

# The Six-Stringed Bowl Lyre *Krar* of Ethiopia and its Function as a Melody Instrument

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In many East African music traditions, instrumental melodies are usually not abstracted from vocal melodies, regardless whether they accompany songs or not. For instance, among the *Baganda* of Uganda the close link of instrumental and vocal music and other forms of speech considers nearly all types of instruments (Cooke 1970: 62). Referring to the *amadinda* log xylophone found in this culture, Kubik (2010: 284) suggests that although this instrument is not used to accompany songs, the music played on it derives from songs that were initially composed for the *ennanga* harp and later on transferred on it. In her essay which discusses the Ugandan bowl lyre *endongo* (or *ndongo*) Gray (1993: 118) explains that in spite of cross-cultural variations, lyres seem to be commonly played for song accompaniment, thus principally duplicating or imitating vocal melodies. This is as well the case of bowl lyres that are widely distributed in East Africa. Gray (ibid.) argues: “.... a study of the lyre is by its nature also a study of a song tradition – in fact, of the lyric style. An understanding of the music and text is deepened by a grasp of the style of accompaniment and playing technique”. Relating to the *obokano* lyre of the Kenyan *Gusii*, Varnum (1971: 243) discusses its use for song and dance accompaniment. He adds that the *Gusii* “concept of music is more of a vocal orientation than instrumental”. Just to play the *obokano* will not be given any special consideration by the *Gusii* without the respected song, whereby a singer is expected to master a wide range of songs as well as possess a pleasurable voice (ibid.: 244).

The miscellaneous ethnic communities of contemporary Ethiopia are epitomized by their diverse musical idioms created and developed out of their linguistic and cultural peripheries. The musical practices observed in these societies have been shaped, influenced and transformed in various ways and forms throughout history. Similarly, one may also observe the melodic dialects of traditional music instruments. On the basis of the cultural dialects, these communities have as well invented and constructed their own musical practices which incorporate songs and dances including instrumental melodies that contain distinct playing methods and techniques reflecting certain modes of speech the traditional musician uses. Hence, through their particular features, instrumental melodies directly display or represent a culture as a whole, or a cultural group, subgroup, a specific region within a cultural setting.

This paper deals with instrumental melodies played on the bowl lyre *krar*<sup>1</sup> of the *Amhara* of north central Ethiopia and to its interrelation with vocal melodies (songs). The distinct feature(s) of melodic dialects that present the cultural and linguistic heritage of the respected musician(s) will as well be taken into closer consideration in the course of discussion.

Among the *Amhara* chordophones mainly serving as melody instruments largely accompany solo and/or groups songs. The three well known chordophones found in this culture are the bowl lyre *krar*, the box lyre *bägäna* and the spike fiddle *masinqo*. The *krar* and the *masinqo* are secular instruments, whereas the *bägäna* is a paraliturgical box lyre specifically played during fasting seasons (see Weisser 2006).

In traditional *Amhara* music instrumental melodies are mainly subjected to the prevailing role of vocal music: *“the meter of the music is generally governed by the structure of the syllables and poetic considerations. Musical instruments largely imitate and duplicate the vocal melody”* (Kebede 1977: 393). This also refers to melodies played on the lyres *krar* likewise many East African lyre traditions where *“the human and the instrumental voices sound primarily in unison”* Wegner (2001: 426). Therefore, as the investigation proceeds an attempt will be made to find answers to the following queries: To what extent are *krar* melodies subordinated to vocal melodies? What is the musical function of the instrumental part in a song? Though before proceeding to the main subject matter let us call the attention of the reader on a few general remarks on the geographic distribution of lyres in East Africa in general and in Ethiopia in particular.

## **East Africa**

According to scholarly accounts, the East African region is considered as the home of lyres which are believed to have expanded from the Middle East via North Africa and the Nile to the present territory of East Africa through a long process of history (Kebede 1971: 140 and 1989: 82; Wegner 2001: 423; Varnum 1971: 243). Nevertheless, it is not easy today *“to reconstruct all the stations the lyre took during its millennia-long journey southwards from North Africa along the Nile. At some stations its path is indicated by iconographical evidence (rock paintings, frescoes). Nubia will also have played an important role as a mediator between the Middle East and East Africa”* (Wegner ebd.). In later periods the expansion of *Luo* populations from southern Su-

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<sup>1</sup> The *krar* is also intensively used in the music of the *Tigray* of northern Ethiopia as far as among the *Tigre* in the neighboring Eritrea.

