber and Arab ethnic elements from North Africa in the populations of West Africa is a well-known and very important factor for the understanding of the characteristics of the musical culture of this region.

Although group singing (and dancing) is present in most of the societies living in savanna regions of West Africa, polyphony mostly exists here in instrumental music. In vocal music polyphony is not as important as in other parts of Africa. For example, there is a highly interesting tradition of instrumental ensemble performance among Kasena people. "Three to six flutes or horns, or a mixed ensemble of both, accompanied by drums, play in a hocket style with polyphonic structures. The music is diatonic, and polyphony derives from the third as a consonant interval. As final cadences, parts moving in parallel thirds resolve into unison (Nketia, 1980:331. Cited from DjeDje, 1998:456). Regarding the vocal forms of polyphony, it is very interesting that in musical culture of so-called "western Sudanic cluster" there are elements of vocal drone (DjeDje, 1998:446), unique for the rest of sub-Saharan African singing style. For understanding the origins of vocal drone in Western Africa we need to take into account the presence of drone polyphony among the Tuaregs (see about this later), and the Tuareg influence in western Africa is well documented.

Forest region, in contrast, shows much less external influences and has much closer links to the other regions of sub-Saharan Africa. The populations of the forest regions are also ethnically more diverse (more than 500 ethnic groups), more village than urban and has much less centralized power (although historically one of strongest coastal kingdoms between 15th-19th centuries in West Africa were created by forest Yoruba people). Forest cultures are also characterized by much stronger importance of traditional African religions (instead of Christianity and particularly Islam among savanna peoples), much less professionalism among musicians and more community oriented group performance. Musical cultures of the forest regions are also united by the bigger importance of vocal forms (instead of instrumental forms popular among savanna peoples. DjeDje, 1998:458).

Most importantly for our subject, forest peoples of the West Africa practice mostly similar to the other sub-Saharan forms of traditional vocal polyphony: responsorial singing between the call of the soloist and the group choral response,

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wide use of thirds and fourths in part singing, parallel movement of vocal parts (connected again to the tonal character of the languages of western African forest peoples), presence of different scales (from seven-tone heptatonic or diatonic, to five-tone pentatonic).

All these traits are more or less present among the people of the forest regions of the West Africa: the Igbo, the Yoruba (particularly among the Yoruba living in the west), the Aja, the Ga, the Akan, the Dan, the Krelle, the Mende, the Temne, and some other groups (DjeDje, 1998:459 – 469). To generalize, we may say that the tradition of vocal polyphony becomes less prominent as we move westwards, towards the extreme western parts of the West Africa.

Of course, as always, the reality is more flexible than this rigid division of West African peoples on the “Islamic monophonic peoples of savanna regions” and the “non-Islamic polyphonic peoples of forest regions”. For example, C. Waterman stresses the strong influence associated with Christianity (and particularly Islam) on the Yoruba popular music. “Though Islamic authorities do not officially approve of indulgence in music, the success of Islam among the Yoruba (as elsewhere in West Africa) has depended on its ability to adapt to local cultural values. Many traditional drummers are Muslim, and some of the biggest patrons of popular music are wealthy Muslim entrepreneurs” (Waterman, 1998:474).

West African popular music has very rich traditions (with charismatic performers like Tunde King, star of popular Juju style, and particularly Fela Anikulapo Kuti from Nigeria). According to C. Waterman, “To draw a sharp boundary between “traditional” and “popular” music in Yoruba society is impossible. The criteria most commonly invoked in attempt to formulate a cross-cultural definition of popular music – openness to change, syncretism, intertextuality, urban prominence, commodification – are characteristic even of those genres Yoruba musicians and audiences identify as deep Yoruba” (Waterman, 1998:487)

Madagascar

Although the island Madagascar is situated off the southeast coast of Africa, the population and the culture of this island (or the Republic of Malagasy) have very strong historical, ethnic and cultural contacts with the outside of Africa regions. Austronesian-speaking peoples of the Southeast Asia are supposed to be the first settlers here. Their initial settlement of the island (presumably about A.D. 500) was followed by the migrations (from around A.D. 1000) from the Arabic counties and the continental Africa, and later – from the Europe. Islam spread on the island from around A.D. 1500 and created the basis for the emergence of hierarchical kingdoms among the Malagasy. The island has been a scene of the struggle between the three major forces: the kingdom of Sakalava (western coast of Madagascar), the confederacy of eastern coastal ethnic groups, and the kingdom of Merina (central part of Madagascar).

Musical traditions of the republic of Malagasy are as diverse as the ethnic origins of its population. Same is true about the vocal polyphony of different regions of the island. Let us listen to the expert of the music of the Republic of Malagasy,

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Mireille Rakotomalala: “At present, the mixture of African and southeast Asian influence is visible in all genres of music among the Malagasy, though some genres reflect one influence more strongly than others. Gilbert Rouget, for example, called the choral polyphony of the central island Merina, with its intervals of thirds and sixths and rapid rhythms, “oceanic” (1946:87), and found a more pronounced African influence among the Sakalava, with genres in call-and-response style, appearing more rhythmic than melodic (p. 88). Norma McLeod identifies two styles – one distinct to the Merina, the Vakinankaratra, and the Betsileo of the central highlands, and the other more typical of groups in the southern desert. Both styles demonstrate the polyphony mentioned by Rouget, and both show rhythms whose variability depends on whether the music is meant for dancing or singing. Of the difference between the two styles, McLeod says “songs in the high plateau area are set strophically. In the desert region, ... litany is prominent with some examples of development into serial polyphony” (1980:547) (cited from Rakotomalala, 1998:783).

To finish the survey of the vocal polyphonic traditions of the sub-Saharan Africa, would be appropriate to mention the outstanding influence of sub-Saharan populations on the musical cultures of the different parts of the world, and particularly the Americas. Transported from their native lands initially as slaves, representatives of sub-Saharan African populations played a crucial role in the development of national musical cultures of South, Central and North America.

North Africa

North Africa is traditionally considered as a region stretching from the Mediterranean Sea in the north to the Sahara Desert in the south. Regarding the tradition of vocal polyphony, I suggest to divide North Africa into two sub-regions: coastal line of Mediterranean Sea (with predominantly Arabic population with monophonic musical culture) and the more isolated and inhospitable mountain and desert regions of Sahara and the adjacent territories, populated with Berber-Tuareg people with specific polyphonic traditions. Therefore, musical traditions of Berber-Tuareg populations will be discussed separately in the next section “Sahara”.

North Africa can be considered as one of the most monophonic regions of the world. Close links between the North African and the Middle Eastern musical traditions are well established. Lomax united the huge region including North Africa through the Middle East, Central and East Asia in a giant family of cultures under the name Old High Cultures. Relatively static demographics of the ancient North Africa (consisting of the indigenous Berbers and Phoenicians traders) started to change dramatically with the first waves of Arab invasions from A.D. 688 onwards. Contemporary musical culture of North Africa is defined mostly by the musical traditions from the Islamic Middle East. “Music occupies an ambiguous role in Muslim life. Since the beginning of Islam, Muslim authorities have disputed the question of whether music should be permitted in worship. Because music, especially instrumental music, was associated with pagan practices and sensual entertainment,

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early authorities declared the act of listening to music “unworthy” of a Muslim. The debate continues. To avoid secular associations, references to music are usually avoided in mention of calls to prayers, Koranic recitations, and other forms of religious expressions” (Anderson, 1971:146-147). In some communities, music making of any kind – religious or secular – is discouraged in the name of Islam. A few forbid music altogether, as do members of the puritanical Mozabite sect of Algeria (Alport, 1970:228, 234-235). Nevertheless, the sung praise of the Islamic deity is standard practice in most of the region” (Wendt, 1998:536).

Few familiar from the Middle East features are characteristic for the North African musical cultures: prevalence of solo singing (or group unison singing), tense high register vocal virtuoso performance, rich melodic ornamentation, sometimes metro-rhythmic freedom (non-regular and free rhythms), particular importance of professional performers and the musical instruments, and the presence of elaborate theoretical works analyzing the scale systems and melodic types of music.

Sahara

As I have already mentioned, Sahara is traditionally considered as a part of North Africa (or a buffer zone between the North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa). My suggestion is to distinguish Sahara as a separate region. This suggestion is based on the unique polyphonic traditions of Berber-Tuareg populations, unknown neither among North African Arab populations, nor among sub-Saharan African peoples.

The name Tuareg was given by the outsiders to the fearful militant tribes of Sahara desert. Berber is a generic and wider external name (possibly from Latin *barbari* (“those who speak a foreign language”). Term *Imazighen* (self-name, meaning “free men”) is increasingly used.

Berber-Tuareg populations are believed to be the earliest inhabitants of the North Africa, joined by Phoenician traders about 1200 B.C. Together they built a Carthage and for centuries were the fierce competitors of the Rome for the dominance over the Mediterranean basin. Berber warrior Hannibal came even through the Alps to defeat Rome, although the Rome eventually won the competition and destroyed Carthage in 202 B.C. Drastic demographic changes for this region came much later, after the 688 A.D. with the first waves of Arabic invasions. Part of the Berber-Tuareg population was assimilated, but another part of the Berber-Tuareg population retreated deep into desert and mountain areas, where they fought for centuries to maintain their identity and traditional culture. Some populations of Berber-Tuaregs were not affected much by Muslim religion until the latter part of the 19th century (Wendt, 1998:533). And even today, although Berber-Tuaregs consider themselves Muslims, few unique “non-Moslem” features of their religion (such as matrilineal

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kinship and very high status of unveiled women, or the tradition of the veiled men) are well known in the anthropologic literature. Today Tuaregs live at eight different locations on the territories between southern Algeria, southwestern Libya, few regions of Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso and few neighboring countries. Although nomadic peoples often display close language connections on vast territories, the existing Berber-Tuareg dialects are mutually unintelligible. According to the most optimistic (and inclusive) estimates, there are about 500 000 Tuaregs in Africa, although according to other, much more conservative estimates, the “real Tuaregs” (camel-herding nomads) are only about ten to twelve thousand left in the Sahara desert. Large Berber (*Imazighen*) populations also live in Algeria and Morocco. They mostly live in mountain ranges of Atlas, Djurdjura and Aures mountains, and southern, desert parts of Algeria and Morocco. Ongoing fight of Berber populations for minority and women rights and for their language and culture is one of the important elements of North African political life (Goodman, 2002:274-275).

Most importantly for our topic, together with other elements of their culture, Berber-Tuaregs maintained the tradition of polyphonic singing. This tradition is particularly spectacular during the traditional celebrations, when the whole village is participating in creating the complex “thick” texture of polyphony. Most of the participants sing a drone, unique for the polyphonic traditions of the entire African continent. Ostinato formulas are also very usual among Tuareg polyphonic songs. Drone is sometimes sung by dancers (Wendt, 1998:543). Both men and women sing, although men are preferred singers (and women are traditionally instrument players – another unusual element of Tuareg culture). Interestingly, there is an important difference in the singing style of men and women as well. Male singing style is close to the North African singing style (high register tense voice with lots of melodic ornaments), and women singing style is much more relaxed (Wendt, 1998a:579-580). Generally, men follow the Muslim religion closer than women. Women are considered (and are very much revered) as the guardians of Tuareg traditional pre-Islamic culture (Wendt, 1998a:593).

Very interesting are the camel festivals (*tende*) where singing plays an important role. In northern regions singing is accompanied by the women’s choral pedal drone, and in the southern regions it is ostinato that mostly (but not always) replaces the pedal drone (Wendt, 1998a:585). According to Tuareg belief, strong rhythms attract spirits, so rhythmically vigorous music with the drone or ostinato is performed to cure the “possessed” or “emotionally ill” person. Solo lead singer is joined by the whole community (with clapping, shouting encouragements, or raspy grunts) at this very important for Tuareg society ceremony. This ceremony may repeat for several consecutive nights.

In Algerian Sahara flute playing by Tuaregs is often accompanied by the vocal sound, produced by the flute player (player is usually a herdsman). And again, like in Tuareg vocal music, the vocal part represents the pedal drone (Wendt, 1998a:591-592).

Conclusions

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To conclude this survey of African polyphonic traditions, we may say that African continent houses remarkable amount of live polyphonic traditions. Considering the vocal traditions, I suggest to distinguish three major regions in Africa: (1) sub-Saharan Africa, (2) North Africa, and (3) Sahara. Two out of these three major regions have traditions of vocal polyphony (although based on different types of polyphony). The biggest, sub-Saharan region of Africa is traditionally divided further into four sub-regions (East, Central, South and West Africa).

Let me briefly remind readers the basic facts about the vocal polyphony in Africa:

- The whole Africa (except the northern Africa) is the largest and virtually uninterrupted region of the distribution of the traditions of vocal polyphony in the world;
- Based on the dynamics of the tone languages, the leading principle of sub-Saharan African polyphony is parallelism;
- East Africa is maybe the most typical region of African polyphony, with the parallel movements of voices in parallel thirds and fourths;
- Central African vocal polyphonic traditions are dominated by the unique polyphony of Pygmies, based on a wide use of yodel technique;
- South African polyphony can be distinguished from the other African region by the Khoisan polyphonic tradition;
- There are few common elements between Pygmy and Khoisan polyphony (most importantly, wide use of yodel);
- West African region consist of two different types of musical cultures. The first type (connected to the savanna residents) shows the influence of Moslem North African musical style, and the second type (connected to the forest peoples of West Africa) shows similarity to the vocal polyphony of other African regions;
- West Africa is the only region in sub-Saharan Africa where drone polyphony is found (possibly the result of the influence of the Tuareg ethnic and cultural element);
- Madagascar polyphonic traditions show the features of continental African, as well as Austronesian polyphonic traditions;
- North African music is based on vocal monophonic tradition, with the remarkably developed professionalism, virtuoso singing style and musical instruments;
- I suggest distinguishing Sahara as a separate region of Africa, on the ground of the specific polyphonic traditions of the Berber-Tuareg peoples. Tuareg tradition of drone polyphony is unique within the African continent. Sahara musical traditions do not show links neither with the sub-Saharan polyphonic traditions, nor the monophonic traditions of the North Africa.

Vocal Polyphony in Europe

It would be quite safe to say the Europe is the second most polyphonic continent of our planet. Although in most of the cases European traditional cultures did not retain the vitality of African polyphonic traditions, the number of polyphonic regions and the sheer diversity of polyphonic traditions create the unique European “polyphonic tapestry”.

Few remarks will give the reader some general idea about the peculiarities of the European traditions of vocal polyphony:

- Unlike the sub-Saharan Africa, where the distribution of the polyphonic traditions is represented mostly as an unbroken geographic region that covers thousands of the square kilometers, most of European traditions of vocal polyphony represent certain isolated “islands”;
- Also unlike Africa, where we have polyphonic sub-Sahara and mostly monophonic North Africa, there is hardly a major part of Europe where the monophonic traditions would be as prevalent as in the North Africa. Pockets of polyphony are scattered all across the European continent in southern, northern, central, and eastern regions of Europe. Traditions of the vocal polyphony are better survived in southern (Mediterranean) and eastern regions of the Europe;
- Many European polyphonic traditions show the obvious signs of the late influence of European professional polyphony. Of course, music professionalism existed in many different regions of the World as well (including North Africa), and some of these traditions had much longer tradition of professionalism, than Europe (for example, few regions from North Africa to East Asia, labeled by Lomax as “Old High Cultures”. Lomax, 1968). But, unlike European classical (professional) tradition, non-European professional vocal traditions were mostly orientated on *solo* performer, or at least, on *monophonic music* (or variant heterophony). European professional music (which interestingly, at the beginning was also monophonic) turned into polyphonic by the end of the 1st Millennia and had a tremendous impact on polyphonic traditions of the European communities with its polyphonic and harmonic language. This influence later extended much wider, throughout the major regions of the world;
- As a result of the strong influence of European professional music, the original character of many European local polyphonic traditions has been strongly affected, and ethnomusicologists working on local polyphonic traditions often mention the existence of two different – “old” and “new” styles of polyphony. The most salient stylistic elements of the “new” polyphonic style are the prevalence of parallel

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thirds, triadic chordal structure, and TSD (tonic-subdominant-dominant) harmonic system;

- Quite paradoxically, although ethnomusicology started in Europe, most of European polyphonic traditions came to the knowledge of European ethnomusicologists much later than the polyphonic traditions of faraway regions of the world (like sub-Saharan Africa or Polynesia). The main reason of this paradox was the initial belief of musicologists that their main purpose was to study the musical traditions of non-European peoples. In fact, the name of the discipline - “ethnomusicology” was not used until the second half of 20th century and the name “Music history of non-European Peoples” was one of the widely used names of the subject. Therefore, European traditional music was left without attention of European scholars for few decades. This is the reason that unlike the African and Polynesian polyphonic traditions, which came to the attention of European scholars already in the 19th century, the rich traditions of vocal polyphony of, for example, northern Greeks and southern Albanians became known only during the 1950s.
- Some of the very interesting polyphonic traditions of the Europe are in East Europe. Western scholars were mostly unaware of the richness of these traditions, as the infamous “Iron Curtain” made the professional interaction of the ethnomusicologists from the “Western” and “Eastern” countries almost impossible for the decades. As the musicological research in developing countries were often conducted by European scholars, materials from some of the “Third World” countries were more readily available to Western scholars, than the materials from the “Second World”. [“Threefold division” of the world countries appeared after the WW2, when free-market and Communist countries were considered to be the “First” and the “Second” World countries, led respectively by the USA and USSR. Countries, which did not belong to any of these two “Worlds”, were considered to be the “Third World” countries. Fight for the “Third World” countries was one of the main driving forces of the fierce and often violent military clashes between the “First” and the “Second” World countries in different regions of the developing world (like in Afghanistan or Vietnam)] One of the main aims of my survey is to make the information about the regional traditions of vocal polyphony from the territories of the former USSR, available to the western scholars and readers, interested in the worldwide distribution of the tradition of vocal polyphony. Unlike the survey of African (or later Oceanian) polyphonic cultures, where transcribed materials are relatively easy to access for the western readers, materials from former Soviet Union and the Eastern Europe are much more difficult to access. So, unlike the review of African and Oceania polyphonic traditions, I am including quite a few

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musical examples from the Europe, and particularly from the Eastern European polyphonic traditions.

I will start the review of European polyphonic traditions from the East Europe. Then we'll move to the polyphonic traditions of South Europe (Mediterranean Basin), where we will touch some Central European polyphonic traditions as well, and finally we'll discuss the North European polyphonic traditions. As I have already mentioned, "pockets" of traditional vocal polyphony are represented in all of these major regions of the Europe.

Vocal Polyphony in Eastern Europe

According to our current knowledge, Eastern Europe has some of the richest polyphonic traditions of the Europe. We will discuss most of the countries and important minorities of the Eastern Europe. We will start with three Eastern Slavic states. First we will discuss Russia, including the numerous peoples of the Russian Federation (North Caucasian Ossetians, Balkarians and Karachaevis, Chechens and Ingushes, Dagestanians, Volga-Ural region peoples – Mordvinians, Komi, Udmurts, Tatars, Mari, Bashkirs, Chuvashs, speakers of Finnish languages from North Russia, as well as Jews and Rom). Then we will move to polyphonic traditions of the Ukraine, then to Belarus, and will finish with polyphonic traditions of Georgia.

Russia

Even after the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russian Federation remains easily the largest country of our planet, comprising major parts of the East Europe and the entire North Asia. Regarding the sheer size of Russian Federation and the wide distribution of ethnic Russians (with subsequent close contacts with totally different cultures of Europe and Asia) it is clear that all the generalizations about Russian traditions of polyphonic singing cannot be exhaustive. We will first discuss polyphonic traditions of ethnic Russians in both (European and Asian) regions.

The study of traditional polyphony in Russia has quite an extraordinary and somewhat paradoxical history. Today Russian traditional music is widely known for its rich polyphony, but during the first few decades of development of Russian musicology (roughly the second part of the 19th century) it was mostly believed that Russian music was monophonic. Influential Russian musical critic Vladimir Stasov (1824-1906) famously declared that to verify "Russianness" of a song, the song must comply to the following two conditions: (1) it should be playable on black keys of the piano only (pointing to the pentatonic character of scales) and (2) it should be playable (on a piano again) with one finger only (pointing to the monophonic character of Russian traditional music).

The first serious blow to this unfounded generalization was the publication of the collection of Russian folk songs by Yuly Melgunov (Melgunov, 1879). Although the collection itself represented a collection of professional arrangements of the folk

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tunes with the piano accompaniment (therefore had not much value for representing the traditional Russian polyphony), in his descriptions of the Russian traditional singing style Melgunov was able to verbalize the essence of Russian traditional polyphony. According to his notes, Russian traditional polyphony is generally built around one main melody, sung in a large group, but it is crucial that participating voices do not sing in unison all the time. Instead they often depart from the main melody, creating interesting multipart harmonies. These “departures” from the unison happen in specified moments of the melody, and going back to the unison also happens in specified moments – to mark the most important sections of the song (like the beginning and the ending of the sections). This was actually the first description of Russian polyphonic style, today known in Russia as “*Podgolosochnaia polifonia*” (literary – “polyphony of subsidiary voices”). By the way, the term “*podgolosok*”, very popular in Russian, then Soviet, and now post-Soviet ethnomusicology, was introduced by Melgunov. In western musicology and ethnomusicology the closest term to describe “*podgolosochnaia polifonia*” is “variant heterophony”, although to be more precise, besides the heterophonic “thick” group singing of the melody “*podgolosochnaia polifonia*” also contains a very important additional, functionally contrasting part, mostly sung by a soloist higher than a main melody (see about this below).

In 1905 –1912 Evgeniya Lineva published her landmark collection of Russian traditional songs (Lineva, 1905-1912). The collection represented well-documented transcriptions of the recordings made by the phonograph. This collection proved the correctness of the Melgunov’s ideas about the character of Russian polyphony. Later studies revealed more complex character of Russian traditional polyphony. Recordings of Russian polyphonic songs on multi-channel technology (Rudneva et al, 1979) were particularly important in this regard.

Discussing different styles of Russian traditional polyphony, Zemtsovsky lists five main types:

- (1) Singing in “*almost unison*”. In this style small polyphonic elements usually occur just before the cadences;
- (2) So called “*heterophonic polyphony*” (or variant heterophony). This style is widespread, particularly in the northern half of Russia. Zemtsovsky points the differences of the performer’s intentions in creating this texture: in one case “the intention is monophonic, with a heterophonic result: in the second, the intention is polyphonic, and creates a heterophonic structure” (Zemtsovsky, 2000:757).
- (3) **Drone** polyphony was maybe the most neglected among the Russian polyphonic types (possibly because of the so-called “*Podgolosochnaia polifonia*”, which was considered to be the “trademark” style of Russian national polyphony). Drone polyphony is present in some isolated “pockets” in the western (Bryansk district) and the southern (Voronezh and Belgorod districts) regions of Russia. There is a special subtype of drone polyphony in Belgorod district – double drone on the fifth, framing

melody from both sides (from below and above). Zemtsovsky also distinguishes so-called “fake” drone, where “no one voice sings the drone, but the illusion of a drone emerges from the combination of voices” (Zemtsovsky, 2000:757);

- (4) Another polyphonic type (Engovatova mentions this type as “*dishkant polyphony*”, Engovatova, 1989:24) involves singing in two functionally different parts: the main melody and the contrasting part. There are three regional subtypes of this type of polyphony, and the main difference between them is in differences between the versions of the accompanying (top) part. The top part has three regional versions: in southern Russia, among the Cossacks, the accompanying high voice is performed by a soloist (called “*golosnik*”, or “*dishkant*”), who sings anhemitonic tune without text” (Zemtsovsky, 2000:757); In Central Russia the top voice (“*podvodka*”) is also solo. In northern Russia (the most monophonic region of Russia) the top part is performed by a group as well and it represents the octave doubling of the main melody. The main melody, on the contrary, is everywhere performed by the majority of participants (both male and female) and is in fact the lower part. This part is called as “*bass*” or “*tolsty*” (“thick”) voice. M. Engovatova suggested distinguishing a version of this style – polyphony with “*podvodka*” (always performed solo by the alto voice) in lyrical songs with extremely wide distribution throughout Russia (including the entire Siberia, and excluding only the northern Russia. Engovatova, 1989:23-24). T. Digun wrote about the importance of the interval of the fifths for the heterophonic “beam” of the melody in South Russian tradition (Digun, 1987: 30)

- (5) The most complex type of Russian traditional polyphony is three-part polyphony. This type is represented in central and southern Russia (Belgorod, Voronezh, Riazan districts and among Cossacks living in the basin of the river Don. As in most other types of Russian traditional polyphony, in this type the majority of singers perform the main melody (called *bass*). The second part (“*golosnik*”) is in fact the top voice. It represents the drone and is singing sometimes without the text. The third part (*tonki golos* – thin voice) is “performed by two or more women in a tense voice in heterophony with the bass voice” [“bass voice” meaning the main melody] (Zemtsovsky, 2000:757). Dmitri Pokrovsky discovered an interesting version of this polyphonic type (among Cossacks): a four functional parts, consisting of the bass, relatively independent “*dishkant*”, a previously unknown part that coordinates the other parts, and a fourth part “*tenor*”, which is singing the version of the third (previously unknown part)

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Out of these five main types of Russian traditional polyphony, discussed in the article of I. Zemtsovsky, written for the Garland Encyclopedia, I would like to discuss in more detail the polyphonic type #3: drone polyphony.

Drone polyphony was virtually neglected in Russia for few decades (Nikolai Kaufman wrote with regret about this in his attempt to find parallels between Bulgarian and Russian drone polyphony (Kaufman, 1968:197). Fortunately, few papers on drone polyphony in Russian traditional music were delivered as a part of the national conference “Vocal Polyphony of the Peoples of Russia”, which was held in Voronezh (one of the actual centers of Russian drone polyphony) in September 1989. The authors of the “drone” papers at this conference were O. Pashina and I. Fedorenko on Russian materials, I. Nazina on Belarus materials, and I. Zemtsovsky on drone polyphony in general (their extended abstracts were published in Russian: Engovatova, 1989). The main melodic line in Russian drone polyphonic singing usually has a narrow range (up to the fourth) and can be performed both by a soloist (which is usually a case in most drone polyphonic traditions. Fedorenko, 1989:13), or by the group (very unusual for drone traditions. Pashina, 1989:11). Interestingly, in the latter (unusual) case there is no traditional terminology to distinguish these two different parts (drone and the melody) and (possibly even as a result of this) in this particular style “singers freely move during the performance from the drone to the melody and back to the drone even within the same stanza” (Pashina, 1989:11). Pashina also mentions (as “extremely rare” though) cases, when the drone is sung by a soloist, and the melody is performed by the rest of the singers (Pashina, 1989:11).

Zemtsovsky notes that “the more complicated the polyphonic structure, the fewer the singers involved” (Zemtsovsky, 2000:757). This leads to the existence of two different types of traditional ensembles in Russia: (1) with “locked” membership (singers with more expertise and experience, performing together for years), and (2) “open” type of the ensemble, which is open to everyone to participate. Although, this type of ensemble does not usually get too big – according to Zemtsovsky, the number does not exceed eighteen participants (2000:757).

Maybe one of the most developed traditions of polyphonic singing of ethnic Russians is the polyphony of so-called “*semeiskie*”, or “*semeiskie zabaikal'ia*”, a specific group of Russians, living deep in Siberia. This name comprises reminder of two major periods of the history of this specific group: name *semeiskie* comes from the name of the river Seim in Belarus; and the whole name “*semeiskie zabaikal'ia*” literary can be translated as “people from river Seim, who live behind the lake Baikal”. Originally the *semeiskie* Russians come from the Central Russia. Persecuted for their religious beliefs (as “*raskolniks*” – literary “those who want break up”), they went from Central Russia first Northwestwards, to the territory of contemporary Belarus (then territory of Poland), and settled on the banks of the river Seim (hence the first part of their name – “*Semeiskie*”). Later they had to move again (as the influence and the territory of Russian Empire was expanding), so they moved from Poland to East, to deep Siberia, behind the lake Baikal (here is the origin of the second part of their name “*zabaikal'ia*” – “those living behind the lake Baikal”). Despite the impressive general difference in sound, *semeiskie* polyphonic tradition represents an extremely developed version of Russian “*podgolosochni*” style, where

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the most of the performers sing the versions of the main melody (and I must say that the differences between the versions are quite extreme in *semeiskie* style). As in many other Russian polyphonic styles, in *semeiskie* polyphony the top part is the only part performed by a soloist. Unlike the most of Russian polyphonic styles, where women play the leading role, *semeiskie* polyphony is performed mostly by men. Among Russian polyphonic traditions southern Russian Cossack polyphony (also mostly male) shows the closest parallels to *semeiskie* polyphony (Dorofeev, 1985:41). The most salient feature of *semeiskie* polyphonic style is the presence of large amount of sharp dissonant chords, often moving into another sharp dissonances (instead of moving into the consonances, or to the unison, more usual for the most of Russian polyphonic styles).

Ex. 2. Russia. Semeiskie from lake Baikal region. (Zemtsovsky, 1972:125)

The musical score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (D major). It consists of two systems of two staves each. The first system shows a treble staff with a soloist's melody and a bass staff with accompaniment. The second system continues the piece with more complex polyphonic textures.

In the 1920th Russian ethnomusicologist Gippius recorded in the North Russia “duets and trios with uniquely independent voices, but this style seems to have disappeared” (Zemtsovsky, 2000:758). Today North Russia is maybe the most monophonic region of Russia. Another unique style – two- and three-part imitation polyphony (“canon”) was recorded in one Russian village (village Foshchevatogo in Belgorod district) as a part of the wedding tradition, with the local terminology for the different parts (Shchurov, 1985:14-15).

Very specific type of polyphony occurs at some Russian rituals. This is a simultaneous singing of different songs, seemingly totally unrelated to each other (the only connection is that they both are bound to be performed at the certain moment of the ritual) (Zemtsovsky, 2000:758). Such songs sometimes are completely contrasting with each other. For example, during the wedding ritual in Russian village one can hear the simultaneous performance of: (1) a ritual lament by the bride (female solo lamenting inside her parent’s home), and (2) cheerful song, sung by the Best Men (male choir outside the house). These songs have different character, texts, rhythm, formal structure and tonal centers.

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To summarize, we may say that different types of traditional polyphony is present actually on the entire territory of Russia. The only region where monophony is dominating (from the musical point of view) is North Russia, where only unison-heterophonic and octave forms of group singing had been recorded (not to forget about the polyphonic style with “uniquely independent voices”, documented in this region in the 1920s).

Out of the several different types of Russian traditional polyphony, discussed above, I suggest to distinguish two principally different groups of traditional polyphony:

- (1) Group of **highly developed heterophonic** types of polyphony with functionally different two (and sometimes three) parts. This kind of polyphony is generally called in Russia “**podgolosochnaia polifonia**” and the decisive feature of this style is the heterophonic (“thick”) performance of the main melody (often called “bass”) by the most of the singers. The contrasting high part is often performed by a soloist; This group comprise of several types (or sub-types), and is widely spread on most of the territory where ethnic Russians live;
- (2) Principally different from the “*podgolosochnaia polifonia*” type of polyphony is **drone** polyphony, in which the majority of performers sing the drone (rhythmic drone with the text, or a pedal drone). The melody in drone type polyphony has a narrow range and can be performed by a soloist or by a group (Fedorenko, 1989:13; Pashina, 1989:11). In rare cases drone can be performed by a soloist as well. In some local styles the parts of the drone and the melody are not well defined (terminologically), and performers freely move from the melody to the drone and back to the melody again.

The geographic distribution of these two different types of polyphony is very different: *podgolosochnaia polifonia* is spread extremely widely and comprises almost the whole territory of the settlement of ethnic Russians. The distribution of drone polyphony, on the contrary, is confined to the very small isolated regions in western and southern Russia.

Polyphonic traditions of Minorities of Russian Federation

As you would expect from the biggest country of our planet, plenty of minorities live on the vast territories of contemporary Russian Federation. Minorities are grouped in several regions of the European part of Russia: (1) in the southernmost part of Russia, North Caucasia, a mountainous region, populated by the peoples of different language families; (2) in North and Northwestern regions of Russia, populated by Finnish-speaking peoples; and (3) Volga-Ural region, populated by the

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peoples of different language families and cultures. Besides these minorities with their national territories within the Russian Federation (earlier within the Russian Empire and then within the USSR), two more peoples - Jews and Gypsies lived throughout the Russian Empire without their own territory. North Caucasian and Volga-Ural regions will be discussed in more detail, as the tradition of vocal polyphony is a very important part of the musical culture of the peoples of these regions.

North Caucasian minorities

North Caucasia comprises peoples living on the northern slopes of the Great Caucasian Mountain Range (neighboring with Georgia on the other side of the Caucasian mountains). Linguistically North Caucasia is one of the most diverse regions of the world. Speakers of three language families live here: (1) Indo-European family of languages (Ossetians), Turkic family of languages (Balkarians and Karachaevis), and indigenous Caucasian family of languages (Abkhazians in Georgia; Adighis, Chechens, Ingushes, and Dagestanians in Russia). Islam, introduced in 17-18th centuries, is the leading religion of the region (interrupted in the middle by mostly Christian Ossetians). Vocal music is dominating in all North Caucasian traditional cultures. Tradition of vocal polyphony is widely spread throughout the whole North Caucasia.

Abkhazians

Abkhazians (*Apsua* in Abkhazian; population was about 70 000 in the beginning of the 1990s. New data are not available) are the only people among the group of North Caucasian peoples, who live south off the Caucasian range only, in the northwestern corner of Georgia. Abkhazians are autochthonous of the Caucasus. Ethnically and linguistically they are close to Adighis (Cherkesses and Kabardinians, living in the northwestern part of the North Caucasus) and together they form Abkhazo-Adighian branch of Caucasian language family. In the world of linguistics Abkhazo-Adighian languages are known by the biggest number of the consonants known today in any of the languages of the world. Abkhazian traditional culture retained many archaic genres and rituals.

Polyphony plays a crucial role in Abkhazian traditional music. Polyphony is present in all genres where the social environment provides more than one singer to support the melodic line. Readers might remember (from the very beginning of this book) the recollection of I. Zemtsovsky, when a dozing Abkhazian started singing a drone to support an unknown to him singer. Abkhazian two and three-part polyphony is based on a drone (sometimes a double drone). Two part drone songs are considered by Abkhazian and Georgian scholars the most important indigenous style of Abkhazian polyphony. Two-part drone songs are dominating in Gudauta district, the core region of ethnic Abkhazians. Millennia of cultural, social and economic interactions between Abkhazians and Georgians on this territory resulted in reciprocal influences, and in particular, creation of a new, so-called “Georgian style” of three-part singing in Abkhazia, unknown among Adighis. This style is based on two leading melodic lines (performed by soloists - *akhkizkhuo*) singing together with the drone or

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ostinato base (*argizra*). Indigenous Abkhazian style of three-part polyphony uses double drones (in fourths, fifths, or octaves) and one leading melodic line at one time. Abkhazians use a very specific cadence: tetrachordal downwards movement, ending on the interval fourth.

Ex. 3. Abkhazia. (Akhobadze, Kortua, 1957:226)

Musical score for Ex. 3, Abkhazia. The score consists of two staves for Soloist 1 and Soloist 2, and a Basses staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is common time (C). The soloists play a melodic line with some grace notes, while the basses play a steady drone. The piece concludes with a tetrachordal cadence.

Ex. 4. Abkhazia. (Akhobadze, Kortua, 1957:221)

Musical score for Ex. 4, Abkhazia. The score consists of two staves for Soloist 1 and Soloist 2, and a Basses staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The soloists play a melodic line with some grace notes, while the basses play a steady drone. The piece concludes with a tetrachordal cadence.

Ex. 5. Abkhazia. (Akhobadze, Kortua, 1957:117)

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The image shows a musical score for two parts: Soloist and Basses. The Soloist part is written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 6/8 time signature. The Basses part is written in a bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The Soloist part consists of a melodic line with various rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The Basses part consists of a lower melodic line with similar rhythmic values and rests. The score is presented on two staves, with the Soloist staff on top and the Basses staff on the bottom.

The first scholarly works about Abkhazian music appeared at the beginning of 20th century (Araqishvili, 1916) and few others followed during the 20th century (Kovach & Dzidzaria, 1929, 1930; Akhobadze, Kortua, 1957; Khashba, 1977, 1983; Asuba, 1986; Shamba, 1986), although none of them were published in Western European languages. The article of the author of this book in the Garland encyclopedia of the World Music seems to be the first available for the western readers publication about this very interesting polyphonic tradition (Jordania, 2000a:851-854).

