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AN OLDER INDIGENOUS STRATUM OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC IN LATVIA – DRONE POLYPHONY AND ITS CONNECTION WITH RECITATIVE-LIKE SONGS

The theme of my report touches on some original aspects of traditional polyphony which are characteristic in Latvia in an older indigenous stratum of its traditional music, that is, drone polyphony and its connection with recitative-like songs.

First, I should emphasize the large amount of recitative melody transcriptions which in comparison with Latvia's nearest neighbors- Lithuania, Estonia, Russia and Belorussia is surprisingly large. These recitative melodies usually are performed with drone polyphony[1].

I would also like to clarify the most prevalent and the shortest form of Latvian folk or traditional poetry, which consists of 16 syllable lines, but is written as quatrains or six-line verses, where each line contains 8 syllables (audio ex. P)

The form of the performance of these traditional songs is collective where each participant has a clear separate function. There are three functions: the leader (*saucçja*), the choir (*locîtâjas*) and the drone voice (*vilcçja - burdons*).

The leader sings or calls out two lines of verses. The choir repeats them, along with a drone voice. The drone voice has many variants- the bagpipe drone, syllabic drone and so on.

Especially for that kind of performance the specific (I would even define it as a canonical) form is developed where after the repetition of two lines of verses the second line is repeated again. As the result we can see the complete musical form- the 5 line melostroph, in where each two lines of the verses matches with one of the 5 line melostrophes. This canonical form is typical and widespread in the whole territory of Latvia along with their matching melodies, which since the last century after the initiative of composer and folklorist Emilis Melngailis, are called *godu balss* (literally – the honour voice - special traditional melody which differs for each small inhabited territory or village).

It is important, that using this specific melody there are performed many different poetical texts in the same certain territory. Usually they were associated with different kinds of family rituals, such as wedding, christening, funeral and the collective work bees, a gathering of friends and neighbors to accomplish a certain seasonal work task.

While trying to write down or reproduce these types of melodies, you will face a very important problem. Because of the limited scope of my report, I will focus on only one problem- the problem of notation and reproducing the recitative type melodies, through analyzing the examples, common in Latvia, and as I have noted already

- the family ritual song - *godu balss.*

Lets listen to the *godu balss* example, which is written down in Latvia's central region - Zemgale (ex.1 Z1, audio ex. Z1).

However, at the end of 19th and the beginning of 20th century were written down 27 that type of melodies from 15 narrators that all had been born in the second part of 19th century. Geographically it is the central part of Latvia or Zemgales region (see Image Map in appendix). It could be called as the first type of *Zemgales godu balss.*

From 27 melodies I have represented 11 examples. The first two are one quatrain of the same narrator. As you can see, the narrator here is following the intonation of syllables, making the melodic line. The next transcriptions of the melodies are written each from a different narrator, although keeping the typical features of this melodic type. The drone voice matches with the moving drone type of bagpipes - at the beginning resounds in the second step of tetrachord (in that case – antique Lydian), in the last two bars - base sound.

Lets listen to the second type of family ritual songs of *Zemgale* (fig. map; ex Z2, audio ex. Z2).

Completely there are transcriptions of 36 that type of melodies from 22 narrators, from which 11 are visible here. The time of notation is the same as the first type- the beginning of the previous century. The first two melodies match with one quatrain from the same narrator. The next are written from several different narrators. The drone voice is restored from guiding unfortunately the only notation example.

As you can see- the both group of theses melodies are very different. First- differs the mode. The base of the first *Zemgales* type is Lydian tetrachord, the second *Zemgales* type- Phrygian tetrachord. The first *Zemgales* type melody is made from short one bar conditional motives where each of it matches with one text dipody and is grouping in replacing and moving.

The second type melodies of the *Zemgale* are made from longer periods of two bars. The melodic moving is equalized, for every movement in one direction the equalizing movement in the opposite direction is following. The many quart intervals in the first type are only as an example.

