

ROLE OF A TONALITY IN THE FORMATION OF EARLY TEXTURE TYPES IN UKRAINIAN POLESSYE

Central Polesseye of Ukraine is an ancient eastern Slavonic land covering the Pryp'yat right bank territory approximately between the Goryn' and Dnepr rivers. At the end of the twentieth century one could still observe a lot of fairly well-preserved archaic genres and forms of folk music, and some rituals of ancient origin.

For the present account, the traditional songs, characteristic of the spring and summer ritual cycle covering the period from March, 1 (Old Style) to the end of harvest, have been selected. Regardless of their different ritual contexts and rhythmic variety, these songs constitute a perceivable stylistic unity due to the following reasons:

1. the melodies of each local tradition are similar in pitch structure;
2. the same principles are used in a texture formation;
3. the songs pertain exclusively to a woman's repertoire;
4. the voicing is characteristic for the ritual songs (very loud singing, sometimes close to a shout, intended for vast outdoor grounds, non-vibrating voice phonation in the highest possible range, use of specific ritual techniques like "voice strain", "gooking", that is a short transition to the head-voice, etc.)¹. For the purpose of the study herein we focus mainly on the first two levels of song formation – pitch and texture.

The scale of women's ritual songs of Central Polesseye is always less than an octave. The degree of a tune's phonic range depends partly on the singing tradition's geographical location. The general basic tendency is as follows: at the northernmost part of Ukrainian Polesseye (bordering on Byelorussia) the ritual songs have the most narrow tune range – three degrees in a third plus a sub-fourth. To the south of Polesseye (the southern borders are rather fuzzy and are not finally defined) the 5-6-grade scales predominate. Moving within these limits from north to south, one can see a more-or-less gradual range extension of a melodic scale from a third to a fifth – sixth. There is another important scale structure element - tonality supports. Their number, location in a scale and in a song form, i.e., the factors determining a support function, are to be taken into account. While in the north the third melodies have just one tonality support and it is always at the bottom of a third, in the south of Polesseye the fifth/sixth melodies can have two or even three support sounds. One of the lower degrees is usually a finalis. The remaining two, i.e. side supports, locate higher along the scale. Their roles in a tune are different. The upper one sometimes organizes a song form, dividing it by a median cadence, but, more often, it just marks the upper limit of a melodic skeleton. Another side support often plays the role of opposition to the main support, while sometimes it appears in the role of a finalis and even takes the place of a main support.

Traditionally each stanza starts with a solo introduction. In the rest - ensemble - part of a stanza voices of 5 to 15 women performing it can form two different types of a texture: drone or heterophonic².

Drone type in Polesseye is usually a collation of a solo, quite often ornamented voicing, to the ensemble background music formed by equirhythmic singing-scansion of the text on the bottom tone of a melody (congruous with a tonality support). Drone texture prevails mainly in the northern regions of Central Polesseye.

Heterophonic texture in Polesseye is formed as a result of the simultaneous variation

of a song tune by singers. In a typical heterophony the resulting tune versions are equipollent, and the singers' voices are equal in rights, that is, there is no division into principal voice and secondary, background parts.

Heterophony is widely spread all over Central Polessye, but at the opposite ends of it – north and south – different types occur. In ritual songs of a Northern Polessyan tradition singers vary a tune within the frames of a close three-degree scale, so that all degrees of a scale are of equal function except for a first degree in a cadence phase, when it is the most stable and strong. This means that at any point of a song stanza (except for the cadence endings and one or two upper points of a tune) any tone of a scale can sound. Such extraordinary freedom of choice, limited, though, by the narrowness of a scale itself, leads in its turn in the process of joint singing to the same "freedom" of consonance use: in vertical "piling up" of versions spontaneous unisons, seconds, thirds, and three-part clusters of two seconds. This is a **dissonant type heterophony** (ex. 1). Songs of drone type also use second consonants together with unison and thirds (ex. 2). These intervals appear in different moments when a solo voice combines with a drone. Thus the **songs of Northern Polessye**, both drone and heterophonic, are full of dissonant chords and sound.

