

### GEORGIAN CHILDBIRTH (*SADZEBO*) SONGS

In the most ancient singing repertoire of the Georgians an especially significant place is occupied by the remnants of the sun worshipping practices present in different regions of Georgia; it is a devotional-ritual round dance *Mze Shina* which has come down to this day as a song performed at the childbirth celebrations. The names of the childbirth celebrating songs are *Mze Shina Da Mze Gareta* (or *Mze Shina*, *Mze Shinao*, *Zashinao*, *Zashinava*) and *Nai-Nai Ninainada* (or *Nai-Nai*), which are based on a phonetical version of the sun deity Nana and refer to her (Garaqanidze, 1997: 19; Mskhaladze, 1969:34).

In the past, apart from the childbirth celebration, the hymn dedicated to the sun deity was sung on the occasions when the child was being put to sleep or placed in the cradle for the first time, also at the bedside of a new mother, a sick person suffering from an infectious disease or at religious feasts. As the mythological tradition has it was performed when praying to the Sun idol or during a promenade of a king who was thought to be the sun's offspring.

Comparatively old notated or audio recordings of the song *Mze Shina* are very few in number. According to the published material only its Gurian (Ex. 1), Megrelian (Ex. 2) and Meskhetian (Ex. 3) variants were known. But in the process of working on this problem Kartlian (Ex. 4, 5), Kakhetian, Imeretian (Ex. 6), Acharian (Ex. 7, 8) and Svan (Ex. 9) parallels were also revealed. The hymn to the sun exceeded the boundaries of the rural folklore, one of its variants representing the western branch of the urban folklore.

The old and the newly discovered dialectal variants of *Mze Shina* differ from one another by the level of their development and a number of other characteristic features. But more vivid than the differences is their interconnection revealed in different components of the musical language and referring to the common provenance of these songs.

The childbirth celebration song is **mostly sung by women**, for it was women who participated in the childbirth celebration rituals. According to one ethnophore from Kartli, in the past only women were feasting and merry-making at childbirth celebrations, they would not allow men to participate in the feast (Garaqanidze, 1981: 50), though men also know the song and do perform it in everyday life. In the recordings of the song it is men who perform the Gurian, Megrelian and Meskhetian variants; the Svan *Zashinao* is known as sung by men only; the Acharan *Nai-Nai* is sung not only by women but by men as well.

Existing publications and the material obtained during fieldworks attest the performance of the song **in round dances** in Kartli, Kakheti, Imereti, Achara and Samegrelo. *Mze Shina* must have been sung during round dances in Guria, Meskheta and Svaneti as well, which is confirmed by the musical texts of the variants of these provinces.

How the childbirth songs were sung?

Singing alternately by two sections of the choir or by the interchange of the soloists (in Kakheti, Imereti, Svaneti; soloist - *latsaad* in the Svan); by the soloist and a unison choir singing in turn (Achara); by a soloist only without any musical instrument (Kartli and Meskheta); by a soloist (accompanied by the chonguri. Guria and Samegrelo). On the basis of the transcription of the song Edisher Garaqanidze conjectures that its original performance may have been antiphonic (Garaqanidze, 1981: 52). The constantly repeated refrain and the connection with the body movements give the scholar grounds to surmise that in the past the song was responsorial which became polyphonic at a comparatively later time (Garaqanidze, 1997: 29).

The verbal text of the song in the Megrelian variants is Georgian. Even Ketevan Chitanava, who is especially interested in this problem, was unable to track down a Megrelian text: the informants in Samegrelo noted that the song had penetrated into Samegrelo from Eastern Georgia (Chitanava, 1985: 217). The Svan texts of the Svan samples also include some Georgian words.

