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THE FOLK VERSIONS OF BIBLICAL STORIES

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GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE WORK

Topicality of the Theme. The Bible - the very first religious book of Christianity and Judaism - is so universal that the scope of its historical and cultural interpretations is inexhaustible. The analysis of the Bible on the subject of folklore is a highly interesting sphere of research; hence, it is an issue of urgent importance for the researchers both of the Bible and of folklore.

For centuries, the Bible has been the subject of people's keen interest. The profound interest of the believers was displayed at the very outset of Christianity. The believers' curiosity needed detailed information about the vague passages of the Old Testament and the New Testament that gave rise to the creation of Apocrypha of the Bible.

Folklore has not lagged behind this process and the folk versions of biblical episodes, i.e. folk apocryphal stories of the Bible were created along with the apocryphal literature.

The modified characters of biblical personages have been retained thanks to the folk narratives. The folk text is a synthesis of the Bible's canonical and apocryphal literature added with significant supplements.

There are two ways of making the folk versions of biblical stories: 1) a parishioner renders the text heard at the sermon in accordance with his way of life and world outlook and imparts it to his brethren; 2) a representative of the elite purposefully renders the text of the Bible in verse and delivers it to the people to preserve the sacral knowledge and hand it down to the generations.

The question receives a thorough study by the modern scholars of medieval history. The folk interpretation of Christian truths, in our opinion, gave birth to the peculiar product that should be considered in the context of "folklore culture".

Goals and Tasks of the Research. It is the principal goal of the research to reveal the Georgian folk versions of biblical episodes, their relation to the literary source, the Bible, Apocrypha and, at the same time, to explain the innovations originated in folklore independently of the Bible. Consequently, the chief task of the research is to cope with the following issues:

1. What interrelation is between the biblical and folk texts?
2. How has the biblical text passed to the people?
3. What alterations are made in the biblical text in the process of rendering it into the folk one?
4. What is common between the Bible and folklore?
5. What innovations are contained in the Georgian folk versions of biblical texts?
6. Do the folk texts created on non-biblical themes bear any biblical motifs?

The question about rendering the Bible into folklore implies not only the relation of the folk text to the Bible, but also the innovations generated in Georgian folklore independently of the Bible.

Chief Topic and Object of the Research. The chief topic of the research is the analysis of interrelation of the religious and mythical aspects of the Bible and folklore with reference to the episodes connected with three biblical personages – Abraham, Job and Solomon.

The object of the research is Georgian folk prose and poetry: legends, fairy tales, narratives, conjurations. The samples of non-Georgian folklore are also referred to for a comparative analysis. The Apocrypha also are of significant importance for interrelation of the Bible and folklore.

The source basis of the present work is the Old Testament and the New Testament, special literature, the Georgian written sources, the data of the Georgian periodicals of the second half of XIX century, the Georgian folk tales, the collected Georgian folk poetry, the collected Hebrew legends, the archival documents (those of the folklore archives of Tbilisi State University, the

folklore archives of the Georgian Literature Institute under the Academy of Sciences of Georgia and the archives of the Georgian folklore laboratory of the Georgian Youth Palace).

Scientific Novelty and Primary Results of the Work. The present work is the first one that deals with the study of folk innovations of the biblical episodes (when we mention folk innovations, we mean the actions, i.e. the functions of the personages).

The term corresponding to the folk versions of biblical episodes has also been chosen anew, as “spiritual”, the one known until now, does not express the idea precisely.

The work is the first attempt of structural study of the folk versions of biblical episodes. From the structural point of view, an adversarial character appears in the folk text, promoting the main character’s mediation, i.e. the transformation from one qualitative function (negative function - x) to the other one (positive function – y). The structural study of the folk verse is carried out based on the structural scheme model of the myth that has been worked out by the outstanding French scientist K. Levi-Strauss. According to the folk text, a quite different structural scheme has showed up, which is common to the Georgian folk versions concerning the three biblical personages:

$$fxa : fyb \rightarrow O \rightarrow fyA.$$

The study of the Georgian-Hebrew folklore in the light of **interdependency** is the novelty of the work. The comparative analysis has shown that the innovations characteristic to the Hebrew folklore are frequently found in Georgian folk literature.

Methodological Basis and Practical Importance. The present work is based on the methodological principles of the study of modern folklore. A comparative analysis is assumed as a basis of my study of the folk versions of biblical texts, using the method worked out by V. Propp – the preference of the function to the element.

The theses made on the material systematized and collated in the given dissertation work (the Bible, Apocrypha, the folklore of different nations) has found an application for giving a course of lectures, as well as for preparation of special courses and seminars. The work can be used as study aids for the scientists, students, teachers and readers interested in the Bible and folklore for more profound comprehension of these works.

Information on Approbation of the Work. The dissertation work has been performed at the Folklore Department of Shota Rustaveli Georgian Literature Institute under the Academy of Sciences of Georgia. The principal theses of the work were published as scientific articles. Separate chapters of the work have been presented as reports at the scientific conferences of the Institute of Literature of Georgia, as well as at the republican conference of Kutaisi University and at the international conference of the Institute of History; the theses of reports have been published.

The work has been approved at the scientific conference of the Folklore Department of Shota Rustaveli Georgian Literature Institute, held on 29 December 2004 (Reviewer: Mzia Chachava, Ph.D.).

Structure and volume of the Work. The work includes the Introduction, three chapters (nine sections) and the Conclusion, and is supplemented with the appendices of abbreviation indices and a list of the attested literature. The work comprises 169 pages typed on the computer.

SYNOPSIS

The Introduction of the thesis defines the main topic and object, as well as the goals of the research; it evinces the urgency of the theme and shows the scientific innovation and primary results of the research.

The Georgian folklore is rich of the texts created on biblical episodes, which, mainly were spread by the bagpipers. Folklore has preserved the transformed characters of biblical personages. The folk text is a synthesis of apocryphal and canonical plots with substantial supplements.

In historiography, special attention is given to the tendencies of study of the mentioned issue, observed in Georgian study of folklore in XX century.