In the ritual songs of South Polessye there is only one texture type – heterophony. Though, unlike the North-Polessyan heterophony, the southern one is a **consonant type heterophony**. Let's remember that ritual tunes of this area are based mainly on the scale in range of the fifth. It is this circumstance that became the major favorable condition for a wide use of parallel thirds (M. Kharlap). According to this principle, the voices "weaving" a song fabric, vary a melodic skeleton so that the accumulation of various versions and vertical combinations of different voices tones form only consonants – thirds, fifth, and unisons, as well as combinations of two thirds (in the form of three-part texture). Therefore ritual songs of this part of Polessye usually sound consonant (ex. 3).

A ritual had a special deep meaning for our ancestors. Songs in ritual have always been an effectual element as of a system of higher order. So the above patterns not only show the system-defined connection between ritual songs' pitch mode and a manner of their texture realization, but, what is more important, they let us organize in the best possible way their sounding, phonism of a tune in accordance with its ritual purpose.

One of the most important functions of ancient rituals is to set a contact, establish relations with the "other world", with departed ancestors, with mythological deities, and to exert influence upon them. Hence the striving for being heard by an imaginary addressee, shouting until they are heard. Thus a song's "message" was required to be stridently loud and flying. This could be achieved only with the help of the highest possible pitch of singing, filled with high overtones and through maximum solidity and strength of a sound fabric. These demands are best met by the ritual songs of Northern Polessye, as their mode and texture can enable the required quality of singing. For instance, the recurrent convergence of all voices into a lengthy unison at the end of musical sentences is a powerful instrument for the space "break-through".

Close tune range compacts the texture and brings all voices to one narrow concentrated sound flow while preventing a drop in volume. Harshness and acerbity of dissonances also make their contribution to the ritual communicative act. Microalterational divergences of a pitch of supportless degrees in voices of different singers create special intonational sharpness and tension. "Gooking", typical of ritual songs of this part of Polessye, serves as a **magic signal-call**. Rubato of a rhythm pattern, irregular accents, connected with pitch bursts, quite often make the tunes sound like a recited pronounce-

ment. The aesthetics of a good deal of such songs is subordinate to their major ancient function – a magic influence upon nature, ghosts, and man.

Consonant ritual songs from Southern Polessye are less suitable for such a purpose. They meet more modern singing criteria: their tunes are orderly cyclic, recurrent, more habitual to our ear (jump to the top and then long undulating descent), with a clear logic of cadences. The singers' voices tend to consonance, making their sound quite harmonious for a modern ear. The initial, primary heterophony criteria are rather distorted here. Thus, instead of spontaneous variants "playing" one can observe their differentiation by pitch in the texture, and, conscious or not, fixing each singer's voice in a particular layer of a vertical texture. Furthermore, the wider tune range notably limits the possibility of shouting, that is, a very loud, piercing performance by the members of a ritual. And the absence of free flowing makes the rhythm of the song more predictable, on one hand, and on the other, makes the song itself more vocal, melodious, unlike the northern declamatory, reciting style. Such songs, having sometimes as they do an archaic rudiment – the above-mentioned "gooking" at the end of a stanza – are for all that still aesthetic (in the modern sense), rather than magic. *The more archaic are the ways and means of a tune both arrangement and performance, acting jointly, the more expressively an ancient ritual-magic function manifests in it. And vice versa: the ritual-magic purpose of a song itself in a long process of search and selection of expressive means has predetermined just such song structures and intonation forms of their performance that best met the ritual demands and purposes.*

So far we have focused on the polar style songs – samples from North and South Polessye. In between these territories among intermediate, and possibly cross-bred modes of ritual songs of Central Polessye we can identify the following:

- Tunes with one tonality support and a range of the third scale basis, but extended to a fourth, mainly due to ornamental strains;
- Tunes with a range of the fourth skeleton and one tonality support;
- Fourth range tunes with two tonality supports;
- Fifth range tunes with one – bottom - support

Coordination of these structures with texture types and their approximate geographical allocation are given below:

– one-support tunes with a fourth range but a third basis, form a drone mode and a dissonant heterophony. As their structure is an extended version of third systems, such tunes are located closer to the northern borders of Polessye, fairly often mixed with the third ones;

– all tunes of a fourth basis, as well as tunes wider than a fourth (usually with 1 or 2 tonality supports) always produce a consonant type heterophony. Considering the diversity of the above scale systems, we must state that this type of polyphony is widely spread mostly not just through Polessye, but through other regions of the Ukraine as well. Even to the north of Polessye we find consonant heterophony as single droplets or micro-local formations.