The verbal texts reflect the mythological, childbirth, cradle, hunting and love themes. The main text is similar almost everywhere, though more extended in some provinces. Each stanza of the variants of different provinces ends by a refrain, but only one begins with it, which is characteristic of the early stage of the poetic word. The refrain, a six-syllable line (*mzev shin shemodio*) remains unchanged in most of the provinces of Georgia (Guria, Samegrelo, Meskheta, Kartli and Imereti). The constantly repeating nonsense-syllable *nai-nai, ninaina-da* also has six syllables and has the same function as *mzev shin shemodio* has in other variants. The refrains (*zashi shaiamodi* and *zashi choi lamare*) of the Svan variants consist of seven syllables.

Of the eastern Georgian variants the Meskhian, Kakhetian and one Kartlian (Ex. 4) are monophonic, sung by a soloist, without a musical instrument, though in the Archives of the Georgian Folklore State Centre there is a much older (1916) two-part Kartlian notated variant (Ex. 5). With its central and dominant function of the bass part (holding drone respectively on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> steps of the scale) it is a typical drone two-part song of Kartlian women.

Of the western Georgian variants the Gurian and Megrelian ones are monophonic, performed by a soloist (accompanied by a musical instrument), the Imeretian and Svan are three-part, in Achara the women's variant is monophonic (Ex. 8), while the men's variant is three-part (Ex. 7).

The Imeretian *Mzeshinao* is an urban song with the harmony different from that of the rural variant. From the beginning of the second stanza up to the end of the song the passages to the first four syllables (*va-zhis ma-ma, shin ar a-ris* and so on) are four-part. It results from the division of the bass part into two parts and of the simultaneous sounding of its two possible variants (such phenomena may occur in rural songs too). The harmony of the song tends to be closer to the west European professional singing, though the unison of the voices at the end of the stanzas (instead of the third, characteristic of the urban songs) brings it closer to the traits of the rural songs. The proximity to the peasant singing is especially evident when *Mzeshinao* is performed in three parts with the higher variant of the bass part. Such an urbanization of

the most ancient rural song is a unique occurrence in the Georgian musical reality (so far I have not come across of any analogous case).

The existence of the urban variant of *Mze Shina* could be explained by the great popularity of the song and its occurrence in western Georgia might be considered to be a natural result of the connection of the western branch of the Georgian urban folklore with this province of Georgia (Imereti). But the urban variant of *Mze Shina* is attested in the very province where the rural version of the song has never been recorded. A tendency of the Imeretian musical folklore towards the adoption of the European professional music idioms and its introduction into Georgian culture on the native basis (for instance, substitution of the panduri by the guitar in the *Batonebis Mobodisheba*, a devotional ritual song performed during infectious diseases) and the affinity of the urban singing to the characteristic features of the rural singing provide grounds to presume that the urban variant must have emerged on the basis of the rural one.

The harmony of the three-part Acharian versions in comparison with the eastern Georgian one is more highly developed, the bass part includes the 7<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> degrees of the scale, below the central tone.

Of the Svan versions, in one sample four-part section occurs several times (at the beginning of stanzas, on the first four syllables of the verbal text, similar to the urban variant of *Mzeshinao*). Here four-part singing results from the simultaneous sounding of the two possible versions of the bass part. The range of this voice is much wider – the 7<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> degrees of the scale below the central tone.

Is *Mze Shina* a song for a soloist accompanied by a musical instrument, or just a song sung by a soloist only?

The variants of *Mze Shina* accompanied by the chonguri are reminiscent of its kindred song *Iavnana*. Though in the rituals connected with the infectious diseases the role of a musical instrument (as a means of cheering up the spirits which cause the disease, gaining their favour and mercy) is much greater, but still it is a later supplement to the most ancient ritual round dance.

The fact that *Mze Shina* is not a typical song that should be accompanied by the chonguri is confirmed by its Gurian and Megrelian notated versions: 1) they never begin with the chonguri introduction (in such songs the chonguri accompaniment joins in subsequently); 2) in these songs the chonguri and the singing passages, accompanied by the chonguri, do not alternate. The above-mentioned characteristic features of the chonguri song cannot have been ignored by such a brilliant chonguri player, as was the performer of the Gurian *Mze Shina* (Arakchiev, 1908) *Mze Shina* is not a song to be performed with the accompaniment of the chonguri. Originally it must have been sung without any musical instrument.