dan furthermore seems to have played a significant role for the introduction of the lyre to northern Uganda and western Kenya. Some sources assume that southern Ethiopian populations might as well have contributed to lyre playing traditions in Western Kenya. This assumption is based on similarities traced in instrument's names and their type. Supplementary evidence may be accessed in Kubik's discourse which particularly dwells with historical and contemporary migrations of musical instruments to the East African region. Along with other musical instruments, he attempts to give clarification about bowl lyres today used in various cultures of the Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Kenya, and Uganda including border areas of adjacent countries (Kubik 1982: 30;). Consequently, lyres known as *nytiti*, *iritingo*, *obokano*, *pagan* (or *pkán*) and *litungu* lyres of the Kenyan *Luo*, *Kuria*, *Gusii*, *Pokot* and *Abaluhya* communities; the *jarjarr*, *kisir* and *tom* lyres of the *Ingassana*, *Nuba* and *Shilluk* people of the Sudan and the *ent(h)ongoli*, *endongo* (or *ndongo*), *edungu*, *adungu* and *odi* bowl lyres of the *Basoga*, *Baganda*, *Samia*, *Achooli*, *Madi* and *Lugbara* of Uganda. The number of strings extends from five to ten (commonly made of gut), whereas the instrument's shapes and sizes are as well of a large variety (Makubuya 1999: 23; Wegner ebd.).

## Ethiopia

In Ethiopia lyres are found in central, southern and western parts of the country. Lyres are primarily found among settled agricultural communities such as the *Dorze*, *Gidole*, *Hamar*, *Kaffa*, *Maale* and *Berta*. These are known by the names *dita*, *dul*, *shungui*, *goala*<sup>2</sup> and *timba* just to mention but a few. Regional and cultural differences may be observed concerning their shapes, sizes, construction material, type of strings, playing methods, tuning models, performance styles as well as music repertoire (Kebede 1977: 383; Gray 1993: 118). Lyres of south Ethiopian regions usually have amorphous and shallow resonators made of wood or clay. **Figures 1a and b** display a museum specimen of the lyre *dul*. The sound box is covered with animal skin (goat, sheep or ox) and tightened with leather strips in crisscross patterns on the rear of the instrument ([figure 1b](#)). The covering leather may also be sewn around its edge with gut or wire. The strings are fixed in certain gaps on the crossbar. To fix them, a strip of cloth is wrapped around the yoke several times for each string. Finally, the end of the string

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<sup>2</sup> See detailed information about the *Maale* lyre *goala* in Thubauville 2005: 72.

is knotted. In doing so, the cloth strips serve as an isolating layer between the wooden cross-bar and the strings<sup>3</sup>.

Contrary to this, lyres from central and northern Ethiopian regions have smaller sound resonators mostly made of wooden or metal bowls. The bowls are covered with goat skin, whereas the tightening method and patterns may vary from place to place and from one instrument maker to the next. Nowadays lyres are also constructed with variously shaped boxes resembling box-lyres than bowl lyres. Thus they have square, rectangular or box-



**Figures 1a-b:** Front and rear side of the lyre *dul* with a huge wooden bowl; intestine strings tied Collection: Museum of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES), Addis Ababa University (AAU); Photographs: T. Teffera, Addis Ababa 1993

