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Folk Traditions in Konstantine Gamsakhurdia's Creative Work (Basing on the novel "Stealing the Moon")

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ABSTRACT

The publication presents scientific analysis of the phenomenon of folk traditions in the creative work of Konstantine Gamsakhurdia -classic of the 20th century Georgian literature (basing on the novel "Stealing the Moon"). Gamsakhurdia's creative work is distinguished in the 20th century Georgian classic literature for high artistic values. The writer's works reflect the issues unlimited in time and space. Gamsakhurdia presents old Georgian folk traditions from deep philosophical standpoint: the lunar cult and St. George, "Dali's" mythological personage, mystery of horse cult and many others. Konstantine Gamsakhurdia's creations have always been read with big interest. A number of fundamental works in Georgian, Russian, English, German and other languages has been dedicated to his creation.

Keywords: Georgia, Samegrelo, Abkhazia, Svaneti, religion, folk traditions, cult, mystery, Dali, "Mother of Water".

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INTRODUCTION

The creative work of Konstantine Gamsakhurdia -one of the greatest 20th century Georgian classics originated and developed on the sure ground of national folklore and culture, created by Georgian people throughout centuries. Like his brilliant ancestors-the 19th century classics, he greatly contributed to the renewal and consolidation of the chain-torn here and there by the vicissitudes. Before discussing the suggested problem, here is the great writer's short bio; Konstantine Gamsakhurdia was born in 1893 (according to some sources in 1891) in the village of Dzveli Abasha. He received elementary education at Senaki noblemen's school, which he finished in 1904. He completed Kutaisi Noblemen's Gymnasium in 1911. The future writer and public figure continued his studies at St. Petersburg, Königsberg, Leipzig, Munich and Berlin Universities. In 1919 he graduated from Berlin University where he was conferred the degree 'Doctor of Philosophy'. He took active part in the work of Europe-based "Committee for Liberation of Georgia". According to Soso Sigua-renowned Georgian critic it was "Committee for Liberation of Georgia" that greatly influenced Gamsakhurdia's thinking and formation of his viewpoint (Sigua, 2008-2009:70). From 1918 Gamsakhurdia was appointed attaché at the Embassy of the Republic of Georgia in Berlin. After the annexation of Georgia by the Red Army in 1921 Gamsakhurdia wrote a letter of protest to Vladimir Lenin entitled "Open Letter to Ulyanov-Lenin". His "Address to the Georgian Nation on 26 May" was published the same year. These two documents are the examples of his adherence to principles and heroism. In 1923 Gamsakhurdia returned to Georgia from Europe, he was well-aware what price he would have to pay for this, but he rejected emigrant's life and came back to his homeland. This was like jumping into the whirlpool and the result followed; in 1924 he was arrested by *Cheka* for the participation in anti-Bolshevik revolt. After imprisonment, he actively supported the movement against justification and extermination of national spirit, which became the reason for his arrest. In 1927 Gamsakhurdia was set free by the solicitation of the Georgia's Executive Committee – for the absence of documents confirming his being a spy. In 1944 he was elected a member of the Georgian Academy of Sciences. In 1965 he was awarded Rustaveli Prize for the tetralogy "David the Builder". Gamsakhurdia's works are translated into many languages. He passed away in Tbilisi in 1975 and was interred in the yard of his house (*Kolkhuri Koshki*). Two aspects alternated in the writer's imagination – agonizing visible reality ("Dionysus' Smile", "Stealing the Moon", "The Flowering of the Vine"), on the other hand the writer inspires eternally

accompanying dream ("The Right Hand of the Grand Master", "David the Builder")(Sigua, 2008-2009: 71).

Goal of the Publication

Konstantine Gamsakhurdia's creative work is so deep, complicated and rich in eternal values, that it is impossible to discuss it in one publication. Thus we focus only on the folk sources of Gamsakhurdia's creation.

Ancient and rich Georgian mythical notions, with their multiformity and range, have been the inspiration for a number of non-Georgian creators. From this standpoint Gamsakhurdia's creative work boasts consanguinity with Georgian folk art. In Gamsakhurdia's works "Beauty", "Khogais Mindia", "Taboo", "The Right Hand of the Grand Master", "David the Builder", "The Flowering of the Vine", "Stealing the Moon", and others presented is a number of mythological personages: *Rokapi*, *Ocho Kochi*, *Dali*, *Mesepeni*, *Tqashmapa*, Dionysus, *Ochopintre*, etc.