Adighis

“Adighis” is a Russian term for several ethnic groups living in the western part of the North Caucasia (population about 120 000). To Europeans they are more known under the name “Cherkesses” (or “Circasians”. Circasians are in fact a small group within Adighis). Polyphony plays an important role in musical traditions of the Adighis. Drone polyphony is leading, although among Adighis drone is generally more movable and sometimes has its distinguished melodic line (sometimes it is closer to ostinato). The traditional term for the drone is “*ezhu*” (means “everybody”). Blaeva mentions three types of Adighian traditional polyphony: (1) two-part drone polyphony, (2) Responsorial alternation of the soloist and the *ezhu*, and (3) overlapping alternation of the soloist and *ezhu* (Blaeva, 1988:10). Term *ezhu* is used among neighboring Balkarians and Karachaevis as well (despite their languages belonging to different family of languages). Two-part polyphony is dominating, although among one of the Adighian groups – Kabardinians three-part singing (with double drones in fifths or octaves) is quite usual. On the other hand, according to the available information, part of Adighis - Abadzekhs and Circassians have monophonic singing traditions and they sing in unison.

Many ancient rituals are still present in Adighian traditional culture. The central figure of Adighian society and culture is *djeguako*, who comprises the highly respected roles of the community historian, composer, and the keeper of the traditional values and institutions. The first notions about the Adighian traditional music and polyphony appeared in the 1850s. The publication of three volumes of the “Folk Songs and Instruments Tunes of Adighis” (Gippius, 1980, 1981, 1986) is considered as one of the best ethnomusicological publications of the Soviet Union. Together with the Ossetian polyphonic traditions, Adighian polyphony came to be known the earliest (out of all North Caucasian polyphonic traditions) among the

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Western scholars. (M. Schneider used the examples of Kabardinian polyphony in “History of Polyphony”).

Ex. 6. Adighis. (Gippius, 1980:128)

Ex. 7. Adighis. (Gippius, 1980: 128)

Balkarians and Karachaevis

These two groups are closely connected to each other. In fact, Karachaevis are Balkarians, who migrated to a new territory (not far from their initial homeland) in the 19th century. Total population of Balkarians and Karachaevis is under 200 000 (70 000 and 120 000 respectively). Balkaria traditionally consisted of several communities living in different gorges, and the name “Balkarian” initially was used only for a specific population of so-called Balkarian Gorge, same as population of the Chegem Gorge was called “Chegemians”, dwellers of Baksan Gorge – Baksanians, etc. The uniting native name for all the related populations was “*Taulala*” (mountain dwellers) (Rakhaev, 1988:21). Living between the Caucasian-language speaking Adighis from the west and Svanetians (Georgians) from the south, and Indo-European Ossetians from the east, Turkic-speaking Balkarians were believed to be culturally closely connected to Turkic-language speaker populations that brought Islam to the North Caucasia. This belief was the result of dominating position of linguistics in ethnogenetic studies. Following the trend, musicologists tried to “bring” the musical traditions of Balkarians and Karachaevis closer to the musical traditions of the Turkic world by all possible means. For example, musicians were writing about the chromatic scales in their music (Taneev, 1947 [1886]) although Balkarian and Karachaevis traditional music scales are diatonic. More paradoxically and importantly for our topic, collectors of Balkarian and Karachaevis songs were publishing their traditional polyphonic songs as one-part, monophonic songs (in an attempt to bring their musical traditions close to monophonic cultures of Moslem Turkic peoples).

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Despite this tendency of negligence towards their polyphonic traditions, Balkarians and Karachaevis have one of the most developed traditions of polyphonic singing among North Caucasian peoples. Three-part singing is widespread here. The melody, as elsewhere in Caucasia, is performed by a soloist, and the drone (or “drones” in case of double drones) by the group of singers. Interestingly, the melodic part has a Turkic term “*zhir baschi*” (“head melody”, or “main melody”), but the term for the bass part is non-Turkic (possibly because polyphony is mostly absent in Turkic musical cultures). For the base part Balkarians and Karachaevis use the indigenous Caucasian (Adighian) term – “*ezhu*”.

There has been an insufficient study of Balkarian and Karachaevisian traditional music and polyphony, particularly in terms of availability to the western readers. Although Balkarian polyphonic songs were among the very first among the North Caucasian songs to be transcribed (in 1885, the Russian composer Taneev, teacher of Tchaikovsky, had a fieldwork here. See Taneev: 1947), Balkarian tradition of vocal polyphony was very slow to reach the western reader. The first publication on European language, containing information about Balkarian polyphony was a small article in *the Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (Jordania, 2000a:856-859).

Ex. 8. Balkarians. Example of three-part singing (From Anatoli Rakhaev)

Musical notation for Ex. 8, showing a Soloist part (treble clef) and Basses part (bass clef) in G minor (one flat) and 4/4 time. The Soloist part is a melodic line, and the Basses part is a drone consisting of two notes, G and Bb, with some rhythmic variation.

Ex. 9. Balkarians. (From Anatoli Rakhaev)

Musical notation for Ex. 9, showing a Soloist part (treble clef) and Basses part (bass clef) in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The Soloist part is a melodic line, and the Basses part is a drone consisting of two notes, G and B, with some rhythmic variation.

Ex. 10. Balkarians. (From Anatoli Rakhaev)

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The image shows a musical score for two parts: Soloist and Basses. The Soloist part is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a time signature of 8. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with several triplet markings indicated by a '3' over a bracket. The Basses part is written on a bass clef staff with the same key signature. It features a drone-like accompaniment with long, sustained notes and some triplet markings. The score is enclosed in a double bar line at the end.

Ossetians

Ossetians (*Iron* in Ossetian) occupy the central part of the North Caucasus. They live from both (northern and southern) sides of the Caucasian range, respectively in Russia and Georgia. They are the only representative of the Indo-European languages in North Caucasus, and the only Christian people (or mostly Christian) in North Caucasus. Ossetians were usually considered the descendants of the Medieval Alans, carriers of Indo-Iranian language. Later archaeological and physical anthropological studies revealed, that despite the fact of the change of the indigenous Caucasian language into Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family of languages, the newcomers (Alans) did not have much influence on the indigenous population of Ossetia (Alexeev, 1974a:197-200). Musically Ossetians are very close to other North Caucasian peoples, sharing most of the characteristic feature with them. Most importantly for us, polyphonic tradition is as important to Christian Ossetians, as to their Moslem neighbors.

Ossetian polyphony is based on the wide use of drone (and double drone). Songs with a drone mostly represent two-part polyphony. In case of double drones, these drones are the interval of fourths, fifths, or octaves apart. In such cases (together with the main melody, always sung individually) the result is three-part drone polyphony. There is another type of three-part polyphony in Ossetia as well (in southern Ossetia, within Georgia), with only one drone, but with two individual singers, singing together two top melodies on the background of the drone. This type of three-part singing is considered by Ossetian and Georgian scholars as the result of the influence coming from Georgian polyphonic music. The name of the base part in Ossetia is *kirnin*, of sometimes – *fersag*. Male singing is dominating. Besides the drone, Ossetians widely use ostinato formulas in the base part. Rhythmically Ossetian songs are not very strict. Quite often they use complex meters and free rhythm, mostly following the reciting style of the singer of the main melody. Cadences quite often finish on the interval forth.

Arguably the most important musical legacy that medieval Alans left in Ossetian traditional culture is the tradition of epic songs about the *Nart* heroes. Interestingly, these songs (called here *kadeg*) are performed arguably in the original Indo-European performance style: by a solo male performer (*kadeganag*),

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accompanying himself on a string instrument. Epic songs about the *Nart* heroes became very popular among Ossetian's neighbors and are currently spread throughout the whole North Caucasia, although in all other North Caucasian cultures (apart from Ossetians) epic songs about *Narts* are performed by a group of singers, in a traditional polyphonic style with a drone.

In contrast to the most of the other North Caucasian polyphonic traditions, which were mostly unavailable for European scholars, Ossetian polyphonic tradition became known among European scholars quite early (Lach, 1917, 1931). The 1964 volume "*Ossetian Folk Songs*" (Galaev, 1964) is still the best published source of Ossetian traditional songs.

Chechens and Ingushes

Chechens (*Nokhcha* in Chechen) are arguably the most populous in North Caucasia (about 1.2 million lived here before the recent Russian-Chechen war. Contemporary estimates are not available). Together with the closely related Ingushes (*Galgai* in Ingush, population is around 200 000) they call themselves *vainakhi*. Their languages are a part of so-called Nakho-Dagestanian group of Caucasian language family. Chechens and Ingushes became Moslems in 17-18th centuries, and they are believed to be the autochthonous residents of the Caucasian mountain ranges.

Both Chechen and Ingush traditional music could be very much defined by their tradition of vocal polyphony. As in other North Caucasian musical cultures, Chechen and Ingush polyphony is based on a drone. Unlike most of the other North Caucasian polyphonic traditions (where two-part polyphony is the leading type), Chechen and Ingush polyphony is mostly three-part. Middle part, the carrier of the main melody of songs, is accompanied by the double drone, holding the interval of the fifth "around" the main melody. Intervals and chords, used in Chechen and Ingush polyphony, are often dissonances (sevenths, seconds, fourths). This is quite usual in all North Caucasian traditions of polyphony as well, but in Chechen and Ingush traditional songs more sharp dissonances are used. In particular, a specific cadence, where the final chord is a dissonant three-part chord, consisting of fourth and the second on top (c-f-g), is quite unique for North Caucasia. Only on the other side of Caucasian mountains, in western Georgia, there are only few songs that finish on the same dissonant chord (c-f-g). Here are two typical examples of Chechen and Ingush traditional polyphony:

Ex. 11. Chechens. (Rechmenski, 1957:15)

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Ex. 12. Chechens. (Rechmenski, 1957:18)



Although still very much alive and functioning in the society, Chechen and Ingush traditional polyphony is one of the least studied among the North Caucasian traditions – the inheritance of almost constant hostility and wars against Russia for the independence during more than 150 years, including their ban from Caucasia to Central Asia (1944-1957) by Stalin and the current unstable situation.

Dagestan

Dagestan (or the Republic of Dagestan) is the region in eastern part of Caucasian mountain range, between Azerbaijan on south, Caspian Sea on the east, Chechnya on the west, and Russia on the north. Part of Russian Federation, Dagestan shares many features of traditional culture with the rest of the North Caucasian peoples. It has already been mentioned that North Caucasia is known for its kaleidoscopic variety of regional traditions and languages, but Dagestan brings this diversity to the utmost. Linguists distinguish more than 100 languages on the territory of Dagestan. Some of the languages are currently spoken by few native speakers only. Some of the most populous peoples are Avars (in Avar - *Maarulal* 545 000), Dargins (*Dargan* 330 000), Kumiks (*Kumuk* 255 000), and Laks (*lak* 110 000).

Unfortunately, the information about the traditional vocal polyphony of Dagestani peoples is very sporadic and incomplete. According to the available information (I am particularly grateful to Georgian ethnomusicologist, late Edisher Garakanidze, who conducted a short but very important fieldwork in Dagestan in 1991, and to Manashir Iakubov, one of the best experts of North Caucasian music), drone polyphony is quite well-known among all major Dagestani peoples (particularly among Avars and Kumiks). The tradition of three-part drone singing is present at least among Kumiks. In Kumik three-part drone singing, as in other polyphonic traditions of the North Caucasia, the main melody is accompanied by the double drone (in interval fifth apart). Virtually nothing has been published about the polyphonic traditions of Dagestanians even on their own languages. The article of Manashir Iakubov about the parallels between the musical traditions of Dagestan and Bulgaria is a rare publication that contains some materials about Dagestani polyphony. Among other elements of traditional music, the article discusses the

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parallels between the Dagestanian and Southwestern Bulgarian traditions of polyphonic singing (Iakubov, 1972).

The Volga-Ural Region minorities of Russian Federation

The easternmost region of the Europe (west from the Ural Mountains, the natural border between the Europe and Asia), the Volga-Ural region consists of the big group of peoples, who speak on different language families (Finnish branch of Finno-Ugric languages and Turkic branch of Altaic languages), have different religious beliefs (pre-Christian, Christian, Moslem) and different traditional cultures. Unlike the North Caucasia, Volga-Ural region is not riddled with high impenetrable mountains, and the migration processes were very active here, resulting in a complete or partial change of languages, physical types of the populations, and cultures.

Finnish branch of Finno-Ugric family of languages are represented in this region by Mordvinians, Komi, Mari and Udmurts, and the Turkic branch of Altaic languages are represented by Tatars, Bashkirs and Chuvashs. Few of the peoples (or the part of the people) of this region practice various forms of traditional polyphony. Now we are going to have a closer look at the polyphonic traditions of the different peoples populating the Volga-Ural region.

Mordva

Among the peoples of the Volga-Ural region Mordvinians are maybe the best known for their rich traditions of vocal polyphony. Although the first publications of Mordvinian songs were the monophonic versions of their polyphonic songs (see Uritskaya, 1973:147). Mordvinian polyphony was also one of the earliest to be published – Mitrofan Piatnitsky published them in 1914, followed publications from the 1920s. Finnish scholar A. Vaisonen published examples of Mordvinian polyphony in 1948 .

Polyphony is heavily featured in both regional groups of Mordvinians – *Moksha* and *Erzia* (both are the names these groups call themselves). Leading Mordvinian ethnomusicologists Nikolai Boiarkin distinguishes four types of group singing among Mordvinians: (1) unison –heterophonic type (mostly among Erzia-Mordvinians); (2) specific drone two-part singing, (3) developed two- and three-part drone type; and (4) late type of so called *third polyphony*, when two parts sing mostly in parallel thirds (Boiarkin, 1985:18-19). In her 1973 article dedicated specifically to Mordvinian polyphony, B. Uritskaya stressed similarities between Mordvinian and Russian polyphonic traditions, but failed to mention the presence of drone polyphony in Mordvinian singing (Uritskaya, 1973).

Ex. 13. Mordva. (Uritskaia, 1973:149)

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Ex. 14. Mordva. (Uritskaia, 1973:151)



Despite the differences between these four polyphonic types, we may group these four types into two main groups of polyphony: (1) drone polyphony, and (2) heterophonic polyphony. Heterophonic polyphony is characteristic for Erzia, and the drone polyphony is present in both regions (mostly two-part in Erzia, with three- and four-part sections in Moksha). In Mordvinian polyphony all the parts are represented by several singers and they sing as a heterophonic “thick” melody (this is not the case, say, in Caucasia, or the Balkans, where the main melodic parts are virtually always performed by soloists). Scale system is anhemitonic, and chords with non-triad structures are usual (Boiarkina, 1985) Mordvinian traditional terminology clearly states the leading role of the middle part in three-part polyphony: the name of the middle part is *Mora Vaig'al* (lit. “voice of a song”), top part – *Viari Vaig'al* (“high voice”), and the base - *Alu Vaig'al* (“low voice”).

Komi

Komi consists of two ethnic groups – Komi Zirians, and Komi-Permiaks. Although these both groups practice polyphony, for a long time they were known as mostly monophonic cultures (unlike Mordvinians, who’s polyphonic traditions were known for a century). According to the available data, Komi-Permiaks practice polyphonic singing wider than Komi-Zirians. N. Zhulanova states that polyphonic singing is particularly important for so-called Komi-Permiaks from the Invensk, who live in the southern part of the settlement of Komi people, and in a small region (around the river Lupia) in the northern part. Two main types of polyphonic singing can be distinguished in Komi-Permiak traditional music: (1) drone, and (2) variant heterophony. Drone two-part singing is spread through the most polyphonic regions of the settlements of Komi-Permiaks (see above), and the unique feature of their

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drone singing is that the drone is sung on *top* of the main melody (Zhulanova, 1989). Although this type of two-part singing exist in some Russian regions (particularly in Central and South parts of Russia), unlike Russian style, where the top drone is mostly sung by a soloist, and the main melody – by the big group, among Komi-Permiaks the drone on the top of the texture is performed by the group of singers.

Ex. 15. Komi-Permiaks. (From Nadia Zhulanova)



In the middle section of the settlement of Komi-Permiaks the tradition of polyphony is not as prominent, as in the southern and northern regions. Drone polyphony is absent in central regions, and the variant-heterophony is the only form of polyphony. Komi Zirians also practice mostly unison-heterophonic styles of singing, although Zemtsovsky points at the unique tradition of “collective polyphonic wedding song-laments” among Komi-Zirians and suggests links with the Russian tradition of wedding lamentation in eastern Vologda district (Zemtsovsky, 2000:774).

Mari

Mari people consist of three ethnic groups: (1) mountain Mari live on the right bank of river Volga, (2) so-called “meadow” Mari’s live between the rivers Vetluzhsk and Viatka, and (3) “eastern” Mari live east from the river Viatka. Mari singing tradition has long been classified as monophonic. Elements of traditional polyphony were researched by Oleg Gerasimov, who came to the conclusion, that variant heterophony is quite usual for Mari traditional culture, particularly in “*rekrutskie*” (soldier’s songs) and lyrical songs, where the large groups of singers are participating. The most interesting forms of traditional polyphony had been found among the *Lugovie Mari* (“meadow Mari’s”). In their group singing traditions the elements of so-called *podgolosochnaia polifonia* (complex version of variant heterophony, particularly widely spread among Russians, and generally among eastern Slavs) were noted (Gerasimov, 1988:20-21). According to Gerasimov, traditional singers indicate that they prefer to sing the main melody in their own way, “directly” (“*priamo*”) creating heterophonic texture, because “it sounds better this way” (Gerasimov, 1988, 20)

Ex. 16. Mari. (From Oleg Gerasimov)

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Udmurtia

Udmurts (in Old Russian “Votiaks”) are usually divided into two subgroups – northern and southern, and are ethnically close to Komi-Permiaks. There are also more detailed ethnic divisions among Udmurts. For example, there is a specific ethnic group *Bessermians* in northern Udmurtia, regarded as the descendants of the medieval Bulgars from banks of the Volga River. Although most of the Udmurts are Christians, there are Moslem and pagan groups among them as well. In regards of traditional polyphony, both southern and northern Udmurtia have a tradition of group singing. In southern Udmurtia the result is mostly unison and variant heterophony. In northern Udmurtia functional polyphony plays more distinguished role.

Turkic languages are represented in Volga-Ural region by Tatars, Bashkirs and Chuvashs. Generally speaking, in Volga-Ural region Turkic language speaker minorities are more populous than Finnish speaking minorities.

Tatars

Tatars are easily the biggest minority group in the Volga-Ural region (about 4 million population), and one of the biggest minorities in Russia. Besides the Volga – Ural region, Tatars also live in Siberia, and around the northern tip of the Caspian Sea (so-called “Astrakhan Tatars”). More detailed division of the Tatars living in these three regions is also available in the ethnographic literature.

In regards to traditional polyphony, Tatars possibly represent the most monophonic musical culture in the Volga-Ural region. As far as I am aware of, only one specific group – so-called “Christened Tatars” (“*kriashennie tatarı*”) practice actively the unison-heterophonic type of polyphony (Almeeva, 1985). Christened Tatars are the only Christian group among the Moslem Tatars.

Ex. 17. Tatars. (From Nailia Almeeva)



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Almeeva noted the presence of the elements of drone type in so-called “third-fifths” polyphony. In this style the strong beats are mostly distinguished by the presence of harmonic verticals – fifth on the first step, or the third on the second step.

Bashkiria

Bashkirs (*Bashkort* in Bashkir) are another major population in the Volga-Ural region. In Bashkir physical type and traditional culture the elements of both substrate and superstrate are evident. Finno-Ugric peoples made the autochthonous substrate of Bashkirs. The strong elements of Turkic nomad peoples came from the North Central Asia and southern Siberia from around the 7th century, and migrations became particularly active during the 10 – 13th centuries. In regards of the polyphonic music, there is a clear connection between the traditional music of Bashkirs with the Central Asian singing cultures. This is a tradition of overtone singing, or solo polyphony (when one person produces a drone and together with the drone creates a melodic line on top of the drone, using the natural whistling-like harmonics of the drone). We will concentrate on this type of polyphony when we will be discussing polyphonic traditions of Central Asian region. So far we should mention that the overtone singing of Bashkirs is the westernmost instance of the presence of the Central Asian type of overtone singing. Tradition of overtone singing among Bashkirs is called “*uzliau*” (Zemtsovsky, 2000:773).

Chuvashia

Chuvash population (“*Chavash*” in Chuvash) is divided into three groups: “Upper” Chuvashes (*Vir’ial*, *Turi*), “Lower” (*Anatri*), and “Middle-Lower” (*Anat Enchi*). Upper Chuvashes live in northwestern region, Lower Chuvash live in southern region, and Middle-Lower Chuvashes live in central and northeastern regions of their ethnic territory. Like most of the Udmurts, Chuvashes are Christians.

Regarding the tradition of vocal polyphony, according to the available data, only Low Chuvashes (*Anatri*) display the live tradition of polyphony. According to the specific two-part texture, Chuvash polyphony is close to the “third-fifths polyphony” tradition of the polyphony of so-called Christened Tatars (Almeeva, 1988:4). As in most of the musical traditions of the Volga-Ural region, Chuvash traditional singing (and polyphonic singing as well) is realized on pentatonic scales. Although pentatonic scales in the region are mostly anhemitonic, Chuvash and Mari singing also display rarer hemitonic forms of pentatonic scales (Zemtsovsky, 2000:773). In hemitonic pentatonic scales the number of the notes are five, but they do include half-tone steps, usually absent in most of the pentatonic singing cultures. Japan is maybe the most well-known for the use of hemitonic pentatonic scales. Here is the example of Anatri Chuvash polyphony:

Ex. 18. Chuvash. (Almeeva, 1988:4)

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North of European part of Russian minorities

Another important group of the Russian minorities live in the northernmost part of the European part of the Russian Federation. These are Finnish-speaking peoples: Saami, Nenets, Karels, Veps. No information is currently available on the polyphonic singing of these peoples. Together with the ethnic Russians, living in this region, North Russia remains arguably the “most monophonic” among all Russian populations, the biggest region of Russia (and in fact, of the Europe) where no traditions of vocal polyphonic singing have been documented so far (except the unique and now extinct tradition of two and three independent melodies, sung together, recorded in the 1920s by Gippius. See above). Unison and octave singing (with slight elements of heterophony) has been the only form of group singing in this region.

Jews and Rom

Discussing the music of Russian minorities, *Jews* (in Russian – “Evrei”) and *Rom* (in Russian – “Tsigane”) traditional music should be taken into account as well. Found in most of the regions of the European part of Russia, Jews and Rom were very influential in 18-19-20th century Russia as brilliant musicians. Although the mastery of musical instruments of Jews was well known and highly appreciated in Russia, no data is currently available on vocal polyphonic traditions among them. Later in this chapter I will discuss in detail the polyphonic traditions of few other populations of Jews from the Middle East and Europe.

As for the Rom musicians in Russia, their singing style widely featured contemporary urban style polyphony, with parallel thirds, European functional Tonic-Subdominant-Dominant harmonies, and European instrumental accompaniment (mostly guitar). Rom choirs (so-called “khor tsignan”) were extremely popular and many follower-ensembles existed in many Russian cities. I remember my professor in ethnomusicology in Georgia, late Grigol Chkhikvadze telling me that for few years, while he was studying in Russia (in Sankt Petersburg) during the 1930th, he was a director of “Khor Tsignan” (“Rom Choir”). Rom singing style was very much appreciated in Russia and had a profound influence on Russian popular singing style.

Ukraine

Regarding polyphonic singing traditions, the second largest country of Europe (after Russia), the Ukraine has quite a paradoxical situation. On one hand, Ukraine is a home of very interesting and rich forms of traditional polyphony (in Ukrainian *bogatogolosie*) and on the other hand most of the Ukrainian ethnomusicologists display almost total neglect towards their own polyphonic traditions.

Founders and the greatest representatives of early Ukrainian musicology Filaret Kolessa (beginning of the 20th century) and Klyment Kvitka (from the 1920s and 1930s) were concentrated on the study of solo professional singers (mostly blind musician-minstrels, *kobzars*). Polyphonic singing (“*Gurtovoe penie*”) was not in the mainstream of their research interests. K. Kvitka, considering polyphony a late phenomenon, wrote with regret about the replacement of the ancient monophonic tradition of refined music with the late mass tradition of “*gurtovoe penie*” (group singing, or choral polyphony. Kvitka, 1986:87).

One of the best publications of the beginning of the 20th century, representing the Ukrainian polyphony (unfortunately, regionally very limited), was published by Russian scholar Evgeniya Lineva (Lineva, 1991, the first edition –1905). Severely criticized by Kvitka, the publication did not have much influence on the development of Ukrainian ethnomusicology. It is clear today that at least some points of the critique were not deserved by Lineva. For example, Kvitka wrote that the transcription of traditional songs by the ear from memory is much more scholarly appropriate than the transcription from the phonographic recording (as it was done by Lineva).

A monumental volume “Ukrainian Traditional Polyphony” was published in 1962 (Iashchenko, 1962). A special research article about the Ukrainian polyphony came out as a part of this volume. Unfortunately, although the songbook gives plenty of examples of Ukrainian polyphony, the songbook (1) did not provide the regional study of polyphonic traditions; (2) failed to pay any attention to the most important polyphonic northern region of the Ukraine – so called “Polissia”, and (3) failed even to mention the drone type of polyphony on the territory of the Ukraine (more so: there is a special declaration that drone in Ukrainian music exists only in instrumental music, and not in a vocal music. Iashchenko, 1962:57). The whole volume represents solely the examples of late style polyphony, obviously influenced by European classical music (with parallel thirds and European style triadic harmony). There is almost no mentioning of any possible parallels of Ukrainian polyphony in the accompanying the songbook research (even with Eastern Slav polyphonic traditions), and the polyphonic traditions in Ukrainian music are declared to be a result of the late

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influence of European classical polyphony on Ukrainian traditional monophonic music. My colleagues would agree that this position was generally abandoned in European musicology at least after the first publication of Schneider's "History of Polyphony" in 1934-35.

In my opinion, the most informative publication on Ukrainian polyphony is a relatively small article (14 pages) of Vladimir Matvienko "On some peculiarities of Ukrainian Traditional Polyphony" (Matvienko, 1967). Matvienko rejected the idea of late (19th –20th century) origin of Ukrainian polyphony and suggests that the traditional polyphony was one of the main forces behind the development of Ukrainian professional polyphonic music. Matvienko was also the first who wrote about the existence of drone polyphony in the earliest layers of ritual and calendaric songs of Polissia, and pointed at Polissia as the most important region of the distribution of Ukrainian traditional polyphony. He also was the first to write about the tradition of using dissonant chords and intervals, containing seconds (the idea of using of dissonances in Ukrainian polyphony was totally rejected in the 1962 volume on Ukrainian polyphony).

Despite the 1967 article of V. Matvienko, the same neglect towards traditional polyphony continued in Ukrainian ethnomusicology. In the early 1990s I received a PhD of a Ukrainian scholar, Irina Belosvetova, and as I looked through the musical examples first, I remember how delighted I was to see plenty of examples of very interesting drone polyphony with secondal dissonances. The dissertation was about one of the regions of Polissia. I started reading the manuscript with much anticipation of the discussion of this interesting phenomenon. Despite the fact that the work was very professionally written, there was hardly even a mentioning of the existence of polyphony in the analyzed tradition (let alone drone polyphony). To be precise, the words "polyphony" was mentioned only twice, and the term "drone" was not mentioned at all. In the later published standard work, "The History of Ukrainian Music", published in 1989, and written by a group of the leading Ukrainian musicologists, the special section about the Ukrainian traditional polyphony mostly follows the 1962 book on Ukrainian polyphony. So, for example, the archaic polyphonic tradition of Polissia with the drone and dissonant intervals is totally missing in 1989 book. Generally speaking, the same trend still continues, and even in the feature article about the Ukrainian music in the Garland Encyclopedia of World Music there is nothing about the drone polyphony with dissonant intervals in Polissia (Noll, 2000).

Fortunately, from other smaller publications (together with the article of Matvienko, mentioned earlier) and some unpublished materials (mostly papers, delivered at the polyphonic conferences in Georgia) we do have more complete idea about the distribution of different types of vocal polyphony on the territory of the Ukraine. For example, in a special paper about the polyphony in Polissia written for the 2004 Tbilisi conference, dedicated to the traditional polyphony, E. Efremov distinguishes two main styles of polyphony in Ukrainian Polissia: (1) Drone polyphony, and (2) heterophony. Drone polyphony with a small range melody is characteristic to northern regions of Ukrainian Polissia. Heterophony is characteristic for both northern and southern regions. In northern regions heterophony is based on

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dissonant harmonies and develops within the third, and in southern regions heterophony is more parallel third oriented and has wider range melodies (Efremov, 2005).

Generally speaking, the tradition of polyphonic singing in the Ukraine decreases as we go from East to West, and from North to South. Therefore, the most polyphonic region is the northeast part of the Ukraine (eastern Polissia), and the only region where there are no data about vocal polyphony, is the southwest part of the Ukraine.

Not going into the detailed classification of polyphonic traditions into types and sup-types, we can say that there are three main polyphonic styles on the territory of the Ukraine:

- (1) **Drone polyphony**, present in the most archaic genres of the Polissia region, both in West (for example, in Brest district) and particularly – East Polissia. Although Shevchuk mentions drone polyphony in Polissia as a sub-type of heterophonic polyphony (Shevchuk, 2001: 200), the difference between drone and heterophonic types of polyphony is a difference of kind; Here is the examples of two-part drone polyphony from Polissia:

Ex. 19. Ukraine. (From Elena Murzina)



The musical notation for Example 19 consists of two staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a common time signature. It features a melody of eighth and quarter notes, with a final note held over into the second staff. The second staff, marked with a '2' at the beginning, provides a drone accompaniment consisting of a steady eighth-note pattern in the same key signature.

Ex. 20. Ukraine. (Belosvetova, 1989:32-33)

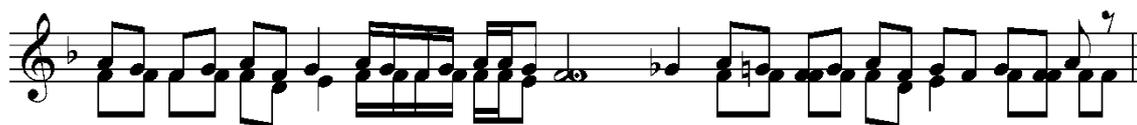


The musical notation for Example 20 consists of two staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. It features a melody of eighth and quarter notes, with a final note held over into the second staff. The second staff, marked with a '5' at the beginning, provides a drone accompaniment consisting of a steady eighth-note pattern in the same key signature.

In Poltava region the drone is “shaken” although the closeness to the previous examples is obvious:

Ex. 21. Ukraine. (From Elena Murzina)

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- (2) *Unison-Heterophonic polyphony* with the elements of two-part Russian type *podgolosochnaia polifonia*. In this style the main melody is performed by the majority of singers and a solo singer performs a contrasting melodic part on top of the melody. This style has not received much attention in Ukrainian musicology as well, although definitely was not neglected as drone polyphony. East Ukraine is rich with *podgolosochnaia polifonia*, and the west Ukraine (Northwest) is mostly heterophonic.

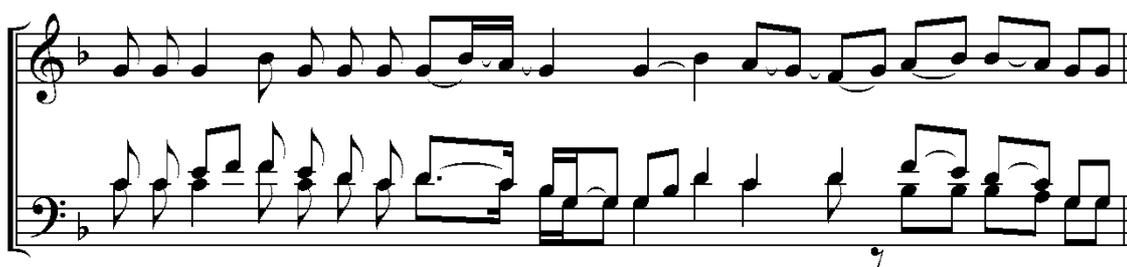
Here is the example of two-part polyphony with parallel thirds and unisons in crucial points:

Ex. 22. Ukraine. (From Elena Murzina)



The most complex tradition of this type of polyphony, based on two- and three-part singing comes from the river Don Cossacks:

Ex. 23. Ukraine. (From Tatiana Rudichenko)



- (3) And finally, the late style of traditional polyphony, based on *European chordal and harmonic system*. As I have already mentioned earlier, this style has been overwhelmingly represented in mainstream publications of Ukrainian musicologists. Here is the typical example:

Ex. 24. Ukraine. Late polyphonic style. (Gordeichuk, 1989:95)

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Belarus

Belarus is a part of the “triad” of the east Slav peoples: Russia-Ukraine-Belarus. Like Russia and Ukraine, Belarus also shows regional distribution of some very interesting traditions of vocal polyphony. Unlike the Ukraine, where polyphonic traditions decrease from North to South, in Belarus the most polyphonic region is the southern part of the Republic, and, exactly like the Ukraine, the most polyphonic region in Belarus is the same “Polesie”, the border region between the Ukraine and Belarus (Kutireva, 1985:36). Belarus name of the region – “*Palessie*” literary means “Region of Forests” in Belarus (the same as the Ukrainian name of the same region – *Polissia*). The least polyphonic region of the Belarus is the northern part of the country (“*paazerie*” – “Region of the Lakes”). Generally, polyphonic tradition in Belarus is decreasing from south to north, and Belarus ethnomusicologists pointed to the crucial importance of the drone polyphonic tradition of the Palessie region. Palessie region holds a very special place in eastern Slav studies, so let us discuss this region in a bit more detail.

Polesie (Polissia, Palessie) is actually the bordering region between all three east Slavic peoples – Russians, Ukrainians and Belarus (and reaches Poland in the west). Geographically Polesie represents the biggest forest massive of the Europe. Polesie has long been regarded as the region of the most archaic layers of language, ethnography and culture of East Slavs. In this context the existence of drone polyphony among eastern Slavs almost exclusively in the region Polesie is extremely

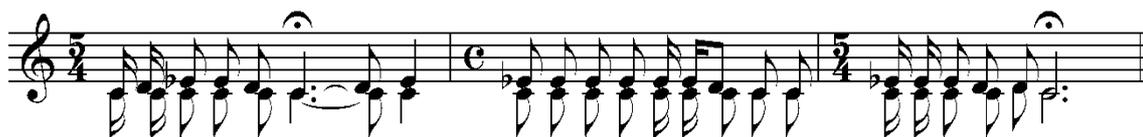
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interesting and important for the study of early forms of traditional music of the Eastern Europe.

Unfortunately, Polesie region underwent one of the most catastrophic events in human history - Chernobyl nuclear disaster in April 1986 happened in the very heart of Polesie region, affecting both Ukrainian and Belarus parts of Polesie. Shocked by the prospects of mass displacement and gradual devastation of local population, and trying to document as much of the existing musical traditions as possible while they were still alive, Belarusian ethnomusicologist Zinaida Mozheiko organized a special fieldwork just few weeks after the Chernobyl disaster. Together with a technician and a driver, three of them traveled long distances through the infected (and still populated) villages and recorded as much as they could. "Sometimes we would suddenly feel very fatigued, so we would just stop our car in the middle of our way from one village to another and would fall asleep" told me Zinaida Mozheiko later. The result of this heroic fieldwork was devastating for the fieldwork participants. Within five months after the fieldwork two (out of three) members of the fieldwork team were dead from different forms of cancer. Zinaida Mozheiko (the only female participant of the fieldwork) survived, although she was seriously ill for several months. By the way, the photo of Polesie musicians at the wedding in the Garland encyclopedia of World Music (pg 793) was taken during that fateful fieldwork.

