

“IRRATIONAL THERAPY” – MYTH, RITUAL, BELIEF
(STUDIES IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION ON THE EXAMPLE OF INFECTIOUS
DISEASES)

“ირაციონალური თერაპია” – მითი, რიტუალი, რწმენა
(ძიებანი რელიგიის ფსიქოლოგიაში ინფექციური დაავადებების მაგალითზე)

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აბსტრაქტი

მოცემული სტატია ეხება ორ უმთავრეს საკითხს: რა ფსიქოლოგიური მექანიზმი მონაწილეობდა ინფექციური დაავადებების რიტუალით მკურნალობის დროს და რატომ შემორჩა თითქმის ბოლო დრომდე ბატონების სახელით ცნობილი ქართული ხალხური რიტუალი, რომელიც ბავშვთა ინფექციური დაავადებების სამკურნალოდ სრულდებოდა. სტატიაში აღნიშნულია, რომ ხალხის რწმენით დიდი დედა ნანას, წმ. ბარბარეს, წმ. იოანე ნათლისმცემლის გარდა წმ. მარინეც და წმ. თეკლაც უნდა ყოფილიყვნენ ინფექციური დაავადებების მკურნალნი. ამავე დროს, სტატიაში აღნიშნულია, რომ ინფექციური დაავადებების მფარველებად საქართველოში ძირითადად ქალები–დიდი დედა ნანა და სამი ქრისტიანი ქალი წმინდანი მიიჩნეოდა.

კვლევა სავსე ეთნოგრაფიული და ფოლკლორული მასალების გარდა ეფუძნება ეთნოლოგიურ, ისტორიულ, ფსიქოლოგიაში ლიტერატურას.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: რელიგიის ფსიქოლოგია, ეთნოლოგია, ისტორია.

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Abstract

The paper focuses on two main issues: what psychological mechanism participated in the ritual of Batonebi performed to treat infectious diseases, and why the Georgian folk ritual of Batonebi has survived in fact to this day. In addition to the great mother Nana, St. Barbara and St. John the

Baptist, Saints Marina and Tekla were supposed to be patrons and healers from infectious diseases. Accordingly, they turned for help mainly to female deities and saints.

This interdisciplinary study is based on ethnographic, folklore materials, ethnological, psychological and historical scientific literature.

Key words: Psychology of religion, ethnology, history.

Introduction

Based on the study of the psychology of religion the article aims to put forward an opinion why ritual against infectious diseases can be healing and on the other hand why traditional Georgian ritual of Batonebi was in practice even in the twentieth century. This interdisciplinary study is based on scientific literature in ethnology, psychology, psychology of religion, history. The archival and ethnographic materials were used as well.

In my opinion the symbol that has an equivalent in the other world is the opportunity for a person to meet the numinous, accept and experience it. I also think that, when meeting the numinous the human would not withstand its grandeur and horror without the symbol. Thus, the symbol is a kind of curtain filled with mental energy, and at the same time, a bridge between the surreal and the real worlds. I also think that the numinosity experienced via the symbol with the equivalent in the other world can heal a person, which can be accomplished through a ritual based on a myth, on religious beliefs.

I also think that basing on the research results, it can be said that in the fight against infectious diseases in Georgia, mainly the great mother and mostly female saints were asked for healing, which once again emphasizes the importance of women, their power and historical role in Georgia.

A symbol is an embodied, realized archetype that has the meaning equivalent in the other world. The elements, archetypes charged with the psychic energy of the unconscious, are realized in the symbol. Symbols - these unconscious icons also have a protective and healing effect; they are sent into the space and return to the Earth and consciousness.

Methods

The paper is based on the interdisciplinary study of the issue. The study was carried out on the analyses of ethnographic, folk, historical materials and scientific literature in ethnology, theology, and psychology.

Results

Study showed that the symbol, this unconscious icon which is filled with mental energy, charged with the psychic energy of the unconscious, which is embodied, realized archetype with meaning equivalent in the other world, have a protective and healing effect; it is sent into the space and return to the Earth and consciousness.

In my opinion, it is the numinosity experienced via the symbol with the equivalent in the other world that can heal a person, which can be accomplished through a ritual based on a myth, on religious beliefs. This healing process I call "irrational therapy".

I also think that basing on the research results, it can be said that in Georgia, mainly the great mother and female Saints were asked for healing from infectious diseases.