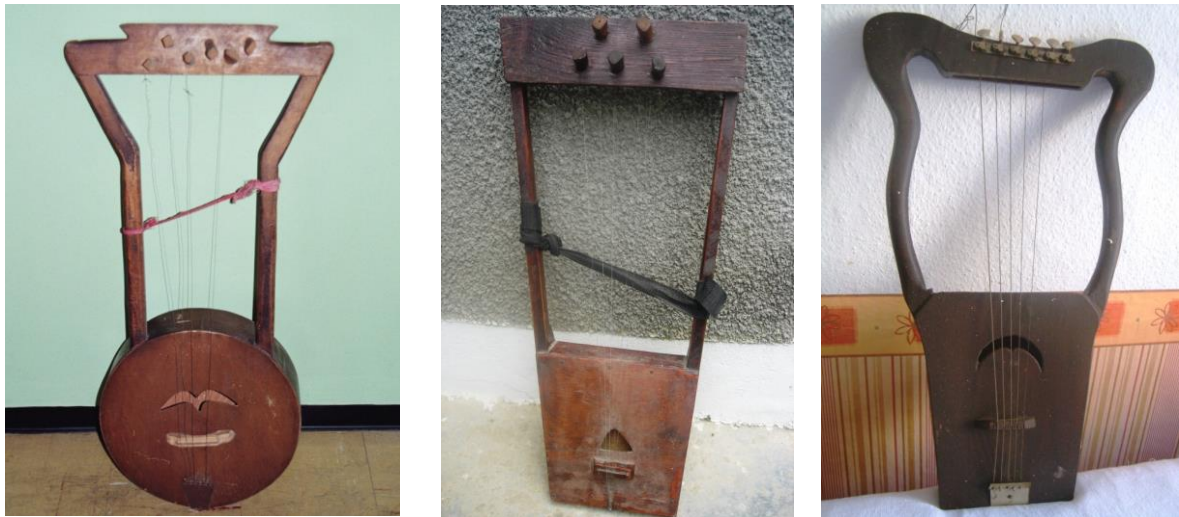
shaped resonators. The lyres shown in the [figures 2-4](#) are entirely made of wood. The two and/or more wooden boards of the resonator are nailed or glued together. There is no skin applied to cover the opening of the resonator as in the case of the traditional lyres. Their different shapes, sizes and materials of the resonators indicate that there is no standard norm of instrument construction, a very usual phenomenon in orally transmitted musical cultures. For that matter, every instrument maker applies his creativity and skill as a result of learnt

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<sup>3</sup> Lyres with this type of strings (also called bulge wrapping: see Wegner 2001: 424-425) are very common in numerous East African cultures (see also Kubik 1982: 104-109; Wachsmann/Trowell 1953: 400-405)

and adapted behavior. Other changes observed in lyre making also consider the type of pegs used to tune the strings, their arrangement and the method of their fixing.

Hence, in the case of lyres illustrated in **figures 2 and 3** for instance, the wooden twigs are inserted into fitting holes that are drilled in the flat body of the crossbar. Concerning the preference of lyre strings nowadays nylon or metal strings are also applied as far as they are available. This is, of course, only possible and accessible in urbanized areas. Therefore, the traditionally used gut strings are almost not used any longer in these areas. As to metal strings two types may be differentiated, namely wire strings (**figure 5**) or commercially produced guitar strings (figure 6) that are fixed in different ways as the pictures given below show.



**Figure 2** (leftmost): six-stringed *krar* (only four strings are left, museum specimen) with spherical resonator; wire strings; Collection: Yared School of Music (YMS), Addis Ababa University; Photograph: T. Teffera, 1993; **Figure 3** (middle): five-stringed *krar* with rectangular resonator; wire strings; Photograph: T. Teffera; *Meqelle, Tigray*, 22.08.2006; **Figure 4** (rightmost): six-stringed *krar* quasi-rectangular resonator, guitar strings and tuning pegs made of plastic material; instrument purchased in Addis Ababa; Addis Ababa; Photograph: T. Teffera, 15.02.2011.



**Figure 5:** wooden tuning twigs attached with wire strings; Photograph: T. Teffera; *Meqelle, Tigray*, 22.08.2006



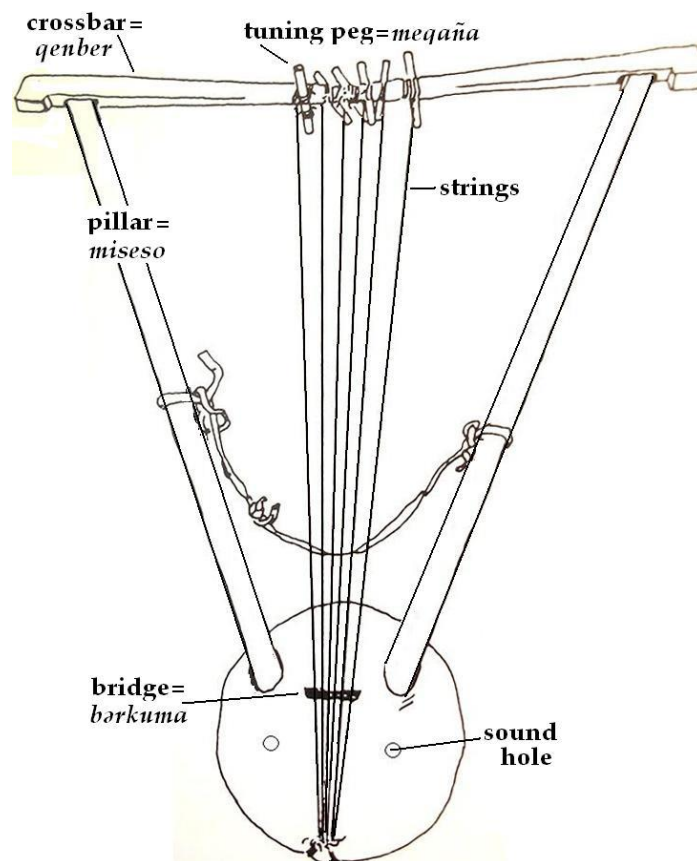
**Figure 6:** plastic tuning pegs attached with guitar strings; instrument purchased in Addis Ababa; Photograph: T. Teffera, 15.02.2011