Drone polyphonic tradition in Polesie is performed by women (same as in Russian and Ukrainian regions of Polesie). There are two parts – the drone (both rhythmic and pedal versions, performed by a group) and the top melodic part – soloist singing a small range (mostly within fourth) melody, often creating seconds with the base. Very specific are the cadencies – the extremely long unison, where the melody and drone come together at the end of every musical phrase. This long unison lasts longer (sometimes twice as long – Kutireva, 1985:37) than the main melodic part of the song and can often last more than 20 beats (Mozheiko and Survilla, 2000:794). In terms of the development of the vertical component of the drone type of polyphony, Kutireva points out the formula: "dissonance – consonance – unison" where the musical idea starts with the dissonance, and before it goes to the final unison, it always goes through the interval of third (consonance) (Kutireva, 1985:38-39). Occasional three-part chords appear in the cadences (see the last example). Here are few examples of traditional polyphony from Polesie:

Ex. 25. Belarus. (Mozheiko, 1983:156)



Ex. 26. Belarus. (Mozheiko, 1983:135)



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Ex. 27. Belarus. (Mozheiko, 1983:136)



Ex. 28. Belarus. (Mozheiko, 1983:102)



Besides the drone polyphony, region Palesie also harbors unison-heterophonic types of polyphony. “As a rule, group singing is heterophonic and especially elaborate in the south [region Palesie]. There are two types of heterophonic song: dissonant two-part singing ... and multi-rhythmic monody, in which the divergence from unison arises from variations in the fundamental melody because of differences in ornamentation... This variety of heterophonic singing is particularly characteristic of harvest songs.” (Mozheiko and Survilla, 2000:794-795). In southern, central, and eastern Belarus two-part singing style with *padvodka* is also characteristic. The main melody is always sung in the lower part called *bas* (pl. *basy*), and to sing the lower part is called *basavats*. The top part (*podvodka* or *hakashnik*) is sung by soloist and represents the main musical contrast to the melodic low part (Mozheiko and Survilla, 2000:795). Out of the two main types of polyphony – drone and heterophony, the later is distributed much wider (Kutireva, 2000:36).

Besides the drone and heterophonic styles of polyphony, a later style of polyphony based on third parallelism has also been distinguished in Belarus traditional songs (Kutireva, 1985:38).

With the survey of Belarus we have completed the survey of three Slavic countries of the Eastern Europe – Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. Vocal polyphony plays a major role in traditional musical culture of all three countries. Without going into the details, we may say, that heterophonic polyphony, and the connected to heterophony a specific style of functional two-part (sometimes three-part) polyphony, known mostly as *podgolosochnaia polifonia* is widely distributed on the territory of these countries. Much more specific is the distribution of the drone polyphony, which is mostly concentrating in the bordering region between the Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, region known as Polissia/Palesie/Polesie. This region is well known among the ethnographers and linguists of the Slavic world, as scholars have long noted the greatest concentration of the most ancient elements of the material and spiritual culture of the Eastern Slavic peoples in Polesie. The third style of polyphonic music on the territory of the Eastern Slavs has obvious traces of the late influence by the European professional polyphony with parallel third and triadic harmonies.

Georgia

Although the main focus of my first book on traditional polyphony (Jordania, 1989) was the international distribution of the polyphonic cultures of the World, the focus on Georgian polyphony was obvious, and a good half of the book (more than 150 pages out of 300 pages total) represented a detailed description and analyses of different aspects of Georgian polyphony. This book does not focus so much on Georgian polyphony, but as the tradition of Georgian polyphony represents one of the most complex polyphonic traditions known in ethnomusicology today with uniquely rich live traditions and local styles of village and urban polyphonic singing, we will be covering several important aspects of Georgian traditional polyphony. Therefore this section will be divided into several sub-sections.

Georgia (in Georgian “Sakartvelo”) shows an array of important signs of unbroken cultural ancestry. Autochthonous residents of the Transcaucasia, Georgians still speak the Georgian language, which survives from the epoch of the pre-Indo-European languages. The only possible relationship of Georgian language outside the Caucasus seriously discussed by linguists is that with the Basque language, the only survivor of the pre-Indo-European languages in Western Europe. Geographically Georgia is part of the region known as “Transcaucasia”, situated on the southern slopes of the Great Caucasian mountain range, stretching from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea (more correctly – the Caspian lake, the world’s biggest lake). Being surrounded by the highest mountains of Europe (reaching at several points more than 5.000 meters), the Caucasian mountain gorges represent the ideal “hiding spot” from outer influences for isolated populations. Even today for a big part of the year the only way to reach some of the populated regions of mountainous Georgia is by helicopter only. From the East and the West Transcaucasia is protected by the waters of the already mentioned Black and Caspian seas, and even the southern approach is not a very easy route because of a number of other (although smaller) mountain ranges. Although partly living at the seaside (east coast of the Black Sea), Georgians have never been great travelers and most Georgians still live in Georgia.

Vocal Polyphony in Georgia

Unlike many countries in Europe, where the tradition of polyphonic singing is represented only in some of the regions, the whole of Georgia is one big group of closely related polyphonic traditions. Readers may remember the opening of this book when, walking down the streets of old Tbilisi and singing with my colleague two parts of three-part Georgian song, we suddenly received help – the third part - from an unknown Georgian who happened to hear us at that moment. Another story from the introduction of this book, when traditional singers started singing a harmony to a classical aria totally unknown to them, just to “help” the opera singer at the table who was “left” by his colleagues without supporting harmonies, is also typically Georgian.

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In another small but very precious moment for me, I remember walking up Chavchavadze Street late night on December 4th, 1978, together with my late father, ethnomusicologist Mindia Jordania, and listening to the singing of a Georgian male, who was drunk (obviously just leaving the feast) but was still singing and simultaneously supporting his friend, who was too drunk to sing, and actually, even to walk. When a few moments later this “supported” friend also made a couple of painful attempts to start singing, I unconsciously wondered whether he would start singing the melody in unison or would sing a harmony. He started singing a harmony, and a moment later my father told me he had the same thoughts as I did.

Another story from my native Tbilisi is more interesting and multi-layered. I was at my grandmother’s family house on the slopes of “St Mountain” (dominating mountain in the very centre of Tbilisi). It was late evening in a hot Tbilisi summer and all the windows were wide open to catch the faint evening breeze. I was on the open veranda and I could clearly hear from the open windows that our neighbors, two Georgian males, were having a small feast. As usual, they were proposing toasts and drinking. I could hear every word of every toast they were proposing. Georgian toasts are very interesting – on one hand they are always the same (I mean that everyone knows which should be the first, second, or the third toasts etc, with a certain space for improvisations as well), but still you cannot “number” them like familiar jokes from an internationally known joke book. In Georgia you need to verbalize these toasts through your experiences and ideas every time you are at the table. The feast proceeded without singing, but at some point one of them started singing an urban song, and his friend joined him very soon. Neither of them was a great singer, but both of them were at least singing in tune. The only problem (at least for me) was that they were singing in unison. That was disappointing for me, as I believed Georgians never sang in unison. “Well,” I remember thinking, “Georgians do sing in unison sometimes”. A few seconds later my great aunty Keto came out on the veranda. “These guys, Edik and Lova, they cannot sing but they are still singing!” she commented with a hint of annoyance in her voice. These names, not very typical for Georgians, gave me an idea. “Are not they Georgians?” I asked with some surprise, as their obviously native command of the Georgian language, good knowledge of the feast traditions and long poetic speeches did not give me any grounds to suspect otherwise. Unlike me, Keto knew both of the participants of the feast, her neighbors, in person. “No. They are not Georgian. Edik is Ukrainian, and Lova is Armenian” she told me in response. As a matter of fact, it is interesting why Keto did not like their singing in the first place – as director of a few choirs in Melbourne, I would not have minded having these guys in a community choir as they definitely could sing in tune quite well. I believe Keto was annoyed by the fact that they were singing in unison. So my belief that Georgians never sing in unison survived.

To tell the truth, I did once hear (on 28th July 1985 during my fieldwork in Upper Svaneti) two Svanetian teenagers singing in unison. They sang only one phrase of a distorted version of a popular children’s song. I was so shocked by the fact of their singing in unison that I still remember the distorted melody they were singing (this was a song “Hit the drums” from the repertoire of “Mziuri”, a Georgian pre-teen girl’s pop-ensemble, very popular in the 1980s).

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Ethnomusicologists noted from the 19th century that traditional Georgian monophonic songs are always performed by an individual. More so – monophonic singing occurs only when the performer is alone (during work in a field, or alone on a road, or putting a baby to sleep, or lamenting alone). If, for any reason, the person is not alone, then even the traditionally monophonic songs can easily turn into polyphonic ones. So, there are polyphonic versions of lullabies, dirges, and field working songs.

General and Regional Characteristics

Fig. 1. Ethnographic map of Georgia (Tsitsishvili, 2004. Used with permission)



Georgia is usually divided into fifteen ethnographic regions (see the map). Some of them are very big, such as Kartli, Kakheti or Imereti, but some of them are very small – particularly in the northeastern part of Georgia.

Without going into a detailed analysis of each ethnographic region, let me first briefly discuss the general characteristics of Georgian polyphony, and then we'll concentrate on the main stylistic features of the major regions.

- (1) Two-, three- and four-part singing is spread through different regions of Georgia, with two-part singing mostly in the mountainous Northeastern regions of the East Georgia, and four-

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part singing in the Southwestern part of Georgia. Three-part singing is the most widespread throughout Georgia;

- (2) There is no tradition of group unison singing in Georgia, so monophonic songs are performed by individual singers;
- (3) There are more than sixty terms indicating the names and the functions of different parts of the polyphonic texture. There has been controversy over the traditional terminology of such names as the “first”, “second” and “third” parts. Later it became clear that the middle part of the song is the “first part”, as it is the main melodic part of the song. The “second” part is the top part, and the third is the bass (M. Jordania, 1972);
- (4) The individual singers always sing main melodic parts, and the group usually sings the bass. In the tradition of “trio” songs (in western Georgia) the bass is also performed by the solo performer. In four-part western Georgian harvest songs there are actually two basses – one is a pedal drone in the middle of the texture, and another is a melodically active low base;
- (5) Drone and ostinato are the two most important principles of polyphony in all regions of Georgia;
- (6) Sharp dissonant chords are in high esteem in Georgian traditional polyphony.

Georgia can be divided into eastern and western parts, as well as into northern and southern parts. The east-west division is generally considered to be stylistically more important. The north-south division generally follows the natural division between the high mountainous northern and relatively flat southern regions.

East Georgia

East Georgia consists of two of Georgia’s biggest ethnographic regions – Kakheti (the Southeastern part) and Kartli (the central part) and five (some maintain six) small mountain regions in the Northeastern part of Georgia: Khevsureti, Pshavi, Tusheti, Khevi, Mtiuleti (and according to some classifications – Gudamakari as well. Garakanidze, 1991).

The plain regions of eastern Georgia – Kartli and Kakheti - have always been historically central for Georgia. State unity started here, and the capital city (Tbilisi) has been the centre of Georgia for the last 1500 years. The best-known feature of

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eastern Georgian traditional singing is the presence of long, “drawn-out” table songs from Kartli and particularly Kakheti. These songs are performed by the two melodic lines singing against a background of a steady pedal drone on “O”. The leading melodies are always performed by the individual singers, and the drone by all the others. So, for example, if there are two hundred singers at the wedding, and (as usual) they all join in singing, only two of the best singers would sing the two leading top parts, and the other 198 will sing the drone. The leading melodic lines have a wide range (about an octave or wider) and of these two melodies one is usually a bit higher than the other. The lower melody is considered to be the leading part of the song (*mkmeli*, the one who speaks, or the “first voice”), who usually starts a song, followed by the higher “second voice” or *modzakhili* (the one who follows). The main task of both lead singers is to ornament their melodic lines. The tempo is usually slow, and the songs are mostly performed in free time. Today these two parts quite often sing in parallel thirds, although recordings of the first half of the 20th century show that the coordination between these two melodic lines was freer, ranging from seconds to sixths. Some major sections of eastern Georgian table songs are performed in two parts, as the leading singers sometimes alternate with each other.

Ex. 29. Tamar Kalo [Maiden Tamar]. East Georgian table song (opening section). (Garakanidze, Jordania, 2004:114)

Ad libitum ♩ ≈ 150

The musical score is written in 8/8 time. It features a vocal line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The vocal line consists of three systems of staves. The first system contains the lyrics "ta-mar k'a-lo, k'vekh-nis tva - lo, a - ru - la - lo,". The second system contains "he he a a - ru - la - a - lo da, he he he - i - da,". The third system contains "a - ru - la lo,". The bass line provides a steady drone accompaniment, primarily consisting of a single note (the tonic) with some rhythmic ornamentation. The tempo is marked as "Ad libitum" with a quarter note equal to approximately 150 beats per minute.

According to a common belief of Georgian ethnomusicologists, this kind of three-part drone polyphony evolved from two-part drone polyphony with alternating main singers, when the two main singers started singing some sections together, gradually increasing these sections. As a matter of fact, in a few of my earlier publications I suggested that the enigmatic name of the most famous East Georgian table song “Chakrulo” represents this historical evolution from a two-part

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(alternating) to a three-part (combined, “embraced”) singing of two lead singers. The term *Chakrulo* literally means “embraced”, of “tied together” (Jordania, 1981, 1984, 1989).

Although the base is a pedal drone in eastern Georgian “long” table songs, it does move, leading to key changes (modulations). These occasional base moves are extremely important for the overall form of a song. These key changes, or modulations, make up the main tonal body of the table song. For example, the tonal body of the famous table song “Chakrulo” consists of the following modulations (indicating only the key changes): G – E – F# – G# – A# – G# – F – G – A – B. These base movements are the most stable element of East Georgian table songs, as they are performed by a big group of singers in unison and are less prone to any changes and improvisations.

These modulations are one of the most fascinating elements of East Georgian table songs, as they are relatively rare among traditional polyphonic cultures. Aslanishvili was the first to investigate this important sphere (Aslanishvili, 1970). I have dedicated my 1982 PhD thesis (Jordania, 1982) to them, and they deserve to be discussed at least briefly.

Modulations can go both ways – downwards and upwards. More varieties occur during downward modulations. Downwards modulations can bring the key a major second, minor and major third down. Upwards modulations are almost exclusively by the major second up. Two more complex modulations – by the minor second down and the minor second up - happen only in another famous eastern Georgian “long” table song – “Long Kakhétian Mravalzhamier”. Here are the “harmonic skeletons” of two modulations that take place in East Georgian table songs: (1) minor third down (from G to E). This modulation is prepared by the specific melodic formula in the top part, singing the phrase from the octave to the fifths of the future scale, and (2) minor second up (from G to G#). This modulation involves complex chain of chord progression from G, A, B, F# and finally G#:

Fig. 2. Modulation from G to E tonal centre

Fig. 3. Modulation from G to G# tonal centre

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The scale in East Georgian table songs is very consistent – always the same diatonic scale, commonly known as Mixolydian (white keys from “G” to the next “G”). I shall specially discuss the scales of Georgian polyphonic songs in a later separate section, as I do not believe this name (“Mixolydian”) adequately expresses the nature of this scale in eastern Georgian table songs.

Modulations always occur in the bass part (when the bass moves to another pitch), but it is one of the high melodic voices that prepare this modulation. The most common way of preparing the modulation is the appearance of the elements of the future scale within the initial tonal centre. For example, if we are in “G” Mixolydian (which has no black keys) and want to move (modulate) into “A” Mixolydian (which has C# and F#), the top melody will sing a melodic phrase, containing F#, and this will give the bass singers (and listeners as well) a powerful signal that the key must move a major second up into “A” Mixolydian. In the same way, if we want to modulate from the same “G” (no black keys) down into “F” (which has two black keys – B flat and E flat) the best way to “prepare” the modulation is to sing the note B flat in one of the high parts and the bass will move down to “F”. This technique of modulation is remarkably similar to the modulation methods of classical European music. For example, if we want to move from “C” major (no black keys) into “F” major (one black key – B flat), the easiest way is to have the note B flat appearing within the C major chord. When we hear the elements of the future scale, our ear is prepared to move there, both in Georgian and European classical music systems.

Long table songs are not the only genres of polyphonic music in East Georgia. There are plenty of other singing genres here as well – from horse-riding to love, healing, working and round dances. Interestingly, none of them are performed in the style of the long table songs. Although the moderate use of ornaments is encountered in most of the eastern Georgian genres (particularly in the solo, opening sections), the rhythm is usually precise, the songs do not employ the complex system of modulations, pedal drone is mostly replaced by the rhythmic drone, or ostinato, and the verbal text is often rendered by all three parts simultaneously. Here are the two examples of this singing style:

Ex. 30. Gigini [humming] lyrical song (Garakanidze, Jordania, 2004:5)

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Andante

solo

o ho ho ho, i - a - o, 1.chven-sa cha-mo-di-a - o.
2.var be - ri - ka-tsi-a - o.

am ert ch'i-k'as ki - de dav - lev, o, me - re dav-tvre-bi-a - o, o.
a - xa - lu - xi she-mo-matsv-da o, cho-xats ar mats-vi-a - o, o.

Ex. 31. Garekakhuri Lashkruli [A horse riding song] (Garakanidze, Jordania, 2004:65)

Maestoso ♩ = 70

A - ru - la - lo hai - da har - nu - na - no, ha - ra - la - li, ha - ri ha - ra - lo,
har - nu - na - no, hai - da har - nu - na - no, ts'as - vla jobs ts'ar ma - va - li - sa,
har - nu - na - no, hai - da har - nu - na - no, ts'as - vla jobs ts'ar ma - va - li - sa,
kots - na jobs tet - ri k'a - li sa, cha - xvev - na shav - gvre - ma - ni - sa.

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Polyphonic singing traditions in the northeastern ethnographic regions are not as developed as in Kartli and Kakheti. Two-part singing dominates here. The northeastern dialectal regions are usually united into two groups: the Tusheti, Pshavi and Khevsureti are generally regarded as more archaic regions (especially Khevsureti), and the Khevi and Mtiuleti are considered to be more advanced. The singing traditions of Khevsureti are of particular interest. They are traditionally regarded as the most archaic survival of the ancient Georgian singing tradition (Chkhikvadze, 1948, 1961, 1964, Araqishvili, 1905, 1916). This hypothesis, I think, does not take into account several very important factors. We will discuss these factors in a separate section in the second chapter, when I shall discuss several isolated polyphonic traditions as separate “cases studies”. Pshavi could be the classical representative of this small group, with two-part drone singing, antiphon between the two soloists, major second moves of the drone, and the typical cadences on the unison. Tusheti is known as the region of the seasonal shepherd-travelers with interesting ties to the neighboring North Caucasian peoples, and some features of their musical traditions unusual among other Georgian regions.

Khevi and Mtiuleti represent a more advanced region, where two-part singing is well established and there are songs where three-part singing plays an important role. Interestingly, in the Khevi and Mtiuleti tree-part singing traditions there are obvious links with Svanetian traditional polyphony from the highest mountain region of western Georgia (Garakanidze, 1991).

One more region which we have not mentioned so far, is Meskhети, in the southern part of central Georgia. This is the only region of Georgia where (possibly mostly due to demographic reasons) the tradition of polyphonic singing began disappearing during the 20th century and was finally lost in the 1970s). According to the last survivors of the local polyphonic tradition, the Meskhetian polyphonic style was close to the eastern Georgian (Kartlian and Kakhetian) style, with the drone (both pedal and rhythmic), and with “long” table songs with ornamented melody (Magradze, 1986).

Georgians also live outside of Georgia, in the district of Kakhi, in neighboring Azerbaijan. This region is also known as Saingilo. The Georgian population of Saingilo is partly Christian and partly Moslem. The only ethnomusicological fieldwork that has been undertaken in the Saingilo region was a small, two-week fieldwork undertaken by the Institute of Literature at the Academy of Science of Georgia in 1987 among the Christian part of Saingilo. The author of this book made the only ethnomusicological contribution to the fieldwork. According to the results of this short fieldwork, the tradition of polyphonic singing (in harvest songs) was still alive at least in the village of Alibeglo in the 1920s and 1930s. Some of the melodies (both vocal and instrumental) recorded during the fieldwork combined (in one part) the elements of the melody and the bass as well (Jordania, 1988b:56-57). The group of young local patriotic males was singing new songs in the traditional Georgian style of drone three-part polyphony.

West Georgia

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Going from eastern to western Georgia, we leave behind the world of long drones and melismatic melodic lines and enter the world of contrapuntal polyphony. This ostensibly clear picture is not very accurate though, as the drone still plays a leading role in western Georgian polyphony as well.

Western Georgia consists of six (according to some views – seven) so-called musical dialects. Unlike eastern Georgia, where we have two asymmetrically big plain regions and several much smaller mountainous regions, the differences between the regions are not as big in western Georgia.

The musical differences from eastern Georgia are also quite obvious.

- Rhythmically western Georgian polyphonic songs are always well defined (no free metres);
- Melodic lines never use rich melismatic ornamentation, so usual for the eastern Georgia and particularly for the genre of ‘long’ table songs;
- Instead of two- and three-part singing we are now in the world of three- and four-part polyphony;
- The drone is present, but it is mostly a rhythmic drone, and besides, in some of the most complex songs the drone is in the middle of the four-part polyphonic texture (instead of being in the bass in eastern Georgia);
- Unlike East Georgian drone and ostinato bass, the bass part in some West Georgian regions can be extremely active melodically.
- The yodel (absent in eastern Georgia) adds another important element to the sound of the western Georgian singing style;
- The tradition of “trio song” (sung by three individual singers) is also unique to some regions of western Georgia;
- Triple metres $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{8}$, very popular in eastern Georgia (particularly in certain round dances), as well as the specific “melody of *Iavnana*”, are rare in some regions and completely absent in other regions of western Georgia.

The best-known tradition from western Georgia is the highly developed tradition of contrapuntal polyphony in Guria. Let us have a look at an example of a four-part section of the harvest song *Naduri*:

Ex. 34. Naduri. Harvest song (performed during hoeing on maize fields) excerpt from the final 4-part section (transcribed by Joseph Jordania)

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The image displays a musical score for a four-part polyphonic piece. The top system consists of two staves: the upper staff is labeled 'Krimanchuli & Mtkmeli' and the lower staff is labeled 'Shemkhambari's & Bases'. The bottom system continues the same two parts. The music is written in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). The top part features a yodel-like melody with a 'distorted falsetto voice' or 'distorted jaw' quality. The second part provides a pedal drone. The third and fourth parts have more active, melodic lines. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

In this four-part section we can see: (1) *Krimanchuli* (“distorted falsetto voice”, or according to the other version, “distorted jaw”) – a western Georgian yodel that was admired by Igor Stravinsky, (2) *shemkhambari* (“the sound that accompanies” – this is a specific pedal drone in the middle of the texture and, believe me, this is the best voice to join in to enjoy the astounding harmonies of “Naduri” songs) (3) *mtkmeli* (lit. “the one who speaks”), the leading voice, who starts the song and who is the only part that recites the text, and (4) *Bani* (“the bass”), the lowest voice, which is melodically very active, and mostly sings a perfect fifth below the pedal drone of *shemkhambari*. Out of these four parts, two of them (*shemkhambari* and the bass) are traditionally performed by the groups of singers, and the two other parts (*krimanchuli* and *mtkmeli*) are performed by individual singers.

If we look at this example of western Georgian four-part polyphony, we can see that it contains few compositional principles of polyphony: (1) ostinato (the top part, yodel), (2) pedal drone (*shemkhambari*, second from the top), (3) mixture of the rhythmic drone and the free melody (*mtkmeli*), and (4) the free melodic line of the bass. This kind of mixture of different compositional principles is in fact very common for the Georgian (and particularly western Georgian) tradition of polyphonic singing. Gabisonia distinguished several such types of Georgian polyphony, based on a mixture of different compositional principles of polyphony, in a special group of *synthesis* types of polyphony (Gabisonia, 1988:12).

The tradition of “trio” (“three singers”) is considered to be the climax of Georgian traditional polyphony. This is not to be sung by everyone present. All three parts are sung by individuals, including the bass part. This feature (solo bass) is unique to a few western Georgian dialects (Guria, Achara, Imereti, Samegrelo). Unlike eastern Georgia, where the bass is mostly a drone or ostinato, and is always performed by a group of the singers, in western Georgia the bass can be the most melodically active part of the song (Jordania, N. 1985, 1986). This is a result of the widest improvisational possibilities for the bass part to create new exciting dissonant harmonies. Have a look, for example, at two small excerpts from different versions of

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1
vo - i, di - la, voi di -
sha-vi sha shvi chi-o - da, vo - i, di - la, voi di -

6
lo, di-la o-de-la-u-da, a-la - lo, a-ra-la - li, a-ra-lo,
lo, di-la o-de-la-u-da, a-la - lo, a-ra-la - li, a-ra-lo,
da - a ra - la - li

11
a - ra - la - li,
a - ra - la - li,

Improvisation in western Georgian polyphonic songs

One of the most important and fascinating aspects that we must also discuss here is the principle of **improvisation** in western Georgian complex polyphonic songs. Unlike some monophonic traditions, where the performers have a well-classified system of scales and melodic types, there are no (or almost no) so-called “native theories” of music in most of the polyphonic traditions in Georgia. (We will discuss this trend of polyphonic cultures in the second part of the book.) Therefore, although I believe there are some implicit “native principles” of improvisation, these principles are not articulated and consciously followed. The principles of improvisation, that I am going to discuss (from Jordania, 1989:144-146), are only acquired by traditional singers through the practical process of listening, learning, singing and improvising.

So I suggest that improvisation in western Georgian polyphonic songs is based on the simultaneous use of two principles:

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- (1) The principle of **melodic (horizontal) development** of each part. Or, what is each singer singing melodically, and where he can improvise? This principle is based on the use of **consonant intervals** (thirds and fifths) in the melodic development of each part. This means that the key melodic notes are exchangeable by other (related) notes thirds or fifths above or below.
- (2) The principle of **harmonic (vertical) coordination** between the parts. This principle is based on the use of **dissonant intervals**: seconds, fourths or even sevenths.

So, each melody has its tonal centre, axis, and the performer can improvise from this centre thirds and fifths (**consonances**) above and below. Simultaneously with this, each of the three (or four) parts of the polyphonic texture has their tonal centres in a vertical coordination on **dissonant** intervals (for example, as in the four-part harvest song above, the tonal centres of different parts were: F, B flat, C, and F). After this the simple mathematical principle of putting together the negative and positive elements is constantly at work. You may remember the old principle “My friend’s friend is my friend. My friend’s enemy is my enemy. My enemy’s friend is my enemy. My enemy’s enemy is my friend”. As the vertical coordination is based on dissonant intervals, the resulting chords during the improvisations will also be dissonances. This “double standard” (consonants for the melodic development and dissonances for the vertical coordination) works very well for Georgian music, where the sharp dissonances are very much appreciated.

Therefore, each of the participating singers has their axis, a specific pitch, and the performer improvises within a fifth up or down from this axis, using the “exchangeable” notes (third or fifth from the main axis) on the **strong beats**. If you have a look at the melodic development of individual parts of the Gurian working song “Naduri”, and then have a look at their vertical coordination, you will understand what I mean:

Fig. 4. Separate parts from “Naduri” coda

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The image shows a musical score for a Georgian polyphonic song. It consists of four staves, each with a different vocal part. The top staff is labeled 'Krimanchuli (yodel)' and features a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is highly rhythmic and melismatic, with many eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff is labeled 'Mtkmeli (leading melody)' and also has a treble clef, one flat, and 4/4 time. Its melody is more melodic and less rhythmic than the yodel. The third staff is labeled 'Shemkhembari (few singers)' and has a bass clef, one flat, and 4/4 time. It consists of a single, long, sustained note with a fermata, indicating a drone. The bottom staff is labeled 'Bani (basses)' and has a bass clef, one flat, and 4/4 time. It features a more complex, rhythmic bass line with many eighth and sixteenth notes. The entire score is written in a single system.

I dedicated a special publication to the relationship of **scale steps** in Georgian traditional polyphony (Jordania, 1983). According to this publication, melodic and harmonic notes can easily exchange with notes a third or a fifth above or lower.

The final element of the western Georgian polyphonic style that we are going to mention here might already be evident to some readers – unlike European professional polyphony, Georgian polyphony does not use the principle of **imitation**. Each part of western Georgian counterpoint polyphony uses melodic phrases from the existing melodic and rhythmic “vocabulary” of their own parts. As a matter of fact, most of the traditional polyphonic cultures do not use the principle of imitation. So, except for the exclusively rare element of imitation, Georgian polyphony is mostly based on three or four contrasting parts.

As in the case of eastern Georgian polyphonic singing, there are many more polyphonic songs and simpler styles in western Georgia than this very complex tradition of counterpoint polyphony. In simpler songs much more drone is used (predominantly the rhythmic drone), as well as ostinato formulae in the base. In these “simpler” songs no individual bass, no yodel, and fewer improvisation are used as well. Many features unite these two (complex and simpler) styles as well: use of the antiphonal alternation of two choirs, overlapping cadences, simple metre (almost the whole Gurian and most of western Georgian singing is based on the 4/4 metre), simple non-ornamented melodic lines, dissonant chords, cadences into unisons or fifths.

During our 1999 fieldwork in Georgia we (Nino Tsitsishvili and myself) specially recorded one of the most popular and not-so-difficult songs “I am going to Guria” from two of the brilliant improvisers of the Gurian song, Anzor Erkomaishvili from the famous Erkomaishvili family (leader of famous “Rustavi” choir), and Vazha Gogoladze from Chokhatauri. Nino and I provided two parts and the Gurian master-singers were asked to perform a few versions of each part of the song: easier, moderately improvised and very improvised versions. For those particularly interested

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in the improvisational techniques of Gurian singers, a comparison of all these versions could be highly interesting. Here is the very simple version of the song to give the reader an idea of it:

Ex. 34. Mival Guriashi. [I am going to Guria] Simple version (transcribed by Joseph Jordania)

Mi - val Gu - ri - a - shi ma - ra, sul - ma tsin - tsin ge - i - pa - ra,
 miv-di - c da ar mob-run - da da arts mi - i - go krta - ma - ad pa - ra da.
 A - ba - dc - lo dc - lo ov - di - la dc - la da a - ba - dc - lo, ov - di - la ra - ni - na
 da.

Here are only four versions of the **bass part** that can be performed with this song. Although we did record the variations of two top parts as well, it is obvious that the bass part has the biggest improvisational freedom, biggest number of versions (here are only two from each singer), and the biggest differences between the versions:

Fig. 5. Mival Guriashi, simple high parts with four different bass versions performed by Vazha Gogoladze and Anzor Erkomaishvili (only the first part of the song – bars 1-9. Transcribed by Nino Tsitsishvili)

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top parts (simple versions)

Vazha 1
Mi val Gu ri a shi ma ra sul tsin tsin

Vazha 2
Mi val Gu ri a shi ma ra da sul ma tsin tsin

Anzor 1
Mi val Gu ri a shi ma ra sul ma tsin tsin

Anzor 2
a - ba - de - la - va - a - he e - da he va he vo he a

2/4

V 1
ge i i pa ra — miv di e da ar da a bru — nda — da

V 2
ge — i pa ra miv di e da a — rda brun da da

A 1
ge i — pa ra ha ru di la mi vdi e da ar da brun — da

A 2
vai di la da da a ba de lo de lo de lo de lo di la vo da

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7

8

V 1
arts mi i gho krta mad pa ra da

V 2
arts mi i gho krta mad pa ra da

A 1
arts mi i gho krta ma ad pa ra da.

A 2
a ru di la va ha he he he va he i da a da

Interestingly, as Anzor Erkomaishvili told us after singing the most complicated contrapuntal bass version (version “Anzor 2”) for the song “I am going to Guria”, “I sang this because I wanted to show you that it is technically possible to sing this kind of very complex and active bass, but this does not fit this song aesthetically. So I would not sing such a version of the bass part in this song with Gurian singers” (interview from 9 July, 1999). As a matter of fact, in this very complex version Anzor used the elements of the trio bass from one of the versions of the famous Gurian contrapuntal song “Khasanbegoura”. This was the only version where no song lyrics were used by the base singer, instead, Anzor performed it using only the typical for the bass part meaningless vocables (like “a-ba-de-la, va-he, a-ru-di-la,” etc). Both singers strongly agreed that it would not fit the song if all three singers tried to do much improvisation simultaneously. According to both of them, a singer needs to listen to other singers, and when others sing the simple way, you are allowed to improvise. Then you will start singing the simpler version in the next section and allow others to do the improvising. It is not only improvisational skills that are valued. Good taste as to when and how much improvisation to use is the most valued characteristic for “master-singers”.

The idea of “master singers” (a term was suggested by N. Jordania, 1985) seems to be very important for an understanding of the extraordinary development of Gurian traditional polyphony. Singers who were experts of both folk and church singing traditions were called “*momgeral-mgalobeli*” (lit. “Singer and church-singer”) and held a very high status in society. Most musically talented children would be sent to their homes to learn the church-singing tradition (of course, if the parent could afford this). Master singers would usually be part of a long-running trio (mostly with

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two other master singers), and would often try to be at different public gatherings together with the members of their trio (to be able to sing together).

Gurian traditional singer Vazha Gogoladze, who died recently during a tour of Paris, told us during the 1999 fieldwork (and repeated again in 2003 during our meeting in Melbourne) about the musical evenings when the members of such trio of “master singers” would create a new song or a new version of a traditional song. According to Vazha’s words, that would usually happen around a table at night. “They would take some food and wine, of course, but not much, because they mostly wanted to enjoy singing, not drinking. Then someone might have an idea for a song, so he would sing a new phrase. Others would join in, trying to harmonize and to continue the idea. Sometimes they would stop singing and start discussing what would be the best way to go in this or another section of the song. This process could go well into the morning hours, and as a result they would have a new song or a new version of an existing song, to sing publicly for the next public gathering” (personal communication from 5 August, 2003). According to folklore tradition, a famous Gurian trio song with the atypical for trio songs yodeling and amazing contrapuntal mastery “Adila”, must have been created as a result of one of such “musical night”, and was perfected by dawn. The main creative force that night was the brilliant Gurian singer (bass) Varlam Simonishvili (1884-1950), and the song is credited to him. Here is about the half of the song “Adila”:

Ex. 35. Adila. Gurian trio song (first half) (Transcribed by Nino Tsitsishvili)

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system contains three staves: Krimanchuli (top, treble clef), Mtkmeli (middle, treble clef), and Bani (bottom, bass clef). The second system contains three staves: Krimanchuli (top, treble clef), Mtkmeli (middle, treble clef), and Bani (bottom, bass clef). The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 2/4. The score includes various musical notations such as rests, notes, and accidentals. A rehearsal mark '8' is placed at the beginning of the first staff in both systems.

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The image shows a musical score for a three-part polyphonic piece, spanning measures 15 to 21. The score is written for three staves: a soprano staff (top), an alto staff (middle), and a bass staff (bottom). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 8/8. The music is characterized by complex rhythmic patterns and dissonant intervals, typical of Georgian polyphony. The first system (measures 15-21) shows the beginning of the piece, with the soprano part starting with a melodic line that is echoed and varied by the alto and bass parts. The second system (measures 22-28) continues the polyphonic texture, with the soprano part featuring a prominent melodic line that is supported by the other two parts. The piece concludes with a final cadence in measure 28.

Different western Georgian dialects also feature elements that give them a special place in the tapestry of Georgian polyphonic tradition. The Imeretian dialect (the biggest region in western Georgia), for example, is famous for its riders' songs and for the flourishing tradition of European-style urban polyphonic songs (we'll discuss Georgian urban singing traditions a bit later); the Megrelian dialect is known for its combination of sharp dissonances with a very soft manner of singing (Megrelians also speak their own language); the Acharian dialect (the only region with Moslem Georgians in western Georgia) has two very different styles: (1) the so-called Kobuletian region is very close to the Gurian style of complex three- and four-part polyphony (according to some scholars, residents in this part of Acharians are Gurians who were under Turkish rule and changed their religion), and (2) the so-called Shavsheti region with a two-part polyphonic singing tradition (the only region with two-part singing in western Georgia. Garakanidze, 1991). And of course, there are two very important mountain regions in western Georgia apart from the plain regions discussed above: Svaneti and Racha. Some researchers also separate the Lechkhumi dialect (for example, Garakanidze, 1991).

Traditional Polyphony in Svaneti

Svaneti (particularly the so-called "upper Svaneti") holds a special place in Georgian ethnographic literature. This is the most mountainous region of Georgia (the

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mountains here are over 5000 metres high), completely cut off for a good half of the year from the rest of the world. Svanetians are the tallest people in Georgia (and one of the tallest in Europe) with their own linguistically very archaic Svanetian language, archaic non-rhythmic poetry, impressive 8-12th century family towers (still in everyday use), and a fiercely egalitarian society (they have never been under anybody's rule, including any of the local noblemen). Together with this variety of archaic features, Svanetians have quite outstanding polyphonic traditions (Araqishvili, 1950).

The following set of features will give the reader a general picture of Svanetian vocal polyphony: (1) all Svanetian songs are three-part (except for a few solo monophonic genres, sung mostly by women); (2) the great majority of Svanetian traditional songs are (or grow into) round-dances; (3) starting relatively slowly, Svanetian song-dances usually get faster by the end (4) unlike many other traditions of Georgian dialects, the melodic range of Svanetian songs is very narrow (usually within the fourth); (5) although dissonances are one of the most characteristic features of all regional styles in Georgia, they play a particularly important role in Svanetian polyphonic songs; (6) ostinato formulae and parallel movement of the voices ("chordal unit polyphony") leads in Svanetian polyphony, although a rhythmic drone is also important; (7) unlike most other Georgian singing traditions, where the mens' and womens' singing is gender-segregated, in Svaneti the men and women often sing and dance together; (8) the singing volume in Svaneti is extremely loud; (9) most Svanetian songs are performed as the antiphon alternation of two choirs (sometimes competing with each other in loudness and endurance); (10) syllables and words that do not have any meaning are very widely used in Svanetian songs (some songs are completely built on nonsense syllables).

