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**ON ONE UNKNOWN EXAMPLE OF *ETHNOMUSIC THEATRE***  
**(*ZEDASHE LULLABY*)**

Folk music occupies a significant place in the spiritual culture of every nation. Musical art, which has survived to this day by means of oral tradition, is closely linked with the collective creative work of generations, national traditions, aesthetic ideals and people's psychology. The formation of its aspects is inseparable from the nation's innate nature and the processes going on in its culture.

One can hardly find another nation in whose culture traditional music could occupy such an important place as in Georgia: this phenomenon has been emphasized by both Georgian and foreign scholars. For instance L. F. Leman-Hauf, a researcher into the ethnogenesis of Georgians, singles out their love for singing both in war and in peacetime, as a common feature characterizing both Kardukhs, an ancient Kartvelian tribe, and modern Georgians (Chitaia, 2000: 33).

"A Georgian is born with singing and is interred with singing, too", said Dimitri Araqishvili, an outstanding composer and collector of folk music. And, indeed, beginning from his/her birth until death and afterwards, on the commemorative anniversary a year after his/her death, every moment of a Georgian's life was accompanied by singing: the birth of a child, putting him/her to sleep, healing a sick child, a wedding ceremony. There was a special song for almost all kinds of work; the deceased was accompanied on the last journey by a funeral dirge; this was supplemented by various devotional songs to be performed at pagan or Christian feasts. Thus every moment of a Georgian's life was accompanied by a suitable song, which was not to be performed independently, as a separate song. It was an integral part of a concrete ethnographic environment, a corresponding event of everyday life and should be performed only on such occasions. Therefore, people brought up in the authentic environment never thought the songs, which were part of some ritual, to be just songs; they were one of the integral components of this or that custom or tradition<sup>1</sup>. As an example I would like to refer to some incidents from the expeditions of an outstanding ethnomusicologist Edisher Garaqanidze:

"In the village of Nabakevi, when asked whether they sang songs, the villagers answered:

"We do not sing any songs".

"What? Didn't you ever sing in the past either?"

"No".

"Haven't you sung "Alilo"?"

"Alilo? It isn't a song".

And after that they began to sing "Alilo".

Here is another example: "In fieldwork of 1979, in the village of Zemo Khviti, when we asked Ilusha Esiashvili, a 77-year-old man, to sing *Chona*, he was amazed, "Easter has passed and you want me to sing *Chona* now?" (Garaqanidze, 2007: 21, 25).

I use the term *ethnomusical theatre* to denote the customs and traditions present in Georgian ethnographic everyday life in such a syncretistic form. I used it first in the monograph "Georgian Ethnomusical

Theatre and Its Sources” (Garaqanidze, 2008). In the monograph the meaning of the term is discussed at some length, therefore I will not dwell on it here; I will only touch upon its two components briefly:

The first component of the term *Ethnomusical Theatre* stems from the essence of the anthropological subject – **ethnomusicology**. Ethnomusicology is a sphere of knowledge which took shape as a result of the synthesis of folkloristic studies and ethnology. It views any sample of musical folklore not as an artistic phenomenon, but, first of all, as an integral part of the people’s everyday life, their economic activities, customs, beliefs and images (Shilakadze, 1991). Therefore, it is the afore-mentioned term **ethnomusic**, based on ethnomusicology, that I use in order to more clearly bring forward the essence of the indivisibility of musical and everyday life phenomena in ethnographic reality.

Now about the other component of the term – **theatre**: various moments of Georgian everyday life with its different rituals, customs and traditions do really create an impressive theatrical show. Apart from that it includes the essential, relevant elements of the structure of the **theatre**. Here, too, the performers are given **the play** beforehand, it determines the sequence of the verbal-vocal performance and other activities. When presenting the play the **performers** retain their individual freedom. Here, too, there is the **audience**, which according to the purpose of the play, can be either passive or can get actively engaged in the performance.