Naturally you have a question- how is it possible for a narrator or even more- the whole region people to make the melodies in so many verifications, at the same time keeping them recognizable as a one specific *godu balss* type. Besides the narrators never use both types of *godu balss*, although geographically they are often see able aside to each other. Everyone recognizes and in family ritual used only one of them (Image Map). Perhaps, the anthropological explanation for so close existence of the different recitative type melodies can be explained: around 6th century AC the tribes from the East came- the representatives are recognized as the wide facial featured anthropological type. They met the narrow facial featured anthropological type, which already lived here. Not explaining more, it is very possible that the incomers came singing the second type of *godu balss* in *Zemgale,* although the native people were using the first type already for a long period of time.

If I, as usually, wanted to demonstrate you one example of the *Zemgale* voices, which one should I choose?

In the Latvian praxis it expresses itself as the leader of the fold group chooses one and the only version and then the whole group reproduces it - sings with no changes

with very different text variations.

And if this one accidentally chosen version were analyzed and compared with some other culture melody in order to find some similarities, familiar intonations, motives, then it is clear that we will not be able to avoid some false conclusions.

Taking that into account, I would like to offer you to point these melodies from a different point of view: each type of *godu balss* take as a possible conditional group of melodies where each of the groups sound, in the separate melody, is with its own concrete probability. I will try to explain more detailed:

The first step would be the coding the entrance melodies. In our example it would be the orthogonal matrix – or pattern (lets call it a matrix A). The number of lines in matrix A is the same number as variants of melodies in Godu balss. For example, there are 27 lines for the 1st type of *Zemgales godu balss* matrix, but for 2nd type of *Zemgales godu balss* matrix A there are 36 lines. The amount of columns in matrix is always 40.

Then, calculating the probabilities, it is possible to get a new matrix B in which there is the same number of lines as the different sounds in the corresponding *godu balss* melodies. The amount of columns is the same - 40. If we take the traditional Latvian *godu balss* as a probability in conditional melodies, then in the matrix B is summarized the information about the probability of each sound, in the melody group, to be in whatever 40 beat parts.

In the Windows graphic structures there are several options to visualize the image like that - you should only choose the most suitable version. Choosing 2 -dimensional projections in plane where the horizontal axle conforms to the beat parts from 1- 40, but the vertical plane - sound probabilities.

Lets take a look at the visual interpretation of *Zemgales godu balss* 1st type (fig. Z1). It is shown in two versions - in the upper one we can see colourful areas of different configuration, in the lower one- the same information in the line's version. The drone voice is shown separately as a colourful line, because the specific sound in the appropriate beat parts is accomplished non-stop with 100% probability. The colours are chosen random. They have no connecting with the absolute highs of the sounds. In these images is clearly noticeable the probability of the each *godu balss* sound to be in whatever beat part.

That might be the model that is put in every narrator's memory and from which she is guiding to compose new melodies. Of course, in her memory you will not find exactly that kind of image. The spiritual experience, which people have biologically, is not explored and it is quite mystical field in a way. But the fact is that, if you collect together all these traditional melodies, you will find something in common and it cannot be denied.

The time, allocated for the report doesn't allow me to explore more seriously and detailed regarding all possible information find out within those images. So far I should have to ask to pay your attention to some easy noticeable moments. For example, the red vertical formation is very flashy. In those dominates the second step of the tetrachord. It means that the mode has been approved in places where as the base sound in 6th and 8th bar re-strengthens the second step of the Lydian tetrachord

(ex. Z1). In this period of melody we have reached the sound interaction of Phrygian tetrachord.

You can find a similar view in the 2nd type of *Zemgales godu balss* (fig. Z2). The same second steps strengthening in the melody's third fourth with a stable return in the base level following.

Are these specific things characteristic only for the Zemgale region which is Latvia's central part? Lets take a look in Latvia's West part - Kurzeme region. There you still can find a region where even nowadays the traditional singing version in the drone polyphony exists. It is *Suitu* region (audio example S; ex. S.).