If we add here that some of the geographical names from the Upper Svanetian region and mythology that do not have any current meanings, are mentioned in written sources from the ancient Sumer from Mesopotamia (creators of the first written language in the history of civilization, a language which was already dead about four millennia ago), the range of archaic features of Svanetian culture will be clearer for the reader. Here is an example of a Svanetian round dance, which starts slowly and finishes very fast, and is performed as an antiphon, and a big part of famous "Lile", a ritual song dedicated to the cult of the Sun:

Ex. 36. Svanetian Round Dance (Garakanidze, Jordania, 2004:96)

o - re - ra - i - u do, o - re - ra do, o - i, o - re - ra, o - re - ra.

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5
Il coro
 o o - re - ra - i - u do, o - re - ra do, o - i, o - re - ra, o - re - ra.

8
I coro
 o o - re - rai da di - la, va - di - la, va - di - la, o - re - rai da o, o.

13
Il coro
 o o - re - rai - da di - la, va - di - la, va - di - la o - re - rai - da o, o.
accelerando

17
I coro **Il coro**
 o o - re - rai - da ra - mai da, o - re - rai da ra - mai da. o o - re - rai da ra - mai da,

20
I coro *poco a poco Agitato*
 o - re - rai da ra - mai da, o o - sa re - ra, re - ra, - o - re - ra, o - re - ra, o - re - ra, do

23
Il coro **I coro**
 oo - sa re - ra, re - ra, o - re - ra, o - re - ra, o - re - ra, o o - sa re - ra, o - re - ra da,

Presto

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Il coro

26
8
oo - sa re - ra, o - re ra.
o - sa re ra, ra-mai da, - o - sa o - ru - di-la, ra - mai - da, - o -

Ex. 37. Lile. Ritual song dedicated to cult of sun. The first half. (Garakanidze, Jordania, 2004:80)

8
O, Li-le o, Is-gva mi, di-da - bi
8
o, bin-go - ia, shi - le - da - i, voi-di - vo - o,
15
8
li - le (oi) Voi - di-vo - o, li - le - o, di-da bi,

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22
8
di - da - bi - o, tar - lc - ia, zcr - si - da - i

Racha, neighbouring Svaneti, is another very interesting region, although archaisms are not as evident and as deep in Racha as in Svaneti. Rachian men and women also often sing together like Svanetians (and unlike people from most of the other Georgian regions), and melodies of the so-called “mountain Racha” group (geographically and ethnographically closest to the Svanetians) also have a small range. But, unlike Svanetian singing, at least some Rachian songs have obvious influences of the eastern Georgian singing style (pedal drone, mildly ornamented melody and specific modulations). Unlike the Svanetians, who still widely use dialects of their own mostly unwritten Svan language, Rachians use the Georgian language.

Religious music

The East Georgian state Iberia was among the first states of the world to officially become Christian in 337. Georgian historians and musicologists believe that in the first few centuries the Christian rites were performed in Greek with monophonic singing. At around the 7th or 8th centuries the Georgian language and polyphonic singing tradition must have penetrated the church. According to the written sources polyphonic singing music must have been well established in Georgian liturgy by the 10-11th centuries (Javakhishvili, 1990, Iashvili, 1977). In the 11th century, when the Greek orthodox canonic liturgy was translated into Georgian, special professional help was sought to make them polyphonic (possibly three-part). The Georgian linguist Zurab Chavchavadze made a brilliant suggestion that the term “Organ”, used in medieval Georgian literature to describe the expertise of the knowledgeable person who was put in charge of making the “alien Greek sound closer to Georgian”, was denoting not a musical instrument, but “Organum”, the medieval term for the early European type of vocal polyphony (Chavchavadze, 1986, 1993:34-36). Interestingly, the term “*Organa*” from the well-known medieval literary source of Giraldus Cambrensis (1200) was an enigma for British musicologists as well. Lloyd Hibberd’s interpretation that “*Organa*” was not an “Organ or “Instruments”, but “polyphony” – “Organum” (Hibberd, 1955) was gladly accepted by most music historians. The closeness of the medieval British and Georgian use of the term “organ” is obvious. In the works of the Georgian philosopher Ioane Petritsi (11-12th centuries) the author makes symbolic parallels between the Christian Trinity

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and the three parts of the Georgian church singing tradition, and mentions the then-existing names of three parts: “*Mzakhr*”, *Zhir*”, and “*Bam*”.

The religious music of Georgia, like traditional music, has been traditionally divided into two – eastern Georgian and western Georgian branches, although today Georgian scholars prefer to speak about different local schools, rather than east-west differences (Shugliashvili, 2000). After the “Golden Age” of the Georgian state and culture (11-12th centuries) hard times brought numerous invasions during the 13th-18th centuries. Maybe the hardest time for the Georgian church-singing tradition was the first half of the 19th century, when Georgian singing was banned in Georgian churches by Russian authorities. By 1860, with the rising of nationalist movements throughout European countries, a special committee was created in Georgia to look after the Georgian church-singing tradition. According to available information, by the 1860s representatives of one school in eastern Georgia and three schools of western Georgian church singing were still alive. Out of these three western Georgian schools one (the Khundadze school) was closest to the eastern Georgian school. Another school, mentioned sometimes as the Shemokmedi school (according to the name of a village), or Erkomaishvili school (according to the family of the tradition bearers) continued the church-singing tradition the longest (until the 1960s). One of the last survivors of this school, the famous Artem Erkomaishvili (grandfather of Anzor Erkomaishvili), was still using the specific neumatic signs to enhance his memory remembering thousands of church songs (neumatic notation was an early medieval system or music writing in Europe, invented around A.D. 800, and indicating the approximate movement of melodic lines, without precise reference to pitch). This school-singing tradition was the most complex and most distant from the only eastern Georgian tradition recorded by the end of the 19th century by Karbelashvili family members. According to the important study of David Shugliashvili, both eastern and western Georgian church songs are based on the same set of canonic melodies, and the difference mainly arises in the ways the melodies are harmonized by the second and third (middle and bass) parts (Shugliashvili, 2000).

Traditional and professional (religious) polyphony in Georgia have always influenced each other. It was traditional polyphony that influenced the initial monophonic tradition of early Christian church singing and turned it polyphonic (as in many other countries of the Europe). Good church singers were good experts in traditional music as well and would sing both in the church and at social events. Church songs were always performed at these social events (usually at the beginning of the *supra*-feast). The most active interaction between the church and traditional polyphony must have occurred during the 19th century, when Georgian church singing was officially banned from Georgian churches by the Russian authorities, and for a few decades the tradition of church singing was kept alive in the families of church singers. Nugzar Jordania proposed the idea that the extremely developed polyphonic tradition of the ensemble of three individual singers in Guria was the result of the influence of the church-singing tradition and was initially created by church-singers (Jordania N., 1985).

[Readers might be a bit confused by mentioning of the works of different Jordania’s, so maybe I need to explain the readers that I come from the family of

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ethnomusicologists. Nugzar Jordania is my younger brother, and Mindia Jordania (1929-1979) was our father. Luckily, in Georgia wives usually do not change their names after marriage, otherwise two other ethnomusicologists from our family – Nino Tsitsishvili and Marina Kvizhinadze – would have increased the number of Jordania-ethnomusicologists to five.]

The slow melodic development of most of the trio songs, the very elaborate non-couplet form with asymmetrical musical sentences, specific cadences finishing the musical sentence on two interlocked fifths (F-C-G) – all point to the closeness of the trio tradition to the church-singing tradition of western Georgia.

Here are the typical examples of West Georgian and East Georgian church-songs:

Ex. 38. Zhamta da Tselta. [Epochs and years] West Georgian church song (Garakanidze, Jordania, 2004:110)

Maestoso $\text{♩} = 84$

z'a - mta da ts'e - lta xel - mts'i - p'e - bi - ta g'mert -

mta - vro - bi - sa she - mo - k'me - do, u - p'a - lo. sa - mgva - mo - vne - bit,

di - de - bu - lo, k'e - bu - lo, er - ta sa - ta - khva - i - a - nis - tse - mu - lo.

a - tsxo - vnen k'mnil - ni shen - ni, a - ts'tsa mo - ts'e - vni - li. da -

sa - ba - msa mo - su - li - sa - i - a, z'a - mi - sa mo - k'tse - vi - sa - sa

rit.

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Ex. 39. Romelni Kerubinta. [Cherubs] East Georgian church song. (Garakanidze, Jordania, 2004:107)

Adagio $\text{♩} = 50$

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of six systems of staves. The first system (measures 1-4) has lyrics 'ro - mel - ni k'e -'. The second system (measures 5-8) has lyrics 'ru - bin - t'a'. The third system (measures 10-13) has lyrics 'sa - i - dum'. The fourth system (measures 14-18) has lyrics 'lod'. The fifth system (measures 19-23) has lyrics 've - msga - vse'. The sixth system (measures 24-27) has lyrics 'nit''. The score includes a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a common time signature (C). The tempo is marked 'Adagio' with a quarter note equal to 50 beats per minute. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and a more active treble line with chords and melodic fragments. Measure numbers 5, 10, 14, 19, and 24 are indicated at the start of their respective systems.

Urban Music

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The urban singing style in Georgia must have started with the creation of the first cities on the territory of Georgia. Tbilisi became the capital of Georgia in the 5th century, and from the 11th century up to the first half of the 20th century became the economical and cultural capital of Transcaucasia with its multicultural and cosmopolitan population. Being on the crossroads between Asia and Europe, Tbilisi harbored an array of extremely talented musicians from different backgrounds (mostly of Middle Eastern ethnic origin, and particularly Armenian musicians, including the famous Sayat-Nova). As a result of this interaction with Middle Eastern music, eastern melodies with ornamented melodies and augmented seconds appeared in Georgian cities. Part of these traditions remained very close to the Middle Eastern original style and had a somewhat smaller circle of admirers, but part of this music became very popular among a wider range of Georgians. These Middle Eastern songs, originally monophonic melodies, became polyphonic (three-part) when performed by feasting Georgians. This style was (and still is) distributed in Tbilisi and a few other cities of eastern Georgia.

Ex. 40. Patara Gogo Damekarga [I have lost a little girl]. Urban song (Transcribed by Joseph Jordania)

Pa-ta-ra go-go - da-me-ka-rga tsi-te-el
 pe-ran-ga. an av-li-li-a-an cha-
 da-da-da-da - dam-dam,
 vli-li, khom a-ar gi-na - kha - - - avt
 da-da-da-da - dam-dam.

Besides this style, known under the name of the “Eastern branch of Georgian urban music”, there was another urban singing style in Georgia, influenced by European professional music. This style appeared much later, with the first contacts of

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Georgia with European music with the guitar-accompanied Russian romance and performances at the Opera House, which opened in Tbilisi in 1850 and became very popular almost overnight. Georgians from both the eastern and western parts of Georgia became very enthusiastic about this new music and new harmonies. Many of the popular arias of Italian operas were rearranged in three-part urban a cappella style and are still sung (with Georgian lyrics) as a part of the Georgian urban tradition.

Two sub-types of the western branch of urban music became popular very quickly: (1) guitar-accompanied lyrical songs, and (2) a cappella choral songs. Both of these traditions are mostly three-part (sometimes the fourth part can be added as well) The two top parts move mostly in parallel thirds (and sometimes sixths), with the main melody in the middle part, and the bass mostly follows the European TSD harmonic system. Here is an example of the three-part a cappella urban “*Mravalzhamier*”, and often a guitar-accompanied lyrical song “*Suliko*”:

Ex. 41. Kutaisi Mravalzhamier [good wishes song from Kutaisi, second largest city of Georgia, centre of western Georgia] (Garakanidze, Jordania, 2004:45)

Grave

mra-val-z'a-mi er, mra-val-z'a-mi er, mra-val-z'a-mi er, mra-val-z'a-mi er,

Ex. 42. Suliko. Urban love song. (Garakanidze, Jordania, 2004:8)

Sa-kva-r-lis-sa-plavs ve-dze-bdi, ver vna-khe da-kar-gu-li-ko.

5
8 gu-la-mo-skvni-li vti-ro-di, shen-xom a-ra-khar su-li-ko.

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Araqishvili wrote at the beginning of the 20th century that the urban singing tradition was having a negative influence on Georgian traditional polyphony. This influence was mostly felt in the increase of parallel thirds between the two top melodic parts (instead of the traditional more adventurous and often dissonant coordination between the melodic parts).

Scale systems

Before starting to read this section, I would advise non-musicians to skip this section due to its excessive technical nature. Although, if you can follow the argument, you need to know that although scales generally are a theoretical abstraction, they are as important and as interesting “building blocks” for musical styles, as perhaps DNA is for genetic studies. So let me briefly discuss the scale systems that are used in Georgian polyphonic songs.

Scales were traditionally one of the most popular topics for Georgian ethnomusicologists. Starting from the works of Araqishvili (1905, 1954), followed by Aslanishvili (1954), and particularly by numerous publications by Gulisashvili, M. Jordania and Chokhonelidze, scales were always of special interest to Georgian musicologists and ethnomusicologists. In the 1970s scales were the leading topic of research, overshadowing even the studies of traditional polyphony. Scholars noted the existence of several most important diatonic scales (Araqishvili, Aslanishvili) and some rare scales, like anhemitonic pentatonic, tetratonic, Locrian, altered (chromatic) scales (Jordania, M, 1959, 1971, 1971a, 1979), or Locrian, Hypolocrian, Lydian and Hypolydian scales (Gulisashvili, 1971, 1971a).

In my opinion the biggest contribution in the studies of scale systems of Georgian traditional polyphonic music came from Vladimer Gogotishvili, a purely “armchair” music theorist, who has never conducted a fieldwork. In his few publications (for example, see 1983, 2003) Gogotishvili put forward the idea that Georgian scales are not an octave (octave meant “eight”, and octave scales have eight note repetitive structure) scales. Instead, in Georgia they are based mostly on the repetition of five-note scale units (pentachords) or four-note units (tetrachords). Tetrachordal (four note), or fourth diatonic systems of the scales are very well known from ancient musical manuscripts from ancient Greece and the Arabian world, but of the discovery that the scale system was based on five notes (pentachords), or “fifths diatonic scales” was crucial for a correct understanding of Georgian traditional and medieval professional polyphony. Let us compare these three systems of scales: (1) eight, (2) fifths, and (3) fourth systems:

Fig. 6. Scales of eight, fifths and fourth diatonic

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According to the intrinsic nature of the scales and intervals, out of these three so-called “perfect” intervals (eight, fourth, fifth) only one can remain perfect in any system of scale. If the musical style is based on the eight (octave) diatonic system, only eights are always perfect, in the fourth diatonic system only fourths are always perfect, and in the fifths diatonic only fifths are always perfect. In the eight diatonic system augmented fourth and diminished fifth are present, in the fifths diatonic system both fourth and eight are sometimes augmented (e.g., see C-F# and C-C#), and in fourth diatonic system both fifths and octave are sometimes diminished (e.g., see B-F, E-Bflat, or B-Bflat, E-Eflat and A-Aflat).

All our music education is firmly based on octave scales (even the name of the notes and keys on the piano are based on octave scales, as we use only seven notes, and the eighth note is considered to be the same note as the first one (remember seven notes from school music lessons: A,B,C,D,E,F,G and then again A,B,C,D,E,F,G etc). If we were to use only “fourth” scale systems, we would have to learn only three notes: A, B, C, and again A,B,C (as the fourth note would be the same as the first one). In fifths scales, accordingly, we would have a string of A,B,C,D, and again A,B,C,D (the fifths note being the same as the first one).

These three types of scales are interestingly linked with different styles of music in different major regions of the world. To generalize, we may say that “fourth” (or tetrachordal) scales are more prominent in Middle Eastern monophonic traditions. In these traditions the interval of the fourth is paramount and this is clear from ancient Greek and medieval Arabic musical theoretical writings.

The “fifth” (or pentachordal) scales seem to be more prominent in polyphonic traditions. At least, this scale system is obvious in such widely separated polyphonic cultures as Georgian and Icelandic (we’ll discuss Icelandic music later in this chapter).

In Georgian traditional polyphonic music the dominant scale system is the “Fifth Diatonic Scale”. This scale dominates in all branches of western Georgian music, and in most of the musical genres of eastern Georgia as well. In eastern Georgian “long” table songs the presence of this scale is obvious only *under* the central tone (pedal drone) (Gogotishvili, 2003).

The “Fourth Diatonic Scale” system in Georgia is more regionally restricted. In its pure form it exists only in solo monophonic working songs of eastern Georgia.

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In polyphonic songs it exists in “long” table songs of eastern Georgia, but only *above* the central tone (pedal drone). Therefore, eastern Georgian table songs have a very interesting mixture of different – “fourth” and “fifths” - scale systems, “working” above and below the tonal centre (tonal centre in these songs is expressed by the pedal drone).

Melody in polyphony

Melody is popularly known as the “soul of the music”. We may have all heard complaints how the music is losing the beauty of the melody, or even worse – losing the melody *per se*.

Analyzing Georgian traditional polyphonic songs, I came to a very strange (for me, and shocking for some of my Georgian colleagues) conclusion, that Georgian polyphonic songs are not built around the “main melody” of a song. Even such brilliant songs as “Chakrulo” or “Khasanbegoura” are not built around the main melody. That’s why, for example, you cannot sing the melody of “Chakrulo”. The musical texture consists of more than one melodic line, and none of them carries the important function of being the main melody of a song. Georgian polyphonic songs are usually built on relatively short musical phrases that can be the same in many different songs. Of course, there are Georgian songs that have their own distinct melodies (to name only a few: “Chela”, “Imeretian Rider’s Song”, or “Iavnana”), but the majority of the most complex polyphonic songs have no one leading melody. The song is usually a combination of all parts and not the one leading melody accompanied by other parts. The combination of these three parts represent the “soul of music” in Georgian polyphonic music. I guess a few representatives of other polyphonic cultures would agree that in their cultures also there is no such thing as a “main melody of a song”, and rather that the combination of all parts delivers the main musical idea of a song.

Unlike polyphonic traditions, in monophonic cultures the melodic line of a song is usually strictly personalized and represents the very soul of the music.

Singing men and singing women

Gender differences are one of the great subjects of traditional music (and not only music). The subject is so vast that at some point I was thinking not to tackle this subject in this book at all. (As a matter of fact, as I am writing this text, in another study Nino Tsitsishvili is working on a book mainly dedicated to this incredibly interesting and important subject in Georgian music). At the same time, to avoid this theme completely would not be fair. At least, we should remember that Alan Lomax wrote about the incredible importance of women’s singing and women’s role in society for the origins of cohesive group polyphonic singing in traditional societies, so it is obvious that we cannot avoid this question. So in just a few words I want to discuss this subject in regards to Georgia.

The general popular perception of Georgian traditional polyphony is that it is exclusively a men’s tradition. Men sing the most complex polyphonic songs – from eastern Georgian “long” table songs to western Georgian complex contrapuntal songs, including the four-part harvest songs “Naduri” and the incredible “Trio” songs. As

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you would expect, women sing family-circle songs: lullabies, dirges, and some older ritual songs. Georgian women's singing is polyphonic as well (two and three-part drone polyphony), although not as complex and technically developed as the men's tradition. Because of this concerts of Georgian traditional music are always heavily dominated by men's ensembles, some of my non-Georgian friends have even had the impression (after listening few of Georgisan CDs) that only men sing polyphonic songs in Georgia.

The strict gender division in Georgian singing is generally considered to be an ancient trait, but there are facts that should be taken into account as well. (In family singing occasions, of course, mixed performances were usual for most of regions, but we are talking now about major social events and ritual performances.) Most importantly, the most archaic musical dialect of Georgia, Svaneti, displays mixed performances of traditional polyphonic songs and round dances. Both Araqishvili and Paliashvili noted in the very beginning of the 20th century that Svanetian men and women always sang together. In mountainous Racha the same occurs. So why should we consider the strict gender segregation of the mostly plain regions of Georgia more archaic than the mixed performances of the most isolated, archaic and mountainous regions? Would it not be more plausible to propose that social factors (and most importantly – the pressure of the Christian religion) had the greatest role in segregating the singing traditions of men and women? We must also remember, that men were almost the sole carriers and beneficiaries of the professional medieval tradition of Georgian church singing, and women virtually did not have access to this, the only available professional education of the epoch (Tsitsishvili, 2004). Musically talented women were mostly appreciated as the carriers of good musical genes for their children (Erkomaishvili, 1988:11-12), whereas musically talented men would become professional musicians. Even by the end of the 20th century you can still come across the attitude when the father pushes his son's professional musical education despite the fact that, according to his (father's) own words, "the daughter is much more talented" (Tsitsishvili, 2006).

Conclusions

To conclude this section about Georgian music, I would like to say that despite the huge amount of research still needed in different areas of Georgian traditional music, Georgian traditional polyphony is perhaps among the best-researched polyphonic tradition of Europe. Several generations of Georgian musicologists and ethnomusicologists from the end of the 19th century, as well as non-Georgian scholars contributed to this process. Some of the works of European scholars will be discussed in the second part of this book, when we will talk about the comparative aspects of Georgian traditional polyphony. More than 20 years of scholarly tradition of organizing international conferences and symposia on traditional polyphony, held in Georgia (from 1984 onwards) and the establishment of the International research Centre of Traditional Polyphony (with the help of UNESCO) in 2002 greatly contributed to the flow of finances, technical equipment and renowned international scholars, experts in traditional polyphony, to Georgia.

Balkans

The Balkans are one of the most polyphonic areas of Europe and possibly the world. All the countries represented here have polyphonic singing, although the proportions do vary. In some countries only a part of the country practices polyphonic singing (as in Romania, Bulgaria or Greece). In other countries (for example, in more than half of Albania and virtually all the countries of the former Yugoslavia) vocal polyphony is very widely spread. Let us have a brief look at each of the Balkan countries.

Romania

Most Romanian traditional vocal music is monophonic (solo or unison), although there are some “rudimentary forms of heterophony and polyphony” in some regions in some particular genres, as Valeriu Apan mentions. He names the following exceptions: “funeral songs sung by two groups of women (in some parts of Banat, Transylvania, and Oltenia); laments sung by a woman leader and a group of women (Banat); songs sung by mixed groups of men and women during the nights of death vigils (Moldavia); wedding ceremonial songs sung by men (Bihor) and mixed groups (Hunedoara-Transylvania); carols sung by men (south Transylvania); quatrains sung by girls during evening working parties (Bihor); and children’s songs connected to different dance-games, found all over the country” (Apan, 2000:879).

And of course, the so-called “Aromanians” (Macedonians) who came to Romania from different regions of the Balkans have the most developed traditions of polyphonic singing in Romania. Their songs are always performed by two groups in antiphon, either in unison or in polyphony. G. Marcu distinguishes two vocal polyphonic styles among Macedonians in Romania: the first one is connected to “Pinderi” (Macedonians from the Pindul mountains) and “Gramusteni” (mostly from Epir - northern Greece), and the second one is connected to “Farsheroti”, a shepherd population from North Greece and the Albanian district of Corcea. In the first style most of the singers sing the main tune in unison (or heterophonic) style. The rest sing the second part (often the drone). In both styles the vertical coordination of parts is often based on dissonant “barbarian” intervals (Dumitrescu, 1977:12). The tradition of polyphonic singing is particularly strong among the Farsheroti Macedonians, who constitute the second polyphonic style: “The Farsheroti Macedonians can hardly accept the idea of singing individually or homophonically. If you happen to ask one of them to sing by himself, he will answer that he cannot unless he has someone to ‘cut his voice’ and at last one more to accompany him. And this is true, indeed. The tunes of the Farsheroti are built in such a way as to make them unable to achieve the complete musical shape unless sung by a group” (Marcu, 1977:41-42). Another specific feature of the Farsheroti singing style is the wide use of melismas and the rubato-style free flow of the musical composition. Polyphonic singing is mostly three-part, with two main melodic lines, singing against a background of a drone bass sung by a big group of singers. Here are typical examples of Macedonian polyphony from Romania:

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Ex. 43. Romania (Marcu, 1977:127-128)



Ex. 44. Romania (Marcu, 1977:206)



Bulgaria

Bulgarian traditional polyphony is one of the best known in the world, reaching the commercial music market in the 1980s and involving popular mega-star artists and producers (like George Harrison). Of course, it was mostly the superb arrangements of Bulgarian composers that became extremely popular (and not the original unarranged traditional songs), but the Bulgarian traditional singing style with dissonant seconds and the cutting open style of singing was the crucial element and the real star in the great success of Bulgarian traditional polyphony in the 1980s.

Bulgarian polyphony is one of the best studied in the world by several generations of Bulgarian ethnomusicologists. Starting from the end of the 19th century, when the traditions of vocal polyphony were brought to the attention by Angel Bukoreshtliev, and then in 1925, when Vasil Stoin wrote about the possible Bulgarian origins of two-part singing in Europe (at that time almost none of the other Balkan polyphonic traditions were known) Bulgarian ethnomusicology went a long way and rightfully boasts an array of important works on Bulgarian traditional polyphony (Kaufman, 1963, 1968; Katarova-Kukudova, 1962; Kaufman, Todorov, 1967, Stoin, E., 1970. Earlier part of Bulgarian scholarship was reviewed by Barbara Krader (1969).

Heavily supported during the Communist regime in Bulgaria, the polyphonic singing style with dissonant seconds became a symbol of national music in Bulgaria, although in recent “post-communist” years the popularity of other genres (for example, wedding instrumental ensembles) has increased and the popularity of choral

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polyphonic singing, devoid of state support, somehow dropped (Rice, 1994). One of the possible reasons for this could be the fact, that despite the international success and the status of a national musical symbol, the tradition of vocal polyphony is spread through only a relatively small part of Bulgaria – in the Southwestern quarter of the country. Therefore the tradition of polyphonic singing does not represent the majority of the population of Bulgaria.

The “polyphonic corner” of Bulgaria (the Southwestern part of the country) is traditionally divided into four regions: Pirin, central-western Bulgaria, Velingrad, and the Pazardjik-Ihtiman region (for slightly different regional division see Rice, 1977, 2003). Drone polyphony leads throughout the polyphonic traditions. The drone is usually performed by a few singers, and the melodic line is performed by a soloist (or soloists). Most of the polyphonic songs are performed by women. The men’s tradition of vocal polyphony is known from the village Nedelino in Rhodope Mountains. Men mostly play instruments at weddings and, as professionals, have a good income (unlike the singing women). Antiphonic performance is very widely spread. Maybe the best-known feature of Bulgarian songs is their sharp dissonant sound, based on the frequent use of dissonant intervals (particularly seconds). Here are some examples from the Pirin region, where the rhythm can be free:

Ex. 45. Bulgaria, Pirin. (Kaufman, 1968:90, #123)



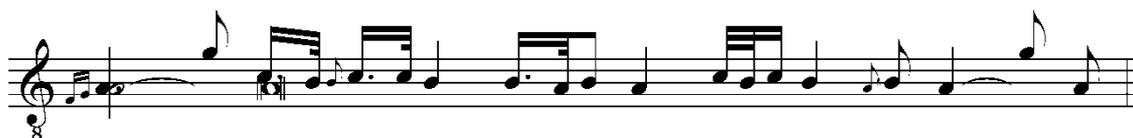
Ex. 46. Bulgaria, Pirin. (Kaufman, 1968:75, #92)



A different character is present in central-western Bulgaria. This region is better known as the “Shop Region”, or “Shopluka” in Bulgarian. The art of clashing seconds is brought to its highest point here, and the rhythm is usually relentless. Although most Bulgarian polyphony is based on two-part singing, there have been examples of three-part singing recorded in “Shop Region” (see the last Bulgarian example). Another tradition of three-part singing, known from earlier publications as two-part singing, was discovered and studied independently by Gerald Florian Messner and Tim Rice (Rice, 1977; Messner, 1980). Katarova-Kukudova (1962) studied three- and four-part polyphony elements when two antiphonic groups merge together. Here are few more polyphonic examples from Bulgaria:

Ex. 47. Bulgaria. (Kaufman, 1968:15, #42)

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Ex. 48. Bulgaria. (Kaufman, 1968:24, #3)



Ex. 49. Bulgaria. Three-part singing. (Kaufman, 1968:130, #205)



Serbia

Unlike the Bulgarian traditions of vocal polyphony that are spread through only the Southwestern part of the country, a big part of Serbian ethnic territory is quite homogenous in terms of the distribution of the tradition of vocal polyphony. The only region where vocal polyphony has not been documented is Southwest Serbia and Kosovo (where Serbs actually represent the minority. Forry, 2000a:953).

Two main regional styles of vocal polyphony can be distinguished in Serbia: eastern and western. The difference between them is mostly expressed in the position of the main melody and the accompanying part. The eastern Serbian polyphonic style (or more precisely, the Southeastern style) is quite close to the Bulgarian and Macedonian styles, with the drone in the lower part and the predominance of sharp secondal dissonances. Only two-part singing has been documented here. Songs are always performed by the soloist and a group of basses. Soloist always starts the song and the group (drone) joins the soloist with a drone. The lead melody usually has a small range (third or fourth). The drone is often pedal (sung on “a”). The rhythm is free (rubato). Serbs sing with open voice, with a tense sound, emphasizing and obviously enjoying dissonant intervals.

Unlike the Southeastern style of Serbian polyphony, according to Forry, the western style positions the accompanying part higher than the main melody (Forry, 2000a:942-943). In the western (or Northwestern) Serbian polyphonic style, unlike the Southeastern style, both parts move, so it is not as easy to label them easily as “main” and “accompanying”. The lower voice of the western Serbian polyphonic style is more melodically active, mostly because of the downwards jumping performance style. Despite melodic activity, this part still might be the accompanying

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part. This part is closer to the specific accompanying part in some Balkan polyphonic styles (for example, among the Labs from Albania). Among the Labs this part sings a repetitive downwards-jumping melody just under the drone. In Serbia this part behaves in the same way, although there is no drone in this Serbian style and this part follows the top part in a more heterophonic manner. The cadences are of particular interest, as here heterophony changes into a drone-like section with the sharp second. The scale system is very specific for this region. It represents an interesting mixture of elements of chromatic and diatonic scales (for example: F, Gflat, and A double flat in some songs). The same type of scale is spread among the neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina polyphonic songs as well. Here is an example of small-range dissonant two-part singing from Serbia:

Ex. 50. West Serbia. (Kaufman, 1968:#263)



As in many other parts of the Europe, there is a late polyphonic style in Serbia as well, based on the use of parallel thirds, and finishing on a cadencial fifth at the end of the musical phrases. The bass makes a specific cadencial movement from the initial tonic a fourth downwards. Interestingly, this late style sometimes also uses the drone in the accompanying part:

Both the more archaic style (with the use of dissonant seconds) and the recent style (based on parallel thirds) are based on two-part polyphony (Golemovich, 1983):

Ex. 51. Serbia. Recent polyphonic style. (Golemovich, 1983:#58)



Montenegro

Montenegro, a small mountainous country, is a part of Serbia and Montenegro state unity. The Montenegrins still mostly live in predominantly agricultural societies and retain many elements of their traditional culture. Unfortunately, although scholars of a few other countries did a series of fieldwork and publications, due to the lack of a national school of ethnomusicology, the traditional music of Montenegro is possibly the least studied among the Balkan peoples. Ethnomusicologists note the existence of four regional musical styles in Montenegro (Petrovich, 2000:957). According to the available incomplete information from Montenegro, unlike most of the Balkan countries, the Montenegro singing tradition is mostly monophonic (solo). The tradition of vocal polyphony has been documented only in the Southwestern part of Montenegro, on the border with Herzegovina. Here on both sides of the border the

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same “Balkan” style of polyphony is documented, based on the wide use of drone and the coordination of parts in major seconds. This kind of polyphony, according to Petrovich, “occurs in shepherds’ and wedding songs of the Southwest region of Montenegro” (Petrovich, 2000:958). Interestingly, Albanian migrants from the mountainous area of Malesi (the Montenegro-Albanian border), the so-called “Malisori”, also sing polyphonically in Montenegro. Here is a rare published example of Montenegro two-part singing with almost constant sounding seconds:

Ex. 52. Montenegro. (Messner, 1980:356)



Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Bosnian and Herzegovian rural areas were mostly isolated from the major developments of social and economical infrastructure and retained a big part of their traditional culture. Their culture represents a mixture of the elements of the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods. As a result of the efforts of visiting Czech folklorist Ludvik Kuba (in 1889) and native scholars (particularly Cvjetko Rihtman few decades later) the tradition of vocal polyphony was brought to the attention of European ethnomusicologists relatively early. Polyphonic singing is widespread throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. The main type of polyphony is drone. The drone is usually performed by a group of singers, and the main melody is performed by a soloist. The melody usually has a small range (third or fourth). Two-part singing dominates, although a three-part singing tradition has also been documented.

In eastern Herzegovina the melodic line often uses special techniques: shaking of the voice (“*potresanie*”) and exclamations on “*oi*” (“*oikanie*”). These techniques are used in table songs, which survived despite the hostile attitude towards the table (and drinking) traditions of the official Moslem religion. The drone often consists of two components: the so-called “straight voice” (the pedal drone) and the ornamented drone with added small ornaments. This added ornamented drone is traditionally mentioned as a “sobbing” (*jekanie*) or “cutting” (*sjecanie*) voice. Melodies develop in a specific manner as a “crawling” across often the half-tone intervals. The range of each part is often very narrow (minor third),

Ex. 53. Bosnia and Herzegovina. (Rihtman, 1953:#25)

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The new style of vocal polyphony (called *na bas*), influenced by European professional polyphony, has been documented in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the beginning of the 20th century. This style is based on parallel thirds and specific cadencial fifths. Interesting examples of the mixture of old and new polyphonic styles has been also documented: “Older versions of Bosnian *na bas* singing sometimes use seconds in alternation with thirds” (Petrovich, 2000:964)

Ex. 54. Bosnia and Herzegovina, mixture of the elements of the old and new polyphonic styles (Rihtman, 1953:#117)



Croatia

Vocal polyphony plays an important part in Croatian traditional music, although there are differences in regional styles.

The Dinaric Alps arguably represent the most ancient layers of Croatian singing style. The reason for this long survival is well known for countries with mountains: “When the lowlands were depopulated by war and the coasts harried by invaders, Dinaric communities retained their integrity” (Forry, 2000:927). The earlier layers of this region are based on the local traditions of polyphony with narrow-interval scales.

Ex. 55. Croatia. Older style polyphony (Czekanowska, 1983:148, #77)



The tradition of a specific “shaking” (throat thrill) style is characteristic, for example, for the district of Sinj: “the initial singer ‘drives’ (*goni*) the opening syllabic recitation and ‘sing *voj*’ (*voika* – “holds a long note”), while the second voice ‘shakes’ (*trESE* – ‘performs a glottal ornament’)” (Bezic, 1967-1968, cited from Forry, 2000:926).

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Another Croatian polyphonic style, widely distributed in other areas of the Balkans, is a more contemporary singing style “*na bas*”. In this style (which is believed to have been introduced to Croatia from Slovenia) the melody range is wider (often a sixth), the accompanying part often moves in parallel thirds with the main melody, and in the cadences goes a fourth down in a final sound of the fifths. Another element of polyphonic music in this region is the abundance of polyphonic aerophones (double flutes and reeds). The music played on them is closely connected to the vocal singing style.

Another interesting region is the Istrian Peninsula and a few islands (including the island Krk). The traditional scale here is so specific that it is known as the “Istrian scale” (this scale represents a very peculiar succession of a tone-semitone combination within diminished fifths: C, D, Eflat, F, Gflat). Polyphonic singing here is mostly based on the parallel movements of minor thirds (or the reversed interval – major sixths).

Musical instruments are a very important element of local polyphonic traditions, playing two-part music based on the above-mentioned Istrian Scale. In some other regions (for example, Dalmatia) monophony prevails. Generally, the new style of polyphonic singing (*na bas*) is much more widespread throughout Croatia than the old traditional style with narrow intervals. Pannonia is thought to be one of the centres of distribution of the singing style *na bas*, (Forry, 2000:931). Here “the songs are usually diatonic, but a few have scales with augmented seconds, suggesting Islamic influence” (ibid, 931). A very interesting specific type of bagpipe (*duda*) was produced to play the new style (*na bas*) songs. The bass has only two notes – the tonic and the dominant. The “dominant” note is a fourth lower than the tonic, and as in the same style of singing, the lower note is used to finish the musical phrases.