Konstantine Gamsakhurdia continues the trend of Georgian classic write to reflect oral folklore in creative work and shares the values of great Georgian creators, such as Shota Rustaveli, Davit Guramishvili, Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani, Ilia Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli, Vazha Pshavela and others (Tsanava A, Tsulaia J. 1998: 6).

The writer revived pagan Georgian beliefs and notions: animism, magic, totemism, respect to ancestors' cult, ceremonial rituals, etc.

With regard to the afore-mentioned creative aspects, our study aims to:

1. Analyze the role of the phenomenon of oral folklore and its place in Gamsakhurdia's novel "Stealing the Moon";
2. Carry out the scientific analysis of the folk legends presented by the writer and determine their place in Georgia's spiritual life;
3. Present the rich gallery of Georgian oral folklore from Konstantine Gamsakhurdia's creative work to foreign reader.

General Characteristics of the Novel

Before moving to the topic of the study, we would like to mention, that the novel "Stealing the Moon" is interesting from many standpoints. It is the artistic chronicle of Tragic Communist epoch of the 1920s-1930s. The idea of the novel was not suitably presented to Georgian reader for a long time. When discussing Georgian reality of the 1920s-1930s pupils and students were limited within Leo Kiacheli's "Gvadi Bigva", Konstantine Lortkipanidze's "The Dawn of Kolkheti", the novels narrated about the role of 'socialist village' as of a transformer in the social and cultural life of Georgian people. The reality was drastically different, which was reflected by Gamsakhurdia with high culture and artistic taste. As mentioned above, from this standpoint the keynote of the novel was hushed up for years by Soviet critical thinking. Only the critics of the 1960s-1970s estimated the novel as a remarkable fruit of creative activity of the 1920s-1930s. From that period on the approach to the novel changed. Essays and researches were written by renowned critics, plays were staged, a two-part film was shot and an opera was composed. In the novel Gamsakhurdia revealed good knowledge of the hardest occurrences of life and his skill of merging this with the art of narrating. Here particularly revealed is the energization process of the hero, directed towards constant quest; the quest is based on certain idea, steady belief, cognition of the regularities of life and spiritual integrity. Gamsakhurdia started writing the novel in 1926, but had to stop for certain period of time due to hard political ideology in the country, and continued writing in 1932. Between those years he was busy searching for historical-ethnographic material, and tried to elaborate literary ways, that would protect him from the attacks of ideological criticism, and help the readers obtain clear picture of Georgia's reality of the 1920s-1930s. According to Guram Gverdtseteli, a Georgian critic: "Konstantine Gamsakhurdia's novel will always be one of the best expressions of Georgian people's first, often painful, steps towards life, rise" (Gverdtseteli 1980: 47). Georgian scientific literature of recent time justly mentions that the novel stands far aside from the style of socialist novel with its content and application of artistic means (Todua V, 2005: 46).

Georgian encyclopedia, published in 1997, writes: The novel ("Stealing the Moon") puts a problem of the incompatibility of individual culture with new collective will".

From the very first page the author starts symbolization of the tragic epoch. Ancient Apsuan song "Erge Ashva", sung to be heard by those in need, was also the catastrophe signal of the entire epoch, not only for one generation, but of years" (Sigua, 1990:47). Lyrical and pathetic intonation of the novel was nourished by old Georgian speech, Nietzsche's style and sweet Megrelian songs. The novel is full of specific and native real-life facts; the writer narrates old myths, legends and rituals. And so, we will develop our research in this direction.

Georgian Oral Folklore and “Stealing the Moon”

Stealing the Moon” is particularly rich in the descriptions of old Georgian customs and rituals. The writer's creative interpretation of folk-ethnographic sources is masterly used for depicting the characters' individual images.

“Stealing the Moon” is a brilliant example of how a true writer should be related to his people and folk traditions.

