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ONE OLD GEORGIAN MUSICAL TERM

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Abstract. *In old Georgian written monuments (XI–XII c.), the musical term ‘Mortuleba’ has a double meaning. Having the same meaning as the older Greek term ‘Harmony’ it points to the systematic nature of horizontal pitch connections. Translations and comments of written monuments of antiquity speak of it when concerned with the ancient Greek music theory. However, the same term in old Georgian writings (Ioane Petritsi) has a different semantic understanding, where it corresponds to the modern meaning of the term ‘Harmony’ (as mentioned in Medieval Latin Treatises). Here it expresses the vertical combinations of tones and, thus, indicates to the polyphony of musical works.*

Key words: *Old Georgian musical terms, ancient Greek music theory, polyphony of church chants.*

Out of the musical terms attested in Medieval Georgian written sources, a special attention is attached to *mortuleba* (“harmony”).¹ The term is polysemantic and occurs in various branches of Georgian literature (theological and philosophical exegetics, hagiography), as well as in the field of church music.

The 12th century scholar’s work Ioane Petritsi’s, *Commentary on the Philosophy of Proclus Diadochus and Plato* contains particularly important evidence for the interpretation of the term under study.

Opinions differ as to the essence of *mortuleba* and its varieties (*mosartavi*, *rtvai*, *narti*, *tsartuli*, *shertuli*). From the philosophical point of view, *mortulebai*, denoting “harmony, pattern, order” is duly discussed in scholarly literature (Nemesius of Emesa 1914; Ioane Petritsi 1999). The musicologist N. Pirtskhalava focused his attention on the aesthetic aspect of the concept *mortuleba* (“beauty”), in addition to the philosophical one (Pirtskhalava 1993, 94–95).

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¹ The present article is the English translation of a part of the author’s study *For Explanation of Some Old Georgian Musical Terms*, published in the Georgian language (see Sukhiashvili 2002).

As already known from the studies of S. Gorgadze, D. Melikishvili and M. Rapava, *mortuleba* is an equivalent of Greek polysemantic term *ἁρμονία* (see: Nemesius of Emesa 1914; Ioane Petritsi 1999; Ammonius Hermiae 1983). The above-mentioned gives us reason to think that it (like Greek “harmony”), along with the philosophical and aesthetic content, also has a relatively narrow musical-theoretical meaning (Sukhiashvili 2001, 51; 2002, 38–45).

In the process of identification of the special musical-theoretical meaning of the term *mortuleba*, the translation method of the medieval Georgian authors (in particular, Ioane Petritsi, the translator of works by Ammonius, Arsen Iqaltoeli XI–XII c., and others) should be taken into account when those texts contain the term under study. As already known, this translation method implies accurate translation from the Greek language, rendering the original text with absolute accuracy.

Therefore, in the word formation of representatives of the Gelati literary school – Ioane Petritsi and translator of Ammonius, the concept *mortuleba* must be used with the musical-theoretical meaning, corresponding to Greek “harmony”.

We have already mentioned that in Greek music theory, the term *ἁρμονία* “harmony” denoted the regularity of combination of tones in a mode, four-tone modes² and more developed mode structures resulting from the combination of tetrachords (Bershadskiaia 1986, 8; Gertsman 1986, 156). According to ancient terminology, pitch aspects of music study are “harmonic” aspects (Gertsman 1988).

It should be noted that from the second half of the eleventh century on, interest in Byzantium increased in ancient musical culture. It is especially interesting, against this background, to find out how and with what meaning the terms borrowed from Greek were used by Georgian figures engaged in translation and furnishing commentary for the philosophical literature of the ancient period (by the way, they had been educated in Byzantium).

First of all, let us discuss the work by Ioane Petritsi *Commentary* on the treatise *Elements of Theology* by Proclus.

In the second chapter of his work, dealing with consisting elements, the author resorts to the example of analogy from the field of music and draws the listeners' attention to *mortulta guarni* (“species of modes”): “If you resort to music *rtvas* (tone or tetrachord combinations), you will see among them the one, as how you combine voice and instrument tones, you will obtain the corresponding species”. Here *mortva* – (Greek *ἁρμόζω, ἁρμόττω*) denotes harmonic joint, agreement, concord, their subordination to pitch system. The resulting species of mode – *guari* is dependent as to which mode the tones are subordinated. Ioane Petritsi distinguishes *guaris* of modes (*mortulebas*) according to one or another attitude, mode (ethos). Some of them arouse compassion, some are stimulating, some are accompanying or destroying moral fortitude, etc. It is beyond any doubt that when discussing *mortulebas*, Ioane Petritsi implies that the meaning of “harmony” is the one accepted in Greek music theory. This viewpoint is also substantiated by the circumstance that, meanwhile, the philosopher mentions ancient Greek teaching on music and discusses ancient musical-cosmological views concerning the relation of modes (*mortulta guarni*) to planets – “According to musical teaching, voices and *mortulebas* (harmonies – M. S) of some species are regarded as belonging to the Sun, Cronus and Aphrodite” (Petritsi 1937, 22).