Over the centuries these multifarious performances of a concrete content and function took shape and were handed down from generation to generation through oral tradition; their **scenarios** strictly defined the time and place of their performance and the suitable musical accompaniment as well. It was a live process of artistic expression with perfect expressive forms: the weepers who came to the funeral service, singers specially invited to wedding parties or to accompany the helpers when working on a neighbour’s land, performers of devotional rituals and others – all of them were actors and actresses to some extent<sup>2</sup>. Finally, we have to deal with a certain kind of folk musical theatre, which I have given the name the **ethnomusical theatre**. I will present some examples to suggest its boundaries and structure. Let us take *Batonebis Msakhureba* (*Serving the masters*) – the ritual was performed if a child caught an infectious disease: when there is a case of infectious disease in a family a mythological plot is revived, according to which the family is visited by supernatural creatures – *Batonebi* (Masters, Lords). These mythological forces are able to kill the patient and “take him/her with them”. *Serving the masters* is the ritual to appease them. The room of the patient is adorned with pieces of bright-coloured fabric, an aromatic infusion of sweet-smelling flowers is sprinkled about the room, a candle and a lamp are lit. Everything and everybody must be quiet in the house. At the patient’s bedside a lullaby is sung in a low, pleasant voice, and a round dance is also performed. If complications set in, the child’s parents, grandfather and aunt (the father’s sister) take off their clothes and start dancing round the bed naked; according to folk beliefs and images the diseased person is naked, hence their nakedness means that they are ready to die instead of the sick child (Garaqanidze, 2008: 171). Thus, in this example there are performers who act according to a fixed **scenario** and perform the roles they are assigned. The patient’s room is *the stage*; the pieces of bright-coloured fabric, the candle, the lamp, a bowl full of aromatic water and a tray with delicacies meant for the masters function as a sort of props.

The process of collective labour, though different in its form, is also an interesting example from the point of view of the **ethnomusical theatre**. Here the stage is the corn-field where singing has the same function as working instruments. Therefore, when inviting helpers it was important that among them there should be good performers of labour songs (Garaqanidze, 2007: 20).

Rhymed exclamations and singing, tempo, changeable dynamics and a cheerful disposition conditioned the course of the working process (Garaqanidze, 2008: 38-45) (video ex. 1).

At the present stage of the development of the field of ethnomusicology, when we have left collecting material (over the decades plenty of fieldwork material has been collected) far behind, it is difficult to imagine that any so-far unknown samples of **ethnomusical theatre** could still be found and described within this sphere of ethnography. Apart from all that has been said above it should also be taken into account that in modern everyday life traditional musical folklore has survived only fragmentarily and it is moving farther and farther from the original source and is heading for oblivion. Under these conditions I had an opportunity to record a so-far unknown sample of *ethnomusical theatre*, namely a ritual to be performed at *kvevri* (clay vessel for wine) and accompanied by singing; according to its function and structure I called it *Zedashis Iavnana* (Sacral wine lullaby). Before touching upon this sample directly I should like to specially dwell upon the phenomenon of the *Zedashe* culture, which means elevating wine to the sacral level and turning it into a myth. In the 2012 expedition to Kiziqi it was this issue that I concentrated my attention on<sup>3</sup>.

*Zedashe* (sacral wine) represents the best available wine to be offered to God. Due to various miraculous properties in the everyday life of people it was even the object of worship. The culture of *Zedashe* wine has survived most vividly in the ethnography of Kiziqi. Here each family kept the *Zedashe* wine pot apart from the others. Besides, every family was to donate wine for the *Zedashe* of his family clan or the section of the village they lived in, in a much bigger vessel for that wine (Topuria, 1963: 159; Sulkhan-Saba, 1991: 278; Kakashvili, 1995: 12).

*Zedashe* wine was also donated to the church and was used during liturgy. Such wine had to be red. This echoes Christian beliefs: according to the Orthodox Christian teaching during liturgy the wine turns into Christ's blood, through which the believers share the greatest divine sacrament. Alongside with the above Christian function in people's everyday life *Zedashe* has a different semantic content, which connects it with the archaic consciousness: in Kiziqi *Zedashe* is considered to be the guardian angel of the family and the family clan. People believe it can heal the sick, make the crops abundant, cause fertility, withstand evil and sometimes inflict punishment for doing evil.