In the childbirth ritual *Mze Shina* was a round dance performed by the participants (at church feasts it was also sung during a round dance). In Georgia round dance songs in themselves exclude solo performances (without or with a musical instrument). In this country when discussing round dance songs one can only speak about such homophonic singing, which implies a unison performance by the participants of the ritual. Of exactly this kind is *nai-nai* sung by Acharian women (recorded by

Alexander Mskhaladze). The soloist and a unison choir, singing alternately, performed this version. So where can the song have been performed as a solo with or without a musical instrument? Only when putting a child to sleep. Such are the Megrelian and Meskhian versions of *Mze Shina*, having the function of a lullaby; Araqishvili and Valerian Maghradze recorded them. In comparison with the singing of the song in the round dance its solo performance with or without a musical instrument must be a later phenomenon. Garaqanidze also suggested that the solo performance of the song without a musical instrument has emerged later, than its unison singing, or the performance against the background of the drone was (Garaqanidze, 1997:28-29). The devotional ritual of childbirth and the round dance it was accompanied with have gone into oblivion. This is why it may be performed both as a solo with or without the accompaniment of a musical instrument. The devotional ritual of childbirth must have lost its function earlier than those of children's infectious diseases and the weather, hence the functionless *Mze Shina* could more easily be adjusted to being performed without the accompaniment of a musical instrument than *Iavnana* and *Lazare*. The fact that the singer of the Kartlian *Mze Shina*, unlike *Iavnana* and *Lazare*, was neither accompanied by the bass part, nor was joined in unison by other singers present there supports the above surmise (about this see Garaqanidze, 1997: 28).

If solo singing accompanied by the chonguri is quite natural when putting the child to sleep, in the same Samegrelo the tune of the round dance performed at church feasts was to be polyphonic (generally there is no tradition of homophonic singing in this province of Georgia!). The solo performances recorded by Araqishvili must have resulted from singing a polyphonic round dance melody by a single person, when he/she could not have helped using the chonguri in order to render the polyphonic character of these songs! To put it in other words the Gurian and Megrelian *Mze Shina* are the variants of the polyphonic round dance melody sung to the accompaniment of the chonguri. The *Mze Shinao* sung by the Paghavas from Samegrelo, must also have been polyphonic (Chitanava, 1987: 60).

Polyphonic round dance songs are sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument in other parts of Georgia as well. Such are, for instance, *Lazghvash*, *Dala Kojas Khelghvazhale* and others. These round dance songs are still sung as such, though sometimes they can also be performed with the bowed *chuniri* (or the *chuniri* and *chang* - the harp). When sung to the accompaniment of some musical instrument the round dance tune may be three-part, two-part or monophonic; as for the part of the musical instrument, it usually renders the texture of the song.

Performing round dance songs without the accompaniment of musical instrument is quite common in Georgian provinces. It is corroborated by the information I recorded in Achara: the song *Es Akvani Kharatuli* ("This Carved Cradle") is a mother's song, which mother usually sings to her child". This song proves to be the same as *Nai-Nai*, the round dance song of the devotional ritual of childbirth. Proceeding from the above it may be said that one and the same song when sung on different occasions or in different environment may be: 1) polyphonic (such is the variant for men); 2) unison for a choir (the variant for women) and, 3) unison, sung without any musical instrument (the variant sung by a mother to her child). E. Garaqanidze associates the

three-part version of *Nai-Nai* with its performance by men (Garaqanidze, 1990: 138). Potentially, women's singing is also three-part, therefore the polyphonic character of the childbirth round dance cannot be ascribed to men only.