Slovenia

Polyphonic singing is an important feature of this country, which consists mainly of forest-covered mountains. A few regional styles are distinguished in Slovenia. As in most of the other Balkan people’s musical traditions, older and more contemporary styles of traditional polyphony are present here as well. The tradition of contemporary polyphonic singing is spread wider than the tradition of the older style. The regions of Resia and Bela Krajina retain the older forms of vocal polyphony. This style is based on two-part singing with a drone. The ancient tradition of singing in dissonant seconds is disappearing and is being replaced by singing in thirds with cadences in unison: “In Bela Krajina in some Midsummer Night songs and in Istria, two-part singing emphasizes the interval of a second, with some thirds and fourths and unison cadences” (Omerzel-Terlep, 2000:913). This style is an interesting combination of the earlier singing style (singing in seconds) combined with the later polyphonic style (singing in thirds and the cadences in fifths or unisons). Most of the polyphonic songs are performed in two groups, as an antiphon, sometimes with an interesting overlapping of both groups in different harmonies as in the following example:

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Ex. 56. Slovenia. (Kumer, 1979:#238a)

The musical notation for Ex. 56 shows two staves. The top staff, labeled 'First group', begins with a melody of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The bottom staff, labeled 'Second group', has rests for the first four measures, then enters with a similar melody: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4.

Contemporary style polyphony is based on the European classical musical language and traditional European four-part arrangements. This style is taking over the older style of drone polyphony. According to Omerzel-Terlep (2000: 913) there are several styles of contemporary polyphonic styles in Slovenia, ranging from two-part singing up to five-part singing. The most popular style of contemporary polyphony among young people is three-part singing with the main melody in the middle.

Macedonia

Speaking about Macedonian music we should remember that the ethnic Macedonian territory is divided between several Balkan countries, and only Macedonians living in Yugoslavia have political unity (first within the Yugoslavian Federation and from 1991 as a fully independent country). As the singing traditions of ethnic Macedonians seem to be one of the most polyphonic in the Balkan region, we have already discussed the polyphonic traditions of Macedonians living in Romania and Bulgaria.

According to T. Bicevski, different types of polyphony exist in Macedonian traditional songs. The most prominent is the Balkan traditional singing drone-type vocal polyphony (both pedal and rhythmic) with dissonant intervals:

Ex. 57. Macedonia. (Bicevski, 1986:26)

The musical notation for Ex. 57 is a single staff in 2/4 time. It features a complex, rhythmic melody with many eighth and sixteenth notes, typical of a drone-type polyphony. The melody starts on a G4 and moves through various intervals, including some dissonant ones.

When the main melody has several (and often ornamented) pitches, the drone polyphony seems to be “in between” the pedal and rhythmic drone types. The drone can be on one pitch only, or can change (usually by a major second up, although it can move a third and a fourth as well). These movements of the bass often cause the appearance of more seconds.

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Heterophony is another type of polyphony among Macedonians. There are also very interesting examples where heterophonic and drone types of polyphony alternate:

Ex. 58. Macedonia. (Bicevski, 1986:#36)



According to Tim Rice: “polyphonic singing occurs in three zones. Female singers in the east employ a two-part melody-and-drone style similar to eastern Serbian and Southwestern Bulgarian styles... Male and female singers in the Northwest sing an accompanying part that moves in relation to the melody to emphasize the interval of a second. Macedonians from the areas around the town of Kostur (in Greek, Kastoria) near the Greek-Albanian border sing in two- and three-part styles resembling southern Albanian singing” (Rice, 2000a:974). The melody range of polyphonic songs is narrow. Part of the polyphonic songs are non-metrical, and the other part (particularly those that accompany dances) has a precise metre. Together with the symmetrical simple metres (like 2/4) there are some of the well-known Balkan asymmetrical “limping” metres as well (like 7/8).

The tradition of contemporary polyphony, based on the use of parallel thirds, is popular throughout Macedonia. On the other hand, major part of the tradition of the old drone singing with dissonant seconds disappeared between the 1950s and the 1980s (Bicevski, 1986). State politics, declaring the old traditions and traditional singing style old-fashioned and backward in the 1950s, played an important role in this process.

Albania

Albanian polyphony was very late to come to the attention of European scholars. It was only during the 1950s that Ramadan Sokoli brought southern Albanian part-singing tradition to the attention of scholars. Soon scholars from the then- East Germany, with the help of Ramadan Sokoli, recorded and then published one of the best collections of post-war Europe (Stockmann et al., 1965). Soon it became clear that Albanian polyphony is one of the richest in the Balkans.

Albania is traditionally divided (by the river *Shkumbin*) into two roughly equal parts – North Albania and South Albania (called respectively *Gegs* and *Tosks*). Polyphony is found in both regions, although the distribution is unequal. In northern Albania polyphony is relatively rare, and is mostly found in the western part of northern Albania, among the high mountains. This region is known for the survival of older singing styles, with narrow-range melodies and strained styles of singing, common to most of the singing styles of the central Balkans (Sugarman, 2000:994).

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The population of this region is known as *Malisori*. Characterizing northern Albanian music and particularly polyphony, Jane Sugarman wrote: “Though most older styles of women’s singing are monophonic, women in Southwestern Kosova and western Macedonia also sing two-voiced polyphony. Against a narrow-ranged melody sung by a soloist, one or more women sing a lower vocal line that sometimes duplicates pitches of the melody and sometimes strikes a pitch a second or third below it. Men in the same districts in Kosova sing only in unison, but in western Macedonia men have their own polyphonic styles of singing, consisting of a melodic line sung against a drone” (Sugarman, 2000: 995).

Southern Albania is one of the richest regions of vocal polyphonic singing in the Balkans, and possibly in Europe or even the world. Southern Albania is divided into four main regions: *Toskeri*, *Myzeqe*, *Chameri*, and *Laberi* (Ahmedaja, 2005). These four regions are sometimes grouped into two styles: *Toskeri* (containing *Myzeqe* and *Chameri* styles) and *Laberi*.

The *Laberi* style (the most mountainous part of south-central Albania) usually has three or four different parts. The polyphony is based on a drone (*iso*), and together with *iso* three other soloists participate. The range is usually not wide (within a fifth, sometimes reaching a seventh), and sometimes there is a very small space for clashing four parts within the fifth. Dissonances are quite common. The scale is mostly pentatonic. The songs are rhythmically and metrically quite strictly organized. The drone is mostly rhythmic, although it can be pedal as well:

Ex. 59. Albania. Laberi style polyphony. (Shituni, 1989:270-271)

The musical notation for Ex. 59 consists of four staves, all in G major (one sharp) and 3/8 time. The first staff is a treble clef with a soprano line, starting on G4 and moving through A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The second staff is a treble clef with an alto line, starting on G4 and moving through A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The third staff is a treble clef with a tenor line, starting on G3 and moving through A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3. The fourth staff is a treble clef with a bass line, starting on G2 and moving through A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. The notation shows a melodic line in the first two staves and a drone line in the last two staves.

Ex. 60. Albania. Laberi style Polyphony (Shituni, 1989:175)

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The style *Chameri* (the border region with Greece) was particularly well researched by a group of German scholars (Stockmann, Fiedler, Stockmann). This style has quite a few differences from the *Laberi* style. Two leading melodies are sung against the background of a pedal drone. The melodies have quite a wide range (usually an octave). The mastery of the performers is mostly shown in the rich ornaments and glissandos in the lead melodies. Rhythmically and metrically the polyphony of *Laberi* and *Chameri* is also different. *Chameri* songs are mostly in *rubato* (free rhythm). This style consists almost exclusively of three-part polyphonic songs, although as the two leading melodies are often sung in a responsorial way, the real sound is often two-part:

Ex. 61. Albania. Chameri style polyphony (Stockmann et al, 1965;101, #3)



Two other polyphonic styles (*Myzeqe* and *Toskeri* –Southwestern and Southeastern parts of Albania) are closer to the *Chameri* style. *Myzeqe* and *Toskeri* polyphony has some common traits with the polyphonic styles discussed above. The first is the type of polyphony – a drone (on “E”). Another common feature is the wide use of dissonances. Besides *Myzeqe* and *Toskeri* polyphony is also mostly three-part, and the top melodic lines are always sung by the soloists.

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Two-part polyphony plays a more important part in the polyphony of *Myzeqe* than *Toskeri*. They are mostly performed by women in the following way: the first part is sung by a woman soloist, and then the group responds. The responding group usually consists of another soloist and a group (drone) (Ahmedaja, 2005). Ahmedaja differentiates the polyphonic types of *Myzeqe* and *Toskeri* according to the relationship between the top parts. The role of the second soloist (second top part) is particularly important, as it may follow the first soloist, or may gain independence. In some rare types of songs every part (drone and the leading melodies) are performed by groups of women in unison. Three-part songs constitute the main part of women's singing as well. In contrast to the *Chameri* and *Laberi* songs, in the three-part songs of *Myzeqe* and *Toskeri* the two top parts often move in parallel thirds. The term *iso* is widely used for the drone part throughout Albania, but there are more local terms as well (for example, "*mbajne kaba*" – "they hold *kaba*" among *Myzeqe* and *Toskeri*).

Sugarman notes interesting differences between the singing styles of Albanian men and women (Sugarman, 1997). The men's songs are more energetic, rhythmically free and more ornamented. Women's singing is more subdued, rhythmically more strictly organized, and less ornamented. Interestingly, as they age, their behavior changes: "as women age, better singers may adopt virtuosi features of the men's repertoire, whereas older men often sing in a more subdued, dignified manner" (Sugarman, 2000:991).

Contemporary Europeanized styles of polyphony, mostly based on two-part polyphony, where the parts move in parallel thirds and sixths, are particularly popular in southern Albanian cities.

Greece

Like many other polyphonic traditions of Europe, the Greek tradition of vocal polyphony became known only after the Second World War, during the 1950s. One of the reasons for this could be the fact that Greek music is mostly monophonic. As a matter of fact, together with Romania, Greece could be considered to be one of the most monophonic countries in the Balkans. At the same time, unlike Romania, where the major part of polyphonic tradition seems to be mostly brought there by Macedonian migrants from other parts of the Balkans, Greek polyphonic traditions seem to be an autochthonous survival of the musical culture of the Balkans.

According to the common view of ethnomusicologists, most Greek traditional music is monophonic, both solo and unison. Only in two regions, geographically situated on opposite sides of the country, are vocal forms of traditional polyphony found. These two regions are Epirus (Epir), the Northwestern corner of the country, and the Dodecanese islands (island Rhodes) – the isolated Southeastern island part of the country. Most interestingly, these polyphonic traditions, isolated from each other, retained some important common features.

Mountainous Epirus has traditionally been considered to be the region with the most archaic element of culture and ethnography in Greece, and one of the richest regions in musical traditions. A good description of the three-part polyphonic tradition of Epirus is given in an article by Cowan: "This musical style, with a pentatonic structure, involves at least three vocal parts: a melodic line, a fixed drone (*ison*)

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sustaining the tonic, and a *klostis* ‘embroiderer’, who alternately leads the song and embroiders the melody with a yodeling voice” (Cowan, 2000:1010). We could add here the predominance of the vertical coordination of the parts on seconds and fourths.

Ex. 62 Greece. Two-part polyphony (Schneider, 1969:#274)



Ex. 63. Greece. Three-part polyphony with “klostis” [yodel] (Baud-Bovy, 1983:#57)

The similarity between the polyphonic traditions of Epirus with the polyphonic traditions of other regions of the Balkans is quite obvious.

Another polyphonic tradition from Greece (the island Rhodes from the Dodecanese group of islands) also shows the same common features of Balkan polyphony, with the drone, dissonances between the parts, the small range of the main melody, and the pentatonic scale. According to the available information, the tradition

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of three-part singing with the third part, the yodeling *klostis*, is not known on Rhodes Island.

The later European style of polyphony became popular on the island of Corfu, where the basis for such influences was created by long-standing political and cultural relationships with Venice (these islands became part of Greece in 1864). According to Cowan, “Romantic serenades (*kantadhes*), still popular, are the only Greek folk music that uses western harmony: men singing triadic three- and four-part harmonies, accompanying themselves on mandolins and guitars” (Cowan, 2000:1014).

Vocal Polyphony in North Europe

North Europe represents a very interesting and somehow problematic picture of the distribution of the tradition of vocal polyphony. Traditional polyphony exists only in two opposite regions of contemporary North Europe – the east (the Baltic region) and the west (Iceland). At the same time, there are very important and clear historical sources of information about the distribution of vocal forms of polyphony in many regions of North Europe. We will review first the live traditions of polyphonic singing (the Baltic states and Iceland) and will then discuss historical sources from a few other regions.

Baltic Region

Located geographically between the eastern and northern parts of Europe, the Baltic region could be a part of both northern and eastern Europe. The Baltic region comprises three countries: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Out of them Lithuania and Latvia are closely related cultures with related Baltic languages. Estonians are a part of a larger Finno-Ugric family of languages. Most importantly for our subject, all three countries of the Baltic region are known to have interesting vocal forms of traditional polyphony. We shall first discuss two Baltic peoples, Lithuanians and Latvians, and then Estonians.

Lithuania

Lithuania is the biggest out of all three Baltic countries and historically held a leading role in medieval Eastern Europe. Another interesting historical fact is that Lithuania was the last country in Europe to officially adopt Christianity in the 14th century.

Lithuania is particularly well known as a homeland of the unique polyphonic singing style known as *sutartines*. Although the term *sutartines* means “agreement”, or “cohesion”, *sutartines* is well known as the “kingdom of the dissonances”. To be more precise, we need to know that there are a few different styles of *sutartines*, based on different principles of polyphony (such as unison-heterophonic, canonic and drone types of *sutartines*). Among all these types of *sutartines* the most well-known

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and truly unique type is the so-called “secondal sutartines”. The most important feature of secondal *sutartines* is the abundance of secondal dissonances. More precisely, in this type of *sutartines* seconds sound almost constantly:

Ex. 64. Lithuania. Example of two-part secondal *sutartines*, performed by three singers (Slaviunas, 1972:64, #4)



The technical means to achieve constant singing in seconds is very interesting. Singing in parallel seconds is always challenging for singers. So if you try to sing two parallel melodies with the distance of a major second between the parts all the time, you will soon find out how difficult this is to do.

In *sutartines* the constant singing in seconds is not achieved by the parallel singing of the same melodies in seconds. Instead, constant seconds are achieved by a clever combination of the *type of the melody* and the *type of polyphony*.

Let us look at the melodic line of the typical secondal *sutartines* given above. The melody often consists of two sections of mostly equal length. In our typical example there are three bars in each section, making the whole melody a six-bar structure (3+3 bars). In both of these three-bar sections the melody moves on the notes of the simple triad. But there is a crucial difference in these two three-bar sections: in the first three bars we have the simple triad-based melody, say, on the notes of the triad of A-major: (A-C#-E), (sometimes only two notes out of the triad are used, as in this example: C#-E). Then, in the next three bars the melody suddenly modulates a major second up, into B-major, and now there is the same kind of melodic movement on the triad notes of B-major: (B-D#-F#). Let us look at a typical *sutartines* melody:

Fig. 7 Typical melody of secondal polytonal *sutartines* (from the previous example)



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Now let us have a look what happens to this melody when it is performed in a polyphonic way. This kind of polyphony, when both parts sing the same melody, but the second part starts singing a bit later, is called *canon*. “This looks like a *round*,” some readers might say. That’s correct. Generally, the term “Round” is another, more popular English name for the same kind of musical composition when performers sing the same melody in two groups, the second group starting a bit later. There can be more than two groups, of course, and they would all sing the same melody after each other. As the first part finishes the melody, it starts singing the melody over again (at the right point, of course), and the other parts do the same. This goes on and on and on. Canons usually have no “legitimate” ending, that’s why the cohesive ending of a canon (round) is often the most difficult part of the performance. The starting moment for the second (following) group is different. Sometimes the second part joins in after just a couple of notes, more often a bar or two, but sometimes it comes even later.

In *sutartines* the starting moment of the second part is crucial. **The second part comes in when the first half of the melody is finished and the melody is moving to the modulated section.** As a result, we have two parts, singing simultaneously the triad notes of different triads ([A]-C#-E and B-D#-F#) all the time. As both phrases are of the same length, exactly when the first part moves from (A)-C#-E into B-D#-F# triad, the second part moves from B-D#-F# into a (A)- C#-E triad, so constant sounding of dissonant seconds is guaranteed.

As we can see, two tonal centres (in our case, “A” and “B”), sound simultaneously. This is a very interesting and clear case of *polytonality* in traditional music, obviously used long before the revolutionary use of polytonality in 20th century music by Ives, Bartok, Stravinsky and other composers who revolutionized musical-harmonic language. No wonder that at the beginning of the 20th century the singing style of *sutartines*, based on the constant use of sharp seconds, sounded “horrible” to some educated musicians. Some educated Lithuanians even compared this singing style to “a crocodile, singing in parallel second accords...” (Rachiunaite, 2002:31).

Although *sutartines* is actually always two-part polyphony, it can be traditionally performed by two, three or four performers. These forms of *sutartines* are appropriately called *dvejines* (“dve” means “two”, “*dvejines*” means “twosome”), *trejines* (threesome), and “*keturines*” (foursome). There are plenty of different types and sub-types of *sutartines*. Slaviunas, whose three-volume work in Lithuanian remains the most inclusive research about *sutartines* (Slaviunas, 1958-1959), distinguished nineteen types of polyphonic singing, and Rachiunaite added nineteen more types in her recently published first English-language book about *sutartines* (Rachiunaite, 2002).

Sutartines polyphony is not present throughout the whole of Lithuania. It has a rather small area of distribution – the Northeastern part of Lithuania, a region called *Aukstaitia*. Some elements of *sutartines* singing style have been found in the neighbouring Latvia as well (Boiko, 1992, 1992a).

As happens sometimes, when there is one distinctive “national” style of traditional music, it occupies the mainstream interest of scholars and leaves very little space for other research topics. This was the case with *sutartines* polyphony in Lithuania. Dazzled by the uniquely Lithuanian *sutartines* singing style (particularly

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the secondal polytonal *sutartines*), neither Lithuanian nor international scholars mention the existence of another polyphonic type in Lithuania – drone polyphony. It was Daiva Rachiunaite, the author of the recently published book on *sutartines*, who brought the phenomenon of drone polyphony in Lithuania to light. At the 2004 conference on Traditional Polyphony in Tbilisi (Georgia) she delivered a special paper dedicated to the drone polyphony in Lithuanian music.

Interestingly, examples of Lithuanian drone polyphony were recorded and published with the publication of the collection of Northeast Lithuanian songs prepared by A. Sabaliauskas (1916). Many other drone polyphonic songs were recorded throughout the 20th century, but they were all known as sub-types of the same *sutartines* style polyphony. Really, the name matters! For example, in the recent English-language book on *sutartines* (Rachiunaite, 2002) the examples of drone polyphony appear under the name of “collective *sutartines*” (styles 38, 39), and symptomatically, the term “drone” is not used in descriptions of this singing style (Rachiunaite, 2002:198-200). This unification of different forms of polyphony under the term *sutartines* does not mean that there is no traditional term for the “drone” in Lithuania. The term for the drone in Lithuania is *tranavimas*, and the performer of a drone is called *tranas*. Unlike the “classical” *sutartines*, which were always performed by from two to four singers, “collective [drone] *sutartines*” are performed by a big group of people (from four to twenty). Also unlike the *sutartines* (where the polyphony is always only two-part), Lithuanian drone polyphony has three- and even four-part examples.

The influence of European harmonic triadic style on Lithuanian examples of drone polyphony is evident. Maybe because of this, Slaviunas considered them to be a late, “new-fashioned” style in Lithuanian music. Rachiunaite expressed a different point of view on this topic, arguing that drone polyphony could be an archaic phenomenon in Lithuanian music (Rachiunaite, 2005). Interestingly, the region of the distribution of drone polyphony (eastern tip of Lithuania) is known in Lithuanian ethnography, dialectology and musicology, as the region where the most archaic elements of Lithuanian (and possibly Baltic) culture has survived. Another interesting difference between secondal canonic *sutartines* and drone polyphony (or “collective *sutartines*”) is, that the secondal *sutartines* style has died out (it gradually disappeared throughout the mid 19th century – mid 20th century, and now exists only in amateur and professional ensembles, mostly in cities), but drone polyphony, on the contrary, is still popular in some east Lithuanian villages (for example, in the village Nibragalys in the Panevezys region). Let us have a look at the “best-kept secret” from Lithuanian polyphonic culture – example of drone polyphony:

Ex. 65. Lithuania. Drone *sutartines*. (Raciunaite-Vychiniene, 2002:200)

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Heterophonic (or variant-heterophonic) *sutartines* with almost unison singing is another polyphonic style in Lithuania. Unlike drone polyphony, the existence of heterophonic style has been long-since recognized.

The ubiquitous contemporary polyphonic style (obviously influenced by European professional music) with characteristic parallel thirds and cadencial fifths is spread through the same polyphonic region of Lithuania (Northeast region Aukstaitia)

And finally we should say that the Lithuanian polyphonic singing style *sutartines* (and particularly the best-known type, the secondal polytonal *sutartines*) became a trademark of Lithuanian musical culture and a potent sign of national identity in the struggle against the USSR policy of Russification.

As a unique polyphonic style, *sutartines* has been discussed in numerous scholarly articles, and different points of views are expressed in the scholarly literature regarding the archaic features and the chronology of the emergency of this singing style. We will have a special section in the second, “comparative” part of this book, fully dedicated to a discussion of different existing points of view on the origins of *sutartines*.

Latvia

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Another Baltic country, Latvia, could be considered the most polyphonic among the Baltic States. Although Latvian polyphonic traditions are not as internationally known and as dazzlingly unique as the Lithuanian canonic polytonal *sutartines* style, and although there is no such variety of polyphonic styles as in Lithuania, the Latvian tradition of polyphonic singing covers most of the ethnic territory of the Latvian state. The only region where no polyphonic recordings have been made is the Northeast part of the country. In the western part of Latvia the tradition of polyphonic singing is still well alive (as in the regions of Nica, Barta, Alsunga).

Interestingly, virtually the only type of polyphony recorded in the territory of Latvia (according to the works of Latvian ethnomusicologists) is drone polyphony. Written sources mention the tradition of drone polyphony in Latvia from the 16th and 17th centuries. The drone is mostly pedal, but there are instances of the rhythmic drone as well. There are different terms for the drone performer in Latvia: *vilceja* (“the one who drags”), *duceja* (“the one who gives a low, continuous droning sound”) and *ruceja* (“a grumbler, the one who murmurs”). The drone changes its pitch and moves always a major second up. The main melody is always sung by a solo performer, and the range of the main melody is very small (usually a third). The drone is always performed by a group of singers. Rhythmically Latvian drone polyphony is based on a simple duple metre (2/4). Two-part singing dominates:

Ex. 66. Latvia. (Vitolin, 1976:103)



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result of a random coincidence of free melodic parts. The fact that this sharp dissonance has a special “fermata” sign on top [a semicircle with the dot inside] at this very moment means that singers were consciously trying to achieve this sharp dissonant harmony and held it longer [“fermata” means that these notes must be sung considerably longer, “drawn out”]:

Ex. 67. Latvia. Three-part drone polyphony (archive recording made by A. Yurian, from Villis Bendorf)



As I have mentioned before, Latvian ethnomusicologist Martin Boiko researched and found some interesting elements of *sutartines*-style singing in Latvia as well, although no songs of the unique “secondal polytonal *sutartines*” have been found in Latvia (Boiko, 1992, 1992a).

Estonia

Estonia is the smallest and the only non-Baltic speaking country in the Baltic region (actually, it was the smallest republic of the whole USSR). The Estonian language belongs to the Finnish group of the Finno-Ugric family of languages. Hunter and fisher ancestors of the Estonians (and Finns) migrated to North Europe from the region of the Ural Mountains in the middle of the third millennia B.C. A few centuries later they were joined by the first Baltic tribes, who made their way to the Baltic region by the end of the third Millennium. According to publications of Estonian ethnomusicologists concerning the distribution of the traditional vocal polyphony, Estonia is the most monophonic out of the three Baltic countries. However this does not mean that there is no polyphonic singing at all. Two different types of vocal polyphony have been documented in Estonia (both in the southern part of Estonia, closer to Latvia. Sarv, 1988):

(1) The first type of polyphony is present in the singing traditions of the specific ethnic group Setu. Setu live in the Southeastern corner of Estonia. The polyphonic style of Setu can be characterized by: (1) two-part singing (mostly), (2) the variant-heterophonic performance of the main melody by a big group, and (3) the top harmonic part, performed by a soloist (Sarv, 1988). This top melody (native term for it is “kill’a”) has an obvious element of a drone. If you look at the top part, it is easy to see that Kill’a usually changes only slightly – it goes to the next note and then comes back to the same note again:

Ex. 68. Estonia. Setu polyphony (from Vaike Sarv)



Ex. 69. Estonia. Three-parts singing with elements of drone (from Vaike Sarv)



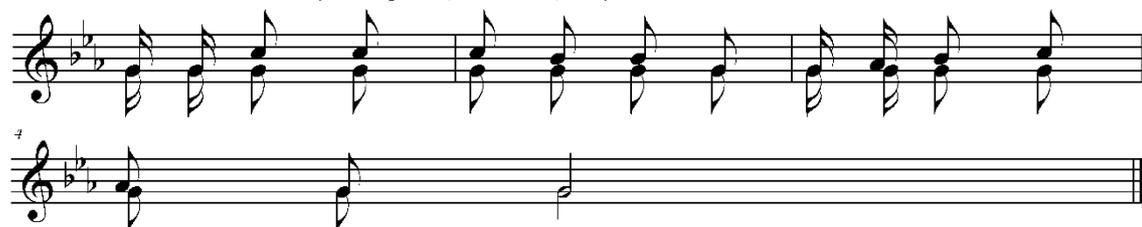
(2) Another polyphonic style in Estonia is drone. Drone polyphony is present in two regions – among the same Setu, and in the Southwestern corner of Estonia. The drone in Setu is not very clearly defined. In a few examples of traditional Setu two-part singing the texture is complemented by the third part. This is the lowest part, which has elements of a drone, and is performed by a soloist.

Another region with drone polyphony is situated in the Southwestern corner of Estonia, next to the Latvian border. Examples of drone polyphony were recorded here by Tampere at the beginning of the 20th century and published in the 1930s. This is a typical example of two-part drone polyphony. The drone character is very well defined, with both pedal and rhythmic versions of the drone. The melody has a small range and is performed by a soloist. There are characteristic repetitive dissonant clashes of the drone and the melody on the sharp seconds (Tampere, 1938). This style does sound very similar to the Latvian drone singing style. As this tradition of Estonian drone polyphony is not very well-known to European readers, let us have a look at a three examples:

Ex. 70. Estonian drone polyphony (Tampere, 1938:5, #14)



Ex. 71. Estonia (Tampere, 1938:5, #7)



Ex. 72. Estonia (Tampere, 1938:7, #16)

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According to the available information, **Finland** is the only state in North Europe where we do not have any historical sources or later information about the presence of a polyphonic singing tradition. But as we may agree, “the absence of data does not mean the absence of the phenomenon”, so at least some forms of late pan-European style of simple polyphony with at least occasional parallel thirds might well be characteristic of Finnish social singing as well. At least, I remember myself, how the group of my Finnish friends were singing on a wedding of my Georgian friend Nasi and Finnish Laif on February 23rd 1988. They were singing in unison, but steadily finishing all the musical phrases with the major third.

Iceland

Finding a live tradition of polyphonic singing in Iceland was one of the highlights of the study of European polyphony – both professional and folk. A live tradition of polyphony in Iceland was particularly important for musicologists studying medieval European polyphony, because of its clear connections to the earliest types of *organum* [*Organum* was the first type of European professional polyphony, that appeared at the end of the 9th – beginning of the 10th centuries]. Angel Hammerich published a pioneering article about the Icelandic two-part singing tradition *twisongur*, then Biarni Forstain published 42 examples of *twisongur*, and finally John Laif recorded on phonograph the examples of *twisongur*. Phonograph recordings proved the correctness of the transcriptions made by Forstain. The term *twisongur* literally means “two-singing”, and it is a **traditional technique** of the two-part performance of secular and sacred melodies. Hornbostel’s description of *twisongur* as “fifths organum with crossing parts” is quite accurate (Hornbostel, 1986 [1930]). Most of the time the parts move in parallel fifths in *twisongur* style, and at certain moment the parts shift places (the top part goes lower and the low part goes higher than the top part). Therefore the second part usually finishes with the note that the first part started at the beginning of the song. The leading genre of Icelandic traditional music, *Rimur* (epic songs), was also performed in *twisongur* style. Here are two typical examples of the earlier type of *twisongur*:

Ex. 73. Iceland (Hornbostel, 1986:310, #36)



Ex. 74. Iceland (Hornbostel, 1986:311, #4a)

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The tempo was usually very slow, and the sound of “empty” parallel fifths is very specific. Interestingly, in late medieval Europe parallel fifths were considered the biggest compositional mistake that a composer could make in composing polyphonic music. By the way, parallel fifths were considered a very serious mistake not only by Medieval European music theorists. I remember myself doing very much feared harmony tests at Tbilisi State Conservatory in the mid 1970s, and parallel fifths were still the most feared mistake for the students.

Another feature of the *twisongur* style is a very specific scale with a range of more than an octave:

Fig. 8. Twisongur scale



The appearance of F and then F# an octave higher is particularly interesting. From the point of view of European scale systems the note F# cannot be a part of the scale. It just does not make any sense. The eighth step of the scale (F#) must be the “octave repetition” of the first step of the scale – F (“tonic”). And the tonic is the most important and stable step of the scale. Therefore, within the basic rules of the European classical musical system the Icelandic scale F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F#, G makes as much sense as a three-eyed human face. But of course, this is simply because the Icelandic scale is not based on the octave (eight note) scale system. The presence of the augmented octave points to the scales of the fifths diatonic system in Icelandic polyphonic singing (you may remember this scale from our discussion of the scales of Georgian traditional polyphonic music). This scale is created by two five-note rings, tied together (F, G, A, B, C, tied to C, D, E, F#, G. See Gogotishvili, 1982, 2004). The most important feature of this type of scale is that the fifths must be always perfect. Perfect fifths always cause the appearance of augmented fourths and augmented octaves (this is unavoidable). This is exactly what happens in the Icelandic *twisongur*.

Another very interesting feature of the Icelandic *twisongur* is the wide use of the Lydian scale. In its “classical” understanding the Lydian scale is a string of white keys on the piano from F to the next F. This scale was never used by the greatest European classical composers (until the romantic style composers of the 19th century, like Chopin). The augmented fourth step of the Lydian scale (B) was particularly avoided as it was considered to be the “ugliest interval”. In some cultures (for example, in many Middle-Eastern cultures) this interval is traditionally considered the harshest and is very much avoided. In medieval European professional music this interval was also very much avoided, and was given a special name “Triton” (“three”

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“tones”, as it consists of three full tones, instead of the “normal” two full tones and a half tone to make a perfect fourth).

So, the Lydian scale for the European musical system, although it is the “ugliest” scale, is still an octave scale with “proper” seven notes (F, G, A, B, C, D, E, and at the end, of course, again F). But in the system of the fifths diatonic scales, it is the perfect fifth that rules, not the perfect octave, so this troubling high fourth step of the Lydian scale (B) causes the appearance of the incredible F# in the *twisongur* scale. This is a fifth diatonic scale on a Lydian basis.

There could be more than two singers and two parts in *twisongur* as well: “More elaborate versions of *twisongur*, with doublings at the octave for other vocal parts, and a great variety of freer forms, were performed in sacred and secular settings” (Hopkins, 2000:403). In later forms of *twisongur* parallel fifths could be sometimes replaced by unisons. Gregorian Chants and psalms could be performed in *twisongur* style as well.

We know that the Church was not happy with the appearance of polyphonic singing in the churches in the first place. There is a well-known written record in the Iceland “Episcopal Sagas” that Episcopo Laurentius from Holar tried to ban polyphonic singing in the church in the 1320s (Grinde, 1982:15). As we can see, there was something totally unacceptable in Icelandic polyphonic singing for the Medieval European musical system.

England

To feel the enjoyment of the informal group singing of the English, one needs to go to one of the famous “singing pubs” of England. “Traditional singing in harmony has been recorded extensively” (Gammon, 2000:327). Unfortunately, the singing styles that have been documented during the last 100 years bear obvious traces of the influence of European professional polyphony. Fortunately, historical sources provide very important information about the wide distribution of the tradition of polyphonic singing in medieval England and other countries of the British Isles. One of the earliest and certainly the most important information about polyphony in England (and in fact, in northern Europe) comes from Giraldus Cambrensis from around 1180-1200. He described in detail the part-singing traditions in northern England and Wales. Cambrensis believed the British islanders learned the part-singing tradition from the Danes and Norwegians. After this interesting bit of information (as there is no live tradition of vocal polyphony in contemporary Norway and Denmark) there is very little information before the 18th century.

Before going further let us listen to Cambrensis himself, as citing his famous passage became a common place in the books on music history, and would be shame not to have it in a book wholly dedicated to the vocal polyphony. Readers, who have read this passage many times, can omit it, but those who will be reading it for the first time, I would suggest to remember that we are listening to a highly educated thinker who is talking about the musical life in Wales and England at the end of the 12th century:

“As to their musical euphony, they do not sing uniformly as this is done elsewhere, but diversely with many rhythm and tunes, so that in a crowd of singers,

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Wales

In the writings of Giraldus Cambrensis about part-singing in the British Isles Wales occupies the central place (Hibberd, 1955). Cambrensis' claim that "you can hear in Wales as many voices [parts] as there are singers" might be an exaggeration, but there can be little doubt that a well-developed tradition of traditional polyphony existed in 12th century Wales.

An interesting folk tradition of reading the biblical texts in two parts (at a fifth interval) has been described by Kinney: "Declamation in the Welsh folk tradition is still to be heard in *canu'r pwnc* 'singing the text'. As now practiced in southern Wales, the tradition is connected with reciting biblical scriptures at catechismal festivals, which became prevalent in the early 1800s. The style of sung recitation may, however, be much older. In a typical example, a passage from the Bible is announced, and the precentor sounds the note. One group enters immediately on the same note, a second part comes in at a fifth above, and the two parts chant together at that interval. The rhythm of the chant is clear, the tone firm and rather staccato, the diction clear. Phrasing is according to punctuation: the reciting tone dips slightly on each strong accent; but at cadences on commas or periods in the text, the dip may reach as much as a fourth. These cadences are snapped sharply, in a sixteenth-and-dotted-eight rhythm. The alternation of voices adds variety, as children chant in unison, then women in unison, then men, and the entire congregation once more in two parts" (Kinney, 2000:345).

The tradition of choral singing today is something of which the Welsh are rightly proud. The roots of this tradition can be found in the ancient predilection of Welshmen towards part-singing, described by Giraldus Cambrensis at the end of the 12th century, but more immediate connections should be made with the growing popularity of choral singing in the 18th and 19th centuries. The widely popular festival of choral singing "Gymanfa Ganu" has been regularly held throughout Wales for more than a century.

Not much evidence is available about polyphonic singing in **Scotland** and **Ireland**. Of course, Cambrensis' information is interesting in regard to the singing traditions of Ireland and particularly Scotland (as Cambrensis mentions, the northern regions are more polyphonic). Interesting singing traditions from Shetland Islands, Hebrides and Orkney Islands (including the famous polyphonic hymn to St. Magnus) support the suggestion that both Ireland and particularly Scotland must have had traditions of vocal polyphony during the Middle Ages. Another reference to the existence of the tradition of polyphonic singing comes from the Irish Sagas. In a "Saga on the Sons of Usneh" there is mention of the tradition of three-part male polyphony. The Saga contains the names of all three parts as well: *andord* (tenor), *coblach* (baritone) and *dord* (bass) (Gruber, 1941:507).

On Tory Island, off the Northeastern tip of Ireland, the tradition of part singing is still alive. According to an article on Irish music in the "Garland Encyclopedia of

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World Music”, Tory islanders “favor duet or even loose choral singing more than singers elsewhere” (Shields & Gershen, 2000:381).

Information on polyphony in **Sweden** is mostly connected to polyphony in church music: “Some extant liturgical books used in Swedish religious institutions from 1300 to 1400 and containing music notations give evidence for polyphonic singing at the cathedral of Uppsala in 1298. King Gustav Vasa (reigned 1523 – 1560) eliminated papal control of Christianity in Sweden and introduced the Protestant faith. The reformation resulted in many handwritten hymnbooks that reflected local traditions; in 1697, the first official collection of hymns was published” (Ling et al., 2000: 443-444). According to Ling, the tradition of folk choral singing (both in unison and polyphony) is still alive in Sweden (Ling, 1981:42). From the 1800s choral singing became widely popular and many major choral societies were established throughout Sweden. During this period “choral and solo vocal music dominated the local production and reception of music” (Ling et al., 2000:444).