Discussion

From the standpoint of folk medicine, Georgian ethnologists have studied children's infectious diseases in many ways. Particularly: V. Bardavelidze, N. Mindadze, M. Burduli and others. As it is known, smallpox and children's infectious diseases (*kvavil-batonebi*), like most diseases, if not all, were treated by both rational and irrational methods. Among the irrational methods we single out the well-known and popular ritual of *batonebi*, which survived almost until recently; survived not only the ritual, but also the beliefs, fairy tales and mythological narratives about *batonebi* and great mother Nana. Irrational methods of healing smallpox and children's infectious diseases are also known to be associated with some Christian saints.

In this case, we were interested in what led to such a persistence of the afore-mentioned irrational methods of healing that they survived until recently from the depths of centuries, millennia and why people selected great mother, *batonebi* (lit. masters) and certain Christian saints for healing these infectious diseases. As a reminder, let us have a brief look at the ritual of *batonebi* and some related elements. First of all, it should be noted that there is a certain myth, beliefs about this myth, and the ritual with the participation of the people whose ancestors created this myth, belief; that the ritual is shared by the given community. In our case, we imply both the pre-Christian and Christian. While discussing mythological narratives, legends, fairy tales, and rituals related to the cult of great mother Nana, Vera Bardavelidze mentions that they were created at the development zenith of ancient Georgian astral religion. Let us recall once more what *batonebi* songs tell us during the ritual performed in the family where the person diseased with *batonebi* lies in bed. The performer of the song tells what happened. The thing is that the family of the diseased has been visited by honored guests, known as *batonebi*, who are gladly received by the family. There is the aunt of *batonebi* among the guests, who is hosted with special respect by the family: a carpet has been laid for her. Moreover, a soft blanket – *orkho'* is also spread for her. One of the main performers of the ritual, the narrator, in a musical form tells a sacral mythological story about the mother of *batonebi*, who in content is the same character, same one as the aunt of *batonebi*. In our opinion this is an epithet of one of the divine characters, Great mother Nana - mother of *batonebi*. In front of the mother and aunt of *batonebi* in the golden cradle lies a golden-haired divine hero wearing a shirt decorated with the moon and stars, and wrapped in a precious cloth. A string of rubies is tied to his cradle. The divine guests rock the cradle and sing "Nana" in a sweet voice. We think, that the text that follows this description, is the text of "Nana" sung to the divine infant by *batonebi* and which tells how seven siblings of *batonebi* came to the village, obviously the seven brothers are dressed in red *chokhas* and seven sisters, seven suns, are the children of Barbare the Sun goddess. They tell how they drop 7 bowls of pearls, a contagious disease over 7 villages, and then collect the disease and take it with them in the form of pearls. In their sacral "Nana", *batonebi* mention that they set up tents in 7 villages and had a good time. Certainly in this it is not difficult to see the ritual hospitality, sweet singing for a diseased person accompanied by *chonguri*. It is noteworthy that "Batonebis nana", the mythological narratives associated with great mother Nana, are reflected in the ritual performed for the diseased one. This is the case when the myth is mirrored in the ritual, when the myth penetrates into this world and becomes visible. The narrator of the sacral "Nana" text continues narration: she describes the land of *batonebi*, the land decorated with ivory, where there is eternal light, the wine-cellar of ruby, with a poplar growing nearby, a nightingale and a hawk sitting on it. It is a well-known fact, that some variants of the sacral text have a tall vine-plant, growing

¹ aka *orkhova* – a thick-pile carpet (Orbeliani, 1991, p. 607).