It is cleared up in the Introduction that the theme of the given thesis, which formerly was considered in the light of “spiritual poetry”, belongs to the genre of folklore. The work gives prove of an obvious misfit of the term for the object of the research, as, although the Bible is a spiritual book, people have not conceived it in the same way. Therefore, the “folk versions of biblical episodes” has been approved as a working term, which more precisely defines the object of the research – the folk versions of biblical texts. At the same time, it should be mentioned that neither the literary source nor the origin of the character has been used as a classification measure. The emphasis is placed on the perception of one or another episode, i.e. how the plot is treated by people. Taking this into consideration, the term “spiritual” seems unacceptable. As far as no suitable term and classification have been approved at the given stage of research (owing to the fact that only part of these verses have been studied so far), we have named them “folk versions of biblical episodes” or “folk versions of biblical books”. Although they have been obtained by means of description, they fully express the main point of the issue – the essence of the folk text.

CHAPTER I . ABRAHAM’S EPOSODE IN FOLK TRADITION

Chapter I of the thesis consists of five sections (the sections are classified in accordance with the order of plot of the Georgian folk “Verse of Abraham”).

“The First Visit” considered in Section I, mainly deals with the tradition of hospitability, its historical and cultural as well as traditional aspects.

In Georgian folklore, Abraham formerly is presented as an inhospitable person that is alien not only to the Bible and to Hebrew folklore, but also to the Georgian institute of hospitability. From the point of view of hospitability, in the folk text Abraham is introduced in contrast with his poor but open-handed and hospitable shepherd, who slaughters the only sheep in honor of abashed God. The guest curses Abraham and blesses the shepherd, who has unmasked Abraham’s inhospitability. According to the folk text, a comparison rises up to discover the truth, moreover, this comparison forms the wholeness – the shepherd is a character presented in parallel to Abraham.

In Section I, consideration is given to Abraham’s inhospitability and the shepherd’s generosity, who, in our opinion, is replaced by Eliezer in the folk text. In this connection, some parallel material from the Hebrew folklore is presented, where Abraham shows hospitability to any stranger. Having compared the Georgian and Hebrew folk texts, we found out that Abraham’s stinginess is a Georgian innovation, which exposes that people’s consciousness is much more interested in Abraham’s transfiguration, i.e. the replacement of his formerly negative function with the positive one, than the character of biblical Abraham, who is the chosen one by God, the performer of God’s will. Abraham’s example inspired people with the hope of survival through repentance.

The plot of “The Verse of Abraham” consists of two main parts. In the first part of the text the functions of the characters are determined and the geometrical principle of expressing the plot is emphasized. Upon the thorough analysis, we concluded that the functions are arranged around the

central circle (**a b c b' a'**) in accordance with the cause-and-effect principle. The central function in the text is Christ's miracle.

In the section, special attention is drawn to the texts of blessing uttered by Christ with respect to the hospitable shepherd, which are expressed by the omen of prolificacy: enlivening of the withered stick that turns into the branch covered with green leaves, symbolizing rejuvenation of Abraham and Sarah; multiplication of one sheep that is a prediction of multiplication of Abraham's descendants, etc. As to Abraham, the Lord curses him, as an infringer of the tradition. His curse – changing the white coloration of the sheep into the black one, and burning of Abraham's property is a sign of barrenness and, consequently, an omen of death.

Noteworthy is the culturological aspect of the blessings from the point of view of interdependency of nomadism and settled life ("felt cloak" / "golden palace" / "marquee" / "habitation"): Christ's blessing means that Abraham's nomadic life is changed with the settled life that is expressed by the birth of Isaac in "The Verse of Abraham", whose function in the folk text is defined by the term "*samamule*", i.e. continuer of the kin, and is associated with viticulture. This motif clears up Abraham's deprivation of Fatherland, which, along with childlessness, is associated with infertility. One more expression of Abraham's settled life is the withered stick that turns into the poplar. The poplar in Georgian mythology is the axis of the universe. It has a religious and social function of the unit and the strength of the universe, and this function is preserved in "The Verse of Abraham".

According to the Bible, Abraham treats the guests to bread, melted butter and meat. In the folk text, the shepherd, being a parallel character to Abraham, offers Christ only bread, i.e. vegetable food, but the Lord asks for *matsoni* (sour cream). The shepherd, who has only one dry sheep, is an unlucky shepherd. The open and vast space has become a limited period of time for him. The episode of offering the bread is taken as a pledge of the equalization of agricultural and pastoral culture. Therefore, according to the folk text, the Lord, as distinct from the episode of Cain and Abel, is treated both to the vegetable and animal food.

The bread offered by the shepherd to the guest is the same calf that later was slaughtered by Abraham in honor of the Lord. Although bread is a vegetable offering, but it (as an offering) is taken simultaneously as a calf and as the Lord in the flesh. Thus, we have the metaphors of common semantics: bread, calf, Isaac, Christ. Isaac is eaten as a vegetable and animal offering to be born as a man. His birth repeats the archetype of cosmogony.

The episode of milking of a dry sheep by the Lord is an original of the birth of Isaac in the folk text, just the same as the cow whose calf was brought back to life by the Lord.

In the section, blessing of Abraham by God (see, Genesis, 13.15-18) is compared with the text uttered by God blessing Abraham. In both cases, one moment is noteworthy: the settled life is good and even necessary, but it should be obtained by nomadism, by search. In the process of search, an unconscious search of god is revealed; and the search, as a rule, involves finding.

In Section II – "**The Transfiguration of Abraham**" – two parallel plans of the folk text is considered: the social plan that is displayed by stinginess and deprivation of guests, and the biological one manifested in infertility, starvation. These two aspects are united under the notion of barrenness that subsequently will be overcome by a forty-day period of repentance and coming of the Lord.

Abraham's punishment manifested in starvation because of his inhospitality is directed to the understanding of the tradition of hospitality. At first sight a paradoxical fact – the punishment of the inhospitable host by depriving him of guests – is taken as something quite natural in the work, making Abraham realize the deprivation of guests as a punishment, i.e. having been left in solitude, he perceives the truth.

It was necessary for Abraham not to have guests, as his home should have been purified to be ready for the Lord's visit. Therefore, the deprivation of guests was at the same time the punishment as well as the purification sent by the Lord to his chosen one.

One more manifestation of infertility is starvation that is connected to Abraham's death in one version of the verse.

The section cites some instances of starvation and eating as the metaphors of death-and-life antithesis: Greek Dionysus-Zagreus; Demetra and the Georgian myths about *Devis* and *Kopala*. Eating is associated with consecration. It also has a cosmogonic perceiving, similarly to wedding, as wedding is associated with reproduction.

During the starvation, Abraham dies in his old existence and comes to life afresh that is manifested in the act of eating. The guest's visit, along with the starvation, is overcoming of Abraham's infertility as one of the demonstrations of bareness or death.