## Physical Structure of the *Krar*

The *krar* (**figure 7a**) is made of a hollowed out bowl-shaped wooden or metal resonating box that is covered with goat or sheep skin and either sewed or nailed on its rear in various ways. The two wooden side posts or pillars called *miseso* run from the bottom of the sound box up to the wooden crossbar *qenber* forming a slight v-shape. The strings, traditionally made of gut, *jəmmat*, are stretched from the bottom of the resonator up to the crossbar. The five or six tuning pegs are wound around the peg levers which are again set against the crossbar. They are always perpendicular to it when rotated to tighten or loosen the strings for the purpose of tuning. The wooden bridge, *bərkuma* (**figure 7b**), is positioned on the stretched membrane. The strings run over the bridge, whereby the use of the bridge is to lift them up the strings so that they can freely vibrate when played. This method is deliberately applied in order to avoid buzzing sounds when the strings touch membrane during vibration<sup>4</sup>. The wooden tuning pegs known as *meqaña* (figure 7c) are fixed in equal gaps on the

<sup>4</sup> Unlike this method, in some Ethiopian cultures the buzzing sound is welcomed and/or preferred (Kebede 1971: 139-140). Therefore, lyres do not possess any bridges. This is also the case of a number of East African lyres. An example is the eight stringed *endongo* lyre of the *Baganda*. Makubuya (1999: 24) explains that the timbre of this lyre is described as buzzing, aggressive and self-imposing. He elaborately notes the following: “The timbre characteristic of the *ndongo* is not just ‘accidental’. The *ndongo* makers make a definite and calculated effort to ensure that the instrument sounds the way it does, focusing on a deliberate use of particular construction materials which provide its ‘sonic properties’ because of the significant role they play in the production of the *ndongo* sound. They are responsible not only for the generation of sound, but also for the tone quality that follows after the vibration is activated. The ‘sonic properties’ in question are the *lutiba* = resonator shell, the *eddiba* = sound table skin, and the *enkoba* = playing strings”.

crossbar. Following certain methods of fastening the. Each string has an individual peg (Kebede 1971: 146-147). Approximately more than 80% of the *Amhara* are farmers of which a large number still today plows the fields with a pair of oxen. The work in the field is according to the traditional work division left to men, women are responsible for taking care of the entire household work, whereas children are responsible to watch cattle. Terms like *miseso* and *qenber* applied to denote parts of the *krar* clearly symbolize the social, cultural and economic life of the community. Confirming this realization, Kebede (1977: 381) writes: “The .... word *miseso* refers to the central post which supports the straw-covered thatched roof of a farmer’s hut. The wooden crossbar ....*qenber* is also the only appropriate Amharic word which refers to the yoke placed on a pair of oxen when farming the land. *Meqaña*s or tuning pegs are tied on the *qenber*. It is in the agricultural localities that cattle are often butchered in the farms for the meat demands of families. .... women traditionally obtain the intestines of newly butchered animals; they use the large intestines to prepare a special delicacy, but gut strings are made of the small intestines. .... the process of making gut strings involves knowledge in cleaning, twisting, curling, scraping, stretching, twining, twisting, drying, and dyeing.”



**Figure 7:** Physical structure of the *krar*



**Figure 7a:** wooden bridge, *barkuma* placed in the center of the stretched membrane to lift up the strings; Photograph: T. Teffera; Berlin 15.02.2011



**Figure 7b:** wooden tuning pegs, *meqaña* (strings made of nylon); Photograph: T. Teffera; Berlin 15.02.2011

### ***Krar* Playing Techniques: *Dərdər* and *Gərf***

The *krar* is played by both men and women, although traditionally it was an instrument reserved for the male domain only. Today women are also appearing in both the traditional and popular music scene playing the *krar*<sup>5</sup> (Kebede 1977: 381).