The identified regularities of the coordination of the two song-structure levels are broken by the following exclusions:

1 – songs of the fourth volume but the third scale structure, where the "Brownian motion" of ornamental variants is completely replaced by the concurrent motion of voices in third. Each singer reproduces the same tune variants at her own texture level, strictly keeping thirds and unisons between the voices, as other intervals are impossible here

(ex. 4). Ritual character of sound is preserved here due to the high pitch and street manner of singing;

2 – rare samples of dissonant fifth songs which, having a relatively wide scale – pentachord in fifth – inherited the principles of heterophony of narrow-volume strains. The same freedom of ornamented variants forming, the same absence of the urge toward their consonance, the same rubato rhythm swinging and accents on the upper tones, the same endless final unisons, the same micro-intonation variation of upper degrees, and, finally, the same, in spite of a wider range, shouting manner of voice production (ex. 5).

These examples offer two hypotheses: 1 – on the relatively late **development of third type heterophony** through the **evolution** of its dissonant forms; and 2 – on the gradual **“conquest” by consonant heterophony** of the territories where the ancient types of polyphony based on ornamental variants – the drone and dissonant heterophony – used to completely dominate.

All of the above-mentioned texture and mode forms are, in our opinion, evidence of different stages of the development of Polessye people’s musical thought. In most traditional villages these stages have been “settled” in different layers (according to their style) of ancient and more contemporary songs. And local connoisseurs and keepers of song repertoire are at the same time connoisseurs and keepers of ancient forms of musical thinking at different stages, using them in the proper circumstances according to the old custom. They are unique musical “polyglots”, experts of different musical languages – modern, and half-forgotten, and quite ancient, even “dead” musical languages. Therefore, hopefully, the further development of the outlined problem with their help can deepen our understanding of different aspects of musical history of this region and even to shed light upon the ethnic history of the present-day people of Polessye.

Notes

¹ It must be admitted that the song repertoire being described includes certain samples which don’t comply with the above criteria. As a rule, they are songs either of a later period or migrated to Polessye from other regions. Striving for correct scientific conclusions, we have selected for our analysis only “pure” material from our standpoint, i.e., typical Polessyan materials.

² Moreover, mixed features of a heterophony and drone texture can be pretty often met.

მაგალითი 1.
EXAMPLE 1.

Русальна (Київ: Поліське: Вільшанка)

Solo $\text{♩} = 132$ *Tutti* $\text{♩} = 112$

Про - ве - ду я ру - са - лоч - ки до бро - ду,
Їа са - ма вер - ну - се до ро - ду.

მაგალითი 2.
EXAMPLE 2.

Лісова (Київ: Чорнобиль: Корогод)

Solo $\text{♩} = 129$ *Duet* *Tutti*

Хлоп - ці в ле - се лип - ки де - руть,
деґ - ки ў бо - ру кўт - кі рўуть. Хлоп - ці з ле - су,
дев - кі з бо - ру да хо - дїм - те до - до (-му).

მაგალითი 3.
EXAMPLE 3.

Петрівка (Київ: Поліське: Вільча)

Solo $\text{♩} = 90$ *Duet* *Tutti*

А сьо - год - ні пе - троў - ка, Пе - троў день,
Пу - сти, ма - ти, по - гу - лят на ўсь день.

მაგალიტი 4.
EXAMPLE 4.

Веснянка (Київ: Поліське: Вільча)

Solo $\text{♩} = 174$ $\frac{1}{8}$

- Вес-ня-ноч-ка - пе-ня-ноч-ка, де ти зій-мо-ўа - ла?

Duet

- У са-доч-ку на ко-лоч-ку кро-сень-це сно-ўа - ла.

მაგალიტი 5.
EXAMPLE 5.

Веснянка (Київ: Чорнобиль: Теремці)

Solo $\text{♩} = 68$ *Duet* (-а)-ми *Trio* $\text{♩} = 72$

По-за бо-ло та(-га^{о-а}) ми Рос-те, рос-те

ру-та-м'я-та зкру-ти-ми ўер-ха [-ми]. У!