Two epochs – traditional and new are opposed in the novel. In this opposition the writer pays big attention to the individual attitude of the representatives of different social strata to traditions. Tarash Emkhvari- former nobleman, educated in Europe, grandpa Taniel –the deacon, Lukaia Labakhua –the magi of strange mysteries, Lomkats Esvanjia- 120-year-old man, Kora Makhvshi-head of large patriarchal family, Kats Zvambaia- a wealthy man and others are imbued with traditional belief. Strong characters of these personages are opposed to the forced new mode of life and its defender young people. Particular mention should be made of Tarash Emkhvari, whose has boundless love of Georgian people and old Georgia. He looks back to remote past, pure and ancient roots. Delightedly talks about Greek culture, his pagan spirit admires Plato and rejects Christianity. Studying the fetishism of Colchis he strengthens his ideological sources, based on animistic, mythological and pagan beliefs. He admires patriarchate, savage nature of Svaneti, its customs, legends, the clan of Kora Makhvshi.....

The activity field of the personages of “Stealing the Moon” is entire Georgia, but they closer connected with West Georgia, more precisely with the life of Samegrelo, Abkhazia and Svaneti. One of the leading characters of the novel is the Enguri- the largest river in West Georgia, which bears a symbolic meaning (A.Tsanava, J. Tsulaia, 1998: 15).

According to Ksenya Sikharulidze – a renowned researcher of Georgian folklore, Gamsakhurdia's no other work includes as many songs and verses of various genres as “Stealing the Moon”. He we encounter almost all types of poetry–work songs, love and domestic lyrics, ritual poetry. Selection and application of folk material in the novel indicates to realistic art (Sikharulidze, 1958:22).

The Moon Cult in “Stealing the Moon”

As mentioned above, when working on the novel the writer spent several years collecting pearls of Georgian oral folklore in different parts of the country (Gamsakhurdia, 1965:395).

The author's special emphasis on lunar cult, obvious from the title, is not accidental. In our opinion it is related to long ancient tradition of worshipping the lunar deity in Georgian pagan pantheon. In ancient Georgia the Moon occupied particularly honorary place. According to Ivane Javakhishvili – great Georgian scholar, the traces of lunar worship were found wherever the Georgians lived. Worship of the moon, as of lunar deity should be considered as ancient belief of all Georgian tribes (Javakhishvili, 1960: 59). “Lamproba” festival was dedicated to lunar worship in ancient Georgia, when performing this ritual people would chant glorifying hymns to lunar deity holding burning branches of birch tree (Javakhishvili, 1960: 60-61). In Samegrelo the terms denoting lunar cult have survived to this day; *tuta* –means moon in Megrelian, *tutashkha*-Moon day. The 17th century Italian missionary Arcangelo Lambertini writes that in Samegrelo the Moon was particularly esteemed and worshipped in olden times. As he writes when the new Moon appeared people hurried outrunning each other to see it, some would stretch a hand towards the Moon, someone would unsheath a sabre or a knife. Someone would take off the hat and bow to the Moon as a token of respect. On *Tutashkha* or Monday the Megrelians would not travel or drink water from the river or spring (Lambertini Arcangelo 1991: 132). According to Sergi Makalatia- renowned Georgian ethnographer the Megrelians completed the Lent on Monday evening of the new Moon. As soon as the new Moon appeared the elder of a village would utter the blessing: “Oh, Moon, I swear your name, protect my household from all harm... Oh you happy Monday, may my son have large posterity” (Makalatia S. Selected Works, vol.1. Tbilisi 1958: 82). It is hard to explain these folk traditions of Samegrelo, but it is a fact, that throughout centuries these rituals occupied significant place in the spiritual life of West Georgia. Basing on these data, the writer introduces an episode, where the phenomenon of folk tradition is presented: “When New Moon rose, Kats Zvambaia would first show Arzaqan and Tarash to the Moon, then unsheath his saber, amazed children would stare at the saber beaming in the moonlight”. For some reason both the wet-nurse and tutor were afraid of the Moon, this is why on Moon day, the wet-nurse never went anywhere, or washed her hair, no one drank water from the Okumis Tsqali, because the Moon was quarrelsome, and would make whales, snakes, monsters and lizards poison the waters” (Gamsakhurdia 1958:82). Amazing is the relation of the Moon and Enguri river, as described by the writer: “The Moon as white as Megrelian *Sulguni* cheese had come out from behind the dark clouds, the Enguri was bellowing like a buck... The Moon, cold and sedate, indifferently looked down at stormy Enguri” (Gamsakhurdia, 1990: 23). According to Strabo -Greek traveler and geographer, the temple of the