According to Giraldus Cambrensis, **Denmark** and **Norway** were two of the most important and influential centres for the dissemination of vocal polyphony throughout medieval northern Europe from Scandinavia to Iceland (Hibberd, 1955). Unfortunately, there is almost no other information on this topic from subsequent centuries. Although, interestingly, “The building blocks of Norwegian music – augmented fourth, parallel fifths and octaves, pedal points, asymmetrical rhythms” (Hopkins, 2000:425) has some remarkable similarity with the main features of the singing traditions of *twisongur* polyphony from Iceland (see above). Considering the deep ethnic and cultural connections between Iceland and Norwegians, this is hardly surprising.

Vocal Polyphony in Central Europe

Poland

According to the available materials, the main region for traditional polyphony is the Podhale region in the Tarra Mountains, southern Poland. Two-part polyphony with parallel thirds, and more interestingly, fifths, with the elements of Lydian scale has been documented here:

Ex. 76. Poland (Elschekova, 1989: 191)



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Survival of the tradition of polyphonic singing in the mountains is also evident according to Dahlig: “Only in the Carpathian area is polyphonic singing found. There, one singer initiates a song and after a few notes others join in: some take the main melody while the rest add a voice below” (Dahlig, 2000:703). According to this description this polyphonic style has elements of two-part heterophonic polyphony, with groups singing both parts and the number of parts changing from two to three. Some influence of European professional music is also evident in parallel thirds and specific “leading” seventh step (giving the music the feel of a European Dominant chord).

Slovakia

According to available data, the tradition of more contemporary polyphony is spread quite widely throughout the territory of Slovakia. It is mostly two-part singing in parallel thirds (mostly in Northwestern Slovakia). In the northern part fifths have a greater importance, and in the western part – thirds and sixths (Elschekova, 1963, 1981). Both parts are usually performed by groups of singers. At the very beginning of the songs (as in virtually all polyphonic cultures), the individual performer starts singing, joined later by others. In some cases the group starts together in unison, which is possibly a later tradition, as with folk music it is very unusual to coordinate the pitch and rhythm of the songs beforehand and to prepare for the beginning. Musical phrases usually finish on one note, in unison. As both parts are performed by groups of singers, the heterophonic division of parts is possible. In such cases a few three- or four-part chords appear in the musical texture. Perhaps the most developed form of heterophonic polyphony has been recorded in the mountainous central part of Slovakia:

And finally, in a few villages of the Northwestern part of Slovakia a tradition of drone polyphony with secondal dissonances and small-range melodies has been documented. The drone is rhythmic (it moves a major second up and down):

Ex. 77. Slovakia (Elschekova, 1981:174)



Czech

Part-singing is quite usual for this Slavic country, although the eastern part of the Czech republic (Moravia) is more polyphonic than the western part (Bohemia).

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The polyphonic traditions of Moravia are connected to the late influence of European melodies and harmonies. As in most European polyphonic traditions of later origin, leading of the main melody in parallel thirds (and sixths) is dominating. Both parts can be performed by groups of people primarily in parallel thirds and sixths, usually in two parts, but sometimes in three.

According to Zelinska and O'Connor, one of the most developed traditions of part singing exists in Chodsko. Besides two parts singing in parallel thirds and sixths, two other parts also hold the double drone, apparently imitating the pedal sound of the bagpipe:

In some two-part songs in Chodsko the melodic lines are so intertwined that it is difficult to tell which part leads the main melody (Zelinska, O'Connor, 2000:719-720).

Germany

Although the tradition of vocal polyphony is not represented very well in the historical sources of Germany, group singing is without a doubt one of the important elements of German traditional culture: "Viewed in terms of action, folk music lives not as a performance by a few musicians for many (as in concert halls), but in collective performance with a high degree of participation and interaction by all present" (Klusen, 1975). Most of the audience members are also performers: they sing, hum, sway, dance, or clap together. Most participants are only nominally interested in the origin and type of musical material. It is insignificant to them whether it is 'art' or 'folk' music, or derived from a subculture; whether it is composed for instruments or for voices; whether it is traditional or contemporary, or 'inferior' or 'superior' quality, already popular or freshly written, from an unknown or celebrated hand, or is transmitted orally or from printed or electronic media; and whether the text suits the situation or function at hand. The determining factor is whether the music or the dance provides the opportunity for performers and audience to participate in the immediate situation" (Schepping, 2000: 648).

There are a few hints about the presence of a polyphonic tradition in medieval Germany. In one of them, a monk from Salzburg, whose name was Hermann, in the second half of the 14th century wrote few polyphonic pieces based on drone polyphony, intending to create a new type of composition based on folk traditions, and in another similar case Oswald von Wolkenstein, who was also very much involved in traditional polyphonic traditions, used canonic polyphony in his compositions (Gruber, 1941:232; Bukofzer, 1940:48).

During the 1700s and 1800s the new pan-European harmonic system appeared, heavily based on the T-S-D (tonic-subdominant-dominant) progression, and during the 19th century this became popular throughout the European countries. The 1800s saw a great number of male choirs (*Liedertafell*) forming in factories, schools etc (Schepping, 2000:652)

Austria

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Austria represents one of the most important vocal polyphonic cultures of Central Europe. As Goertzen and Larkey wrote, “No country in Europe has folk music more thoroughly wedded to the diatonic major mode and the fleshing out of harmony than Austria” (2000:671).

In popular imagination Austria is the country of the yodel, an extraordinary style of singing with wide melodic jumps, when the singer rapidly changes his voice back and forth from the usual (chest) voice to the falsetto (head) voice. Of course, the Tyrolean yodel is by no means a unique singing tradition throughout the world, but perhaps because of its location in the centre of Europe, the Austrian yodel is the best known. The popularity of the yodel ousted the polyphonic singing style of Austrian Tyrolean Alps. Therefore, not everyone realizes that the yodel-singing style is primarily connected to the group polyphonic singing tradition in the Alps region (Haid, 2005).

All styles of Tyrolean yodel and particularly the supporting harmonies bear the obvious influence of European professional major-minor harmony (Haid, 2005). I am not aware of any Tyrolean yodeling examples that are not based on the T-S-D harmonic system. Maybe that’s why “It is difficult to distinguish between older yodeling styles and several recent waves of commercial yodels” (Goertzen & Larkey, 2000:672).

Although the polyphonic style and the tradition of the yodel are best known from the mountainous central and western parts of Austria, these traditions exist throughout most of the country (including the vicinity of the capital city – east and north of Vienna).

Salzburg, the birthplace of Mozart – is part of the spectacular mountainous region, together with the Salzkammergut region, famous for its lakes, Styria and part of Upper Austria. They are all stylistically close. These spectacular regions are the home of very rich polyphonic traditions and yodel: “Its most typical forms of vocal music respond to this geography. There are three- and four-part homophonic yodels, other multi-part mountain pasture songs, and the *Almschroa*, a solo dairymaid’s yodel” (Goertzen & Larkey, 2000:673).

According to Messner, one of the most famous styles of Austrian Alps was in Carinthia in southern Austria. Five part male singing still exists in this area, although the original hexachordal polyphonic character changed into more usual late 19th century harmonic style. Three-part singing is characteristic for women’s singing style, and mixed four- and five-part singing style also exists (Messner, 1973)

Different bordering regions of Austria feature singing styles of the bordering countries as well. Besides, part of the Tyrol with its characteristic singing style is found in neighbouring northern Italy as well.

Switzerland

Switzerland is another extremely important region of polyphonic traditions of Central Europe. With polyphonic choral singing based on European classical harmony and yodel, many regions of Switzerland (particularly of the Swiss-German areas) are close to the Austrian style of vocal polyphony.

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The Swiss-German regions are perhaps the most polyphonic, with several regional styles of the yodel and traditions of vocal polyphony, and with a tradition of festivals of singers, organized from 1825 onwards. Perhaps the most archaic style of yodeling exists among several families of Muotatal (under the name *juuz, juuzli*). This three-part singing tradition is still based on European classical harmony, although the singing style is not refined and is based on glissandos and uncertain and sometimes non-tempered pitches during singing.

In Appenzell special yodeling competitions are traditionally held. Here the tradition of polyphonic singing also features yodeling (in a local style the yodel is lower in range), and is accompanied by two or three other parts – drones (*gradhabe* “to keep it straight”) (Hoffman & Delorenzi-Schenkel, 2000:691). Another yodeling style (*schmelzer*) in the same region (Appenzell) is known for its acceleration. Lucerne polyphonic singing also includes long drones with European harmonies and the use of yodel (Hoffman & Delorenzi-Schenkel, 2000:691). In still another region, Solothurn, “singing was formerly accompanied by clapping hands, slapping thighs, or drumming on a table. Other movements – holding the hand or little finger to the ear, pressing the throat to manipulate vocal quality, and other techniques – were commonly associated with singing in many areas. Tight closed circles, in which singers held their heads close together, commonly occurred” (Hoffman & Delorenzi-Schenkel, 2000:691).

The Italian-speaking area is also represented by the contemporary polyphonic singing style in parallel thirds. This polyphonic style is widely spread throughout the alpine region.

A big part of the folk repertoire of the Romansh-speaking area is religious songs. The information about their singing style (metallic high and loud voice) comes from the 18th century. Their singing style was described as “an ugly yelling and screaming” (Hoffman & Delorenzi-Schenkel, 2000:692). The tradition of two-, three- and four-part singing with European major-minor harmonies is still well alive in this region.

According to the available information, the French-speaking area is the most monophonic in Switzerland (not unlike France itself). Hoffman and Delorenzi-Schenkel mention only the tradition of group unison singing from this region.

To complete the review of the Central European region, we need to mention as well that two-part singing of the typical late European style has been recorded sporadically in **Belgium** and **Holland** (Bosmans, 2000:520)

Vocal Polyphony in Western Europe

France

Generally speaking, central France is the largest territory of non-polyphonic singing traditions in the Western Europe. As Hugh Shields put it, “centuries of classical polyphony have made little impression on the monophonic popular tradition and its realization mainly as solo performance” (2000:542). Elements of polyphony and harmony are usually confined to the use of accompanying instruments, or, in vocal music, to the use of heterophonic singing.

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Heterophonic elements had been documented in **Breton** (a specific historical region in western France) dance songs. Historical sources about the musical traditions of Breton society documented the staunch resistance of their pagan rituals, songs and dances. For example, the ritual dancing around a fire on St John's Eve has survived, despite a religious ban from the 600s (Kuter, 2000:561). The singing style *tuilage*, where two voices ("singer" – *kaner* and "countersinger" – *diskaner*) alternate and sometimes overlap, exists in Breton (and neighbouring regions).

Other region with the elements of polyphony is the Southeast France and particularly the Southwestern corner of France. Here (mostly in Bearn) there is a tradition of two-part singing mostly in parallel thirds, although the use of traditional modes (for example the use of natural 7th step) suggest older origins of this type of polyphony:

This tradition of vocal part-singing could be connected to the influence of traditional musical culture of neighbouring Basques. Basques are known to be the only survivors of the pre-Indo-European population of old Europe. This unique position of the Basques is chiefly a result of the isolation of their language, the oldest and the only non-Indo-European language in Western Europe. Therefore, the presence of the tradition of vocal polyphony is quite interesting in this mountainous region. Basque traditional music widely uses the tradition of vocal polyphony, which has some traces of the late influence of the European harmonic language. This influence is mostly heard in the wide use of parallel thirds. Both Spanish and French parts of the ethnic territory of Basques are known to be regions of distribution of this kind of two-part singing. (See musical examples of Basque polyphony later, in a section dedicated to Spanish traditional polyphony).

Interestingly, one of the most developed traditions of vocal polyphony of the Western Europe (and Mediterranean basin), **Corsica**, is a part of mostly monophonic France.

Although *paghjella* was often mentioned in 19th century accounts of travelers, as it was a case with many other polyphonic traditions of the Europe, Corsican polyphony was not recorded until after the 2nd World War. Felix Quilici and Wolfgang Laade recorded this tradition in the 1940s and the 1950s. As soon as the Corsican tradition entered the scholastic circle, it became clear that it was one of the richest and finest traditions of vocal polyphony in Europe.

Polyphony is mostly spread through the inland, far from the coastal regions, often representing the forest-covered mountains of the central and northern parts of the island. By the end of the 1940s, when this tradition was finally recorded and documented by ethnomusicologists, it was mostly performed by local shepherds at informal gatherings. Its status was not very high and the tradition seemed to be fading. From the 1970s Corsican polyphony became a musical symbol of the Corsican political movement and made a big appearance on the international scene of world music (Bithell, 2000b).

The traditional polyphonic repertoire of Corsica consists of three main types of songs: the *paghjella*, the *terzetti* and the *madrigale*. *Paghjella* is the best known and the "most Corsican" local style. The term *paghjella* is connected to the term

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paghja (“pair”). Laade suggests this term could “refer to the pair of half verses, which together make one line of the poem and a sung strophe” (Laade, 2000:569). *Paghjella* is a three-part singing tradition with a few distinguishing features:

- (1) All three parts – two melodic lines and the bass - are performed by individual singers. The bass is the only part that can feature more than one performer (Laade, 2000:569);
- (2) The two top melodic lines sing highly ornamented melodies (melismas – *ricucetti*), first following each other, then joining and concluding the musical phrase together;
- (3) The two top parts sing mostly in the same range, and there is no agreement between ethnomusicologists of which to consider the highest or the middle part: *secunda* or *terse* (interestingly, there is no part called *prima*!). Laade considers *secunda* (the one that starts singing) the highest and *terza* the middle (Laade, 2000:569), but Bithell considers *secunda* the middle (although the leading) voice and *terza* the highest (Bithell, 2000:6). According to the stratification of the voices in the cadence, as well as the stratification of parts in other three-part polyphonic European traditions, *secunda* seems to be the middle part.
- (4) *Paghjella* is mostly performed by males, although two brilliant female singers (Patrizia Poli and Patrizia Gattaceca) were leaders of the internationally renowned group Les Nouvelles Polyphonies Corses;
- (5) Dissonant chords and intervals play an important role in the *paghjella* tradition;
- (6) Links with the European major-minor harmonic system are obvious, particularly in the bass movements on T, D and S, and in the final chord, based on the major tonic chord;
- (7) The *paghjella* often starts in a minor key and concludes in the same, but major key (reminiscent of the endings of many polyphonic compositions of J.S.Bach).
- (8) The rhythm, known among professional musicians as *parlando-rubato*, is free, which makes precise coordination between the voices challenging. Smooth rhythmic coordination is considered crucial for a good quality performance;
- (9) The singing style is harsh and strained, particularly in the top voices, and the bass is more relaxed. While singing, performers usually stand close to each other, with hands cupped around their ears, and they often sing with closed eyes.

Each village usually had their own *versu*'s (the basic model of musical realization) and they were referred to as “u versu di Russiu”, “u versu di Tagliu” according to the village or region (Bithell, 2000:7). The central and most important region of the *paghjella* tradition is the forest-covered mountainous region of Castagniccia in central-eastern Corsica.

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Another part of Corsica's polyphonic tradition is connected to the influence of Italian music. Corsica belonged to the Italian cities Pisa and Genoa from the 11th to the 18th centuries. This influence is felt in such polyphonic genres as *Madrigale*, *sirinati* (serenades), *barcarole*, *brindisi* and dance songs (Laade, 2000:570-571). Their performance style sometimes is referred as *a paghjella* ("in a paghjella style", Bithell, 2000:5). "Songs of Italian or French origin are always sung in a relaxed voice, and many village and urban singers sing Italian and modern Corsican songs in an operatic *bel canto* ['beautiful singing' in Italian, a famous operatic singing style in Italy] voice" (Laade, 2000:571).

Portugal

According to the Garland Encyclopedia article written by the expert of the Portugal traditional music and polyphony, Castelo-Branco (2000), vocal polyphonic singing occurs in few isolated pockets of northern and southern Portugal. In the mountainous north part of Portugal these are the districts of Viana do Castelo, Braga and Aveiro. In the central part of the north of Portugal there is the district of Viseu, and in central-east Portugal the district of Castelo-Branco. Another important region of traditional polyphony is in the district of Beja in the southern part of Portugal.

The polyphonic traditions are mostly connected to the European major-minor harmonic system. Two-, three- and four-part singing in Portugal is based on European triadic harmonies and parallel thirds.

The scales are mostly European major and minor, but in the Beja and Castelo-Branco districts older scale systems are also used. The melodies in the central, eastern and south Portugal polyphonic traditions use melismatic ornaments (but not in the Northwestern districts). In most of the polyphonic regions women sing polyphonic songs. Only in southern Portugal (district Beja in Alentejo) is polyphony primarily a part of the male repertoire.

Spain

Vocal monophony with oriental ornaments and the brilliant tradition of flamenco is so dominating in Spanish musicology that Garland's article on the music of Spain fails to mention the presence of vocal polyphony in the traditional music of any of the regions of Spain.

According to available information, the tradition of vocal polyphony is still present in several regions of Spain: Valencia, Balears, Catalonia Aragon, Murcia, Navarra, and particularly among the Basques. According to Ayats and Martinez, "In these regions, oral polyphony was sung in the non-religious repertoire (i.e. ballads) but above all, it was related to religious brotherhoods; they were sung during processions to praise the patron saint through the 'goigs' [chant to a patron saint]". The musical language of the polyphonic traditions of most of these regions is heavily influenced by the late European harmonic style.

The tradition of vocal polyphony in the province **Albacete** in eastern Spain features totally different characteristics: a long pedal drone, a richly ornamented

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melodic line with descending undulating melody, development in free rhythm, and scales using chromatic elements:

Ex. 78. Spain, Albacete (Schneider, 1969, part 3, #64)



The oldest inhabitants of Spain (and arguably the whole of Western Europe), the **Basques** speak their own unique pre-Indo-European language and demonstrate tremendous historical and musical continuity. For example, the ancient, 22.000-year-old bird-bone flute with three holes, found in the city of Izturitz in France, a part of the Basque country, demonstrates quite clear connections with *txistu* – the contemporary three-hole flute of the Basques (Laborde, 2000: 314, 316).

In the notes to “The World Collection of Recorded Folk Music” (1984) Constantine Brailoiu mentions the predilection of Basques for singing in two parts (in thirds) as a widely known fact. A special article on Basque music at the Garland Encyclopedia fails to mention this fact, and only the presence of a CD “*Polyphonies Basques*” in “Audiovisual Resources” gives the reader an idea about this fact. Two-part singing among the Basques, as in most other Spanish regional styles of vocal polyphony, does have obvious traces of the influence of the European major-minor system. Parallel thirds and sixths are prevalent here. The music flow is strictly organized metro-rhythmically and the major scales dominate:

Ex. 79. Example of Basque polyphony (Ghvacharia and Tabagua, 1983:210)



Italy

With its internationally renowned opera traditions and *bel canto* singing style so universally popular, Italy has long been a symbol of “beautiful singing”. Unlike some other European countries, where folk singing styles became the symbol of national musical identity, “rarely shared at the national level, folk song in Italy never

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became a national symbol. Instead, during the second half of the nineteenth and part of the twentieth century, opera and so-called Neapolitan popular song served such purposes” (Sorace Keller et al. 2000:604). Four main regions are distinguished in Italy: (1) North Italy, (2) central Italy, (3) the Mediterranean south and Sicily, and (4) Sardinia. The tradition of vocal polyphony is distributed in three out of the four regions: in north and central Italy and on Sardinia. Although the southern part is mostly monophonic, geographically more isolated Sicily has vocal polyphonic traditions. As a matter of fact, central Italy is more of a transitional region between the polyphonic north and monophonic south, so polyphonic singing decreases from north to south of Central Italy.

“Choral singing belongs mainly to the alpine area and the north, where a variable number of singers sing two, three, or four parts. The accompanying part sings below the leading part or, less commonly, above it. This type of polyphony, structures in thirds or sixths, is widespread from the southern German territories to the valley of the river Po, and into Slovenia, Dalmatia, and northern Croatia. In playfulness and intricacy of texture, the richest polyphonic forms include the *tiir*, from the town of Premana in Lombardy; the *trallalero*, in the area around Genoa, in which five (sometimes six) vocal parts imitate various instruments; and the *bei* in Tuscany. These styles are neither song forms nor song types, but polyphonic procedures applied to different kinds of songs” (Sorace Keller et al, 2000:610).

The singing style in north Italy is open and relaxed and the metre and rhythm is strict. As in many other polyphonic cultures, the performance of choral music in north Italy often involves the listeners as well. “The atmosphere of the singing event encourages active participation, and men and women, as they sit at table with a bottle of wine, join the performance” (Sorace Keller et al, 2000:611). The presence of choral societies in the Alpine region is a good indication of the widespread popularity of polyphonic singing in the Italian Alps. “Even though their members [of choral societies and choirs] are not professional musicians, and do not depend on musical activities in order to make a living, the Alpine choirs are in a way professional or, at least, semi-professional organizations. Through concerts, the release of records, the publication of songbooks, and occasional subsidies, they support themselves and survive as an institution. Their music is widely appreciated in Trentino. In the countryside, as with commercial songs in the cities, it is this type of popular music that people like to listen to. Such choral groups, therefore, are Alpine, popular, and professional at the same time” (Sorace Keller, 1986:449).

Plenty of polyphonic examples are represented in Leydi’s 1973 book “Italian Folk Songs”. According to this book, singing in parallel thirds and sixths is very widely distributed in north Italy from Venetia to Genoa.

Apart from the later style of polyphony, based on European harmonies and parallel thirds, Italy is the home of more archaic polyphonic singing styles as well. First of all, some very interesting sources are available from medieval Italy. According to them, for example, by the end of the 15th century, a specific type of dissonant polyphony, based on the use of seconds, existed in a local burial liturgy in Lombardy (see the discussion in Ferand, 1939). At the same time (the end of the 15th century) we have another very interesting piece of information about very specific

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two-part singing in Milan where instead of “correct” and accepted consonances of fifths and fourths, “the sharpest dissonances – major and minor seconds, ninths, and sevenths – predominate” (Ferand, 1939:314). This information is contained in the tractate *Practica Musicae* (1496) of the famous Italian music theorist Franchino Gafori. From this region today we have only late style part-singing, based on the use of consonant thirds and European harmonies. Even the earlier source of the 1020s and 1030s, Guido d’Arezzo (in “Micrologue”, XIX) gives musical examples of polyphonic two-part singing with drone, with fourths and seconds between the parts:

Ex. 80. Italy (Kartsovnik, 1988:28)



It is very important to know that a similar kind of specific dissonant polyphony has been documented in contemporary central Italy. The central-eastern Italian regions Abruzzi (east of Rome) and Marche (north of Abruzzi) feature two-part archaic polyphony with the drone, small-range melodies and dissonant seconds in the specific genre *canto a vatoccu* (“song in the manner of a bell clapper”).

Ex. 81. Italy (Sorace Keller et al, 2000:607)



The same style of two-part polyphony with narrow range and secondal dissonances is also known in Tuscany in western Italy. This style of polyphony here is a specific genre *canto a dispetto* (“song of the despised”. Sorace Keller et al., 2000:610). Roberto Leydi noted the recent tendency towards an increase of choral performance in North Italy. For example, the solo performance of ballads has been replaced by choral performances (Leydi, 1977).

Only minor elements of polyphony (unison and heterophony) have been found in the southern part of Italy, or south of Naples. Solo singing dominates in this region. Polyphony is seldom choral (in which participants join and try to blend), but instead is unison singing that borders on heterophony, or two or three parts carried by single voices (Sorace Keller et al., 2000:611). The singing style in southern Italy is very close to the Middle Eastern Arabic singing style with a nasal timbre, embellished melodic line, and rubato (free) metre and rhythm.

On the other hand, **Sicily**, which is considered a part of southern Italy, is very polyphonic. Written sources testify to the presence of vocal polyphony in Sicily at least from the 17th century. According to Ignazio Macchiarella’s 2005 report on Sicilian polyphony at the polyphonic conference in Vienna, vocal polyphony is known in more than 120 Sicilian villages and it is spread “...all over the island with the exception of the very western zone where it was documented in the past, before

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the strong earthquake that upset the social life in the area in 1968” (from the Vienna 2005 Polyphonic Conference materials).

According to Machiarella, European type parallel thirds, chordal singing, two- and four-part drone singing and polyphony with counterpoint elements are all present on the island. Most of the time polyphonic singing is connected to sacred ritual singing during the Holy week feasts. Apart from the sacred genre, polyphony is an important part of the “...heritage of an ancient peasant repertory. Today they are performed out of their traditional contexts, mainly within private festival banquets and gatherings, rarely during a few villages’ feasts in the Eastern provinces” (Macchiarella, 2005).

The fourth region of Italy, the island of **Sardinia**, has historically and culturally been the most isolated region of Italy. Italy annexed Sardinia only in 1861, and in 1948 it became an autonomous region. Sardinia has a very different set of cultural elements, including language (derived straight from old Latin), and a distinct polyphonic style.

Sardinia is divided into four provinces: north, central, southern and western. The centre of the island is mountainous. This region, together with the eastern region of the island, known as Baronia, was referred to by the Romans as Barbagia (from Latin “Barbaria” - “those who do not speak our language”, and this is interesting, taking into account the most obvious and direct connection of the contemporary Sardinian language to the language of the Romans throughout Italy). Barbagia is the main region of distribution of the rich traditional polyphony known as *tenore*. This style is still widely spread among the local shepherds. The polyphony consists of four parts: the main melodic part is *boghe* (“voice”), the top harmony is *mesa boghe* (“high voice”), and two low parts – *contra* and the lowest part *basu*. Two low voices usually sing double drone a fifth apart (this can also be a fourth). The harmonic parts usually pronounce specific syllables that make good vibrating and blending sounds (like “mbo-mbo” or “bim-mbo”). The harmony is usually based on a single chord of a tonic major triad. Melodic activity in the top parts mostly happens within a very small range (about a third). They sing with a tense and nasal voice, sometimes creating seconds with the static triadic harmony of droning parts. In more modern choirs the singers double or even triple the traditionally known parts in order to make the harmonies richer.

The northern part of the island is known for the religious polyphony performed by local brotherhoods (groups of men who serve the Roman Catholic Church) (Lortat-Jacob, 2000:627). This style of polyphony is also close to the *tenore* tradition, with a rich reverberating harmony of a tonic triad in four parts. Voices also have the same names, except the top part, which is called here *falzittu* (although it is not performed with falsetto). This singing style features unprepared modulations, relatively free metre and rhythm, and ornamented melodies.

The southern part of Sardinia is not known for its vocal polyphonic tradition, but the tradition of instrumental polyphony is central here. This region is the home of the triple clarinet *launeddas*, the symbol of Sardinian culture. This instrument features a drone and two melodic pipes. Small bronze statues from the eighth/seventh century

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B.C. depict a player of a double (or triple) blown instrument, an ancestor of the *launeddas*.

Conclusions

With the survey of Italy we have finished the survey of the vocal polyphonic traditions of the European continent. Although I have tried to present a completely full list of the main regions and styles of polyphony in different European countries and regions (particularly of the peoples of Eastern Europe, much less known to western ethnomusicologists and interested readers), I acknowledge that such a brief survey of the whole continent cannot cover the amazing variety of all practices of group choral singing in Europe. Another shortcoming of this survey is that certain countries and polyphonic traditions have received more attention than others. So, bearing all this in mind, and without repeating the few remarks about European polyphony that we discussed at the beginning of the review of the European continent, let us formulate a few general conclusions about vocal polyphony in Europe:

- Although in a certain sense we may say that the whole of Europe represents one big polyphonic region, unlike sub-Saharan Africa, different types of polyphony are spread here in certain isolated regions.
- Without going into a more detailed classification of the polyphonic traditions of European traditional polyphonic styles, I would like to distinguish three main types of polyphony here. The **drone** type of polyphony is definitely one of the dominating types of vocal polyphony throughout the European landscape. This is particularly evident in geographically more isolated (and supposedly more archaic) regions – in mountain ranges, islands and forests. The harmonic language of this style often features very specific secondal harmonies and small-range melodies.
- Another “pan-European” style we may call the “**late European type of polyphony**” as it seems to be connected to the later influence of European professional polyphony and harmonic system. Movement in parallel thirds and sixths, triadic chords and tonic-subdominant-dominant harmonic relationships characterize this polyphonic style.
- The third widely spread type of vocal polyphony in Europe is **variant heterophony**. Although variant heterophony can be potentially present in every singing style where any of the parts is performed by more than one performer (for example the bass part), I use the name “variant heterophony” as a name for a type of polyphony only in cases when the main melody is performed by a group of singers in a variant-heterophonic texture. Rich and varied forms of variant heterophony are particularly widespread in eastern Europe.

Vocal Polyphony in Asia

Asia is by far the biggest and the most populous continent on our planet, with two thirds of the world's entire population living there. The immense size and the number of peoples, languages, religions, and cultures make it nearly impossible to generalize about Asian musical cultures. The only factor that makes my task (reviewing vocal polyphonic traditions) easier is that, according to the available information, there are not so many polyphonic cultures in Asia. But again, this is only "according to the available information". I am quite sure that there are more vocal polyphonic traditions in Asia that have not reached mainstream western ethnomusicology. There are few good reasons for this belief:

- (1) From the late medieval times when contact between the Europe and Asia (mostly with China and India) became more consistent, the opposition between "East and West" came into existence. This opposition, that still haunts the desire of humanity to come closer to each other, was expressed by music writers very clearly: *West is polyphonic and the East monophonic*. It is clear today that some Asian peoples have vocal polyphonic traditions (like the peoples of southern China, south and northeastern India, eastern Afghanistan, or Taiwan), and some European peoples have monophonic singing traditions (like almost the whole of France, Finland and Hungary), but stereotypes are still alive. Even the Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, the best ethnomusicological encyclopedic publication, out of four special volumes dedicated to the different regions of Asian continent, two do not mention in the extended index such a basic term as "harmony", and one does not mention the term "polyphony".
- (2) Despite the fact that the above-mentioned generalization is not always correct, it seems quite safe to say that vocal polyphony is not a mainstream element of musical culture of at least some Asian countries. This might be the main reason that research of traditional forms of polyphony was (and still is) very much marginalized in local ethnomusicological studies;
- (3) Western scholars, specializing in traditional musical cultures of different Asian countries, likewise mostly study the most important and representative elements of the given culture (for example, raga in India, or gamelan in Indonesia).

According to currently available information (as inferior as it is), many Asian traditional musical cultures contain some **elements of vocal polyphony** (group

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singing in unison and octaves with heterophonic elements). In instrumental music different forms of polyphony are widespread (particularly heterophonic polyphony). More elaborate forms of vocal polyphony have been documented in a few regions of Asia: in the Persian Gulf, in some parts of India (among the tribal peoples of southern and Northeastern regions of India), in the Northeastern part of Afghanistan (Nuristan), among southern Chinese ethnic minorities, among Vietnam mountain minorities and a few other regions of Southeast Asia. Vocal forms of polyphony also exist among the aboriginal populations of Taiwan, and among the enigmatic first population of the Japanese islands – Ainu. The phenomenon of solo polyphony, or overtone singing (when one singer can produce two sounds simultaneously) is a fascinating vocal tradition of several Central Asian peoples.

I am not going to discuss each Asian country separately (as I mostly did in Europe). Vocal polyphonic and monophonic traditions are interspersed in Europe and most of the European countries have islands of live traditions of vocal polyphony. Historical sources reveal the presence of such traditions in the past in some other countries (like in most of the northern Europe). This was the main reason for the detailed analysis of polyphonic traditions in European countries. In Africa, by contrast, the polyphonic and monophonic regions are not so interspersed, and this makes it possible to divide Africa into several big regions and to discuss vocal polyphonic traditions according to these regions. Unlike Africa or Europe, the majority of regions of Asian countries mostly practice monophonic singing with deep traditions of professionalism, a more important role for instrumental music, and elaborate theoretical works on their music. We shall start our survey from the Middle Eastern region.

Vocal Polyphony in the Middle East

The region of the Middle East, according to the main elements of its musical cultures, unites a vast region, which comprises parts of three continents: parts of western and central Asia, northern Africa and a small part of Europe (the European part of Turkey). Garland Encyclopedia frames the Middle East within the regions from Northwestern Africa (Morocco) up to Kazakhstan and Northwestern China.

As imperfect as most generalizations are, we can characterize the Middle Eastern region as having the following features:

- Vocal polyphony does not play an important role in most of the musical cultures of this region;
- Traditions of very developed instrumental polyphony (particularly of the string instruments) are quite usual for many Middle Eastern musical cultures;
- Despite the absence of vocal polyphonic traditions, group singing (mostly in unison or in octaves, sometimes with heterophonic elements) is quite common in folk-singing traditions of this region;

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- The Middle East is one of the most advanced regions of the world in terms of early professionalism and the role of the solo performer in musical culture;
- Although vocal music has primary importance in a musical culture (this idea is clearly expressed in the classifications of one of the greatest thinkers of humanity Al-Farabi), musical instruments, and particularly string instruments, play an important role. This idea is also clearly expressed in the writing of another great thinker of the Medieval Middle East – Ibn-Sina (Avicenna);
- Following a great tradition of writing about music from Ancient Greece, many of Middle Eastern musical cultures have a great tradition of theoretical works about music, with lengthy discussions ranging from the role of music in society to specific scales and melodic models. The music of Ancient Greece itself is considered by many to be a part of the Middle Eastern family of musical cultures;
- Also starting from Ancient Greece, Middle Eastern thinkers have long discussed the value of different kinds of music. There were suggestions that certain scales, modes or musical instruments should be banned (for example, Plato suggested a ban on the *aulos*, a double-reed aerophone). This tendency was dramatized after the advance of Islam, and resulted in a general disapproval (and sometimes a strict ban) of non-religious-related musical activities in some of the Middle Eastern countries. As a live example of such a ban, our friend and colleague from Monash University spent two years in an Iranian jail for performing classical music.

Pearl Divers of the Persian Gulf

Arguably the most prominent vocal polyphonic tradition from the Middle Eastern region has been recorded from the pearl divers of the Persian Gulf, around the island of Bahrain. Bahrain has never been an easy place in which to live. Water is so scarce that the Arabs used to dive into the gulf and collect fresh water on the bottom of the sea from underground springs. Until the 1970s pearl diving in the Persian Gulf, and particularly around the Bahrain Islands, was a thriving industry. Pearls from this region was considered to be the best in the world. Most industry was connected to the sea: fishing and collecting pearl. The best time for collecting pearls is from June to October. Small one-masted boats carried several pearl divers (from 1 to 4). Each dive could be the last for each of them, as sharks and poisonous jellyfish were very frequent in the sea. Every diver would usually make 30-40 dives a day (Rovsing-Olsen, 1978:12, 2002:87).

The traditional polyphonic songs of pearl divers are called *nahma*. The most salient feature of *nahma* songs is the exceptionally low vocal drone – *hamhama* (two octaves lower than the main melody). Scholars think that *hamhama* might be

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connected symbolically to the voice of the whale (Lambert, 2002:651). The leading melody is performed by a professional singer *nahham*. *Nahma* songs were documented in Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain. These songs are divided into two groups: working songs and entertainment songs. Working songs are rhythmically organized around short cycles (only one of the songs – *yamal* – is in free time). Entertainment songs (*ffiri*) are considered to be “prestigious forms, and their origins is the subject of rich legends” (Lambert, 2002:651).

Nahma is accompanied by clapping and the sounds of percussive instruments. No drone in instrumental music has been documented.

Much less known is the two-part singing of the Bedouins. The Garland article mentions choral singing during the ritualistic combat dances of Ababda Bedouins (Saleh, 2002:624) and Roving-Olsen provides an example of Bedouin polyphony (see Roving-Olsen, 1978).

Polyphony in Jewish music

Polyphonic singing is not a very common feature of Jewish traditional music and liturgical service. “Despite efforts by German immigrants who introduced their choral tradition to synagogues in Haifa in the 1930s, and by Sephardi musicians such as Rahamim Amar (in Sephardi synagogues the choir sang in unison), few synagogues employ a trained choir. This lack of choral music can be traced to the fact that the orthodox establishment identified choral music with non-orthodox synagogues, and it has led to a lack of a native choral repertoire for the synagogue in Israel (unlike Europe and North America)” (Seroussi, 2002:205). As far as I know, the elements of vocal polyphony in Jewish music were first studied by M. Ravina, who delivered a paper at the Anthropological Congress in Moscow in 1964. This issue was specially researched in more detail by Gerson-Kiwi in her 1968 publication (re-published in 1980). Interestingly, despite the generally accepted fact that “choirs have not made an inroad into the Israeli synagogue” (Seroussi, 2002:205), polyphony is observed mostly in synagogue singing. More specifically, Gerson-Kiwi discusses three regional styles of Jewish polyphony: Yemen Jews, the Samaritans and Corfu Jews (with a plenty of musical examples).