One of the metaphors of death is Abraham's grief because of deprivation of guests that can be perceived as an initial stage of his transfiguration, since it points to self-absorption, and Sarah's laughter is taken as a metaphor of giving birth to Isaac. Sarah's laughter is of cosmogonic meaning, as it is associated with the birth of Isaac that symbolizes Abraham's and Sarah's coming to life afresh.

Standing outside the tent where Abraham sits at table, Sarah laughs, and it is a repetition of Abraham's act of eating.

Abraham's and Sarah's old age is also a metaphor of death that changes into their rejuvenation in the Greek folklore. The same is traced in the Georgian folklore. Abraham's age in the Bible as well as in the Georgian folklore – hundred years – points out the completeness of the cycle. After leaving this exclusive circle, Abraham begins a new life. Beyond the circle the transition to the new criteria begins, and Abraham's attitude to the Lord changes.

As a result, we have semantically identical but different metaphorical couples, one of which denotes death and the other signifies life: infertility – fertility, stinginess – prosperity, starvation – eating, sadness – laughter, old age – rejuvenation, etc.

“The Second Visit” in Section III, deals with the restoration of the tradition of hospitality by Abraham. In this episode, the Lord visits Abraham for the second time to test him.

Abraham slaughters a calf. Later the Lord brings the calf back to life by means of the skin and bones. The Georgian legend about the “wooden shoulder” and the Greek Dionysus- Zagreus are cited as parallel materials. Taking into consideration the corresponding arguments, boiling is perceived as a precondition of life, because fire has the capacity of regeneration.

In the section, special attention is drawn to the separate details: Bone signifies the principle of inviolability of life, for if the bones are destroyed, no resurrection can be achieved; Skin symbolizes the womb that gives birth anew (“bone and skin” is the minimum that is needed for life); Table – “*tabla*” is the place of the deity, etc.

The slaughtered calf is the prototype of the sheep that was used to replace Isaac with in the episode of oblation. It is also an archetype of Isaac, as well as the cow, the calf's mother, is the archetype of Abraham. The act of bringing the calf back to life reveals the wisdom of the sacrificing of Isaac in people's perception. Structural unity of these two elements is also considered in the third section: 1) lack (Abraham's deprivation of guests and infertility); 2) fillup (the guest comes, Isaac is born); 3) test (Abraham slaughters the calf, Isaac should be slaughtered); 4) (the Lord gives life to the calf, Isaac's survival).

In the section, mention is made of the wholeness of the plot of “The Verse of Abraham” that is achieved in the folk text through the principle of introduction of the compared character. This principle serves the mediation of the main character, i.e. its transition from one qualitative function (negative function – x) to the other one (positive function – y). Thus, we have a structural scheme:

$$fxa : fyb \rightarrow O \rightarrow fyA$$

where, *fxa* - is Abraham as the bearer of the negative function, and *fyb* - is the shepherd as the bearer of the positive function. The transition stage, i.e. transfiguration, is conditionally denoted by a circle. The last element of the scheme – *fyA* shows Abraham after having acquired the positive function, i.e. *A* – is a new image of Abraham that denotes the restoration of the tradition of hospitality by Abraham, and symbolizes the rebirth.

In the form of conclusion, the section gives the stages of Abraham's metamorphosis: **a, b, O, A**. The latter comprises the first three ones. Besides that according to the folk logic, the previous stages are necessary to make the rebirth of Abraham understandable and even justified.

Section IV – **"The Sacrificing of Isaac"** deals with the psychological and social aspects of infertility as a biological phenomenon. The childless leader of the nation - Abraham, like the childless kings in fairy tales, is perceived as the tragedy of the entire nation.

In the Georgian folklore, Sarah is double-faced: in some versions of "The Verse of Abraham" she agrees to sacrifice Isaac, while in the others she comes against it. In spite of this, according to the Georgian folklore, Abraham comes to an agreement with Sarah about sacrificing of Isaac, as distinct from the Bible, according to which Abraham takes Isaac to sacrifice without any agreement with her.

It is emphasized in the Georgian folk text that Abraham's heart is heavy, as he has to sacrifice Isaac to the Lord. It should be noted that according to the Georgian folk version, Abraham is given seven years to think and decide what to do with respect to the same thing that is done rashly in the Bible, and in three days in the Hebrew folk texts. In the Georgian version the situation is aggravated. According to the Bible, Abraham does not think much about his son, but here, he has seven years to get ready to sacrifice his son. It would have been more painful and distressing for him to take such decision after seven years' thinking. It is obvious that the challenge thrown unexpectedly by the Lord to Abraham turned out to be unacceptable to the people's logic.

It should be noted that in the Hebrew scientific literature Isaac is portrayed as a passive person. The Georgian and Hebrew folk texts give more interesting portrait of Isaac than the Bible does.

First of all, mention should be made of Isaac's unusual birth in the Georgian folk texts: having been in the mother's womb, he grows strikingly rapidly. Besides that, his age – seven years – is sacral and denotes completeness, wholeness (like Abraham's hundred years). His love for God is matured and he is ready to perform the duty. In our opinion, seven years indicate the perfection of Isaac's consciousness.

The parallel material is taken from the Hebrew folklore, where Isaac meets Satan who tells him about the secret of sacrifice. Here, as well as in the Georgian folk versions, Isaac reassures his father, trying to relieve his feelings. It means that Isaac is well aware of the importance of his sacrifice.

Isaac is a victim. He should be fried or boiled. According to Aristotle, boiling means death and rebirth. In one of the versions, Abraham's tears in the pot turn into the fish that is the illustration of identity of Isaac and Christ in the exegetic literature. Fish symbolizes Jesus Christ. In the ancient Christian literature Jesus often was mentioned as "fish", and the Christians – as "fishers". The Greek designation of "fish" ἰχθῦς, is deciphered as the abbreviation of Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεοῦ υἱὸς σωτήρ, i.e. Jesus Christ, Son of God, the Savior.

The question of identity of Isaac's and Christ's functions is also considered in the work: both of them are the only sons, the birth of both of them is connected with the miracle and both of them are sacrificed by their fathers. The first is motivated by the belief in God, the second – by the love for Adam's descendants. Both of them are united under the same omen: to lose something that is the dearest in one's life, i.e. to obtain something that is the most important in life.