We can calculate matrix B for these melodies as well and get the *Suitu godu balss* visual image. The sound structure in this group is the same as in the 2nd type of *Zemgale* - the Phrygian tetrachord. But comparing with the 2nd type of *Zemgale* it is graphically evident to be represented in more red. The second step of the tetrachord is represented way more at the very beginning till become the most important one, only at the end returning into the base level. The drone voice here is different than in *Zemgale*. The movement is from the lowest sound to the highest one. Besides the first drone's sound is showing with a very little probability in the main melody, it is almost not used. It was different in *Zemgale*. But in the both mentioned regions, at the end the drone matches with the base sound.

Also I would like to admit that the mode change, strengthening in a new step of tetrachord in the all versions I just mentioned, are happening in the third fourth of the melody. So we can see the *golden proportion* rule the structures of all the melodies. In this case the 1st type of *Zemgales godu balss* is very interesting.

Where should you search for a precise golden line for all the 10-beat melody:

40 : x = 1,6 x=25

The cut golden line or the Aurum perplexion is going through the 25th beat-part, which is just next to the special rhythmic stop or halt in the 23rd and 24th beat part. There you can also see the specific saw-type figure, which musically should originate with a special instability. From both sides it is crowded with a new base sound of the tetrachord. You could say that it all together makes a specific musical culmination moment in the third fourths of melody.

For a sake of the interest, lets take a look in the opposite, meaning the Northeast direction of Latvia. There you will find Vidzeme and Latgale regions. (fig. map, fig. V1). And again you can see specific combinations of sounds in the third fourths, but what is different from the central and the West regions, here the second step of the tetrachord does not get the stable meaning. Here the 3rd step of the tetrachord dominates more.

What else that kind of melody-probability model can give us? Could it be used as a version how to create new melodies?

First thing that comes up into the mind is that - if we take the most appropriate possible sound from the each beat part, will we get the most typical melody of the same voice?

Let's take a look at some new constructing melodies (fig.synthetic Z1, Z2; synthetic S, V1). For the each type of *godu balss* four melodies are constructed. The

first one is the most possible melody; the next ones have gradually decreasing the amount of probability. Surprisingly, the maximum of possible melody does not seem very characteristic. The opposite - for some the melodies with a decreased probability amount seems closer to the real ones, from the narrator's written melodies. The lack of time makes me to confine my report with a conclusion: for a reason, which settles as the basis for every performing case, the singer makes melody from the very beginning, keeping only the main rules, but staying independent in less important details, the most possible melody becomes impossible in the reality.

I could state that every *godu balss* in matrix B is a specific portrait of this certain voice or even the some kind of face with it's specific features. If we take into the account the wide extension of that type of melodies in Latvia, it would be necessary to create the matrix B for every *godu balss* so you could get a clear visual view which would characterise every region, it connections, the impacts of the nearest regions and so on. E.g. it is possible that in Latvia, parallel the axel North-East and South-West in the direction of North-East, the use of third step of the tetrachord in recitative melodies is increasing, although the one that represents South-West has dominating of the second step of tetrachord in *godu balss* melodies. What contains to the *golden proportions*, they are more typical from the centre to West, although the *golden proportions* in East are less noticeable.

To sum up, I would like to emphasize one more question. Why does that kind of recitative type melody is structured, following the ideal harmonic proportion principle? Also why are the golden proportions noticeable in the melody that creates it's melodic line image in the order depending from the language intonations? It influences from the syllable prosody and its conditional impulses. First to be concluded is that the third fourths is the place, which is especially changed following the text repeats. Regarding to that, nothing specifically new is being told. Then why do we still have such important mode changes in traditional melody lines? Practically, the text repeating is happening in a higher mode level, besides with a specific rhythm based way in a new sound line. So far the new base sound stops approximately quavers movement. The whole melody structure is rounded again, repeating the second line in the original mode.