Yemenite part-singing is connected to the liturgical forms, and Gerson-Kiwi mentions them as “Psalm-polyphony or a prayer-polyphony” (Gerson-Kiwi, 1980:69). She distinguishes four forms of polyphony among Yemenite Jews:

(a) Vocal drone (exists in prayers). This is two-part singing with a drone. The melody has a short range – third only (A-C). With the additional tone “G” the range increases to a fourth. Dissonant seconds are frequent between the drone and the melody. “As the diapason is so narrow, the main interval is the second, but the sharp dissonant clusters do not in the least irritate the singers: their auditive perception can only follow the horizontal path, and in this selective hearing the chords simply do not exist. But they do exist for the unbiased observer and they have to be registered as a definite style of part-singing” (Gerson-Kiwi, 1980:70). Generally, I am always skeptical about the idea that “singers do not hear these clashing intervals”, and Gerson Kiwi herself writes later in this article (see later) about secondal dissonances that they

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“seems to be so congenial to the Yemenite singers that there can be no question of haphazard intonation” (Gerson-Kiwi. 1980:72).

(b) Choral polyphony of acclamations in Organum Technique (in Asmorot). This is a massed response from the entire congregation (including children) singing in a loose organum of many different pitches. The author mentions that East African mass choruses have the same kind of “sound columns” as in the Yemenite Jews’ singing. According to Gerson-Kiwi this singing style must be very close to the real sound of the medieval organum (According to Riemann’s 1898 publication, parallel fourths and fifths from the medieval musical tractates were considered to be a theoretical abstraction. The appearance of the Icelandic tradition of two-part parallel singing in perfect fifths changed the attitude towards the early organum practice)

(c) Vocal ostinato technique (in psalm reading). This form is based on simultaneous singing of the main tune and accompanying short ostinato-motifs. Ostinato-motive is developed around the tonic, and Gerson-Kiwi considers it to be “another trend originating from a basic drone form”.

(d) Heterophonic part-singing (in religious hymns). Heterophonic singing starts as an organum, but “very soon softens down to a heterophonic singing in the narrowest possible space of a second.” These dissonances “seems to be so congenial to the Yemenite singers that there can be no question of haphazard intonation” (Gerson-Kiwi. 1980:72).

(e) The style of parallel organum (in Yemenite wedding songs). In this style as soon as the leading singers starts a song, he is joined by the “chorus which adds the lower fourth to the principal melody and maintains this organal technique until the end” (ibid, 72):

The presence of vocal polyphony among the **Samaritans** is particularly interesting as the Samaritans have been in “nearly complete social and cultural isolation” (Gerson-Kiwi, 1980:73). Three forms of polyphony had been distinguished by the author:

- (1) **The canonic diaphony**, based on a completely linear logic of development with strict rhythmic organization, and without clear harmonic connections to each other: “one could even venture to say that we have here an early example of atonality, though the canonic sections are thematically connected with each other and follow the same modality. But in this interchained fabric where one section overcrosses the other, these orders are no longer effectual, and the auditive impression is that of a complete disruption of tonality”. According to Gerson-Kiwi, this technique is designed to shorten the prayer by reciting two different verses simultaneously. The author draws parallels with the technique of motet of the *ars antiqua* (ibid, 75)
- (2) **The organal homophony**, resulting from reciting the text of “The Song of the Sea” by the whole congregation. The thick sound consists of the low consonances (tonic, fifth and the octave) and the array of the dissonant sounds.

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- (3) **Vocal drone organum.** So, drone is present among the Samaritans as well: “The solid sound columns moving over the drone with perfect ease and brilliant tone color, provide one of the most advanced forms of a spontaneous polyphony” (ibid, 78).

The third polyphonic tradition, discussed by Gerson-Kiwi, is in Greece, among the Jews of the Isle of **Corfu**. Two distinct styles are distinguished:

- (1) **Bourdonized Third Parallels.** As the name of the style suggests, the main melody is followed by a harmony-triad, and the drone is used to give support to the melody.
- (2) **“Tenor-Motet” Style.** This style consists of the organum-like movements “of fifths, thirds and even seconds” with slight ornamentation in the refrain.

Then Gerson-Kiwi discusses the possibility of the external influence of traditional polyphony on Jewish polyphonic traditions from southern Albanians, Northwestern Greece and Albanians living in southern Italy and comes to the conclusion that there are clear signs of such an influence.

Some other sources from the Middle East also suggest the presence of organum-type liturgical singing. H. Husmann discusses the singing in parallel fourths in **Syrian** Christian churches. He notes the closeness of the Syrian tradition to the medieval organum and suggests that the medieval organum has a Syrian origin (Husmann, 1966). Elements of drone are heard on the recording of family singers from Hadramawt, **Yemen** (see the audio track #5 from the accompanying CD of the Garland Encyclopedia, volume 6, Middle East, where the soloist and chorus parts are overlapping).

Armenia

There has been a long-running misunderstanding of information about Armenian traditional music in Western ethnomusicology. This misunderstanding started, I think, with Paul Collaer. In his widely known work on Mediterranean polyphony Collaer provides several polyphonic examples from two Caucasian peoples – Armenians and Georgians (Collaer, 1960:58-66). Although both Armenia and Georgia are from the same region (Caucasia), where they were the closest neighbors for at least a few millennia, sharing many elements of culture (including being among the first Christian countries in the world), according to the parameter of polyphony and monophony their singing traditions are drastically different. Georgian vocal music (discussed above) is entirely based on a polyphonic model, while Armenian vocal music is entirely monophonic. I remember this well-known fact has been discussed many times by Armenian and Georgian ethnomusicologists at various scholarly meetings while they were both part of the former Soviet Union. So where did the examples of “Armenian polyphonic songs” come from? Both Armenian two-part songs with secondal dissonances, reproduced in articles by Collaer (“Akhalkri”

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and “Shallakko”, both on page 58) are in fact instrumental melodies, performed on blown instruments by two (or three) performers, one (or two) holding the drone(s) and one playing the improvised and ornamented melody. By the way, the second melody from Collaer’s article, “Shallakko”, (or “Shalakho” as it is best known in Caucasia), is in fact a dance tune, and a very popular one in entire Transcaucasia. It has been widely known in Tbilisi, capital of Georgia, at least from the end of the 19th century, when Armenians constituted a major part of the population of the Georgian capital city. I remember myself playing “Shalakho” on a piano (or sometimes on a guitar) at many parties, to the great enjoyment of my clapping and dancing friends. The popularity of this dancing tune was so big that I remember somebody putting the madly swirling “Shalakho” melody together with the broken chords from Beethoven’s “Moonlight Sonata” in the 1980s, creating a new popular crossing between the oriental scale with augmented seconds with the “Neapolitan harmony” of Beethoven’s elegiac music.

The monophonic nature of Armenian musical culture is so well known that by far the best musicological work on the history of Armenian music is entitled “History and Theory of Armenian Monodic Music” (Kushnarev, 1958). Interestingly, cited in the “references” of Collaer’s article, the title of this outstanding book is translated without the word “monodic”.

The only work I know of which is fully dedicated to the problem of polyphony in Armenian music is a paper of Armenian ethnomusicologist Barsegian on polyphony in Ancient Armenia. The paper was delivered at the 1988 conference on traditional polyphony, held in Borjomi, Georgia (Barsegian, 1988). Barsegian analyzed the literary sources from the 5th (Favstos Buzand) and 7th centuries (Movses Kalankatuaci). According to Barsegian, the ancient Armenian term “Bazmadzain” (“many sounds”, or possibly – “ many different timbres”) and “chorekdzain” (“four sounds”) was used in regard to instrumental music and instrumental ensembles in ancient Armenia.

By the end of the 19th century two talented Armenian composers Kristofor Kara-Murza and Makar Ekmalian introduced harmonized (in European style) versions of Armenian folk and liturgical music and started performing them at concerts and liturgy (Manukian, 2000:725). More genuine polyphonic versions of Armenian monodic compositions connected to the traditional singing style were created by the great Armenian composer, ethnomusicologists and choirmaster, Komitas (1869-1935).

The Bedouins have also been documented as having some forms of vocal polyphony. For example, a choral singing tradition has been documented in **Egypt**, among the nomadic tribe of Ababda (branch of the Hamitic Beja tribes), who live between the Nile Valley and the Red Sea. They are known to have “ a display of martial dancing skills in which warriors are paired in freely improvised mock combats, a form both ancient and widespread, is accompanied by choral singing, clapping, stamping, and strumming on the *tanbur*” (Saleh, 2002:624)

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Elements of polyphony were recorded in **Turkey** (Feldman, 2002:192-193). "...In the *zıkr*, elements of polyphony permeated every musical moment. This polyphony, while rudimentary – it was based mainly on octaves – was so pervasive that the music of the *zıkr* must be placed in a different category from other genres of Turkish urban music, which insisted on strict monody." (Feldman, 2002:192). And of course, the official policy of the Turkish government to distance themselves from the Ottoman past and come close to European musical traditions, among other tendencies, resulted in the creation of classical choirs and a massive exposure of choral music on radio and TV (Feldman, 2002:117), although this seems to have had a little impact on traditional singing practice in Turkey which is mostly monophonic.

Central Asia – Overtone Singing

The musical symbol of Central Asia is a unique polyphonic style, known by the names "overtone singing" or "throat singing". A solo performer produces two different sounds simultaneously. This singing style has been found on a wide territory comprising Tuva, western Mongolia and Altay and Sayan mountain ranges. According to the information received from Yuri Sheikin from Yakutsk, there are few different distinct styles of overtone singing in this region:

- (1) Northwestern Tuva is the most important region for this style, with 14 styles of singing (term – *khoomei*).
- (2) Unlike western Tuva, eastern Tuva is much less known for overtone singing traditions, and singers here are far apart. Three styles have been documented here (the term *khoomei* is used here as well).
- (3) Five styles of overtone singing have been recorded in Mountain Altay. Overtone singing is known here under the term *kai*.
- (4) Three styles have been recorded among the Mountain Shoria. They are also known under the term *kai*.
- (5) Khakassia has two styles of overtone singing, known as *khai*.
- (6) One style of overtone singing has been documented in Yakutia as well, under the name *khabarga*.
- (7) And finally, outside the Russian Federation, six styles of overtone singing have been documented in western Mongolia (under the term *khoomei*)

Overtone singing is positioned ambiguously between the polyphonic and monophonic singing traditions. From a musical point of view overtone singing is polyphony, as two functionally completely different parts (drone and a pentatonic melody) are heard simultaneously. From a social point of view, overtone singing is not polyphony, as this singing style lacks crucial social element of the polyphonic singing tradition – active musical interaction between several (at least more than one) performers.

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The singer produces a sustained pitch using a specific tense sound, then, using this sustained sound as a drone, he changes the mouth cavity shape with his tongue, lips and some other parts of the mouth to produce different harmonics (overtones) and construct melodies from these overtones. Interestingly, singers use only the selected set of overtones, carefully avoiding two overtones that do not fit the pentatonic scale (Levin, 2002:982). So, if the drone is on “C”, the singer will be using the overtones from “G” to the next “G”. This part of the overtones contain G, Bflat, C, D, E, F# and G. Out of these overtones “B flat” and “F#” are carefully avoided. This fact suggests that singers do not follow the naturally existing sound material. Instead they follow their aesthetic and cultural preferences. Overtone singing was traditionally performed by men only, but now there are women singers as well.

There has been a diversity of opinion about the origins of overtone singing, ranging from the most archaic periods (30-40 000 years ago), the “pre-speech articulation” epoch of human history (see, for example, Ikhtisamov, 1984:180-181) to the first millennia A.D. (Vainstain, 1980). I will discuss this interesting question in a separate section (or “Case Study”) in the second part of this book.

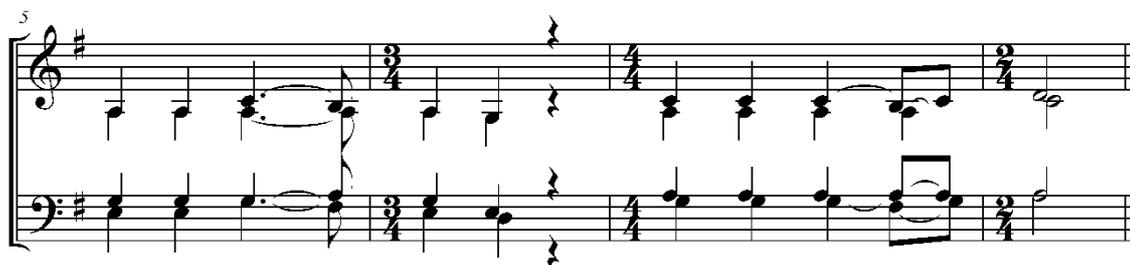
There has been a great deal of interest in the overtone singing style, and many singing-loving westerners have learned this unique sound-production technique. I remember myself sitting together with my Georgian friend and colleague, Edisher Garakanidze, under a big tree in Switzerland, near Geneva on September 26th, 1991, trying to learn the basics of overtone singing under the guidance of the brilliant performer of this style (and not only!) and ethnomusicologist Tran Quang Hai. After some time I came to the conclusion that, although I managed to produce few audible overtones, singing Georgian polyphony was still much easier for me.

Although Central Asia is justifiably known as a monophonic region, elements of “usual” polyphony (when polyphony is created by the group of singers) are present in some genres. I well remember the excitement among Soviet ethnomusicologists when an example of vocal polyphonic music was found in Central Asia. This example of rare polyphonic singing came from **Tajikistan**. I am very grateful to Zoia Tajikova who provided this information together with her own transcription of this unique version:

Ex. 82. Tajiks (from Zoia Tajikova)



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Z. Rabiev recorded in 1964 this polyphonic version of the traditional *naksh* in Ura-Tiube, in Fergana Vale, northern Tajikistan. The song is performed as an alternation of the soloist (*sarnaksh*) and the mixed choir of 10-12 singers. The soloist singing sections are in free rhythm, and the choir singing sections are metred. It is difficult to say whether all these spectacularly clashing dissonant chords were intended as they were performed, but it is clearly not a case of performers “not achieving the unison”, because the song actually starts with a long section where the choir does sing in unison (and octaves).

As I know, although the tradition of vocal polyphony has not been documented, strong vocal-instrumental polyphonic tradition is present in solo epic genre (*zhyrau*) in **Kazakhstan**. In this genre solo singing is supported by *dombra* playing, which accompanies the vocal melody in parallel fourths and fifths. Quite interestingly, in virtually all the earlier transcriptions of Kazakh epic tradition scholars were transcribing only the monophonic version (melody only), without the two-part *dombra* accompaniment. Singing in groups and antiphon between the groups of singers is another interesting tradition. “The most popular wedding song, “Zhar-Zhar,” which is found in different versions throughout Central Asia, constitutes a genre on its own, defined by an antiphonal performance style in which two choirs – one male and one female – sing responsorially” (Kunanbaeva, 2002:951).

Afghanistan (Nuristan)

One of the world’s most isolated, rich and interesting traditions of vocal polyphony exists in high mountains of East Afghanistan, among Nuristanians.

Hidden from the expansionist politics of Arabs, Mongols, and Persians by the high impenetrable mountains of southern slopes of the Hindukush mountains in East Afghanistan, about 150 000 Nuristanians maintained their independence until the end of the 19th century. In 1896 Afghani Amir Abdur Rahman Khan finally incorporated Nuristanians into Afghanistan, turned them into Moslems and gave their region a new name “Nuristan” (“enlightened”). Prior to this event this region was known in Afghanistan as “Kafiristan” (“Land of Infidels”). As you would expect from the people who live in such isolation, Nuristanians maintain elements of pre-Moslem

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practices, most notably music with the unique polyphony and dances. About half of the Nuristanians also live in neighbouring Pakistan. Nuristanians speak Kafir and Dardic languages (belong to Indo-Iranian languages), are agriculturalists and physically differ from the rest of the Afghanistan population.

Singing traditions of Nuristanians represent an extremely interesting and isolated case of vocal polyphony. I was privileged to become acquainted with over forty polyphonic songs from Nuristan, recorded by Herman M. Pressl in 1968 and 1969 (I am grateful to Viennese Phonogrammarchiv for making these recordings available to me). Together with the recordings made by Lennart Edelberg and Klaus Ferdinand in 1953-54 (and by Lennart and Margot Edelberg in 1964 and 1970), these recordings represent variety of examples of Nuristan traditional polyphony.

According to these recordings, Nuristan polyphony was (at least in the 1960s and the 1970s) a rich and live tradition, fully functioning in Nuristan society. Both men and women sing traditional polyphonic style. They mostly sing separately, but sometimes they do sing in mixed groups. Polyphony is mostly three-part. Rhythm is always precise. Metre is mostly triple (most popular being 6/8, although 4/4 and the peculiar 5/8 is also used). Lydian scale is one of the main scale systems in Nuristan polyphonic songs. Melodies have a small range (mostly up to fourth, or augmented fourth in Lydian scale). Polyphony is based mostly on the use of two principles: ostinato and drone. Drone is mostly rhythmic. Three-bar repetitive structures dominate. Songs are often accompanied by drums, string instrument *wadzh* (bowed harp), clapping and dancing.

Maybe the most important and salient feature of Nuristan polyphony is the amazing richness of dissonant chords and intervals. Nuristan vocal (and instrumental) music is a true kingdom of secondal dissonances. This abundance of seconds is often derived from the leading melodies “jumping” over the drone. If you think of three independent parts being squeezed in the space of the fourth (or augmented fourth), it is not surprising that in some songs seconds are virtually the only interval you hear during the whole song.

As transcribed examples of Nuristan polyphony are very scarce, I am including here few examples, which I transcribed from the recordings made in Nuristan by Herman M. Pressl in 1968 and 1969. Not available on multi-microphone recordings, these recordings are not easy to transcribe.

The “typical” Nuristan polyphonic song is a three-part composition, with two lead melodies (*mil-alol* and *at-alol*, “lead” and “support” parts) and mostly movable drone (*asamchilog*, choir). 6/8 metre is the most widely spread. Very peculiar string instrument – *wadzh* (four string bowed harp, tuned usually into Lydian tetrachord with the augmented fourth and very characteristic chords, full of seconds) is also often used for the accompaniment of singing and drumming. The following excerpt represents these features:

Ex. 83. Afghanistan, Nuristan (Vienna, Ph. Archive, B13225)

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I am presenting here only six bars from each song as three-bar structures dominate Nuristan polyphonic songs. The songs mostly consist of the ostinato-like repetition of these six-bar structures (3+3 bars). One of the voices (at the end of the repetitive three-bar phrase) is improvising the short motif that leads to the next repetition of the three-bar structure.

The next example is in 5/8 metre with the typical secondal clashes between two parts. Song is accompanied by drumming (on the first and fourth beats of the five beat cycle):

Ex. 84. Afghanistan, Nuristan (Vienna, Ph. Archive, B13220)



These were so far examples of male polyphony. Women's singing has the same features, and three-part singing is dominating. Here is the example of typical three-part polyphony from Nuristan women:

Ex. 85. Afghanistan, Nuristan (Vienna, Ph. Archive, B13242)

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One of the songs from this collection is particularly interesting, as two versions of the same song (“Senkivar kasek”) – were recorded in the same village on the same day. The first version is performed by women and the second is by mixed group. Most of the songs are sung by men and women separately. This kind of mixed performance might not be usual for Nuristanians, because this particular performance shows a bit of uncharacteristic features, and possibly even a “confusion” of the singers. It starts with the male lead and in the first phrase both man and women are singing the second “supporting” part. This is not traditional (to have more than one person singing any of the lead parts), and possibly both male and female singers are giving each other space, because for a while none of the “second soloists” is supporting the lead singer. Only about a minute later the female singer starts singing again the supporting lead part. Group of women also sing a drone in this version, and as women sing an octave higher, this version has uncharacteristically wide range of more than an octave. Second lead part, sung by a woman to the male lead part is very interesting. Instead of singing, as usual, a second lower from the lead melody, she follows the lead melody a seventh higher (singing the same notes, but an octave higher).

Nuristan polyphony is definitely one of the most isolated and interesting traditions of polyphony on our planet. We will discuss the unique features of Nuristan polyphony and its possible links to other polyphonic traditions in the second part of the book.

The peoples of **North Asia**, according to the available information, have monophonic singing traditions (solo and unison). There has been a kind of sensation that caused long-heated discussions among Soviet ethnomusicologists when a particular round-dance *osuokai* of the Yakuts with elements of polyphony was recorded in the 1980s. According to Sheikin, one of the Russian ethnomusicologists commented after hearing the recording: “they are singing as if they are not Yakuts,

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but some kind of Georgians!” (Personal communication from the December 9th, 1986). On the recording you can clearly hear organum-like parallel singing, with most of the singers singing more or less in unison, and one voice (female voice) singing the same melody a fourth higher. It is an example of Schneider’s “tonally unrelated parallelism”. It is not clear whether this polyphony was intended or if it was an unsuccessful attempt by a mixed group to sing in unison. According to the singers themselves, they were all singing the same voice. Eduard Alexeev dedicated an interesting article to this issue (Alexeev, E, 1967).

Many other peoples of Russian northern Asia have vocal genres with group singing where unison (and octave) singing is often performed in unison-heterophonic texture. Therefore, we may say that in the north and east of Central Asia (the region of distribution of overtone polyphony), vocal monophony with minor elements of heterophony dominates. Of course, we should not forget here that I am talking about the indigenous peoples of northern Asia. Ethnic Russians living here do practice polyphonic singing. Among the Russians living in this region are so-called *semeiskie zabaikal'ia* with one of the most developed and complex traditions of vocal polyphony among the Russians. We have discussed their singing traditions in the section dedicated to the vocal polyphony of Russians.

East Asia

Japan: Ainus

Arguably the most isolated tradition of vocal polyphony in the world is in eastern Asia, among the Ainus from the northern Japan and Kuril islands. Ainu ethnic, linguistic and even racial origins are much debated. The first Europeans who met the Ainus wrote that they looked like Finns. Later scholarly research confirmed the unique features of Ainu language and race. As arguably the first dwellers of this region (Sakhalin, Kuril Islands and particularly Hokkaido in Japan), the Ainus constitute the substrata of the Japanese.

About 20.000 Ainu live in northern Japan (mostly on Hokkaido) today. Only about one hundred of them can actually speak the Ainu language. After a five-year research program, conducted by the Japan Broadcasting Association in the beginning of the 1960s, about two thousand Ainu traditional songs were recorded. A 600-page volume “Music of the Ainu” containing about 500 transcribed pieces of music was published in Japanese with a small English summary (Kazuyuki, 1965).

The traditional polyphony of Ainu is based on canonic imitation of relatively short musical phrases. According to Kazuyuki (1965, 1975), out of thirteen different genres two are the most important: *upopo* (round, sung in a canon by elders sitting in a circle), and *rimse* (round dance, only very rarely sung as a canon). There is an interesting and complex interaction between these two genres: “The way in which these songs are handed down is in disorder today, and many songs are sung equally as *upopo* and *rimse*. Even in such instances, however, *rimse* is rarely sung in canon. Imitation is a significant criterion for judging *rimse* and *upopo*. The latter is sung imitatively by several people seated round the lid of a chest, tapping the rhythm on the lid. Usually the lead is taken by the oldest member of the group. The leader turns his

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face towards a man sitting at his right, and on a cue this man starts singing a beat behind. This continues until the last man sings while the rest go on singing. Thus the whole sound becomes chaotic and the sounds comply with the etymology of the word ‘upopo’, noisy singing like birds twittering. The whole process is repeated several times, and then the leader starts another song in like manner. The falsetto (*pon*) singing at the beginning of the song is very distinctive, and its effect is like lighting candles one after another in the dark. Upopo and rimse were originally the same as their etymology suggests; they only gradually achieved separate identities. The rimse became a dancing song, and the upopo became an imitation sitting song” (Kazuyuki, 1975:63).

Canonic singing can vary from two parts up to six parts. Here is an example of a six-part canon:

Ex. 86. Japan, Ainus (Kazuyuki, 1965:22, #1)

In the following two-part song canon is not precise:

Ex. 87. Japan, Ainus (Kazuyuki, 1965:220, #247)

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Precise canonic singing is the best known and the most characteristic of Ainu polyphony. As a polyphonic culture, mostly based on canonic singing, the Ainu tradition is unique among the polyphonic cultures. The only other polyphonic tradition that uses canonic singing so widely is the Lithuanian *sutartines* from the Baltic region. Unlike Lithuanian *sutartines*, where you hear two-part singing, in Ainu *upopo* you can hear five- and six-part canonic singing.

Some songs have elements of drone polyphony, as in the following example, which starts as a loose canon and grows into drone two-part singing with dissonant secondal intervals:

Ex. 88. Japan, Ainus (Kazuyuki, 1965:16, #55)



Secondal dissonances are even more obvious in the following example, where two women sing in two parts (this is my transcription from the accompanying cassette, from Kazuyuki, 1965):

Ex. 89. Japan, Ainus (Kazuyuki, from the accompanying cassette)



Numerous influences between Ainu and neighbouring musical cultures had been noted (including Japanese, eastern Siberian peoples, peoples of Kuril Islands, Kamchatka and Sakhalin. Kazuyuki, 1975:66), although the tradition of vocal polyphony seems to be a uniquely Ainu phenomenon in this vast region.

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Not much is known about the other (southern) end of Japan – the **Ryukyu Islands**. According to the available information, group antiphonal singing (*uta kake*) and call-and-response forms are quite usual (Atumi, 2002:791). Particularly refined and rich are the antiphonal singing traditions on the Amami Islands (between the Japanese mainland and Okinawa). Atumi notes the closeness of *uta kake* and the antiphonal singing of southern Chinese minorities (the region known for its vocal polyphonic traditions – see below).

China

Alan Lomax united China with most of the countries from the Middle East to East Asia under the collective name “Old High Cultures” (Lomax, 1968). These “Middle East – East Asian Monophonic Belt” cultures are based on sophisticated vocal monophony, deep traditions of professionalism, highly developed musical instruments, instrumental ensembles of ancient origins, and sophisticated theoretical works about music. Despite this closeness, there are a few extremely important differences within this group. Most importantly, the scale systems (as I mentioned earlier, the “DNA of musical cultures”) are totally different. East Asian musical cultures are mostly based on pentatonic anhemitonic scales (scales without the semitone, the smallest interval for tempered music, although pentatonic with semitones are also present, most notably in Japanese music), while Middle Eastern music is known for the extensive use of semitones and even smaller intervals. The use of specific melismatic embellishments in Middle Eastern music is another important element that is absent in East Asian music. Even without mentioning other differences between Middle Eastern and East Asian musical traditions, it is clear that the group of “Old High Cultures” consist of at least two principally different groups of cultures – (1) Middle Eastern group of cultures (from North Africa to North India and Tajikistan) and (2) East Asian groups of cultures (China, Japan, Korea and part of the Southeast Asian cultures). And still, with regard to dividing the world’s musical cultures into monophonic and polyphonic groups, Lomax’s suggestion of uniting these cultures in a group “Old High Cultures” is justified.

China, geographically one of the biggest and the most populous country of the world, is home to a large number of ethnic minorities. The majority of Chinese are Han. According to the available information, although mainstream Chinese (Han) folk music is generally monophonic, interesting forms of group singing in call-and-response forms are an integral part of their traditional singing. For example, work songs – *haozi*, a loud outdoor genre accompanying different types of work - are performed by a leader’s call and group response. Another group song is *tian’ge* – a responsorial harvest song from southern China, connected to the different processes of working on rice fields. *Tian’ge* helped to maintain the working rhythm and kept the workers’ spirits up. Sometimes workers would just listen to the specially invited professional singer while working, or the “landowner would arrange for two competing groups of singers, who would take turns, trying to cap each other” (Jianzhong, 2002:153). According to available information, group singing among the Han is always monophonic (unison, or social polyphony only). For the elements of

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heterophony in Han classical and folk music see Mok, 1966). Therefore, China is generally known among ethnomusicologists as a classical country of vocal monophony.

Now if we look at the musical traditions of **Chinese minorities**, we will find plenty of traditions of vocal polyphony that are mostly unknown to western scholars. Almost half of the Chinese minorities have been documented to have vocal polyphonic traditions. If we take into account that the number of Chinese minorities is over fifty, and that their combined population numbers around 100 million, we may get an approximate idea of how rich (and how unknown to western readers) these polyphonic traditions can be.

Let us listen on this matter to one of China's leading ethnomusicologists, Mao Jizeng, from the Central Institute for Nationalities from Beijing: "Although some foreign scholars believe that China has only monophonic folk song, in fact more than twenty minority peoples in China have polyphonic songs. [Another Chinese scholar, Qia estimates a more precise number – 25 minorities, See later. J.J.] Some folk singers have a saying that indicates a deep-seated tradition of polyphony: 'A lamp has two wicks, because if there's only one the light isn't bright enough.' Polyphonic songs can be divided broadly into three groups: (1) part singing, found among the Zhuang, Yao, and Miao; (2) songs in which a continuous bass line with a fixed melody is combined with the main melody, found among the Dong and Mulao; (3) folk songs in canon or round form, such as the songs of the She. Looked at as a whole, the forms of the various musical lines are basically integrated, and their melodic movements, rhythms, supporting notes, and finals are the same ... The frequent appearance and prominent use of major seconds and the special progression of major seconds resolving to unisons are important characteristics of some polyphonic folk song" (Jizeng, 2002:449).

A very detailed and informative special section on multi-part music among Chinese minorities has been written by Shen Qia, another leading Chinese ethnomusicologist from the China Conservatory of Music, Beijing, for the Garland Encyclopedia of World Music. Here is most of the text of this very important section for our topic: "As far as we know at present, apart from the Han, twenty-five minorities have multi-part music. These include the Zhuang, Buyi, Dong, Maonan, Mulan, Dai and Wa of the Yue-Pu system; the Miao, Yao, and She of the Miao-Yao system; and the Qiang, Yi, Hani, Lisu, Naxi, Bai, Lahu, Iino, Tujia, and Jingpo of the Di-Quang system. Eighty percent of them are distributed within Guangxi, Guizhou, and Yunnan regions; the others are found in the Aba district of Sichuan, in southwest Hubei, western Hunan, and the Ningde region of northeast Fujian. Following are some important forms of multi-part music.

"*Galao*. The dong form *galao* 'ancient and solemn suite' is sung in a southern Dong dialect and flourishes in the countries of Liping, Congjiang, Rongjiang, and Sanjiang in the southeast Guizhou.

"*Wennai*. This is a generic name given by the Buyi to their multi-part folk songs. The Buyi *wennai* are often drinking songs for wedding celebrations. There are

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also some *wennai* called “double songs”. *Wennai* are mainly found in Libo, Sandu, and Dushan in south Guizhou.

“*Huan*, *bi*, *xi*, and *liao*. These are all names given to *shan’ge* folk songs in different Zhuang areas. These localized terms cover many different melody types, of which multi-part songs are only one:

“• *Huan* are found along the You, Hongshui, and Liu rivers in west and central Guangxi. They include many two-voice forms. *Gumeihuan*, named after Gumeitun, its place of origin, is now current in the countries of Tianyang, Debao, and Bose in western Guangxi. *Huanleng* is found in Shanglin in central Guangxi. *Huanliu* is named after the vocables used, and is found in Pingguo Country in west-central Guangxi. *Huanya* ‘song of the Buyayi’ is so named because of local people, the Buyayi branch of the Zhuang, call themselves the Ya; this last type of song is current in Tian’e, Guangxi. In the three-voice genre *sandunhuan*, current in Shanglin and Mashan countries in Central Guangxi, the middle voice is the principal one. The four-voice genre *huanyue* originated as a duo singing style in shamanic rituals; it too may be found in Shanglin and Mashan countries.

“• *Bi* are found mainly in northern and northwestern Guangxi. They are variable in form, and the melodies differ from place to place. Some forms of *bi* are multi-part. For example, in Luocheng there are *binongnai*, a women’s duo song; and *binongniang*, a men’s duo – both sung antiphonally. This country also has *biyewan*, sung at night; *bijiang*, a narrative form; *biyou*, a fast *bi*; *biyan*, a slow *bi*; *bidan*, a *bi* with regulated vocables; and *bifuyin*, *bisangye*, and *bimaiwei*, among other forms.

“• *Xi* are found in Fusui, Daxin, Ningming, Longzhou, Jingxi, Debao, Napo, Chongzuo, and Tiandeng in Southwest Guangxi. *Xi* include many melody types, in which some are multi-part *shan’ge* folk songs.

“• *Liao* are also called *huanliao*, from *huan* ‘song’ and *liao*, a vocable – thus this class of songs is named for its vocables. *Huanliao* can be divided into three categories: *huanlei* (long song), *huanding* (short song), and *huanzhong* (medium-length songs). They are found mainly in Tiandong and Pingguo in west-central Guangxi.

“These multi-part songs include some characterized by harmony and some characterized by polyphony. Polyphonic songs are the most common and may use heterophony, imitation, or nonimitative polyphony.

“Over the past decade or so, Chinese scholars have collected a wealth of multi-part music and researched it in depth. The accumulated material proves that the multi-part music discussed here is an ancient and indigenous form of folk song, owing nothing to the multi-part music introduced by Western missionaries in the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century” (Qia, 2002:489-490).

To this amazing variety and richness of traditional polyphony, present among Chinese minorities, we could add the relatively recent (1995) fieldwork discovery of a quite sensational polyphonic tradition, made by a Chinese scholar Zhang Xingrong from the Yunnan Art Institute. In the mountain village of Puchun (a village without electricity and roads) of the Hani people, located on the borders of Honghe, Luchun and Yuanyang counties, they recorded five-part a cappella “Bridal Laments” and eight-part accompanied “Rice Transplanting Songs”, where all the parts are

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performed by individual singers and singing is also accompanied by traditional instruments – an end-blown flute *labi* and three-stringed plucked lutes *lahe*.

Unfortunately almost no information is available on traditional polyphonic singing in **Tibet**, although scholars note the presence of the tradition of table songs performed in big communal groups, and rich traditions of antiphon singing in Tibetan dance-songs, including antiphony between soloist and group, or between the men's and women's groups (Jizeng, 2002:477, 483). On the other hand, the famous Tibetan monks' chant is in fact a group singing (chanting), and should be considered among the different types of group singing, although it is hardly an ordinary type of vocal polyphony.

In his widely known book "Work and the Rhythm" Carl Bucher gives an interesting example of two-part drone polyphonic singing from Tibet. This is *tongskad*, traditional work song:

Ex. 90. China, Tibet (Bucher, 1923:113, #90)



Taiwan is another very important region of traditional polyphony, and, as a matter of fact, one of the centres of study of vocal polyphony in Southeast Asia (I am referring to the fact that Taiwan hosted a special conference on traditional polyphonic singing in 2002. For more information about this and other conferences fully dedicated to the research of traditional polyphony see the special Appendix at the very end of this book).

Several indigenous peoples live in Taiwan: the Atayal, Amis, Bunun, Paiwan, Saisat, Tsou, Rukai, Puyuma, Shao. Several of them practice vocal polyphonic singing.

Atayal is one of the biggest aboriginal groups in Taiwan (numbering around 100 000). They mostly sing solo, although during the wedding ceremonies group singing, featuring two- and three-part canonic polyphony occurs.

Ami is the most numerous group in Taiwan (around 150 000 population). Their polyphony is mostly based on two-part singing, with the low part performed in unison (or solo) and the high part singing a wide-range pentatonic scale-based melody. Occasional three- and four-part sections also appear. Millions of western listeners have heard traditional Ami two-part polyphony without realizing they were listening to a Taiwanese traditional song, because when the British rock-band "Enigma" used the recording of Amis' two-part polyphonic harvest song (recorded in Paris in 1988 from native Taiwanese singers) as the main melody for their 1994 worldwide hit "Return to Innocence", they did not acknowledge the source of the song, singers, the original recording and even ethnic origin of the song.