In the Hebrew as well as in the Georgian folk texts, Isaac knows that he is a victim and should be sacrificed. Moreover, he helps his father to fulfill the divine duty. In the Georgian folk verse, Isaac is double-faced: it is quite understandable that Isaac is a victim, God is the receiver of the victim, Abraham is a priest. As to Isaac, he is a victim and a priest (or a co-priest) at the same time, as thanks to his free will happens everything. And if the Hebrew tradition draws attention to Abraham's psychology, in the Georgian tradition Abraham and Isaac are the bearers of the same tragedy. Moreover, a seven-year-old boy experiences the love for God at the very hard moment of his life – when he was facing the death. Isaac's rising from the scaffold is perceived as his rebirth: when Abraham lifted his hand to stab Isaac with a knife, he, actually, prepared him to be born anew.

The section ends with the text of Abraham's blessing from the Bible (see, Genesis, 22.17-18), which is repeated in several versions of the Georgian folk verse. The emphasis is placed on Isaac's firm belief and reproduction "like sand in the sea".

Section V - "**The Term "Abramiani"**" deals with the so-called New Year tray "*Abramiani*", which was a bail of the family's prosperity in Georgian reality.

The Georgian ethnology suggests several ideas concerning this phenomenon. According to available information, the Imeretian New Year's "*abri puri*" originating from the word "*ambari*" (i.e. Georgian for "granary") is assumed as a basis of the New Year tray (J. Rukhadze). The Imeretian "*ambariani*", most likely, has turned into the "*abramiani*" in Kartli (V. Gotsiridze).

According to another supposition, the origin of the New Year tray is connected with biblical Abraham (N. Gambashidze), however, nothing is said about the folklore material, and namely, about "The Verse of Abraham". Accordingly, we should take into consideration the replacement of Abraham's initial infertility (stinginess, starvation and childlessness) with fertility and prosperity to get at the archetypal roots of the New Year tray that is taken as a pledge of the family's fertility, prosperity and all earthly blessings. People's memory has retained only the pragmatic side of the traditional ceremony: the family using the "*abramiani*" when performing the New Year ritual should have been blessed like Abraham.

The stages of the New Year ritual performed by the Georgian Jews are also considered in the section, and compared to the plot of "The Verse of Abraham": "*roshenana*" – the day when destiny is shaped – infringement of the tradition of hospitality by Abraham; "*kipuri*" – the day of repentance that ends with sacrifice – Abraham's repentance, slaughtering of the calf and forgiveness that is explained by Isaac's birth; "*sukoti*" – from the word "*suka*" (tent), i.e. the period for weddings – Sarah standing at the tent, and the conception of Isaac.

According to the Georgian material, the wedding ritual is associated with the New Year celebration, as in the Mesopotamian mythology the day of wedding is mentioned as the "bride-bed day" and "the beginning of the year". Both of them are associated with the fertility and new life. Isaac's birth is the beginning of a new life for Abraham and Sarah. They are born anew together with Isaac.

Thus, we have a differently moulded ritual couple of the same semantic, having in common the idea of rebirth. Abraham's rebirth, which, in the folk verse, is the result of forty days' starvation and repentance, is associated with the birth of Isaac, i.e. with the act of wedding and giving birth to a baby. The fertility that later came to Abraham was perceived as a magic deed in people's consciousness, and, in our opinion, that is why it is associated with the New Year tray that brings prosperity and fertility to the family. Therefore, it can be stated that the word "*abramiani*" is associated with the name of biblical Abraham, rather than with the Imeretian "*abri/ambri puri*".

CHAPTER II. THE FOLKLORE VERSION OF "THE BOOK OF JOB"

The Introduction deals with the comparative analysis of two versions of “The Book of Job” – that of the Hebrew and Greek ones. According to the Greek version, Job is more appeasable and easy-tempered character than Job of the Hebrew origin, who is irritable and hot-tempered.

In Georgian tradition, apparently, the Greek translation of “The Book of Job” was known. The last paragraph of this version reads: **γέγραπται δὲ αὐτὸν πάλιν ἀναστήσεσθαι μεθ’ ὧν ὁ κύριος ἀνίστησιν** – i.e. he will rise from the dead after those, who will be resurrected by the Lord, - that is alien to the Hebrew text, and is found in the Georgian folklore (Job and his children are resurrected by the Lord).

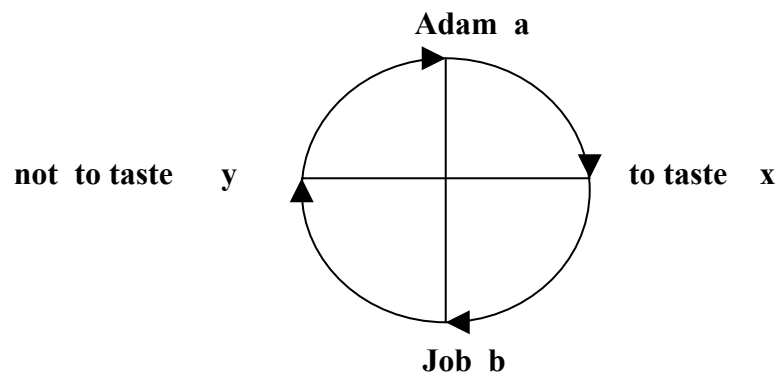
In Chapter II, “The Verse of Job” is presented in relation to the Bible and Apocrypha. At the same time, the independently formed Georgian folk innovations are considered. Studying out the folk text, the emphasis was placed on the functions. From this viewpoint, Job is associated with biblical Adam.

Having learnt about his children’s death, Job takes off the clothes. It means that he takes off all that is earthly, and returns to the state as he was created by the Lord – “naked and unadorned”. This Adam’s nakedness demonstrates the state in which the human race came into being. Job’s nakedness means to start life afresh.

In the folk version, the function of Job’s wife deserves mention. She goes from house to house, begging for bread. She manages to buy bread with the help of her golden hair (that is Eve’s original virginity, according to the folk version), but Satan deceives her and changes the bread. That is the repetition of Eve’s function in the folk version. Job in the folk verse recognizes “Judas’ bread” and gives it to the dog that dies at once. This is not the repetition of Adam’s function, and by that folk Job is associated with biblical Adam. In Chapter II, from the point of view of the mentioned functions, the identity of these two moments is accentuated, i.e. the folk version of the episode of bread, which also is met in the Greek apocryphal story “Testamentum Iobis”, is based on the archetype of depravity. Different is the ending only – Adam, in contrast to Job, eats the apple offered by Eve.