The *krar* can be played in horizontal or oblique position, whereas the player may stand (**figure 8**) or sit (**figure 9**). Two playing techniques called *dərdər* (**figure 10**) and *gərf* (**figure 11**) may be distinguished<sup>6</sup>. In the *dərdər* style the strings are plucked alternately with the left hand fingers. The musician has the opportunity to beautify a *krar* melody in a sophisticated manner. Free melody ornamentation is given a high aesthetic value in the *Amhara* music, not only in instrument playing, but also in singing. This is one of the main criteria, in which the virtuosity of a musician can be measured. Kebede (1977: 389) also explains that a *krar* per-

<sup>5</sup> Among famous female *krar* players the late *Merry Armide* and *Asnaketch Worku* may be mentioned, who served for decades as talented singers and instrument players, hence inspiring their fans with their individual *krar* playing styles and their unforgettable songs of which a large part of them have been released on music albums.

<sup>6</sup> Pertaining to the two *krar* playing styles, I must make some remarks on the terms Kebede (1977: 387-389) applied, since I believe they are not only misleading, but also do not make any sense as such. For the *dərdər* style, Kebede notes the term *bekignit* (with *kignit*) and for the *gərf* style he uses the term *bememcha* (= with plectrum). I never heard these terms both during my training at the Yared Music School and in my decade long researches among others carried out in central Ethiopia among the *Amhara*. I also asked quite a number of traditional musicians and non-musicians whether they are familiar with these two terms, however, nobody confirmed them. Therefore, although I do not doubt the scientific works of Kebede as such, but at least in this case I do not suggest using these very unusual expressions in order to avoid possible confusions.



formance in the *dərdər* style allows: “...the ... musician to execute elaborately ornamented and varied melodic configurations that greatly appeal the musical sentiment of the Ethiopian”. The *dərdər* style requires an intensive practical experience to master. When I was a student of the Yared School of Music (YMS) in Addis Ababa, this style was given major emphasis by the traditional music teachers<sup>7</sup>.

Unlike the *dərdər* style, the second playing technique, *gərf*, was not part of the core curriculum of the YMS, since it is considered as very simple to master within a short time. Hence, it was up to the students to practise this technique in their spare time through observation and continuous practice. In the *gərf* technique a leather or plastic plectrum is needed to strum the strings with the right hand, while the left hand fingers take their positions behind the strings, about 5 - 8 cm below the tuning twigs, and stop one string to vibrate freely at a time while the other four fingers mute the respected strings. It is these single pitches, which subsequently create the desired melody. *Krar* melodies are monophonic and not homophonic despite all strings are strummed with the plectrum. There are just a few musicians who master both playing styles and execute the one or the other technique depending on the melodic-rhythmic structure of the song they are performing. In many regions of the *Amhara* the *dərdər* style is preferred than the *gərf* style which is primarily applied by *Təgray* and *Tigre* (Eritrea) musicians.

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<sup>7</sup> My music training at the YMS took place from 1978 – 1982.



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**Figures 8-9:** Musician *Asnaketch Worku*, Photographs: unknown date; Courtesy of *Asnaketch Worku*



**Figure 11:** *Gərf* style; Photograph: T. Teffera, 15.02.2011 Berlin

**Figure 10 (left):** *Dərdər* style; Musician: Martha Teffera; Photograph: T. Teffera, 15.02.2011 Berlin

## Krar Tuning Process and Tuning Models

The close link of the *krar* with songs can already be perceived in melodic patterns played to tune the strings. The *Amhara* music repertoire employs different traditional scales called *qañatoc*, whereby each of them is named after well-known traditional songs, namely *tazata*, *bati*, *ambassel* and *anchi hoye lene*. A *qañat* consists of five pitches within the range of one octave and with distinct interval relationship. While tuning the *krar* the musician at first determines the departure pitch fitting to his vocal range. This pitch is the fifth string of the *krar*. Following this string number six is a duplication of the string five, the departure pitch, hence tuned an octave apart, e.g. c – c' (**figures 11a-c**). So the departure pitch is habitually the lowest pitch of the scale. The fingers of the left hand are divided over the six strings. Hence, whereas the departure pitch is played by the ring finger (string no. 5), the thumb is reserved for the strings one and two and the other four fingers each play the following strings sequentially (forefinger = string three; middle finger = string four and little finger = string six).