Bunun are the most mountainous people on Taiwan, living in the central Taiwan mountain ranges. Their polyphony is the most "harmonic". Drone has a

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prominent place in their singing. For example, in a song depicting the growth of the seed from the ground, Bunun singers use a unique gliding-up drone, starting very low and gradually going up, while other parts also go higher modulating, but without gliding. In Bunun songs you hear the sound of full chords most of the time. Drones are usually in the top or the middle of the texture. Harmony can be based around the major triad, or more adventurous sets of harmonies can be used as well, as in the next example (from the cassette, my own transcription), ominously called “Song of the Victory of the Head Hunters”. Here is the first half of the song:

Ex. 91. Taiwan, example of Bunun polyphony (from Bois, 1989)

♩ = 60

The musical score for Ex. 91 is written in 8/8 time and the key of D major (two sharps). It consists of three systems of two staves each. The first system shows a treble staff with rests and a bass staff with a drone of two notes (D and A) that glides upwards. The second system shows a treble staff with a melody of eighth notes and a bass staff with the drone. The third system shows a treble staff with a melody of eighth notes and a bass staff with the drone. The score ends with a double bar line.

The **Paiwan** live in the southern part of the island and number around 70 000. In their traditional singing they use two-part drone polyphony, and small-range melodies. Unlike Bunun, who uses drone on top of the multiphonic texture, the Paiwan use drone as the lowest part. Secondal dissonances are also used in Paiwan polyphonic songs.

The **Rukai** are close ethnically and geographically to Paiwan, and this is clear in their singing style as well, although Paiwan polyphonic singing seems to retain more traditional elements than Rukai polyphonic singing.

The **Saisiat** are one of the smallest groups numbering fewer than 10 000 people in Northwestern Taiwan. Their traditions are deeply influenced by the neighbouring Atayal, the most numerous and influential Taiwanese mountain people (see above). Regarding polyphonic singing, according to available data, they did have

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a tradition of vocal polyphony which was lost during the 20th century: "...at one time there was singing in parallel fourths, but no-one sings in this way anymore" (Tsang-houei, 2002:525).

The **Tsou** people are also very few (under 10 000). They live in the high mountains of the Central Ranges and are neighbors of the Bunun. Like the Bunun, the Tsou are known for their harmonic polyphonic singing, although two-part singing is prevalent here (unlike the three-part singing of the Bunun people). Unlike any other Taiwan peoples, who use only binary metres, the Tsou also use ternary metres (3/4 and 6/8).

South-East Asia

Vietnam

According to the available information, the traditional music of the Viets, the main ethnic group of Vietnam, has some interesting forms of group singing (particularly responsorial forms), although the group singing is based on unison (social polyphony). Therefore we can repeat what is generally known about Vietnamese traditional music, that it is based on a tradition of vocal monophony.

On the other hand, traditions of vocal polyphony are found in the singing traditions of several **ethnic minorities** of certain regions of Vietnam (Nam, 1988:41). More than 50 minorities live in Vietnam. Some of the minorities live in the lowlands, and others live in the uplands (mountain regions). As is often a case, the earliest population of Vietnam is preserved today as minorities in the mountain ranges (mostly in central Vietnam) (Nguyen, 2002:531). Another mountainous region of the country – the northern part - is mostly inhabited by groups that came from southern China between the 1300s and 1800s. The Vietnamese mountain peoples have different (from the Viets) origins, physical features, languages and musical cultures. Vocal forms of polyphony are documented among the central, and particularly the northern mountainous minorities. According to a very few available examples of Vietnam polyphony, two-part singing is prevalent, and heterophony and drone forms are present. Both of these examples are from Kao-bang province of northern Vietnam:

Ex. 92. Vietnam (Do Ming, 1975:156)

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Musical score for a piece by Joseph Jordania (2006). The score is in 2/4 time and consists of four staves. The first two staves are vocal lines, and the last two are piano accompaniment. The music features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are also some accidentals, such as a sharp sign in the first staff. The piano part includes a triplet in the upper voice and a long note in the lower voice.

Ex. 93. Vietnam (Belorusec, 1969:269)

Musical score for Ex. 93, Vietnam (Belorusec, 1969:269). The score is in 4/4 time and consists of four staves. The first two staves are vocal lines, and the last two are piano accompaniment. The music features a mix of quarter and eighth notes. The first two staves have a *pp* dynamic marking. The piano part starts at measure 7, with the upper staff having a whole rest and the lower staff having a whole note.

Unfortunately, the Vietnamese mountain minority's traditions of vocal polyphony are almost unknown in the western ethnomusicology. Garland's article on

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Vietnamese minorities does mention their traditions of group singing, but fails to provide information whether the singing is unison or polyphonic.

According to the available information, traditions of vocal polyphony similar to those of the Chinese and Vietnamese minorities are present in **Nepal**, and **Burma (Myanmar)** as well. Unfortunately, these polyphonic traditions have not been studied sufficiently, and the only information I have are works about southern Chinese and Taiwanese polyphonic traditions. They mention the typological closeness of Southeast Asian polyphonic traditions (mostly existing in the forest-covered mountain regions of Southeast Asia) (Tsang-houei, 2002:523).

India

India has one of the world's biggest diversity of peoples of different physical types, languages, religious confessions and cultures. This applies to the musical traditions as well. Perhaps one of the reasons for the small national importance of folk music is the sheer diversity of the vocal and instrumental traditions of Indian peoples and ethnic groups, making it very hard for a folk tradition of any one region to become the national idiom of Indian music. Instead, contemporary Indian film music (the biggest film industry in the world) is recognized as the unifying national symbol of Indian popular musical culture. Songs from Indian films are actively put on cassettes and sold in their millions throughout the country. They create a background for social events and are learned and sung by villagers and city dwellers alike (Green, 2000:555).

Not all the traditions and musical styles of different regions and peoples of India have been studied sufficiently. The musical landscape of India is dominated by the magnificent North Indian (Hindustani) and South Indian (Karnatak) classical traditions. Although classical traditions are polyphonic, India is generally known as a country with monophonic vocal traditions, because in both North and South India this polyphony is instrumental (or vocal-instrumental). As a matter of fact it is quite amazing how Indian instrumental music is dominated by drone polyphony, the form of polyphony virtually absent in vocal group singing.

Dominated by the classical traditions of raga both in North and South India on one side, and the massive popularity of film music industry on the other, very little attention has been paid to the folk music of the different peoples of India. The accepted stereotype of Indian music as "monophonic culture" also contributed to the very limited attention of scholars to polyphonic traditions of the different Indian peoples.

The work of Kauffmann and Schneider (1960) about the polyphonic folk tradition of the **Assamese** people is the only major study of traditional vocal polyphony in India that I am aware of.

Polyphonic singing of the mountain-dwelling Assamese has understandable links with the polyphonic singing traditions of neighbouring mountain peoples of

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Southeastern Asia. We find here several different forms of part-singing, although the parallel movements of fourths, fifths and octaves seems to dominate:

Ex. 94. India, Assam (Kaufman and Schneider, 1960:260)



Ex. 95. India, Assam (Kaufman and Schneider, 1960:#11)



Another region with documented traditions of vocal polyphony is **southern India**. Although cultures (and musical cultures) of different regions of southern India (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Kota) are different, they are still united by a common Dravidian ancestry. According to Lomax, the singing traditions of the tribal communities of southern India contain different forms of polyphony (Lomax, 1968). Interestingly, all four articles dedicated to four main southern Indian regional musical traditions in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* mention their strong traditions of group singing by both men and women (mostly in call-and-response form) and the popularity of circle dances, but they fail to mention whether they are monophonic or polyphonic. This must be the result of general neglect of scholars towards vocal polyphonic traditions in India. As a matter of fact, the word “polyphony” is absent in the impressive index of this 1000+-page volume dedicated to the music of Indian Subcontinent.

Conclusions

Following are a few general conclusions to sum up this brief review of the polyphonic traditions of the biggest and the most populous continent of the world:

- Generally speaking, Asia is one of the most monophonic continents of the world, although a few regions are known for their polyphonic traditions.
- In the Middle East vocal polyphony is present among the Persian Gulf fishing and particularly pearl-diving populations around the island of Bahrain. Vocal polyphony here is based on a strong tradition of very low drone with a highly ornamented melody.

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Polyphonic singing was also noted among some other Middle Eastern peoples, particularly among the Jews, Syrians, and Bedouins.

- Central Asia harbors the unique tradition of overtone singing, based on the use of a long drone sound and creating the melody using the natural overtones of the drone sound.
- The most isolated polyphonic traditions of the world also come from Asia. The first inhabitants of the Japanese and Kuril Islands, the enigmatic Ainus retained their tradition of canonic singing up to the 20th century. Another uniquely isolated polyphonic region is Nuristan, situated in impenetrable mountains of Hindukush in Afghanistan. The secondal polyphony was still thriving here in the second half of the 20th century.
- Probably the biggest and the most important (although not researched sufficiently) region of traditional vocal polyphony in Asia is Southeast Asia, stretching from Northeast India up to the Southern Chinese minorities, and the ethnic minorities of Vietnam, Burma, and Nepal, living in the forest-covered mountains of Southeastern Asia.
- One of the most important (and better researched) regions of traditional polyphony is Taiwan, where different mountain peoples practice different forms of polyphony.

Vocal Polyphony in North America

The musical traditions of Native Americans are stereotypically regarded as monophonic. Despite the presence of strong group-singing traditions in most American Indian traditional music, monophonic (solo, unison and often loosely heterophonic) singing predominates.

At the same time, unlike many of the other “monophonic” regions of the world, where the study of dominant monodic music totally pushed away any study of the elements of polyphony, quite a few American scholars (mostly musicologists and ethnomusicologists) contributed to the study of elements of part-singing among North American Indians (see the survey in Nettl, 1961).

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According to the available sources, mostly summarized in a concise and very informative article by Bruno Nettl (1961), information about the polyphonic singing styles of different Indian peoples is quite abundant. Although some regions and peoples lack any references to polyphony, solid information is available on other regions and peoples. Most importantly, this information questions the existing general stereotype about the general monophonic nature of American Indian vocal singing traditions.

Among different regions of North America two regions are particularly rich in information about vocal polyphony: (1) the Northwest Coast, and (2) the East Coast.

Plenty of information indicates that the **Northwest Coast** Indians (particularly the **Nootka** and **Salish**) were familiar with a part-singing tradition, and particularly often used drone polyphony. Drone could be the highest part (as among the **Makah**) as well as the lowest part (**Salish** Indians). Makah used a so-called “metal pitch”, a drone that sounded on top of the melody. According to Densmore’s informants, the “metal pitch” [high pitch drone] was sung by individuals, mainly women, who “either did not know the song or wished to improve its quality” (Densmore, 1939:130). It is very interesting that the Makah would use a “metal pitch” drone to accompany a stranger when he would sing his own song for them. Densmore provides some very interesting information about the additional harmonic tones that Salish singers used to place during the long notes in the melody (Densmore, 1943:31). Abraham and Hornbostel transcribed this example of drone polyphony from **Thomson River Indians**:

Ex. 96. North America (Abraham and Hornbostel, 1922: #32)



Singers were divided into two groups (so both parts were sung in unisons). Some of them sang a melody, and others occasionally repeated the same note, a third lower than the main tone of the melody (Abraham & Hornbostel, 1922:32).

According to Roberts, Nootka had parallel three-part singing traditions, with men singing a melody and women singing together with them, some singing a fourth, and some an octave higher. They had special terms indicating the relationship of the parts. She indicates that Nootka have known polyphony for a long time. Polyphonic elements in the singing of the **Nootka** and **Kwakiutl** were also discussed by Ida Halpern at the “Centennial Workshop on Ethnomusicology” in 1967: “There are slight polyphonic tendencies noticeable. However, to speak of polyphony when there is a slight momentary discrepancy of pitch should not be considered true polyphony, but unintentional polyphony. Some of the Nootka songs, however, have a more truly polyphonic feeling than those of the Kwakiutl” (Halpern, 1975:25). Later she notes that polyphonic moments “always occurred the same way in the same song” (pg. 42).

According to Keeling vocal counterpoint is particularly characteristic for the **Californian Indians**: “Throughout this area the various tribes also perform secular

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dances such as Shakehead Dance or the Pomo Ball Dance, and these illustrate the basic style of group singing in the region. This music resembles the Northwestern style in that it is contrapuntal, but the nature of the counterpoint is very different. In north-central California, the solo part is augmented by another basically rhythmic part known as “the rock.” This is an accompaniment, sung by one person, and the singing itself is called “holding rock”. In addition to the soloist and the “rock” there is rhythmic beating of clapsticks (played by the singer) and often the sound of whistles blown by dancers, so that the whole musical texture is fairly complex” (Keeling 2001:415-416). “...The presence of vocal counterpoint as a basic element in public singing is one of the most distinctive characteristics. While certain types of polyphony have been noted among tribes of the Northwest Coast, true rhythmic counterpoint is much more prevalent in California than in other regions of North America. Contrapuntal styles have been described here among the Northwestern and north-central California nations, but other types of counterpoint are also evident in historical sources and archival recordings of music pertaining to certain earlier rituals of Southern California groups” (ibid :418).

Another important region for indigenous polyphonic traditions was the **Eastern Coast**. In the Northeast, drone was mostly used. Roberts mentions polyphonic songs with several singers singing a main melody and others carrying a drone (Roberts, 1936:7). Menomini also used a drone “to help the singers” (Densmore, 1939:26). In another interesting case, “Female informant, wife of a medicine man, helped her husband to sing by standing beside him and singing a drone above his melody” (Nettl, 1961:359). Therefore, drone could be a top part as well. The Delaware and Fox Indians also used drone in their traditional songs (Baker, 1882:14).

Information about polyphony from **Southwestern** USA is more fragmentary and only mentions a couple of tribes from remote regions: the **Yaqui** women sang a very high drone (octave and fifths above the tonic) (Fillmore, 1889:306). The **Papago** women also used a drone above the melody “for the space of three or four measures” (Densmore, 1929:14). Call-and-response with the soloist and chorus “stepping” on each other (or overlapping) in a dance song of the **Creek** Indians has been eloquently described: “It is ... difficult to divide between where the leader stops and the chorus comes in . . . The more animated the dance becomes, the more merged and rapid are the parts. The effect of this is . . . bordering almost on harmony” (Speck, 1911:162. Cited from Nettl, 1961:360). The **Cherokee** and **Shawnee** are also documented to have the same kind of responsorial singing with parts “stepping” on each other (Nettl, 1961:360).

Information on **Plain Indian** polyphony is also available. And again, we see the use of drone, sung by women of the Pawnee Indians from the northwest and south west of the region (Densmore, 1930:659). According to Helen Roberts, the **Oglala Sioux** sang in parallel thirds and simple imitation-like call-and-response where the chorus starts while the soloist is still singing. Her general remark is “choral singing was common among the Oglala Sioux” (Roberts, 1936:7). The **Arapaho** are also noted for such cadential two-part singing.

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Nettl also discusses the very interesting tradition of the use of the instrumental drone in this region. Drumming on the kettledrum, partly filled with water (and accordingly specially tuned) accompanies singing with a steady instrumental “rhythmic drone”. It is very interesting that according to Nettl (who transcribed such songs from the **Arapaho** Peyote), the kettledrum is tuned to either the tonic of the melody, or a fifth below the tonic (Nettl, 1961:358). Polyphonic elements in **Peyote** songs are also mentioned by Gooding (2001:445).

Summarizing the information on polyphony among North American Indians, Nettl writes that out of six musical areas, identified in his seminal work on Indian music (Nettl, 1954), “only two, the **Great Basin** and the **Athabaskan**, one an exceedingly simple style and the other represented only by the Navaho and Apache, **lack references to Polyphony**” (Nettl, 1961:360). In the concluding part of the article Nettl discusses different possibilities of the meager distribution of vocal polyphonic traditions among North American Indians, and suggests two different models: (1) vocal polyphonic traditions among American Indians existed earlier much more widely, and the isolated regions with elements of part singing are only the remnants of this old tradition, or (2) by the time of the first contact with Europeans American Indians were “on the threshold of developing an elaborate polyphonic style” (Nettl, 1961:362). I do not want to discuss these very interesting historical issues in this part of the book, dedicated to a **review** of the information available from various sources. We will discuss this topic in the second part of the book, in a special section (or “case”), dedicated to the vocal polyphony of American Indians.

South America

It became a commonplace in ethnomusicological publications to note that South American Indians’ singing traditions contain much more polyphony than those of their North American counterparts. “In spite of the dearth of polyphony in North America, it has often been taken for granted that Central and South American Indians had complex polyphonic styles” (Nettl, 1961:354). According to Alan Lomax, “Polyphonic singing, which is frequently diffusely organized counterpoint, occurs in South America especially along the eastern slopes of the Andes. In this area too one encounters an unemphatic, soft-voiced, subdued, feminine-sounding style, with a frequent use of harmony. Such singing can be heard in the backwoods of highland Peru (Q’eros) and from the Campa of the eastern Andean slopes, through Venezuela and Colombia, into southern Mexico among the Tzotzil” (Lomax, 1968:85)

Q’ero. Probably one of the most interesting surviving musical traditions comes from the small tribe of Q’ero (about four hundred people only left), who live in the Cusco region of the Andes in Peru. Although some consider Q’ero to be Inca survivals, scholars think that Q’ero musical culture “probable reflects an even earlier diversity with an Inka overlay” (Cohen, 1998:225). Most importantly for our topic, the Q’ero have interesting and sometimes unique traditions of polyphonic singing. According to Cohen: “The general Q’ero musical aesthetics allows different pitches, texts, and rhythms to sound at the same time. Though the Q’ero sometimes sing in perfect unison, their songs are structures to be sung individually. There is no sense of

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choral singing or harmony. A family, *aullu*, or community may be singing and playing the same songs at the point of starting and stopping. Yet the melodies sung at communal occasions have a sustained note at the end of a phrase, permitting the other singers to catch up and share this prolonged duration, which serves as a drone. When the new verse starts, the heterophony begins anew” (Cohen, 1998:230).

Cohen describes the singing of women during the Palchasqa festival among Q’eros (held during February or March): “... several families join together outside and throw flowers (*palcha*) at the alpacas while singing and playing *pinculu*. Five or more women sing at the same time, interspersing ritual phrases with complaints about their daily lives. Each tells her own story in song. At times, the musical texture consists of different people singing personalized songs simultaneously. Only occasionally do they meet on ritual phrases or on final notes” (Cohen, 1998:228). Another interesting tradition is the big family singing sessions with the elements of drone polyphony: “twenty people may be packed together inside, drinking, singing heterophonically, with conch trumpets blasting. Sometimes, late in the night, the individual qualities become less apparent as people find accord between them, reaching a degree of musical consensus. At this point, the sustained final note of a phrase provides a drone beneath the individual voices. Occasional multi-part texture occurs, and the whole event takes on a choral sound” (Ibid, 229). Another interesting tradition of big communal singing happens during the carnival, where few groups of women sing in disregard of each other, together, while men play the musical instrument *pinucllu*. Cohen notes the closeness of this tradition to the celebration singing tradition of Amazonian Indians (ibid, 229).

The **Warao** from the eastern Venezuelan tropical forests of the Orinoco River Delta have very important ritual singing by shamans for curing. In particular, if the patient is an important person, singing in small ensembles (duets or trios of shamans) is required and it “results in a complex, multi-part texture like a free round.” (Olsen, 1998:184).

Indians from the **Amazonian region** of Peru are known for heterophonic singing. “Two-voice polyphony in intervals of fourths and canonic singing have also been observed” (Pinilla, 1980:384, cited from Romero, 1998:482). Rounding off the tropical-forest region of South America, A. Seeger notes that “most Indian music is associated with ritual; it has little harmony or polyphony, and what polyphony it has is unfamiliar to unaccustomed ears” (Seeger, 1998:135).

Interaction between the Christian missionaries and the Native American cultures was quite unidirectional – the missionaries “forbade traditional music and ceremonies and restricted musical activities” (ibid, 131). Later, missionaries of certain protestant sects intensified the process, some with such success that hymns are the only music performed today in certain tropical-forest Indian communities. Singing hymns may take unusual directions, however, as among the Waiwai, where communities compete by composing hymns.

With few exceptions, the music of the Christian church and traditional music of the Indians have apparently not mixed: the tunes for Christian services are hymns, and the Indian melodies continue without harmony where they are sung at all. In unusual cases, Indian communities employ some form of harmony that may have its

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origins in Christian music, as among the **Kayabi** (strict parallel fifths) and the **Javae** of Brazil, and the **Moxo** of Bolivia (Olsen, 1976). In Guyana, among the **Akawaio**, the **Makushi**, and the **Patamona**, unusual music was developed for the syncretic religion known as *Hallelujah* (Butt Colson, 1971)” (Seeger, 1998:131).

The influence of European classical music, including the wide use of parallel thirds, is particularly evident in the singing traditions of the Europeanized **Mestizo** (Romero, 1998:483). Heterophonic and canonic singing is mentioned among the **Venezuelan Indians**. Free rhythm is quite common in solo songs, but polyphonic songs (particularly accompanying dances) have a strict rhythm and metre (Brandt, 1998:525).

In **Venezuela**, “In the plains and surrounding areas, especially in the states of Apure, Carobobo, Cojodes, Guarico, Lara, Portuguesa, and Yaracuy, the Holy Cross is venerated by performances of three-part polyphonic pieces (*tonos*) usually sung by men, sometimes unaccompanied, but more often accompanied by one or more *cuatros*. The music and texts came from Spain during the early days of the colony. Most harmonic singing in Venezuela is in two parts (usually at interval of a third), but plains wakes use more complex polyphony, unique in Latin America. The lead singer (*guia* ‘guide’) usually sings a solo phrase and is then joined by two other men improvising a harmonic response – a higher part (*falsa*, and *contrato* and other names), and a lower part (*tenor*, also *tenorete*)” (Brandt, 1998:534).

The profound influence of colonial Spanish music on highland **Maya** is felt in the survival of the “late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century style ‘falsobordone’ settings, in which a plainchant melody is transposed to a higher octave and harmonized below in three or four parallel parts – a texture still cultivated in Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala” (O’Brien-Rothe, 1998:652).

The influence of the African population on the musical traditions of South America was truly profound. Africans were brought from different regions of Africa as slaves to South American plantations, and they usually spoke different African languages, but they “shared general musical traits that transcended particular African communities – among them collective participation in making music, call-and-response singing, and dense, often interlocking, rhythms played on drums” (Seeger, 1998a:47).

Another very interesting feature of the musical cultures of South America is that archaeological records are full of references to **polyphonic blown instruments**. Panpipes, played in interlocking style, as well as double, triple and even quadruple flutes suggest that the peoples of the central and northern parts of South America were familiar with certain forms of instrumental polyphony before their contact with European civilization. In one of the most important written sources from 1609, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega speaks about the **Qollas**, an Aymara-speaking people from the **Titicaca region**, that they “played double-unit panpipes in interlocking fashion. His reference to different vocal parts (tiple, tenor, contralto, contrabajo) in Qolla panpipe performance may suggest that different-sized panpipes created polyphony (as they do today)” (Turino, 1998:207). We will discuss the problem of polyphony in a pre-contact Mesoamerica in a special “case study”, dedicated to the possibility of the presence of polyphony in ancient civilizations.

Conclusions

The following general conclusions can be formulated:

- South American Indian music has a few interesting regions of distribution of group polyphonic singing, although in many regions these are only a loosely coordinated heterophonic singing traditions.
- Among a few South American Indian peoples the tradition of polyphonic singing is particularly important (as among the Q'eros from the high mountainous Cusco region).
- Generally speaking, the Andean region is the most important region of distribution of polyphonic traditions. Here drone polyphony, unique throughout South America, was documented.
- Quite a few Amazonian forest tribes also actively employ group singing, resulting in heterophony.
- The abundance of polyphonic blown instruments raises a question about the presence of polyphony (at least, instrumental polyphony) among pre-contact South and Central American cultures.

Polyphonic singing on Pacific Islands

Covering about half of our planet (but only a fraction of the world's population), the Pacific Ocean is the home of an amazing richness of vocal polyphonic traditions. Both Marius Schneider in his 1934-1935 "History of Polyphony" and later Alan Lomax in his 1968 "Folk Song Style and Culture" placed the Oceania islands (particularly Polynesia and Melanesia) among the three most polyphonic major regions of the world (the two others being sub-Saharan Africa and Europe).

Polynesia

Perhaps one of the most important historical lessons that Oceania (and particularly Polynesia) taught European musicology (in the 18th century) was the shock of the discovery that well-organized part-singing can exist far from European civilization. The very first encounters of European travelers with the Pacific Ocean Island communities brought to light their strong predilection towards vocal polyphonic singing. From 1773 records come the following descriptions: "This set most of the women in the circle singing their songs were musical and harmonious, noways harsh or disagreeable", or: "Not their voices only but their music also was very harmonious & they have considerable compass in their notes" (Beaglehole, 1962:246). Some descriptions are even more precise: "They sing in parts, keeping the same time and varying the four notes without ever going beyond them. So many

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singers and so few notes you always hear the whole together. The difference of Words & Voices makes some variety. The singers (that I heard) were all women. One confined herself entirely to the Lower Note which acted as Drone” – this eloquent description comes from Cook’s second 1772-1775 voyage (Burney 1975:84. Cited from Kaeppler et al., 1998:14). Very clear information on the Oceanic people’s part-singing capability came from Cook’s third voyage as well: “Where there is a great number they divide into several parts each of whom sings on a different key which makes a very agreeable music (Beaglehole, 1967:2:944. Cited from Kaeppler et al., 1998:14). Early records even indicated the use of unusual chords as well: “We now and then remarked some discordant notes, with which, however, the ear of these people seemed very much gratified” (Labillardiere, 1802:133). These and many other travelers’ notes did not leave a place for any skepticism about the wide distribution of a polyphonic singing tradition in Oceania before their first contacts with Europeans.

Quite amazingly, despite the overwhelming and clear information about the presence of part-singing traditions among Polynesians, some European professional musicians still doubted the ability of Polynesians to sing in different parts, as they believed it “a great improbability that any uncivilized people should, by accident, arrive at this degree of perfection in the art of music, which we imagine can only be attained by dint of study, and knowledge of the system and theory upon which musical composition is founded . . . It is, therefore, scarcely credible, that people semi-barbarous should naturally arrive at any perfection in that art which it is much doubted whether the Greeks and Romans, with all their refinements in music, ever attained, and which the Chinese, who have been longer civilized than any other people on the globe, have not yet found out.” (Cook and King, 1784:3:143-144. Cited from Kaeppler et al., 1998:15). It took more than a century and the discovery of many more vocal polyphonic traditions in different parts of the world untouched by European civilization (including the central African rainforests and Papua New Guinea) to subdue European arrogance and convince professional musicologists that at least not all polyphony was an invention of medieval monks. But let us leave this matter until the second and third parts of the book.

The great success of Christian hymns in Polynesia was the result of the natural closeness of European polyphonic traditions and the polyphonic traditions of the Oceanic peoples. According to Alan Lomax, “In one way, the singing of Oceania stands in marked contrast to that of other regions: many choral performances, though set in irregular or free rhythm, are nevertheless performed in excellent concert. The only other area in the world where choruses commonly sing in free rhythm, yet in good concert, is Old Europe. It seems likely that this peculiarity, along with a shared preference for text-heavy, polyphonic performances with drone chords, facilitated the adoption of the Central European hymn style, especially by the Polynesians” (Lomax, 1968:91).

Polyphonic traditions are spread on all three groups of the Pacific islands: Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia. Although the late European polyphonic style became very popular in Oceania from the moment Christian hymns spread among them, more ancient, indigenous stylistic features of their traditional polyphony had been also documented. For example, despite their disagreement about several

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important issues, both Kaeppler and Moyle note the importance of drone polyphony among earlier layers of **Tongan** polyphonic traditions, one of the best preserved in Polynesia (Kaeppler, 1994:462-463; Moyle, 1987:149). Tongan *Lakalaka*, a symphony-long grand composition in four and five choral parts, divided into antiphonal groups, were specially composed by *punake* who created the skeleton of the new *lakalaka*. The skeleton mostly comprises the main melodies (*fasi*), and the harmonization of the melodies usually becomes a communal event. Kaeppler gives a fascinating detailed account of how one of the *lakalakas* was written: “On November 1975, Ve’ehala [name of a composer, or *punake*] explained to me his compositional process for his 1975 *lakalaka*: first he had the overall idea; then he composed the poetry; next, using melodies he could remember from previous songs, he ‘twisted them around to form something new,’ which for his 1975 composition took about two hours; the poetry was written on a blackboard; then he sang the melody and ‘the people harmonized it by themselves’” (Kaeppler, 1994:463). Traditional terminology also clearly distinguishes the functions of different parts, like *fasi* (main melody), *laulalo* (second part, lower than melody, often a drone, particularly in earlier-style singing), and several decorating parts (*teuteu*).

Fasi and *laulalo* were the most important ingredients of the polyphonic texture, and the number of decorating parts could vary and even reach six. Kaeppler gives a good description of six-part singing still being remembered by older singers in the 1960s: “According to a few knowledgeable musicians in 1960, indigenous singing had as many as six parts. The leading part or *fasi* (i.e., the main melody of the poetry), was usually, but not always, sung by men. The two women’s parts, *fakapakihi* and *tali*, were described to me simply as high and low. *Lalau* was described as a high men’s part that was usually sung above the melody. *Ekenaki*, another men’s part, was sung lower than the melody, and finally, *laulalo* was a low men’s part, rather like a drone. According to the Tongan view, *fasi* (melody) and *laulalo* (drone) were the important parts, while the other parts were decorative... This traditional six-part singing is seldom heard today, having been replaced by more Western-sounding harmony with up to three parts each for men and women, who sing western diatonic pitch intervals” (Kaeppler, 1990:195).

Unfortunately, for different historical and political reasons polyphonic traditions did not survive in most of parts of Polynesia so well as on Tonga. “Traces of indigenous polyphony survive in the central areas of Polynesia, including Tonga and the Society Islands, but are apparently absent on the periphery, in Aotearoa [known as New Zealand], Hawaii, and Mangareva” (Stillman, from Love et al., 1998:308).

Tahitian *himene tarava* is possibly the best-known choral form from Polynesia. Influenced by the European harmonic language, *himene tarava* is based around triad harmonies of the supertonic (ii), which move to tonic and then alternate between the tonic (i) and dominant (v) harmonic functions. As in most cases in Polynesia, big mixed groups sing *himene tarava* with interesting dividing functions. “The primary functions of the vocal parts are textual declamation, rhythmic punctuation, and melodic decoration. The primary declamatory part, performed by

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most of the women in a choir, centres at or near the tonic; the men's counterpart usually centres on the dominant below. Other texted parts are performed by pairs of soloists, usually men, centre on the third degree of a major scale. The rhythmic punctuation performed by the remainder of the men consists of a vocalized grunting pitched on the lower tonic" (Stillman, from Love et al., 1998:308).

Smaller islands. Interesting and unusual examples of polyphonic tradition when parts sing different texts were also documented in Polynesia. *Suahongi* from **Bellona** (a small, 11- kilometre-long coral island between the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu), as well as *me'etu'upaki* from Tonga represent this kind of polytextual polyphony (Stillman, from Love et al., 1998:308-309).

Polyphony (with long drones in the older layers) has been recorded in such far-flung regions of Polynesia as the easternmost Polynesian island **Rapa Nui** [known also as Easter Island] and the westernmost small islands lying deep within the Melanesian territory (**Luangiua, Bellona, Tikopia, Anuta**. See Besnier et al., 1998:843, 850, 852, 856). Community participation in choral singing is so intense that, for example, in a small Anuta atoll with only 200 residents, when a member of society dies, the population divides itself into "small" choirs of about twenty members (thus, each choir has 10% of the total population of the island!) and they all sing at the deceased's house one after another" (Feinberg, see in Besnier, et al., 1998:857).

Melanesia

According to the above-mentioned compilation works of Schneider and Lomax, drone polyphony has been the leading form of traditional polyphony not only in Polynesia, but in Melanesia as well. Interestingly, the dissonant nature of the indigenous polyphonic tradition of Oceania has been better preserved in Melanesia, where the stylistic parallels between some European polyphonic traditions and some Melanesian regions reach astonishing precision. Parallels between the singing in dissonant seconds of faraway Balkan mountaineers and Admiralty islanders are among the best known and most puzzling in ethnomusicology, involving polyphonic traditions of faraway regions of the world. Discussed at different times by Erich Moritz von Hornbostel, Jaap Kunst, and Florian Messner, this issue will be discussed, together with other comparative issues, in the next part of the book.

Polyphonic singing from **Guadalcanal Island** makes good representation of the Melanesian polyphony. "The vocal music of Guadalcanal also uses a drone, above which two solo parts interweave melodic lines. In the Nginia language, a person may say that the first voice opens (*hihinda*) the singing, the second follows (*tumuri*), and the drone growls (*ngungulu*). In women's singing throughout the island, the growl is a continuous drone, like that of the panpipe ensemble ... In three-part instrumental or vocal polyphony of Guadalcanal, the melodic parts at the end of stanzas and pieces join the tone of the drone, so all parts cadence in unison or at the octave. Besides this type of polyphony, the songs of Guadalcanal feature two solo vocal parts having wide ranges and frequent and rapid change of register, a kind of yodeling" (Zemp, in Kaeppler et al 1998a:665). A similar tradition of drone three-part singing exists on the neighbouring small volcanic **Island Savo** with 1500 residents, who have the same

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kind of drone polyphonic singing tradition (ibid, 1998:666). Good examples of Polynesian and Melanesian polyphony are presented in the volume 9 of The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, “Australia and Pacific Islands”.

New Guinea

New Guinea is the biggest land area of the Melanesia. It is also an important region for the polyphonic traditions. For example, the Indonesian province of **West Papua** (formerly **Irian Jaya**) is home to several mountain peoples from the Central Irian Jaya regions, who widely use vocal polyphony: the Moni, Dani, and Yali.

The songs of another mountain people, the **Moni**, “are famous for a thick harmonic texture, with melodies sung in parallel motion on chords using ninths and elevenths, transcribable as C-E-G-B-D-F, over a bass drone” (Chenoweth et al, 1998:584). **Yali** polyphony is more adventurous – their songs are based on two- four-part contrapuntal polyphony.

Micronesia

Micronesian group singing traditions are sometimes considered to be close to the Southeastern Asian polyphonic traditions of mountain Vietnam, Southern China, and other group singing traditions from this region (including Northeastern Indian polyphonic traditions). Generally, polyphonic traditions in Micronesia are not as strong as in Melanesia and particularly Polynesia, and are mostly based on unison and heterophonic forms of singing. We should not forget that group antiphon and responsorial singing (in unison and octaves) is widely spread between peoples with both monophonic and polyphonic singing traditions.

Australia

Despite the fact, that Australian traditional music is heavily based on group singing (mostly unison singing with some elements of heterophony), singing in parts is not characteristic for the indigenous populations of this continent. If we do not take into account the singing traditions of late migrants from different parts of the world, we may say that Australia is the most monophonic continent of our planet. The only tradition that contains polyphony is the vocal-instrumental forms, particularly in the northern tip of Australia, where the didgeridoo (drone) and singing voice creates drone two-part polyphony. According to available information, polyphony is not performed in a purely vocal form.

CONCLUSIONS

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So we come to the end of a review of vocal polyphonic traditions all over the different continents. The distribution of vocal polyphony shows an uneven and puzzling pattern. It is quite safe to say that some continents and major regions of the continents are predominantly monophonic, while other continents and major regions are predominantly polyphonic.

Predominantly polyphonic continents are Africa (more precisely sub-Saharan Africa) and Europe (particularly the mountainous and island parts of East Europe and Mediterranean region). Another very important polyphonic region (not a continent), is Oceania (particularly Polynesia and Melanesia),

On the other hand, the major parts of North, Central and East Asia, Australia and most of North and South America are monophonic, although there are some very interesting exceptions, like the polyphonic singing of the Ainus in North Japan, or the secondal polyphony of Nuristanians in mountainous Afghanistan, or the drone polyphony of Northwest American Indians and some South American indigenous peoples, or the unique overtone singing style of some Central Asian peoples.

I want to repeat here again that despite all my efforts to represent all the major polyphonic traditions of the world, I am sure that the list of polyphonic regions and cultures in this review is not complete. It is definitely beyond the possibility of one researcher to comprehensively review all the known in contemporary ethnomusicology polyphonic traditions of the world. So, despite my lifelong interest in traditional polyphonic cultures, and the most generous help of my colleagues, experts of traditional polyphony from different regions of the world, this review by no means can be considered complete. I am sure experts of different regions of the world will find the information about many polyphonic traditions incomplete. And of course, the possibility of finding of new interesting traditions of vocal polyphony is still with us, particularly in the regions, traditionally known as “monophonic”.

Another important issue that must be taken into consideration, when we trying to create the cartography of the polyphonic tradition, is the possibility of the presence of vocal polyphonic traditions in several regions of the world where we currently do not have live traditions of vocal polyphony, but historical sources give us some grounds to discuss this issue. I will attempt to discuss some of these regions in the next part of this book, completely dedicated to the historical and comparative study of traditional polyphonic cultures from different regions of the world.