*Zedashe* is worshipped by the people and hence the rules about how it should be treated are also sanctified. If the family moves house and another family settles in, the newcomers never touch the *Zedashe* wine vessel. The old owners come back from time to time and pay respects to the guardian angel of the family. Even when the whole village had to leave their old homes they never took the *Zedashe* wine vessels away, but continued to take care of them. The place where the wine vessels used to be buried in the ground was considered to be sacred. When the wine vessel was lost, the place where it used to be is worshiped. About two decades ago you could very often see empty wine vessels left in the church near its walls. In the past the vessels were used to contain *Zedashe*, but now nobody would touch them for people stood in awe of them. The fact that *Zedashe*, as a sanctuary, was held in higher regard than the church is an expression of the pagan attitude: in Bodbiskhevi, a certain Giga removed the dome of the church. His wife Olgha was taken ill. A fortune-teller told them that it was God's punishment; no sanctuary could help her and he advised them to beg *Zedashe* for help (Kakashvili, 1995: 9).

During the field work I recorded an impressive ritual associated with the *Zedashe* cult. By its structure it is a sample of **ethnomusical theatre**: in order to express their veneration for *Zedashe*, the

family fixed a day, which, as a rule, coincided with some feast. Food and candles were prepared for that day. All the members of the family would sit at the table near the wine vessel. The wine vessel could be in a special place: in the wine cellar (*Marani*), in the yard, or under a tree, in a wattle and daub hut or in a special space near the sanctuary. The oldest woman in the family would go up to the sacred wine vessel, sit down nearby, light a candle and offer a prayer for the welfare of her family members to the *Zedashe* angel. First of all she said, “Here is to our *Zedashe!*” She would stick the lit candle to the lid of the wine vessel and start singing in order “to put the angel to sleep”. The song, as stated above, was called *Zedashis Iavnana* (*Zedashe lullaby*). Other members of the family would also join in singing (video ex. 2).

I could not trace another variant of the *Zedashe lullaby* anywhere else, though we can easily consider the *Zedashe lullaby* a variant of *Batonebis Iavnana*, both from the musical viewpoint and mythoreligious belief, which is revealed in the texts of the *Batonebi* songs and in the outer or inner character of the *Zedashe* cult. Namely, part of the mythological text of the *Batonebis Iavnana*, which mentions the wine cellar of rubies, wine and the poplar growing within, in my opinion, must be associated directly with the *Zedashe lullaby*:

“In the wine cellar of rubies there is wine and the rubies sparkle,

A poplar grows within, very young, with its branches spreading wide...”

The mythological “wine cellar of rubies”, mentioned in this excerpt of the *Batonebis Iavnana* is directly associated with the *Zedashe* cult which has completely transformed into a myth where the most significant place is occupied by the wine cellar (resp. wine vessel). As for the “poplar growing within” it is a well-known mythological image, quite popular with different peoples, its semantics being associated with the renewal of the year, abundance and giving life. The tree of life, mentioned in *Batonebis Iavnana* must have occupied quite an important place in the *Zedashe* cult too, namely in the *Zedashe* ritual of cutting a branch of a grape vine and putting it into the wine vessel when the harvest was bad, which must be considered one of the manifestations of this mythological tree<sup>4</sup> (Topuria, 163: 141). Another manifestation of this mythological plot must be a kind of an open-air *marani* (wine cellar) where the wine vessels were buried under a tree which was popular in Georgia. **Planting** the *Zedashe* wine vessel under a tree was a widespread practice. Besides being practical (which meant burying the wine vessels in the shade of the tree) such a wine cellar must have had some mythological meaning as well, for the tree looked as if it were growing in the wine cellar. The term **planting** the wine vessel (Kakashvili, 1995: 8) corroborates all that has been said above, for only a plant (resp. a tree) can be planted.

It should be noted that the woman from whom we heard the afore-mentioned lullaby **did not consider this sample to be a song** and therefore she refused to perform it – “It is not a song just for singing..” Lamara Kokuashvili tells us that her aunt (father’s sister) was a good connoisseur of *Zedashis Iavnana* and the ritual associated with it, and from her Lamara learned this song<sup>5</sup>. In the example given the soloist was to enumerate all the sanctuaries in a recitative manner (“Archangel, all the saints, our Trinity, St George” and others) and offer prayers to them. As she says to perform the ritual in this form demands that “the seer women should have a special talent”. Here they mean the female-votaries of the cult, or the “sanctuary slaves” who have vowed to serve the sanctuary and who can preach and make prophesies in the name of the sanctuary when performing the ritual.