Figure 11a



Figure 11b



Figure 11c: numbers under each note refer to *krar* string numbers

**Figures 11a-b:** playing position and division of the left hand fingers among the six *krar* strings; Photograph: T. Teffera, 15.02.2011 Berlin

**thumb** = strings 1-2  
**forefinger** = string 3  
**middle finger** = string 4  
**ring finger** = string 5  
**little finger** = string 6

With reference to the tuning process, it is important to note that the musician does not think or imagine the *qañat* pitches in their ascending or descending sequence. This feature is also observed in various studies. Pertaining to African music instruments, Tracy (et. al. 1969:25) writes: “....African instruments are not tuned from note to note up or down the scale. It is done in a specific, but generally irregular way for each instrument. In studying a tuning, therefore, not only the

pitches of each note are important, but also the order in which they are tuned and the relationship of note to note in the tuning pattern". Mention must be made at this spot that there are certain margins of pitch tolerance in relation when it comes to instrument tuning as far as we are not discussing about tempered pitches in the sense of Western music.

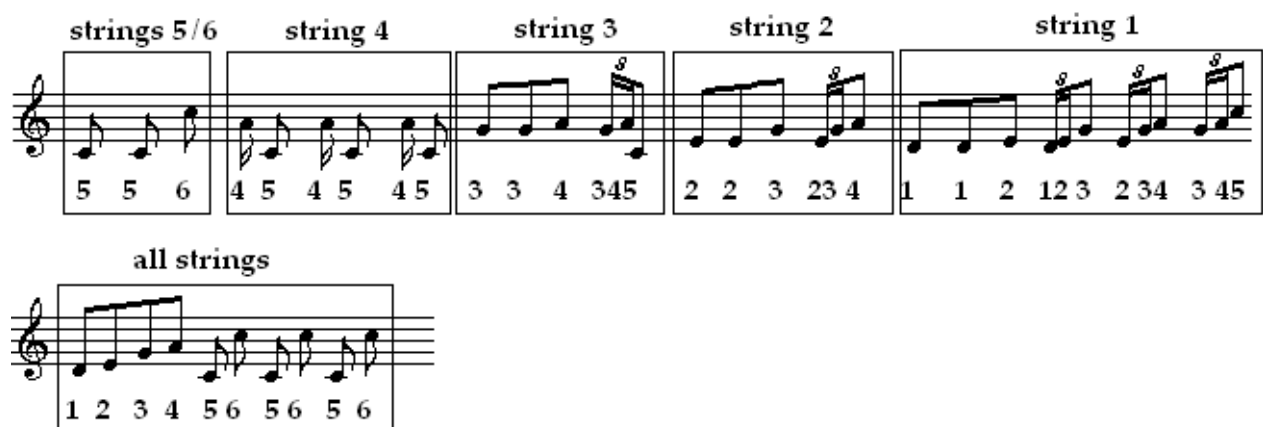
The following example demonstrates a model I frequently apply to tune the *krar*. In this case it refers to the *tazata qañat*. The numbers given under the notes indicate the numbers of the *krar* strings.

**Figure 12a:** An example of one *krar* tuning model in the *tazata qañat*



So while tuning each string one after the other, the musician may play partly improvised melody sequences, passages or fragments of a particular song on the adjacent strings (**figure 12b**). Applying this model will help the musician to ease the tuning process. One may also hum or sing certain passages of a song to accelerate the tuning process and consequently check and recheck the pitches and undertaking minor corrections until all the scale along with the desired intervals are sounded to the full satisfaction of the musician.

**Figure 12b:** An example of one *krar* tuning model in the *tazata qañat* showing the strings to be tuned and the adjacent strings that may be played to speed up the tuning process



It is very important to note, that neither fixed rules and nor uniform techniques exist to tune the *krar*. This is rather a subjective experience merely based on the learnt behavior of every *krar* player. Tracy (et. al. 1969: 25) confirms this realization with the following statement: *“every tuner of an instrument, African or not, appears to have his own inner tuning model, and it is this ideal model which he attempts to reproduce on his instrument. He may have more than one tuning model. Generally speaking...” African musicians do not tune by comparison with a standard physical norm such as a pitch pipe or tuning fork, but rather by a psycho-physical process. This may be conscious or unconscious, but in either case gives rise to the correct pattern of intervals”. Furthermore Kubik (2010: 263) states “... psychologically tuning is a kind of “focusing” in which the musician brings the notes he attempts on his instrument into congruence with his inner tuning model, an inner pattern of approximate pitches to which he has been trained from.....”*

In other words, it is attempted to clarify and affirm the important of vocal melodies to tune musical instrument, in this case the lyre *krar*. The Western conception scale (ascending and descending orders) is not applicable in the music discussed here.