In the research, mentioning is made of the function of food. When viewing “The Verse of Abraham”, we noted that eating is associated with survival, life. But here, eating is a metaphor of resurrection when consecrated by God (e.g. sacrifice), but when it is Satanic, it acquires a negative function of death.

Adam and Job, faced with the dilemma, behave differently – Adam loses his conviction of God. Adam who loses the conviction of God, becomes a mere mortal, whose concrete sample is Job, who stands the test. Job, having acquired his function, returns to his original state. Thus, the synthesis of the biblical-and-folk plots forms a circle:



Having acquired his function, Job helps Adam to get back the lost belief in God. He rises above the archetype of depravity and abandons Satan. In spite of this difference, Adam is Job, and Job

is Adam. Their comparison, that makes the principle defining the wholeness of the universe, shows the history of human spirit.

In the given episode, Adam, whom God created in his own image (**a**) is associated with the negative function (**x**) – that is equal to losing the conviction, and Job – the son of Adam, a mere mortal (**b**) is associated with the positive function (**y**), that is manifested by his steadfastness.

The initial, variable value is **a**, as Adam, faced with the dilemma can acquire the negative as well as the positive function. Thus, Adam is between the **x** and **y** functions. He is an intermediary between them. In this instance of mediation, according to the folk verse, he is opposed by Job – Adam could not make choice. Job's behavior exposes Adam. As a result of their functional confrontation, we have the following scheme:

$$\mathbf{fxa : fyb \rightarrow O \rightarrow fyA}$$

where, **fxa-** is Adam, bearing the negative function, and **fyb** – is Job, bearing the positive function. The closure of the circle is the principle of existence of the universe, and consequently of the human origin, which implies the wholeness received by the opposition that is equal to Adam's return to his primeval personality, not as **a**, but as **A** (this includes Adam as well as Job, i.e. **A=ab**), that is displayed in his completely new existence.

Job, in contrast to Adam, refuses to eat the food offered by Satan, but the experience of Adam plays an important role. **A = ab** means that **b** can become **A** only by passing through **a**, i.e. the unity of **a** and **b** forms **A**, and vice versa, **a** can become **A** only through **b**.

The analysis of the folk versions of "The Book of Job" shows that in the Georgian folklore Job is directly associated with biblical Adam and with the motif of the search of Adam's lost conviction.

In Chapter II of the presented work, particular interest is drawn to the function of Satan. Satan is always with Job and tries to turn him against the Lord. The Hebrew **satan**, Aramaic **sitna**, Greek **διάβολος**, are taken as parallel materials. According to our information obtained as a result of the comparative analysis, the devil in "The Verse of Job", as well as **satan** in Hebrew tradition is not the enemy of God, but the performer of His will. In one of the versions, Job calls him "my devil". This makes us assume that the struggle between them is the struggle in Job's being. The devil is the metaphor of Job's **alter ego**, and consequently, he is Adam's **alter ego**. When Job comprehends the essence of the devil, the latter turns into ashes and burns down without fire. That means the devil's final destruction.

The structure and plot of "The Verse of Job" is drawn up in accordance with the structure and plot of a classical tragedy.

In the work, "The Verse of Job" is compared to the old Greek tragedy from several points of view: a) the personages and their function (hero, antagonist, messenger; chorus); b) the constituent parts of tragedy (plot, fear, torture, sympathy, catharsis); c) from the point of view of the composition (prologue, epilogue, parodos, episodions); and **Deus ex machine**, characteristic to the classical tragedy – in the finale of "The Verse of Job" God appears in this form.

In classical tragedy, the main hero's torture acquires the highest sense in case the hero is tortured by his beloved one. Job is "the Lord's godson", that is why his torture is more tragic.

It is mentioned in the folk verse, in contrast to the Bible, that Job's torture lasted seven years. This is also given in the Greek apocryphal book – **Testament Iobis**. The motif of the worm fallen from Job's body, probably, passed to the Georgian folklore from the Greek apocryphal story. Job takes the worm and puts it back on his body. The function of the worm is determined in the work, according to which, the worm is necessary to gnaw Job's body. In that way, Job, taken as "the best self" of a man, can prove his existence. Therefore, the worm helps Job in self-affirmation.

In many versions of “The Verse of Job”, the worm fallen from Job’s body turns into a bee, and the earthworm turns into the silkworm (this is the folklore innovation). Different kinds of worms creeping on Job’s body – caterpillars, grubs, vineyard worms, earthworms, bees – are the metaphors of the three worlds. The gradation from the worm to the bee is given in the Georgian folk text. The worm is the most subterranean creature; the bee is the same worm, but with wings. They personify two horizontal dimensions of the cosmic axis or tree. One of them personifies the roots, while the other symbolizes its branches, i.e. the sky. The worm passes through all possible stages that bring it closer to the bee. The above-named give a circular motion that forms the celestial-and-terrestrial opposition. In the given opposition, the first denotes the netherworld, and the second is the upper world, i.e. the sky. In the centre there is a link uniting them – the middle world. The vineyard worm belongs to the netherworld and upper world at the same time, as vineyard is presented as the plant, which unifies the two worlds: the earth gives the heavenly drink and it is for people. In “The Verse of Job”, it also has the function of the unitor.

Apart from the etiologic essence (“Job’s worm is the synonym of “silkworm”), the folk verse includes the greatest wisdom of world mystery: Job’s body becomes *dim-gal* (the great axis), or **Axis Mundi**, the same *dur-an-ki* (the union of the earth and the sky). Job’s body is a living symbol that sets the three worlds in one vertical.

Job is a medium, a tool in God’s hands. This is proved by the folk verse, where his body is the bearer of the bee’s function – from his body stearin is leaking. The bee in mythology, as well as in Christian religion is associated with immortality and rebirth. Job’s body is that universal state that, according to people’s belief, makes it possible for Job to rise from the dead, and the bee helps him. In this connection, parallel is drawn with Khakhamati St. George from Georgian mythology, who resists the devils, having turned into a bee.

According to the folk verse, Job eats a “leaf of manna”, and turns it into silk. It means that Job eats the food inappropriate for people, i.e. symbolically, he acquires the sacral knowledge that is accessible only for the chosen ones, and makes the sacral wisdom accessible to people. In the folk text, the silkworm symbolizes this. Thus, God cooperates with his chosen one for the love of the humanity.