The childbirth songs, having lost their primary function long ago, have survived only on the stage, being performed at the concerts and with great changes at that. Further research in the dialectal variants of *Mze Shina* will throw light on many interesting issues of the ancient musical language of and its evolution in Georgia.

Translated by *Liana Gabechava*

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**მაგალითი 1.** „მზე შინა და მზე გარეთა.“ გურული. *Ä. Äðæ:ðâ, Í ððí ðí ðý ï ðñ ý Çäí ðäí í é Äðçðð (Èì ðððððð). Í ðððñðð ðç II ð «Öðäí ä Í ðçñ èðñüí í - Ýðí í ððððð-ðññí é Èí í ðññðð». Í í ðñâà, 1908, დანართი, 5.*

**Example 1.** “Mze Shina da Mze Gareta.” Gurian. D. Arakchiev [Araqishvili], Folk Songs of Western Georgia (Imereti). Reprints from vol. II of the “Works of Musical-Ethnographic Commission”. Moscow, 1908, Appendix, #5.

*Andantino*

голосъ

чокури

მზე ში - ნა და მზე გა - რე - თა მზე შინ შე - მო - დი - ო.

mze shu - na da mze ga - re - ta mze shun she - mo - di - o.

3

მზე ში - ნა და მზე გა - რე - თა მზე შინ შე - მო - დი - ო.

mze shu - na da mze ga - re - ta mze shun she - mo - di - o.

მზე შინა და მზე გარეთა.

mze shina da mze gareta.

**მაგალითი 2.** „მზე შინაო, მზე შინაო!“ მეგრული. იქვე, დანართი, 1.

**Example 2.** “Mze Shinao, Mze Shinao!” Megrelian. D. Arakchiev [Araqishvili], Folk Songs of Western Georgia (Imereti). Reprints from vol. II of the “Works of Musical-Ethnographic Commission”. Moscow, 1908, Appendix, #1.

*Andante*

голосъ

чокури

მზე ში - ნა - ო, მზე ში - ნა - ო, მზე შინ შე - მო - დი - ო!

mze shu - na - o, mze shu - na - o, mze shun she - mo - di - o!

მზე ში - ნა - ო, მზე ში - ნა - ო, მზე შინ შე - მო - დი - ო!

mze shu - na - o, mze shu - na - o, mze shun she - mo - di - o!

*არიანო*

მზე ში - ნა - ო, მზე ში - ნა - ო, მზე შინ შე - მო - დი - ო!

mze shu - na - o, mze shu - na - o, mze shun she - mo - di - o!

**მაგალითი 3.** „მზე შინა და მზე გარეთა“ (ნანა). მესხური. ვ. მაღრაძე, ქართული (მესხური) ხალხური სიმღერები. თბილისი: ხელოვნება, 1987, გვ. 174.

**Example 3.** “Mze Shina da Mze Gareta” (Nana). Meskhetian. V. Maghradze, Georgian (Meskhetian) Folk Songs. Tbilisi: Khelovneba, 1987, p. 174.

$\text{♩} = 60$

მზე ში - ნა და მზე გა - რე - თა, მზე შინ შე - მო - დი - ი.  
mze shi - na da mze ga - re - ta, mze shin she - mo - di - i.

მზე ში - ნა და მზე გა - რე - თა, მზე შინ შე - მო - დი - ი.  
mze shi - na da mze ga - re - ta, mze shin she - mo - di - i.

**მაგალითი 4.** „მზე შინა“. ქართლური. ე. გარაყანიძე, ქართლური საწესო სიმღერების ერთი ჯგუფის საკითხისათვის (სადიპლომო ნაშრომი). თბილისი, 1981, დანართი, 12.

**Example 4.** “Mze Shina”. Kartlian. E. Garaqanidze, On the Issue of One Group of Kartlian Devotional-Ritual Songs. BM thesis. Tbilisi, 1981, Appendix, #12.