Moon was located near Iberia; here it was offered human sacrifice; he writes that sacrificed were those "who wandered alone in the forests, priests would catch such person, put chain on his neck, and fed him during a year as an offering. After chrismation he was sacrificed together with other offerings. Human sacrifice was performed by delivering a blow; the one to perform this action would step out of the crowd and deliver the blow to the offering from the side directly into the heart. The sacrifice would fall down on the ground, while the priests would be engaged in fortune-telling, declaring their considerations loudly in public. When the dead body was brought to a certain place, everyone would step on the corpse to purify themselves (Javakhishvili, 1960:50).

Great Georgian scholar I. Javakhishvili presumes that the temple of the Moon, mentioned by Strabo should have been somewhere in Kakheti. This temple was particularly famous in Iberia and Albania, to which testifies the fact that there was only one temple of the Moon in these two countries (Javakhishvili, 1960:51). In Gamsakhurdia's novel the scene of Lukaia's sacrifice at Ilori St. George church, is the remainder of the Lunar cult. Preaching at St. George shrines is also related to the Lunar Cult. According to one data preserved in Georgian oral folklore every year on 23 April numerous people would gather at St. George church in the village of Suja near Senaki in Samegrelo. On the eve a virtuous elderly person with pure heart would be selected and left in the church overnight, he would spend all night praying and entreating. In the morning before the church service started he would be taken out of the church and brought to an elevated place and where he would predict the life in the following to all the people. Javakhishvili presumes, that this custom too was the remainder of the Lunar worship (Javakhishvili, 1960:56). Gamsakhurdia gives an excellent description of the preaching custom in his short story "Taboo", where he writes about the afore-mentioned festivity of preaching on 23 April.

Thus, the writer presents the Lunar cult from domestic standpoint. Main characters of the novel perform the ritual with esteem. Rites of St. George – interchangeable deity of the Moon occupies significant place in this trilogy. One of the most colorful personages of the novel is 120-year-old Lomkats Esvanjia. He is related to old life and pagan traditions with his heart and soul. He assiduously performs the rituals of St. George and *didmukha* (literally big oak tree). The novel writes: "During almost 100 years, Lomkats Esvanjia was locked at Ilori Church on the eve of St. George's Day. The next day he would preach and "announce" the saint's will to people. Esvanjia was a priest too, and incomparable forecaster" (Gamsakhurdia, 1959:682). Thus, Lukaia Labakhua, Lomkats Esvanjia, Kora Makhvshi-head of a large family, priest Zosimai and Tarash Emkhvari himself are closely related to traditional beliefs. This belief is connected with visible or invisible threads to the Lunar cult and cult rituals of its interchangeable deity - St. George.

St. George Cult in "Stealing the Moon".

The cult of St. George-interchangeable deity of the Moon stolen by the Enguri river was most widespread in Georgia. The 14th-15th century German traveler Hans Schlittenberg wrote, that the Georgians worshipped St. George too much. Vakhushti Bagrationi- great Georgian geographer of the 18th century mentioned: "In Georgia there is hardly any hill or High Mountain where St. George church is not erected" (Bagrationi Vakhushti, 1978:: 136). It is noteworthy, that almost all chief churches in Georgia were named after St. George. Ivane Javakhishvili mentions, that throughout the history St. George was most worshipped by the Georgians; as the scholar notes, there were more churches named after St. George, than after any other saint. According to the Georgians' belief there were as many St. George churches and St. Georges in Georgia as there were days in a year (Javakhishvili 1960: 48-49). Konstantine Gamsakhurdia masterly describes the legend connected with St. George's cult in the novel "Stealing the Moon". This is a well-known legend about bringing a bull to be sacrificed into the church yard on the eve of St. George's Day. Here is an episode from the novel: "Nan" Tarash asks his nurse what colour is St. George's horse?-"White, my beloved, it is a white horse". -"Nan" Why does Dadialock the gate of the Ilori church yard?" -"So that no one will enter the church yard before St. George comes and bring the bull to be sacrificed.... St. George will bring the bull.... Dadiawill come the following day, open the gate and sacrifice the bull to St. George of Ilori" (Gamsakhurdia 1959:81). In one episode of the novel, Gvanji Apakidze describes the power of Ilori St. George to Tarash as follows: "Ilori St. George was the most powerful in all Abkhazia and Sachqonio. Pilgrims still come here. Ilori St. George horrified the entire country. It owned all herds of Odishi and Abkhazia, formidable patron of this country.....". Every year on the eve of St. George Day-on 23 April a bull was brought from the farthest part of Georgia, so that no one would recognize the bull brought by Ilori St. George; the bull was washed in the sea, and sprinkled with sea sand, then the preaching started and everyone was made believe that the saint had brought the bull from the sea" (Gamsakhurdia 1959:203-204). The 17th century Italian missionary Arcangelo Lamberti writes this legend in his book "Description of Samegrelo". According to Lamberti "Dadia would attend the celebration