In one of the version of folk text, Job gets into the cocoon, and God turns him into a butterfly. Inside the cocoon a circle is formed. It unites the time and space, stops time in space. There is nothing inside the circle. In folk version, this metaphor is Job’s death, and it is the folk innovation. Death is the necessary condition for coming to life afresh, for resurrection. The butterfly in “The Verse of Job” symbolizes the spirit. The butterfly is a transition stage from flesh to spirit. This is the spiritual materialization. Job’s spirit continues existence as butterfly to be born afresh, for the butterfly is a presage of resurrection.

In the folk verse, “seed” is one more metaphor of Job. “Seed” is a symbol of revival, repetition. Job is seed that should be “kept”, and then scattered by God over the world, that is the repetition of cosmogonical act. “Growing of seeds afresh” is implied as the creation of a new world.

Job is blessed, because he believes in “repetition”, rebirth. In the ending of the folk verse, Job is given immortal children in the paradise. However, it is not the result but the beginning that proves Job’s or Abraham’s heroism – faith is the beginning. Abraham and Job believe in possibility of impossible, and thanks to this belief, they manage to get everything anew.

CHAPTER III. SOLOMON AS A FOLKLORE CHARACTER

Chapter III of the given work consists of the Introduction and four Sections. The Introduction deals with the description of Solomon as a biblical personage and gives his main characteristic features – wisdom, construction and showing deference to the idols of his wives.

Section I – **“The Wicked Woman”** develops the theme of folklore versions about the biblical two wicked women. In Georgian folklore, this motif is found in the version of two daughters-in-law that proves that the biblical story was not alien to the Georgian folklore; however, owing to certain alterations it has been attributed to the rank of short stories about family life.

Folk Solomon’s consent to build a palace of the birds’ wings, as required by his sick wife, corresponds to the showing of deference to the wives idols by Biblical Solomon. In the folk text, Solomon’s ignorance that is explained by his consent to pursue his wife’s whim is confronted with the wise bird, which bears the function of revealing in the fable. In this case, as well as in the case of Abraham and Job, the folk text shows opposition that forms wholeness.

The function of the wife in the fable deserves mentioning: she incites Solomon to evil, and is the bearer of Eve’s function. Her whims can be perceived as submission to earthly passions. The wife is a metaphorical character, Solomon’s **alter ego**, which tries to dominate over him, and Solomon’s best “self” – **super ego** - is presented by means of the allegorical bird in the folk text. It is the bird living in the sky that helps Solomon to get back to his “self”. The wife symbolizes danger, but Solomon overcomes it and rises. This can be expressed by the above-mentioned formula, which explains the structure of the folk version of biblical episode:

$$\mathbf{fxa} : \mathbf{fyb} \rightarrow \mathbf{O} \rightarrow \mathbf{fyA}$$

where, **fxa** – is Solomon, marked by a negative sign, and **fyb** – is Solomon’s “best self” symbolized by the metaphorical bird. Thanks to the bird that confronts Solomon, he returns to his best “self”, and gets back his real essence, which Solomon acquired owing to his own choice (having chosen wisdom), and if Adam eats the apple offered by Eve, and biblical Solomon recognizes his wives idols, the folklore character of Solomon does not repeat his archetype’s mistake and scorns the earthly passion with the help of his wisdom. The bird is metaphor of Solomon’s wisdom. It helps Solomon to pass the exam and the latter appears modified – **A**, it means that he is the bearer of the positive function – **y**.

The motif of unfaithful wives is widely spread in Georgian folk texts about Solomon. This is one of the principal themes of “The Verse of Solomon and Kundzuleli”. In this connection, special attention should be drawn not only to the function of Solomon’s unfaithful wife, but also to the function of her lover – *Kundzuleli* – “the king of devils”. We do not agree to the opinion of Philippe Gogichaishvili, the compiler of Petre Umikashvili’s “Folklore” with respect to the name of the king of devils – *Kundzuleli* (the one who lives on the island). He prefers the version “*Kuntsuleli*”. In our opinion, it would be more correct to use *Kundzuleli*, i.e. the king of another country and representative of the different world. **Samudra-pala** – as parallel material from the Indian folklore, is the sovereign of the sea, who, although temporarily, but manages to be master of Solomon’s wife and to own his throne. The devil tries to take the place of the hero.

The character competing to Solomon in the Hebrew folklore is *Asmodevs*, which is the direct form of the Persian *Aeshmodaeva*, from this is the Georgian *eshmaki* (*devil*). The similarity is obvious both from the linguistic and functional point of view.

Besides Samudra-pala and Asmodevs, Kundzuleli is compared to the Indian Gandarva, German Morolf, Anglo-Saxon Saturn, Russian Kitovras, Slavic Vasil Okulevic and other characters confronting Solomon.

According to our data, Kundzuleli, Kitovras, Vasil Okulevic are the parallel characters, correlates. Each of them is the lover of Solomon’s wife. This motif is alien to the Talmudian story of

Solomon. The roots of this motif were found in oriental mythology. Later it passed to the Byzantine tradition, from where it was spread in Eastern Europe.

The struggle between Solomon and Kundzuleli begins in Solomon's bed, when he finds out that a stranger visits his wife by night. Solomon's silence is his death, while his word uttered when he discloses this matter, is his birth. Solomon is alive when Kundzuleli is in his kingdom (symbolically in the kingdom of the dead). Solomon and Kundzuleli, by analogy with the Russian legend, where Solomon and Kitovras are brothers, is shown as two correlates of one origin, like the fairy tale, they cannot exist simultaneously. Their meeting always ends with the death of one of them as a result of fighting.

Kundzuleli fights against Solomon by means of his wife, whose, at first sight, amoral behavior, has mythical basis and is associated with the ability of the female Deity to be the wife of now this world, now that world. She is a connecting link between her husband and lover, i.e. between "this" and "that" worlds. Kundzuleli strives for his former being – Solomon through his wife, because this is the only way for him to be acceptable for this world. But in the end, when Kundzuleli is defeated and Solomon's wife returns to her husband, this act acquires the cosmogonical significance, i.e. earthly paradise comes, and one who is unworthy of marriage is destroyed that also is caused by the necessity of regeneration of the universe.