### **Musical Function of the *Krar* Melodies in Song Performances**

In the *Amhara* music the *krar* mainly accompanies songs as has been stated earlier. Specifically in solo performances the instrument player is in most cases also the singer. *Amhara* songs usually consist of one, two and/or more melodically and rhythmically distinct song sections (song parts). Many songs are arranged in cyclic form, thus recurring over and over again. The *krar* almost fully imitates the song melody. Breathing gaps of the singer which depend on the given song structure are substituted by the instrumental part. The melodic and rhythmic structures of instrumental introductions and interludes may duplicate certain passages of a song or they may be full reproductions of a particular part of it like for example a refrain.

It is up to the musician to insert an instrumental interlude at a certain gap and how as well as for how long to play it. Such interludes are very common in solo may among others appear between refrain and following stanza, or between strophic lines, verse lines and couplets. Instrumental interludes allow the voice part to rest giving the musician the chance to think of the next lyric to sing. The *krar* player determines the duration of such interlude as well as instrumental introductions, since as the singer one can take full control over the music per-

formance. The virtuosity of a musician is judged by the attractive style of *krar* playing, the style of singing and by the melody ornamentations and instrumental improvisations. Additionally, of course, the lyric, its poetic beauty also entertains the audience, since it is the song message that adds flair to a music performance as such.

In the following, an excerpt (figure 13) of a solo song entitled *andegna* 'Once again' is represented. This song belongs to the *tazata qañat* consisting of the pitch sequence g'-a'-h'-d''-e''. The music performance begins with an instrumental introduction in which the melody of the refrain is duplicated twice. Then the vocal part starts with the refrain followed by the stanza which is melodically slightly varied than the refrain. Refrain and stanza parts are repeated again and again as illustrated in the transcription. It is important to note that throughout the entire song the instrumental melody fully imitates the vocal melody. Also gaps occurring in the vocal part are filled out with ending phrases of the lyre so that the instrument is sounded all the way through the music performance (music example 1).

Just for the purpose of comparison in music example 2 the same song given in music example 1 is performed by the late traditional musician *Ketema Mekonnen*<sup>8</sup>. Here we may conceive how the instrumental introduction is executed in a more elaborated manner than in the previous example, while the tempo is a slightly faster. The lyre playing style along with the melody structure reveals the individuality of the musician in performing a song in his own way. And yet the major characteristics of the songs remain unchanged so that the listener would recognize it as such. The close link of the instrumental melody with the vocal melody may also be perceived in the song. As the master of the *krar*, *Ketema* embellishes the instrumental melody starting from the instrumental introduction which he plays in the *dərdər* style (plucking). After some phrases the refrain melody is played twice on the *krar* only. Subsequently the song begins with the refrain followed by the stanza parts which consist of the core message of the song with steadily changing song lines containing the message of the song. With regard to the *krar* playing style, note must be made that while the first five strings are played with the left hand, the sixth string is plucked with the thumb of the right hand rhythmically, namely only at specific points along with the fifth string which is the

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<sup>8</sup> *Ketema Mekonnen* is one of the influential musicians of his time who used to play both the *krar* and the fiddle *masinqo*, the instruments of the *azmari*. He entertained his audiences for several decades. Likewise a number of similarly outstanding Ethiopian artists, *Ketema* has left a substantial legacy of traditional songs of which quite a large portion has been released and offered on the local music market most probably during the 1970s and 1980s. Quite a number of his songs are still today broadcasted on various radio and TV programs.

departure pitch. This rare *krar* playing style is applied only by a few musicians, whereby the purpose of the octave duplications is apparently the strengthening and accentuating of this basic pitch (in both octaves). Although this octave duplication occurs only once in a while, it gives the performance a unique flair attracting the attention of the listener.

