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 (ebd.) 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 (ebd.: 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 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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1 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 pkan) and litungu lyres of the Kenyan Luo, Kuria, Gusii, Pokot and Abaluhya communities; the jaŋarr, 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, goala² 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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² 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 crossbar and the strings.

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-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

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. Tefera, Addis Ababa 1993

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3 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.
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, jimmat, 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, borkuma (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 vibration⁴. The wooden tuning pegs known as meqaña (figure 7c) are fixed in equal gaps on the

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⁴ 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”.

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

Figure 6: Figure 6: plastic tuning pegs attached with guitar strings; instrument purchased in Addis Ababa; Photograph: T. Tefera, 15.02.2011
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 k'rar 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 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**
Krar Playing Techniques: Dərdər and Garf

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 krar⁵ (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 garf (figure 11) may be distinguished⁶. 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-

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⁵ 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 unforgett able songs of which a large part of them have been released on music albums.

⁶ 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 garf style he uses the term bemench ( = 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 dàrdor style allows: “...the ... musician to execute elaborately ornamented and varied melodic configurations that greatly appeal the musical sentiment of the Ethiopian”. The dârdor 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.

Unlike the dârdor style, the second playing technique, gorf, 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 gorf 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 dârdor style is preferred than the gorf style which is primarily applied by Tagray and Tigre (Eritrea) musicians.

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7 My music training at the YMS took place from 1978 – 1982.
Figures 8-9: Musician Asnaketch Worku, Photographs: unknown date; Courtesy of Asnaketch Worku

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

Figure 11: Garf style; Photograph: T. Teffer, 15.02.2011 Berlin
Krarr 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 *qənətoc*, whereby each of them is named after well-known traditional songs, namely *təzəta*, *bati*, *ambassel* and *anchi hoye lene*. A *qənət* 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](image1.png)  ![Figure 11b](image2.png)

**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. Teffara, 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 *qənət* 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 tazəta qaṆat. The numbers given under the notes indicate the numbers of the krar strings.

**Figure 12a**: An example of one krar tuning model in the tazəta qaṆat

![Figure 12a](image)

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 tazəta qaṆat showing the strings to be tuned and the adjacent strings that may be played to speed up the tuning process

![Figure 12b](image)
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 andegena ‘Once again’ is represented. This song belongs to the ṭazḥa qašāt 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 Mekonnen⁸. 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 dardar 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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⁸ 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 *ndegeena* ‘Once again’; *Krar* player/singer: Martha Tefera; *dordor* style; Recording: Timkehet Tefera; 15.02.2011, Berlin
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 garf style with an exception of the short instrumental introduction which she performs in the dərdor style. The instrumental introduction consists of variously shaped short melody fragments (dərdor style) which may roughly be understood as a demonstration of the five qənət pitches. After a while, Asnaketch skips to the garf 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 ac-
quainted 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 Tefera 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.
Cited Works


Audio Examples

Music Example 1: Solo Song accompanied by the lyre krar; song title: andegena ‘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 andegena ‘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 4: Solo instrumental lyre melody imitating the song entitled: Hode Ney, Ney 'My dear come, come'; Musician: Addisu Berhan; born in Sabia/Gondár 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.