at Ilori accompanied by all his chief courtiers. They came to see how St. George would bring the bull. The prince would come, lock the gate with key and seal it. He would return early next morning together with his suit, and after making sure that the seal on the gate lock was untouched, he removed the seal and opened the gate. People in the church would see the bull and render their gratitude to St. George for sending such bull (Lamberti Arcangelo 1991:142-143). Sergi Makalatia- Georgian historian and ethnographer, also tells the legend about St. George's bull during the celebration at Ilori in Samegrelo. The legend is analogous to Lamberti's story (Makalatia, 1958:355). Noteworthy pagan remainders are included into the ritual of St. George celebration at Ilori; its comparison with renowned Mithraic mysteries and Tavroliias in old countries of the West reveals many interesting similarities, more precisely, St. George stole the bull, he locked the bull at Ilori church for a night; Mithra also caught the bull himself and locked it in his cave.

As for distributing bull meat among people and ritual performed with bull's blood at Iloroba celebration, we have complete analogy with Mithra's Roman tavroliias, where Mithra's followers were sprinkled with bull's blood and the meat was consumed at fraternity table (Makalatia, 1958:357).

The comparative study of Ilori celebration and other pagan beliefs and rituals, revealed its genetic connection with the belief of pagan deity "Mithra", whose cult was widespread as Mithraism in the countries of the East and West. As seen from the novel Konstantine Gamsakhurdia was a good connoisseur of the history of the afore-mentioned ritual and he also knew that St. George's enormous bow was preserved at Ilori monastery. "Who knows – Gvanji says to Tarash, how many millions of people the sextons have made to walk under this bow.... But this is all too late for me... now only death will make me walk under the bow" (Gamsakhurdia, 1959:204-205).

The writer adjusted the ethnographic material to personages' spiritual world.

Abkhazian Pagan Festival *Mizukhtu* in "Stealing the Moon"

The novel interestingly presents *Mizukhtu* -Abkhazian pagan ritual of first blossom and *amshap* - the festival of oak worship. The material used by the writer has ethnographic source. As Gamsakhurdia himself mentioned in 1926-1932 he was collecting historical-ethnographic materials. The writer describes *Mizukhtu* festival as follows: "Kats Zvambaia takes children to the mountains to celebrate first blossom of *Mizukhtu* – ruler of woods; those who stayed at home decorated houses and huts with flowers. On the eve the nurse and other elderly ladies walked to the forest shooting guns to collect quadrifolium flowers. Tarash and Arzaqan went with village boys to search for treasure. They returned to the village singing and shooting guns. The procession was headed by Lomkats Esvanjia, who wore the crown of oak leaves" (Gamsakhurdia 1959: 80).

Later Tarash Emkhvari- a personage of the novel recalls this story with love in Paris (Gamsakhurdia 1959:294).