That kind of melodic structure is possible to understand, taking into the consideration the functional aspect of melody. I shall remind that Latvian indigene religion in the pre-Christianity time, so as it practically continued to belong to other religious or pantheistic systems, for the true pre-Christianity society within family, the sacred place was the Household where the most rituals took place. The most important component of these rituals was the *godu balss*. So the leader of the rituals (in the slave centuries more often- female) sings some kind of poetic sentence loudly. Among the people who surrounded, they repeated it, not passively but with an attitude and accepting the sentence. But as I noticed, not changes in the text are noticeable. The attitude manifests itself with musical resources, usually lifting, if I could say so, the sound level for a tone. What is the drone meaning in this collective ritual? Seems that it is specifically musical, like the *organ -point* has to do in the professional classical

music.

In the conclusion I would like to mention that through this research as the basis to be the *godu balss* melodies, it can be quite possible to follow and find out the developing and formation process of the oldest traditional melodies, because there start to become noticeable and evident important base elements of music language.

Notes

[1] The transcriptions are selected from the most important publications of Latvian traditional music:

Latvju tautas mûzikas materiâli (Latvian Folk Music Materials; 6 vols; 1894-1926) by Andrejs Jurjâns.

Latviešu mûzikas folkloras materiâli (Latvian Folk Music Materials; 3 vols; 1951-1953) by Emilis Melngailis.

Latviešu tautas mûzika (Latvian Folk Music; 5 vols; 1958-1986) by Jekabs Vîtoliòš.
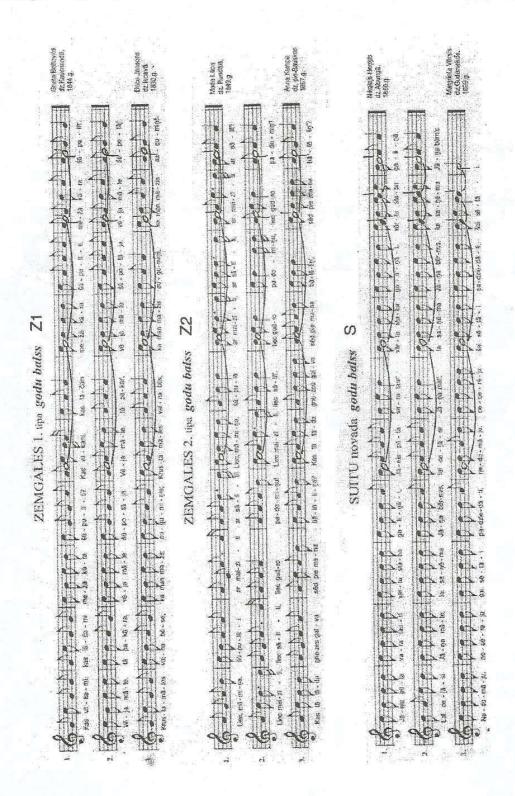
Audio Examples

Example P: Sample of Latvian poetry
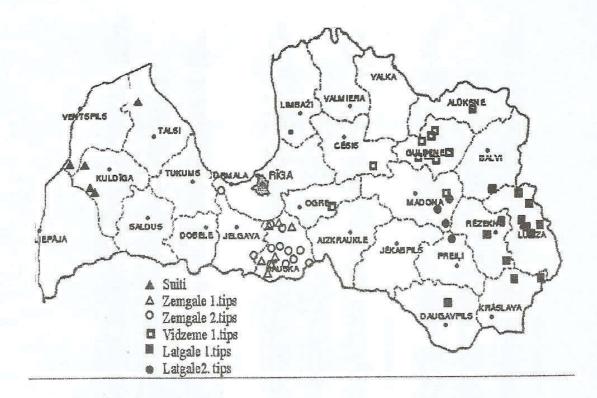
Example Z1: godu balss. Zemgale