In Georgian folklore, the epithets associated with the moon are used with respect to the evil force – Kundzuleli. In this connection, we have considered ethnographical material about the cult of the moon in Georgia. In our opinion, the astral nature of Kundzuleli and possession of the magic golden ball by him is perceived as metamorphic variety of the Deity of Moon. To all appearances, the moon epithets used with regard to the evil force indicates that the copper ("titberi" is for Georgian brass, the same as "tutberi" - "tuta"-moon) jug, in which Kundzuleli is confined, must be broken, i.e. Kundzuleli must die and then must be brought to life afresh, he must be resurrected just like the moon that dies and returns to life every month. In our opinion, the lunar nature of Kundzuleli, as well as the epithets associated with the moon indicates that his life in the jug is a temporary act. The moon metaphor secures the resurrection after his death.

The theme of the wicked woman is widely spread in the cycle of fairy tales on Solomon. In this connection, mention should be made of the Georgian fairy tale "The Choice", which is the paraphrase of the Serbian tale, where Solomon mentioned in the Georgian one is replaced by the unknown wise man.

In Georgian folklore, Solomon often appears as a boy who is expelled from home because of his mother. Solomon condemns his mother for her shameful behavior and she drives him out. This motif is widely adopted in Russian fairy tales and the comparative analysis has shown the functional identity of the Georgian and Russian fairy tale; the difference is in attributes only.

Apart from the unfaithful wives, the section deals with the disobedient women. In this connection, one Georgian short story deserves certain interest. This story word for word reiterates one of the narratives of "Decameron" by Jovani Boccaccio (IX.9), which, in its turn, probably, takes roots in Italian folklore.

The old Hebrew, Ukrainian, French, Russian, Italian and other folklore materials presented in the work show that the motif of wicked women is very topical in folk tales about Solomon. Such wicked women, as a rule, are presented in the person of mothers and wives in folklore. This motif with respect to Solomon is international and it is included even in the guide of Anti Aarne. This kind of negative attitude towards women in folklore might have been caused by the influence of the Bible.

Section II – **"The Confinement in the Jug"** deals with the story of Solomon where he lures Kundzuleli and his people into the jug and establishes peace on the earth.

According to "The Verse of Solomon and Kundzuleli", all evils on the earth come from Kundzuleli and his people. Solomon, the wise king, fights with the devils' king and exterminates the evil on the earth that is the function of the demiurge, rather than of the earthly king. The confinement of Kundzuleli and his people in the jug resulted in the establishment of peace on the earth. According to the Georgian folk verse, Solomon stops the time and this act is equaled to the regeneration of the universe.

This motif is widespread in Georgian folklore; it is especially topical in the cycle of legends about David Agmashenebeli and Queen Tamar. In the given work, the capture of the devil mule by David and the capture of Shukurvarskvalvi by Tamar is compared to the capture of Kundzuleli, and the emphasis is placed on the sign common to them – the capture of the evil spirit is followed by the establishment of peace and happiness on the earth. (Similar motif is presented from the British-Celtic narratives concerning Marlene – the character parallel to Solomon).

One of the principal characteristic features of biblical Solomon – construction is used in Hebrew folklore, where Solomon captures Asmodevs by means of his own ring. The ring also figures in Solomon's Muslim version, where Zahr is the character parallel to Asmodevs.

The capture of the evil spirit by means of a ring is met in the Greek apocryphal book **Testamentum Solomonis**, which, with regard to its matter, is much closer to the legend about David Agmashenebeli (construction of Gelati Monastery and capture of the devil-mule (the devil that turned into a mule), than the Georgian folk version of Solomon.

In view of the motif of confinement in the jug, the Hindu legend **Vicramacaritram** is very interesting, where the evil spirit Shimnus, like Kundzuleli, is lured into the jug. Shimnus gives himself away. The ability of getting into the jug is attributed only to the evil spirit, according to the Indian source. It is noteworthy that the Georgian version of inability to fill the jug is also connected with the evil spirit. In view of this one important moment deserves mentioning, and namely - it is emphasized that a non-material devil having no flesh and correspondingly deprived of wealth and prosperity is marked with the sign of infertility – "the devil is deprived of wealth". This remark, in our opinion, is a folklore variety of the evil considered by pseudo-Dionysus of Areopaghesis.

Section III – **"A Series of Tales About Solomon"** deals with three principal questions: What is Solomon's function in Georgian folk tales? Is Solomon's biblical image retained? What innovations are presented in the Georgian folklore?

Wise Solomon is a personage of the Georgian tales on everyday life. He is not the main character, he has a function of the grantor, but he is not a grantor of wisdom, and he is not unconcerned when giving advice, as he gives advice for a certain consideration.

The analysis of the folk texts shows that the peasant who serves Solomon for three years and asks for a piece of advice from him in return for his service, is the repetition of Solomon's character, who, faced with the dilemma, asks the Lord to endow him with wisdom, and the Lord, apart from wisdom, grants him all worldly goods. It means that the peasant repeats Solomon's choice, and Solomon is in the role of the Lord.

The wisdom brought by the peasant to his native village is perceived as the wisdom from "that" world, because in fairy tales, leaving one's home is understood as going to "that" world. By analogy with the fairy tale, where the main character gains victory with the help of the magic thing brought from "that" world, in our case the thing is replaced with the knowledge, wisdom or advice from "that" world.

Noteworthy is the way on which the hero returns home. The mythical personages – the frog and the bird in fairy tales are perceived as the symbols of the netherworld and upper world; as to the forest and wood, they are metaphors of the cosmic chaos and the axis of the universe.

The departure and return home of the hero is associated with the metamorphosis characteristic to the main character of the fairy tale: at the very moment the hero leaves his home, village or country

and goes to another country, he leaves his "self" in his former origin and seeks a new "self". He passes through the three worlds that is necessary for the hero of any fairy tale, returns home, but he is changed, even the neighbors cannot recognize him. Only the godlike hero has the ability of this metamorphosis and can pass through the three worlds (R.Cholokashvili). The evil spirit is deprived of this ability. Thus, the hero of a series of tales about Solomon leaves home, passes through the three worlds, gets modified and returns home with the knowledge taken from "that" world. By origin, he is a godlike and cultural hero, who uses the knowledge from "that" world in "this" world, with that connecting these two worlds. In spite of his simplicity, genetically he is connected with the hero of the fairy tale.

Section IV – **"The Parallel Characters of Solomon"** deals with the poetry, prose, namely, short stories and fables, where the personages are the bearers of Solomon's function in Georgian folklore.

From the analyzed material, several parallel characters of Solomon have been selected, out of which the most important is the character of Jesus Christ, however, in folklore version there is a dissimilarity concerning the time - here Solomon is perceived as the continuer of Christ's deeds, and not vice versa.