"Mother of Water" and *Ochokochi*

In "Stealing the Moon" Gamsakhurdia interestingly presents the legend of "Mother of Water" and *Ochokochi* (the goat-man) widespread in Western Georgia. When characterizing the ferryman on the Enguri river, the author compares him to *Ochokochi*. He writes: "He indeed looked like *Ochokochi*, wandering in the Enguri groves", or: "Mother of Water lives in water and *Ochokochi* wanders in the groves"..... "The Sun had disappeared behind the clouds and dark trees looked like dark clothed *Ochokochi*." In order to make the story about "Mother of Water" and *Ochokochi* clearer for foreign reader, we would like to direct your attention to the viewpoints expressed in scientific literature. The above-mentioned legends have been the focus of a number of Georgian and foreign scholars, distinguished among them should be the renowned 19th century German scholar and ethno-anthropologist Adolf Bastian; he documented the legend about *Ochokochi* in the second half of the 19th century and later published it in Germany. According to the publication "The population of West Georgia believed that enormous evil spirits (*Kaji*) lived in rivers, they had bold heads and were like amphibians. They also lived in woods, as well as male demons- wood men, called *tqaskochi* by the Megrelians. They could be seen by hunters, but if someone dared to speak with them or make a mistake while speaking with them, would go mad. (Sulaberidze, 2009: 132).

Now about "Mother of Water", many scholars were interested in this issue, such as

I. Teptsov, T. Erickson and others. The scientists related the queen of forest to the remainders of the "Amazons" in the Caucasus. Adolf Bastian called the "Mother of Water" with long hair and beautiful face (*weiblichen Daemonen (female demons)*). They searched for fiancés, if they captured a man, they enchanted and subordinated them " *Ochokochi* "was in love with her, but " *Tqash mapa* "eluded him... The German scholar compared her to Lorelei- magic maiden, known in German mythology as magic, mellifluous, siren-like, golden-haired seducer, who sometimes flies up to the sky and sometimes looks

down at fishermen from the rocks of Rein (German Ballads, 1961 :42). Renowned Georgian scholar Akaki Gelovani compared German Lorelei with Georgian *Dali*, who is the queen of cliffs like Lorelei. Similarity between these legends is determined by universal belief and viewpoints- common for everyone on the initial stage of the development of society. This standpoint once again confirms that cosmogonic myths were both locally and typologically contain aspects common to all mankind(Gelovani, 1983: 50). Concerning the legend about *Ochokochi*, our attention is drawn to the meeting of the novel personage Jviba Pipia and *Ochokochi*. The author skillfully uses folk legend for the interesting presentation of personages. The novel reads: "Once Jviba went deer hunting and had to spend night on the mountain, he made fire under the tree and cooked himself food from deer meat. All of a sudden, two huge hairy creatures –a male and a female appeared in front of him. The female asked Jviba for a piece of meat, Jviba was well-aware that whoever spoke with these would go mad, so he ignored the request. The male *Ochokochi* told the female one: "Let's wait until Jviba falls asleep, then I will kill him and eat, and I will give you the deer meat", Jviba did not sleep all night long. When the creatures fell asleep he thrust the dagger into the ground and covered it with his cloak. He took the gun and climbed up the tree, when *Ochokochi* woke up he attacked the cloak, but instead of Jviba, the dagger pierced his hand. Poor *Ochokochi* started looking for Jviba, but Jviba shoot and badly wounded him, the creatures fled away, the male *Ochokochi* died, the others wept and grieved bitterly. Jviba died at very old age in his native village. The story of this brave hunter was documented by the seminary teacher Ivan Pertov in the 1880s and was published in 1885 in Russian(Tsanava A. Tsulaia J., 1990:24).

Oral Folklore "Mesepeni"

One of the chapters of Konstantine Gamsakhurdia's novel includes a brilliant example of Georgian oral folklore *Mesepeni*. This episode describes hard spiritual state of Tarash Emkhvari who is just back to Okumi from Svaneti. One of the personages of the novel Tsurunia asks another personage how long the rainy days will last. Kats Zvambaia's answers the question: "Rains? Rainy days will last long, *Mesepeni* are coming out of the sea and this will soon be followed by spring rains."