² According to Plato, “All harmonies (denoting “mode”) are formed of four tones” (Gertsman 1986, 77).

Another noteworthy term in Petritsi's word formation is *guari* (species) which corresponds to Greek εἶδος (“species, type”) (Melikishvili 1999, 217–219). As is known, in ancient Greece, developed mode forms (resulting from combination of tetrachords) were called octave “eidoses” or “harmonies” (Kholopov 1974, 305; Gertsman 1986, 159). Cleonides names seven “eidoses” of an octave – Mixolydian, Lydian, Phrygian, Dorian, etc. („διὰ πᾶσῶν εἰδῆ”) (Gertsman 1986, 69). In Petritsi's word formation, *mortulta guarni* (“species of modes”) must refer to exactly the above-mentioned mode “eidoses”.³

Thus, the reasoning of Ioane Petritsi on *mortulta guarni* – “And consider combinations from hypate to nete as elements, what they in fact are, and their unions – as species” (Petritsi 1937, 22) must be interpreted as follows: “Consider tone combinations (here intervals or tetrachord structures may be implied) as elements, and their unions – as species, or types.

K. Rosebashvili also arrived at the conclusion that in this example of analogy mode is implied, however, identification of musical-theoretical meaning of the term *rtva* was not the object of the research (Rosebashvili 1988, 48–49).

The fact that *mortuleba* and *mortulta guari* are used in a number of specimens of Georgian literature as correlated concepts corresponding to Greek musical “harmony” (in the sense of mode) is also obvious from the Georgian translation of the work by Ammonius Hermiae, a Byzantine philosopher, founder of Neo-Platonic school of Alexandria (5th c.), namely, in the commentary on the well-known work by Porphyry *Introduction to Aristotle's Categories*, which is made by a representative of the Gelati monastic literary school (Ammonius Hermiae 1983, 098).⁴

According to the reasoning offered in the work (Ammonius Hermiae 1883, 15), arithmetic is a science on numbers existing by themselves, independently, whereas the object of music is the interrelation of numbers, which is reflected in the union of interdependent tones, and their combination. The combination of interrelated tones results in *mortuleba*, i.e. mode.

In Old Georgian translations, the term *ketilmortuleba* also occurs. E.g. in Ephrem Mtsire's (XI c.) translation of the Homily of St. John Chrysostom (11th c.), in which the vision of Prophet Isaiah is explained (Isaiah 6, 1–3), God-given “*ketilmortuleba*” (euphony, harmony) of church chant moods is noted: “the modes have God-given *ketilmortuleba* (euphony)” (see A-162, *Metaphrastic collection*, 180r). It has become evident from the Greek text of the Homily that *ketilmortuleba* corresponds to the Greek *εὐρυθμία* (see: John Chrysostom G 1839, 97–98). The latter is a synonym of *ἁρμονία* and denotes “euphony”, “beauty”, “harmony”. In the work of St. John Chrysostom, it has a purely aesthetic, semantic function and indicates euphony, harmony of church modes.

A variety of *mortuli* is *shertuli*, which is attested in the *Homily on Miracles of Martyr Theodore* by Chrysippus of Jerusalem (the identity of the Georgian translator is unknown) (H-341, Hagographic collection, 198).

Chrysippus of Jerusalem compares the sound of the strings of an instrument to his homily about the miracles of St. Theodore, whereas the praise of the martyr is compared to the *shertuli* chant – to the understanding of these words by listeners.

³ If *guari* is a variety of mood, so *guarni chreltani* may be interpreted as “species” or types of modes (naturally, mood as intonation category is implied).

⁴ There is difference of opinion in scholarly literature about the translator of the work: According to K. Kekelidze, the work was translated by Ioane Tarichidze; S. Gorgadze and I. Lolashvili suggest that the translation must belong to Ioane Petritsi (Ammonius Hermiae 1983, 046).