მზე ში - ნა და მზე გა - რე - თა, მზე შინ შე - მო - დი - ი.  
mze shi - na da mze ga - re - ta, mze shin she - mo - di - i.

ზო - ჟის მა მა შინ არ ა - რი, მზე შინ შე - მო - დი - ი.  
zo - zhis ma - ma shin ar a - ri, mze shin she - mo - di - i.

**მაგალითი 5.** „ლაზარე“ („მზე შინა და მზე გარეთა“). ქართლური. ჩამწერი გ. სვანიძე. საქართველოს ფოლკლორის სახელმწიფო ცენტრის არქივი.

**Example 5.** “Lazare” (“Mze Shina da Mze Gareta”). Kartlian. Notated by G. Svanidze. Archive of Folklore State Centre of Georgia.

ლა - ზა - რე მოდ - გა კარ - სა - რი - ა - ლე - და თვალ - სა - რი.  
la - za - re mod - ga kar - sa - ri - a - le - da tval - sa - ri.

ზე - ცას სა - ში გა - მოს ტა - ცა და - ვე - მხიო ი - ში კვალ - სა - რი.  
ze - zats sa - shi ga - mos ta - ca da - ve - mxio i - shi kval - sa - ri.



**მაგალითი 6.** „მზეშინაო“. იმერული. ჩაწერა ო. ჩიჯავაძემ მაიაკოვსკის რაიონში 1961 წელს; გაშიფრა ნ. ზუმბაძემ. თბილისის სახელმწიფო კონსერვატორიის ქართული ხალხური მუსიკალური შემოქმედების ლაბორატორიის (ამის შემდეგ — ქმშლ) არქივი.

**Example 6.** “Mzeshinao”. Imeretian. Recorded by O. Chijavadze (Maiakovski region, 1961); transcribed by N. Zumbadze. Archive of the Georgian Folk Music Laboratory of Tbilisi State Conservatoire.

მზე შა - ნა - ო, მზე ში - ნა - ო, მზე, მის მე - ნო - დო - ო,  
mze shu - na - o, mze shi - na - o, mze, mis me - no - do - o,

9  
ვა - ჯა - მა - მა პატ არ - ა - რა მზე, მის მე - ნო - დო - ო,  
va - ja - ma - ma pat ar - a - ra mze, mis me - no - do - o,

**მაგალითი 7.** „ნაღ-ნაღ“. აჭარული. ალ. მსხალაძე, აჭარის საოჯახო-სანეს-სჩვეულებო პოეზია (საკანდიდატო დისერტაცია). ბათუმი, 1968, გვ.35

**Example 7.** “Nai-Nai”. Acharian. Al. Mskhaladze, Devotional-Ritual Family Poetry of Achara (Thesis for the PhD degree). Batumi, 1968, p. 35.

ნა - ნა ნა - ნა - ნა და ნა - ნა და ნა - ნა და ნა - ნა და ნა - ნა ნა - ნა ნა - ნა და ნა - ნა და ნა - ნა და ნა - ნა და ნა - ნა  
nai - nai nai - nai - na da nai - nai da nai - nai da nai - nai da nai - nai da nai - nai nai - nai na da nai - nai da nai - nai da nai - nai da nai - nai





10

Two systems of musical notation. The first system has a treble and bass staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The melody is in the treble staff, and the bass staff provides a simple accompaniment. The lyrics 'Do - mi - ne, ex - au - di' are written below the treble staff. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment with the lyrics 'pro - pria vo - ca - ce' written below the treble staff. The key signature changes to two sharps (F# and C#) in the second system.

Do - mi - ne, ex - au - di  
pro - pria vo - ca - ce

13

13

ზო - ბი - ბი ბი - ბი  
zo - shi - shi ma - ma

ლა - ლევანთი ხო - რდა,  
la - levanthi kho - rda,

ზო - ბი ბი - ბი - ბი - ბი  
zo - shi shi - i - a - ma

დი