In the folk texts, the same function is attributed to Solomon and Jesus Christ: healing the sick, supporting the have-nots, etc. As to the episode of the withered cock that began to crow, according to the Georgian and Russian folk texts, it formerly was attributed to Jesus Christ, and then to Solomon. Solomon's omnipotence turns out to be quite acceptable for people that is retained by the episode of livening the fried fish up. He has superhuman knowledge that is enough to make the withered cock crow and reanimate the fried fish.

In the folk texts, any kind of resurrection is a metaphor of Christ's resurrection, the repetition of his resurrection. Christ livenes up the cock. So does Solomon. The functions are identical. Solomon reanimates the fish to prove the truth. Christ resurrects to prove that he is the son of God. The functions are identical again. Fish is the symbol of Jesus Christ. Solomon is the bearer of God's function – he reanimates the fish by word, symbolically he reanimates Jesus Christ. Solomon, a biblical personage, who lived ten centuries before Christ, is Christianized. Anachronism is a usual occurrence in folklore (Jesus Christ visits Abraham). Christian allegories and epithets with respect to Solomon in people's consciousness is caused and justified by his wisdom. The folk text shows that Solomon as the supreme manifestation of human wisdom approaches to Christ. Mention should be made of two purposes of the folk storyteller: **1.** persuasion of the listeners of the supremacy of wisdom; **2.** Solomon's popular image should have guarded the secret of Christ's resurrection.

In the Georgian folk fables Solomon often appears as the bearer of the function of the Almighty God – he is the initiator of blacksmith's work, but he cannot impart the knowledge to the more mortals, hence Solomon in folk text is a superhuman character. Emphasis is placed on his godlike wisdom. He becomes understandable to the people only when Christ interferes, otherwise, Solomon is the manifestation of the sacral wisdom that becomes understandable for people after the appearance of the son of God in the likeness of a man.

The coincidence of Solomon and Jesus Christ is traced in some more Georgian tales, where the deprivation of eyesight by Solomon as a judge is perceived as opening of the inner vision, the release from the earthly troubles. The loss of sight is taken as death, while the recovery of eyesight by Jesus Christ is the recognition of Solomon's justice.

In Georgian folklore, the shepherd who surprises Solomon with his ability to predict is Solomon's parallel character. According to the fable, the most reasonable person among the men is not verily wise. In Georgian folklore, Solomon as the symbol of human mind is confronted with the intuitive comprehension in the person of the shepherd. According to people's understanding, it is impossible for the human mind to comprehend everything. According to the folk fables, even wise

Solomon is nothing as compared to the God's intention, to the Almighty's will. Therefore, it became necessary to humanize Solomon, to equip him with a human trait. Folklore as if makes a difference between the rational and intuitive thinking and for confrontation with Solomon introduces a shepherd or a peasant who are able to comprehend the universe intuitively and never are mistaken, or in the given case, they are higher than human mind. This is the closeness to the God's intention, through sensation, not through logic. (Compare: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy"). This moment is also interesting from the standpoint of culturology: here the confrontation is not only between mind and sensation, but also between the king and shepherd as two symbols of nomadic and pastoral culture.

An old wise man, whose figurative speech is understandable only to Solomon and the mere mortals cannot understand him, and a little boy, who repeats Solomon's function by assisting the judge to administer justice are Solomon's parallel characters. The shepherd, the old man and the little boy are Solomon's parallel characters, but which of them is more? This problem is also traced in novelistic tales. Solomon often is replaced with another personage – with a hunter or a merchant... Here, to all appearances, the matter concerns the second adaptation of the tales about Solomon. Or, Solomon is perceived as a synonym of wisdom by the narrator's consciousness that results in association of Solomon with all kinds of wisdom, regardless of the fact whether it comes from the Bible or not. In view of this, folklore presents interesting innovations by associating Solomon's character with Jesus Christ, and introducing parallel characters in the person of the shepherd and a little boy; Solomon appears as a blind judge whose self-willed blindness is the guarantee of justice; his wisdom and sagacity brings benefit and happiness to the people. Ineluctability of destiny is obvious in the tales about Solomon, and many other things that always have stirred up keen interest of the people.

CONCLUSION

For centuries, the Bible – the basis of Christian religion determinant of its world outlook - has been the subject of keen interest of people. The profound interest of the believers was displayed at the outset of Christianity. The curiosity of the believers needed detailed information about the vague passages of The Old Testament and The New Testament that gave rise to the creation of Apocrypha of the Bible.

Folklore has not lagged behind this process and folk versions of biblical episodes, i.e. folk apocryphal stories of the Bible were created along with the apocryphal literature.

The transformed images of biblical personages have been preserved thanks to the folk tradition. The folk text is a synthesis of the Bible's canonical and apocryphal literature added with significant supplements.

There are two ways of making folk versions of the Bible: 1) a parishioner expresses the text heard at the sermon, renders it in accordance with his way of life and world outlook and imparts it to his brethren; 2) a representative of the elite purposefully renders the text of the Bible in verse and delivers it to the people to preserve the sacral knowledge and hand it down to the generations. Upon further analysis, we have concluded that the second way of making folk versions of the Bible is more advantageous.

Although the Bible is a religious book, we are of the opinion that it has not passed to people in that form. That is why we cannot agree to the tradition of attribution of folk versions of the Bible to "the spiritual poetry" that is rooted in Georgian study of folklore. When analyzing folklore, the source of text does not play a vital part; it is more important to find out how the text is processed by people's consciousness.

Sharing the opinion of Rene Ghenon, - "People do not create, people reorganize", we consider: the biblical stories have been purposely turned into the folk versions by the people

standing in the spiritual centre of the society, and are kept in the “collective memory” in order to pass the metaphysical and sacral-religious knowledge on the future generations. Folklore is the best and the only means to do this.

The theses of the dissertation work have been used in the following publications:

1. “The Transfiguration of Abraham” – Georgian Folklore, I (XVII), Tbilisi, 2002.
2. “The Book of Job”, Folklore Version – Classical and Modern Georgian Literature, N 7, Tbilisi, “National Literature”, 2004. (with summary in English).
3. A Series of Tales about Solomon – Georgian Folklore II (XVII) Tbilisi, 2004.
4. The Verse of Abraham in Georgian and Hebrew Folklore, - Georgian Heritage, VI Kutaisi, 2002 (with summary in English)