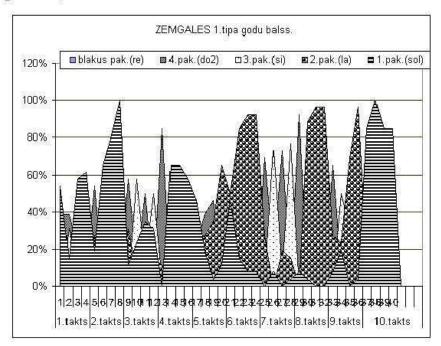Example Z2: godu balss. Zemgale

Example S: godu balss. Suitu
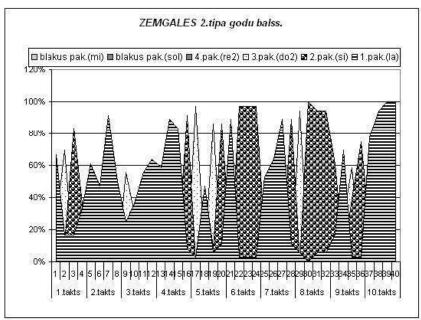
მაგალითი Z1, Z2, S
Examples Z1, Z2, S

ტაიდა ლანჯი. დანართი
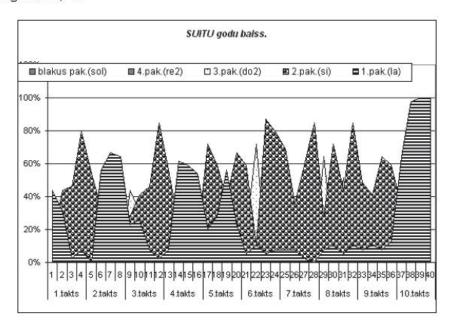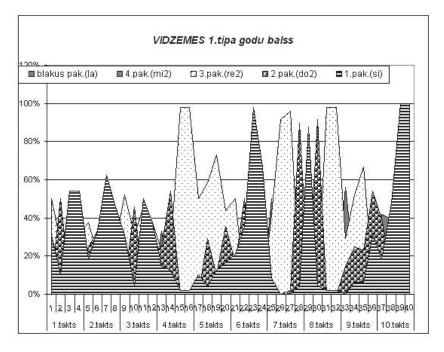**Taida Lange. APPENDIX**

სურათი: რუკა
Figure: Map

- ▲ Suiti
- △ Zemgale 1.tips
- ○ Zemgale 2.tips
- ▣ Vidzeme 1.tips
- ■ Latgale 1.tips
- ● Latgale2. tips

სურათები: Z1, Z2
Figures: Z1, Z2

ZEMGALES 1.tipa godu balss.

ZEMGALES 2.tipa godu balss.

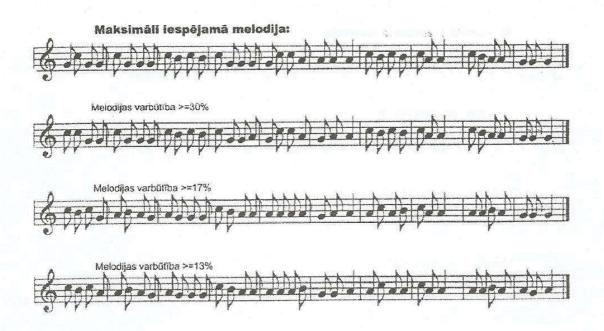სურათები: S, VI
Figures: S, VI

SUITU godu balss.

VIDZEMES 1.tipa godu balss

მაგალითები: Synthetic Z1, Z2
Examples: Synthetic Z1, Z2

Nošu piemērs nr. 7.

Sintētiskais ZEMGALES 1.tipa godu balss

Maksimāli iespējamā melodija:

Melodijas varbūtība >=30%

Melodijas varbūtība >=17%

Melodijas varbūtība >=13%

Nošu piemērs nr. 8.

Sintētiskais ZEMGALES 2.tipa godu balss

Maksimāli iespējamā melodija

Melodijas varbūtība >=40%

Melodijas varbūtība >=25%

Melodijas varbūtība >=12%

მაგალითები: Synthetic S, VI
Examples: Synthetic S, VI

Nošu piemērs nr. 9.

Sintētiskais ṢUITU novada godu balss

Nošu piemērs nr. 10.

Sintētiskais VIDZEMES 1.tipa godu balss