Tedo Sakhokia – famous Georgian ethnographer, notes that *Mesepeni* live both on land and in the sea. Once a year in autumn they leave sea and come to the land. This often coincides with rainy season. It rains non-stop, day and night, during two weeks. According to Georgian folklore *Mesepeni* were hunters, who would never let a single beast stay alive; they also stole the peasants' whole year's fill – cattle, and returned to the sea bottom (Sakhokia, 1956: 16). The novel describes *Mesepenis* "deities of the reptiles living in the sea, they came to land when spring rains started, they never grew old" (Gamsakhurdia 1990: 747). Similar to *Mesepenia* separate chapter of the novel is dedicated to Dali -the most well-known personage of Georgian mythology.

Representation of the Mythological Personage Dali

In Georgian Literature a number of prosaic and poetic works of have been dedicated to Dali. Although most data about this mythological character have survived in the oral folklore of Svaneti, Dali is not a local Svan phenomenon. She is also well-known in East Georgian oral folklore as Dalai. The 18th century German scholar Guldenstedt confirms that the Chechens, Kists, and Tsova Tushetians spoke of the God as Dale-Dalai. The Tsova Tushetians call God Dalai, and celebrate "Dalevebai" and memorial day of the deceased "Dalaobai". Both Svan and North Caucasian peoples used Dal to denote God, but later the meaning of word narrowed and became the name of Goddess- protector of wild animals and hunters (Georgian Oral Folklore, 1972: 40-41). In Georgian Oral Folklore Dali is distinguished for prettiness and beauty; she enchants anyone who sees her. Dali lives in cliffs, where only ibexes can walk. She delivers children like an ordinary woman. Her motherly love is boundless. Folk ballad about her delivering a baby in the rocks has survived to this day. Dali always repays kindness with kindness. She assists people even in farming activities. Hunters pray to her and entreat for mercy. Dali is an incomparable healer; touch of her wings heals human wounds (Georgian Oral Folklore, 1972: 40-42). Gamsakhurdia used this brilliant character of Georgian oral folklore for very impressive poetic comparison. The novel reads: "In the morning the Sun shines above the snowy mountain peak, just like golden-haired Dali. Avalanche slides somewhere in the cliffs and the mountains sing..." Other picturesque comparison of Dali and the Sun is also encountered in the novel: "The silent forest meets the day-break as a solemn occasion" (Gamsakhurdia, 1990: 552-553). Main characters of the novel have to live in Svan towers and hunters' caves. The author gives an excellent description of Dali's domain, he also reveals himself as a brilliant connoisseur of the ethnography, historical past, mythology and folklore of this corner of Georgia.

The Mystery of the "Meziri" and Horse Cult.

Svan *Meziri* has symbolic meaning in the novel. *Meziri* is presented as the deity protector of family in the form of a snake. Concerning the *Meziri* festival-*Meziroba*, Ethnographer Besarion Nizharadze mentioned,

that when new harvest was ripe in Svaneti, no one in the family would have meal, until the elderly woman of the family baked pastilles, men were not allowed to watch the process. The woman would murmur incantation to "Kora Meziri". In Svans' understanding *Meziri* had great power, it was even considered as domestic God- inseparable from the family. If *Meziri* left the house it was a sign of the fall of the family (Nizharadze, 1962:75-76). "Stealing The Moon" interestingly presents the mystery connected with horse cult, called "prayer of *Terdoba*". Every year Lukaia Labakhua diligently performed this mystery on the first Saturday evening of the Lent as demanded by the tradition. The personages of the novel: Grandpa Tariel, Tarash, Carolina and others attended the festival. Carolina is surprised "why well-educated linguist" Tarash Emkhvari "attentively watches the mystery- of man turning into a horse –surviving from dark centuries"(Gamsakhurdia, 1958 :67). The ritual episode in the novel develops as follows: "Lukaia organized *Terdoba* prayers the same evening, he made small figurines from the dough: a horse, a saddle, rein, trimming and lash. He put these on a special piece of fabric on the tray, sprinkled them with wine, stuck wax candles on the sides of the tray and lit them. During the ritual he walked several times round the tray neighing"(Gamsakhurdia 1958 :67). In pagan Samegrelo horse cult was regarded as totem. Horse was one of the most important components of domestic life, and people hoped that the ritual would contribute to the reproduction of horses. As Sergi Makalatia writes "*Terdoba*" was "*Tevdoroba*" festival. On this day the owner of a horse would bake a horse figurine made of dough with all accessories: saddle, stirrup, rein, etc. (Makalatia, 1941 :311). The author duly describes the horse mystery in the novel, thus reviving this ancient tradition of Georgian oral folklore