**Figure 13:** Song *andegna* ‘Once again’; *Krar* player/singer: Martha Teffera; *dərdər* style; Recording: Timkehet Teffera; 15.02.2011, Berlin

♩ = M.M. 115

**instrumental intro.**

**Refrain**

lyre     ən-- de --- ge ----- (e)-- na     mew-- ded ən-- de --- (e)-- ge --- na

voice

ən-- de --- ge ----- (e)-- na     fə --- qər ən-- de --- (e)-- ge --- na

ən-- de --- ge --- na     a--- yə--- ge --- ñə --- mə--- na

Stanza

ən---de--- ge---na ya ye---tən---tu ze---me---n

ən---de--- ge---na des---ta ya---ye---ni---be---t

te--- me---lə---so bi--- ge-ñā a--hun mən a--le---bet

Music example 3 consists of one the timeless tunes of the astounding female musician (*krar* player and singer), *Asnaketch Worku*, entitled *Ende Eyerusalem* 'Like Jerusalem'. In this song *Asnaketch* accompanies her voice by largely applying the *gərf* style with an exception of the short instrumental introduction which she performs in the *dərdər* style. The instrumental introduction consists of variously shaped short melody fragments (*dərdər* style) which may roughly be understood as a demonstration of the five *qāñət* pitches. After a while, *Asnaketch* skips to the *gərf* style that is, unlike the preceding free rhythmic part, played in a 6/8 time until the end of the song. When listening to the song one may perceive how the first eighth note of each triple group is accentuated thus revealing the very common arrangement of the



large portion of the *Amhara* traditional song repertoire including the traditional shoulder dance *askista*.

Referring to the rest of the song, the lyre does in this case not a duplicate of the vocal part. The *krar* is also not played uninterruptedly throughout the music performance as in the case of the majority of songs. On the contrary, it is sounded in the moment when the vocal part takes full rest and vice versa; i.e. the *krar* is in this case just played to supplement the vocal gaps.

In the last audio example (music example 4) a 14 year old boy plays the *krar*, without singing. Some lyre players are either unable to sing songs. But they can play any song melody on the lyre. Here the young man duplicates the melody of a very widely known traditional song, entitled *Hode Ney, Ney* 'My dear come, come'. Some lyre players are virtuoso musicians. Some may play their music instruments in traditional music groups where they are working as active members. There they accompany other singers on the *krar* or other traditional music instruments. In the given music example the lyre represents the melodic dialect of this well-known song through the sounds of the strings. So regardless whether the *krar* accompanies a vocal part or not, whenever listening to the melodic, metro-rhythmic arrangements played on this instrument one may identify or recognize the vocal melody after a short while. This, of course, refers either to the culture bearers or scholars and ordinary people who are acquainted with the *Amhara* music)

## Conclusion

Based on the so far made discussion about the close interrelation of instrumental and vocal melodies, one may encounter that vocal music takes a superseding priority over instrumental music, here the lyre *krar*. In doing so, similarly to vocal melodies that may be shaped in various ways according to the artistic and musical skill of an individual, instrumental melodies as well reveal individual talents, thus giving the musician a special identity. Hence, artists such as *Ketema Mekonnen*, *Asnaketch Worku*, *Kassa Tessema* and *Mary Armide* have left their marks on lyre playing culture through their unique methods and skills of *krar* playing in their song performances. Today many young musicians such as *Martha Teffera* are following the footsteps of these great artists. Basing the proficiencies of their role models *krar* players represent their talents in their own way. However, regardless which *krar* playing technique a musician applies to accompany a song, the vocal melody shines largely through in the instrumental part, whereas the vocal and instrumental interpretation.

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## Audio Examples

Music Example 1: Solo Song accompanied by the lyre *krar*; song title: *andegna* 'Once again'; Singer and instrument player: Martha Teffera; Recording: Timkehet Teffera; 15.02.2011, Berlin.

Music Example 2: Solo song accompanied by the lyre *krar*; song title *andegna* 'Once again': Singer and instrument player: *Ketema Makonnen*, Released: ca. between 1968-74; side II, track 1; Philips/Ph 131 (the same song was released on music cassettes in the 1980s which are still offered today on the local music market).

Music Example 3: Solo song accompanied by the lyre *krar*; song title *Ende Jerusalem* 'Like Jerusalem'; Singer and instrument player: *Asnaketch Worku*, CD Album released: Traditional Music from Ethiopia; track 3; Producer: Peter Finger; Acoustic Music Records 1996, Osna-brueck, Germany 1996.

Music Example 4: Solo instrumental lyre melody imitating the song entitled: *Hode Ney, Ney* 'My dear come, come'; Musician: *Addisu Berhan*; born in Sabia/*Gondär* Region, Central Ethiopia, 16 years; Recording: Timkehet Teffera; Ethnomusicological field research 1997. Collection of the Berliner Phonogram Archive; see shelf no. 0345.005; Ä9 7 D-05.