It has become evident as a result of familiarization with the Greek original of the *Miracles* that *shertuli* is the Georgian translation of *συμφωνία* (Chrysippus of Jerusalem, Act. SS. IV, 55). The term *συμφωνία*, like *ευρυθμία*, is a synonym of *ἁρμονία*. It means: “agreement, concord of sounds, musical harmony”. Thus, in the Georgian translation of the work (circa 8th–9th cc.), the words: praise of the saint by “*shertuli sakhoiba*” must be understood as praise of the saint by “harmonious” chant.

It is obvious from the examples given above, that the term under study is a semantic equivalent of the Greek musical “harmony” (in some cases – of its synonymous lexemes “symphony” and “eurhythmy”) and it points to the horizontal pitch organization.

The term *mortuleba* in medieval Georgian literature is also used with another semantic function, with the contemporary sense of “harmony”.

It is also known that from about the 7th c. in the Roman church chanting schools, the concept “harmony” gradually lost its old meaning, derived from the ancient times, and became related to an entirely different phenomenon – the vertical combinations of tones. In the 7th c., there still co-existed two interpretations of “harmony”. On the one hand, according to the ancient teaching on music it implied horizontal pitch organization, and on the other one, simultaneous vertical combinations of voices.

In Bishop Isidore of Seville (7th c.) notes, “Harmonious music is voice modulation⁵, and means an agreement of several voices as well as their simultaneous combination” (Chevallier 1931, 9). In Western Europe, beginning with the 9th c., interpretation of the concept “harmony” was related to its new semantics.

It should be taken into account that all the achievements and novelties typical for the development of the theory and practice of the Roman church chanting (period before the Schism), were known at the Byzantine educational centers, where a number of Georgian figures were educated. Therefore, the use of the concept *mortuleba* by Georgian authors with a different meaning, contemporary to “harmony”, is quite regular. Examples are attested in the so-called *Afterword* of Ioane Petritsi’s *Commentary*.

In the *Afterword* Ioane Petritsi speaks about music *mortuli* by the Holy Spirit (Petritsi 1937, 217). He explains *mortuleba* as simultaneous sounding of three different voices, three phthongs (*mzakhri*, *zhiri* and *bami*), their vertical combination and unification (*sheqovleba*).

It is obvious from the above examples that Ioane Petritsi interprets the concept *mortuleba* in two ways: in the second chapter of the *Commentary* on Proclus’ work, the philosopher, guided by ancient music theory, links this term to the horizontal aspect of pitch system, and in the independent work entitled the *Afterword*, taking into consideration the contemporary (modified) meaning of the concept “harmony” and peculiarities of national musical thought, he uses the same term with another meaning as well, implying the vertical aspect of pitch organization. Therefore, *mortuleba* is an old Georgian term denoting “polyphony”.

The use of the term *mortuli* and its varieties (*mortva*, *mosartavi*, *tsartuli*) in medieval liturgical-hymnographic collections (*Iadgaris* – Sin, 1. Sin. 34, S 425, *Heirmoses and Theotokia* A-603, *Pentakostarion* Sin, 72, etc.) is also noteworthy. The terms identical as to their form, attested in different sources of one and the same period, must not be different from the semantic point of view either. The definition of *mortulias* as a term denoting polyphony, offered by Ioane Petritsi in the *Afterword*, suggests that in hymnographic texts it must denote polyphonic sounding of church chants.

⁵ Latin term *modulation* corresponds to Greek *ἁρμονία*. It denoted “mode” in the ancient as well as medieval period.

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STARI GRUZIJSKI MUZIČKI TERMIN

U starim gruzijskim pisanim izvorima (XI–XII v), muzički termin 'mortuleba' ima dvostruko značenje. Kao i stariji grčki termin 'harmonija', on ukazuje na horizontalni sled tonskih visina. Prevodi i komentari pisanih dela iz antičkog perioda svedoče da je razmatran u vezi sa muzičkom teorijom stare Grčke. Međutim, isti termin u izvorno gruzijskim teološkim i filozofskim spisima (prvenstveno raspravama gruzijskog filozofa neoplatoničara Ioane Petritsija iz XI–XII veka) ima drugačije značenje: odgovara terminu harmonija u modernom smislu, istom onom koji postoji i u srednjovekovnim latinskim raspravama. Ovdje se termin 'mortuleba' odnosi na vertikalna tonska sazvučja i samim tim ukazuje na prisustvo višeglasja u gruzijskom crkvenom pojanju.

Ključne reči: *stari gruzijski muzički termin, muzička teorija antičke Grčke, višeglasno crkveno pojanje*