The Ritual of *Malanuroba*

In "Stealing the Moon" Gamsakhurdia pays particular attention to the Ritual of *Malanuroba* and dedicates separate chapter to it entitled: "The *Malanuris* have come". This chapter makes one of the most chief knots of the novel, namely the Tarbas must conduct a vendetta against the *Zvambaias* (Tsanava A., Tsulaia J., 1998: 37). Gamsakhurdia masterly uses the tradition of *Malanuroba* to develop the plot of the novel. In the novel the *Zvambaias* bolted the entrance door, untied the dogs so that no one could enter their house. But according to the tradition, on *Malanuroba* night, the *Malanuris* enter the houses without permission, Arzaqan and Dzabuli expected that everything would be according to the tradition, but instead of *Malanuris* they were assaulted by the revengers -Jamlet Tarba and his friend. The situation became so grave on *Malanuroba* night, that Kats *Zvambaia*, Tarash and Arzaqan had to leave Okumi and flee to Svaneti. Scientific literature mentions, that *Malanuroba* is one of the kinds of Georgian satirical drama. This way it originated in the 16th -17th century West Georgia. *Malanuroba* was the spectacle of protest against feudal epoch. It contained signs of remote layers, indicating to the connection of this spectacle with pagan cult. Basing on the description of *Malanuroba*, published in an issues of "Sakhalkho Gazeti" in 1910 Prof. D. Janelidze notes, that *Malanuri* is an actor of folk theatre. (Janelidze , 1959:76).

Description of Wedding Traditions

Description of wedding traditions occupies significant place in the novel. The author again reveals good knowledge of ethnography and folklore. From this standpoint interesting is the description of the tradition of "*Khintkiria*", which had the function of a duel in the past. The author describes "*Khintkiria*"- as traditional entertainment game: "In the circle of young girls and boys would come two young men with daggers, third young man with a dagger would tie their eyes with *qabalakhi* (traditional headdress for men). One of the men with the dagger in the sheath and cartridge-cases in the hands walked about the circle and with the tinkling of cartridge-cases exclaimed "*khintkiria*". Girls and boys sitting in the circle would join him and all would exclaim "*khintkiria*" together. When describing wedding traditions, Gamsakhurdia does not forget about singing tradition in Western Georgia. In this episode the author includes the well-known in Samegrelo wedding song "*Si*

Kouli Bata" (Where are you going Bata), This song was first documented and published by Alexandre Tsagareli - Georgian scholar, professor at St. Petersburg University; however Tsagareli's text is more extensive. According to Tsagareli the song is based on a folk legend: "once a landowner from Samurzaqano decided to marry the daughter of a Megrelian nobleman. But he fell in love with his future mother-in-law, who locked her daughter in the room; she herself married the landlord and followed him to Abkhazia (Tsagareli, 1880:68-69).

CONCLUSION

Work on the creation of great Georgian writer Konstantine Gamsakhurdia allowed us to make the following conclusions:

Gamsakhurdia's creative works originated on the sure ground of national folklore and culture. The writer pays particular attention to the reflection of Georgian oral folklore in his creation. In "Stealing the

"Moon" the writer masterly depicts the domestic environment, family and community mode of life of the West Georgian population -Megrelians, Svans and Abkhazians. The novel provides artistic description of St. George and Lunar cults, Abkhazian pagan festival "*Mizukhtu*", wedding traditions and other folk festivals. The novel also presents West-Georgian folk legends about Dali, Mother of Water, *Ochokochi*, *Mesepeni*, *Meziri* and other interesting episodes. Gamsakhurdia's novel clearly shows that in old Georgia oral folklore was vitally related to traditional beliefs. The legends had such deep roots in people's consciousness that they could hardly be broken even by sharply different social conditions. The writer bases on rich factual and scientific material: the materials of Georgian oral folklore collected by foreign travelers and well-known Georgian ethnographers.

Konstantine Gamsakhurdia is a great master of prose, he masterly models indelible personages. Closeness to native region and people determined the immortality of Gamsakhurdia's creative work, which is still the research topic of both Georgian and foreign scholars.

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