All the afore-mentioned **makes this song reminiscent** of the *Ghvtis karis* (God’s Court) *Ia-*

*vnana*, the same as *Savedrebeli Iavnana* (*entreating lullaby*), performed in a similar manner by the persons mentioned above. Women performed *Ghvtis karis Iavnana* walking around the church at church feasts. It is a highly impressive performance during which the participants holding lit candles walk around the church with reverence, crossing themselves (video ex. 3). The resemblance between the *Zedashe*, *Batonebis* (*Sakhadis*) and *Ghvtis Karis Iavnana* examples is manifested very well in both the identity of the **responsorium trace** (Garaqanidze, 1997: 27) and **the refrains and glossolias**, given at the end of the musical phrases.

Since in this case the *Zedashe lullaby* was performed by one woman, quite understandably the song was homophonic and therefore it was recorded in the same manner. Though, as the respondent informed us, during the ritual the whole family performed the song. That is why it may be presumed that if not performed in a three-part form, it must have been sung with a bass-part accompaniment. Here I mean the principle of **ethnohearing** which must have been activated in similar circumstances (Zemtsovsky, 2004: 18-19). The above factor in the case of the Georgian folk songs is illustrated very well in Edisher Garaqanidze's monograph on the performance manner of Georgian folk songs, "One man's singing will be homophonic, if another man joins in, he, as a rule, will sing the bass part, the third one will sing the middle part, all the others, joining in later, will sing the bass". In two-part singing one man is a leader, the others sing the bass-part (Garaqanidze, 2007: 48-50). The abundant use of entreating words and prayers in the *Zedashe lullaby* brings this song closer to the *Ghvtis karis Iavnana*, performed by two soloists singing alternately against the background of the bass drone. When performing in this manner, when the verbal or musical text of the "cult votary" is completely improvised and depends mainly on the performer's mood, **unison performance is excluded**. From the point of view of three-part singing, I can present an example of a *Savedrebeli Iavnana* (*entreating lullaby*), recorded in Kakheti in 2004; it is performed by a soloist against a background of the bass part. In the refrain, which, unlike the main part of the soloist, almost always sounds the same during each repetition, when a high-pitched voice joins in, making the song polyphonic.

Thus, *Zedashe lullaby* is a sample of the **Ethnomusical theatre**, which on the one hand is a part of an independent tradition associated with the cult of wine, on the other hand many features make it resemble *Sakhadi* and *entreating lullabies*.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> In specialist literature the songs of this kind, which are performed in prescribed situations and are inseparable from this or that custom or devotional ritual, are called "tandebuli" (accompanying) songs, compared with "ts-minda" (pure) songs, which can be performed in any time or place (Garaqanidze, 2007: 19-23).

<sup>2</sup> Quite understandably the above-mentioned customs and traditions were not perceived as a show or a theatre by the tradition bearer.

<sup>3</sup> I wish to express my gratitude to Dean David Grigalashvili, who lives in Tsnori and the Javashvili, the Begashvili and the Kokhtashvili families for their assistance in carrying out the field part of the above research. Thanks are also owed to Tinatin Shervashidze, the Head of Edisher Garaqanidze Children's Studio "Amer-Imeri" in

Tsnori and to the Peikrishvili family in Qvareli.

<sup>4</sup> It is reminiscent of the tradition widespread among European peoples (Italy, Germany, Czechia) where they would cut off a tree branch, “killed the spirit of the tree,” so that it should resurrect in a better form (Frazer: 300-306).

<sup>5</sup> Tinatin Donjasvhili, 64, confirmed that it was a woman who performed and preserved the knowledge of the ritual (Dedoplistsqaro).

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### Video Examples

Video example 1. Shroma (Imeretian naduri)- from Edisher Garaqanidze's expedition, village of Qumuri, Vani district; television program prod. D. Gugunava (with Edisher Garaqanidze's comments), 1988 (Garaqanidze, 2008: video #3, from 05:11).

Video example 2. *Zedashis iavnana*.

Video example 3. *Ghytis karze satkmeli iavnana*.

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