upwards along and climbs the tree, the fruit of which grants immortality, and a woman and a man who do not eat it, dies untimely. Finally, the singer-narrator, participant of the ritual finishes the text by spreading the carpet of violets and roses for the mother-aunt of *batonebi*, which is also ritualized. As a result of the research, Vera Bardavelidze came to the conclusion that the legends, fairy tales, beliefs and rituals discussed by her in this context present great mother Nana as the goddess of fertility and revival. *Batonebi* are the children of great mother Nana i.e. deity of the sun and have the same nature (Bardavelidze, 2007, pp. 86, 96); the fact that the above mentioned text also refers to great mother Nana as Barbare (St. Barbara) may prove the same. Vera Bardavelidze dedicated a fundamental study to the connection between Barbare and the Sun. It is also very clear that replacing mother Nana with Barbare would become possible only after the adoption of Christianity. It is well known that the deity of Sun eventually turns into great mother, a goddess, of course, in the cultures where the sun is feminine in nature. As Eliade notes, with the introduction of agriculture Paleolithic human attitude toward animals galls into crisis and mystical connection is established between a human and plant. Particularly, between a woman, plant, ground, as initially woman who took care of plants (Eliade, 2002; Lortkipanidze, 2002, p. 80). Great mother Nana must have emerged as a result of this process. As Vera Bardavelidze notes, great mother Nana herself participated in cosmic processes. She is in direct contact with the Sun, aunt of *batonebi* should be one of her epithets; as far as the Sun and the Moon are a husband and wife, a sister and a mother and a child (“The Sun lay down and gave birth to the Moon”). We know that being sister-brother, mother-child, and at the same time wife-husband is characteristic of coupled deities and is associated with cosmogony-renewal, is nurtured from the fundamental belief of pre-Christian mythological thought. Irakli Surguladze writes: “Ivane Javkhishvili paid special attention to their (of the Sun and Moon) gender and interdependence. It turned out that in oral monuments there is only one main pair, the Sun and the Moon, of which the Sun is sometimes mother, sometimes sister, and sometimes wife of the Moon” (Surguladze, 1993, p. 148). According to Vera Bardavelidze’s research, there is an opinion in Georgian ethnological science that Kal-Babar (Babbar / Barbal) the ancient Georgian (Svan) sun-goddess is a Sumerian sun deity; consequently, it must have come to us from the Mesopotamian world (Bardavelidze, 2006, pp. 125, 129, 131). According to Ivane Javkhishvili, despite being associated with the Christian world, Barbare must be a distorted form of the ancient pagan name (Javkhishvili, 1950, p.199). According to our research and that of Nana Bakhsoliani, we believe that *Babbar* should be an epithet of the deity and not its name itself. We suggest that Vera Bardavelidze's study of the solar, namely, sun-goddess Babbar / Barbal is the epithet of the sun goddess Nana, the traces of her cult in Georgia, particularly in Svaneti, have been studied by the mentioned scholar. When Vera Bardavelidze notes that the center of Babar’s worship was the city of Elasar, or Lars, she relies on the works of B. Turayev and A. Struve. Struve points that *Babbar*, having the nature of sun, was worshiped in Lars and in the city of Sipar Shamash, whose temple was called *E-Babbara* or the house of the luminary (Struve, 1941, pp. 68, 105). Therefore, *Babbar* is the epithet of Shamash, masculine deity of the sun, and means “luminary”. That is, *E-Babbara* refers to the house of the Sun Shamash and is the name of his temple (Turayev, 1935, p. 74). Mentioned by Knut Tallqvist: *é-bab-bar-a*, *ba-ab-ar*, *babbar-é*, *babar-šu-a* – are all epithets and mean: white, the temple of Shamash or “house of light”, the rising and setting sun (Tallqvist, 1938, pp. 43, 52, 72, 90). In addition to the above, the semantics of this word reveals a connection with burning, blazing, fire, a star (Giorgadze and Khazaradze, 2002, pp. 29, 30). Iv. Javkhishvili, on the one hand, notes that St. Barbare’s name could be assimilated by the Georgians only with Christianity; on the other hand, he adds that, proceeding from the ancient belief of *batonebi*, the name Barbare, mother of *batonebi*, should be a

distorted form of the ancient pagan name (Javakhishvili, 1950, p. 199). That female name Barbare means barbarian in Greek, a comer from a foreign country and also because the Greeks referred to the Persians, or their king, the Egyptians, and the slaves brought from Scythia, Phrygia, Caria, Cappadocia, as barbarians, this nickname may have become the reason for the origin of the name Barbare, which means a stranger, a comer from a foreign country. Its dissemination may be based on the nickname of a slave woman or women from one of these countries. It is believed that the word barbarian must have originated from doubling of *bar*. On the other hand, the Sumerian word barbarian, obviously doubled *bar*, meant a stranger, i.e. not of Babylonian or Sumerian descent. In our opinion it is not excluded that the mentioned word (barbarian) was introduced into the Greek world via the migration from Sumer to the Mediterranean. This could be the reason why the forms similar or identical to the female name Barbare may be found in the languages of the peoples of the Roman Empire. Thus, we think that in “Batonebis nana” Barbare must be St. Barbare substituted instead of goddess Nana. Such a replacement is fully in line with the context, since, like deity Nana, St. Barbare is also considered a healer of infectious diseases. Such a replacement is one of the clearest examples of the conversion from paganism to Christianity; manifestation of the religious worldview of the people who rejected one faith and adopted another. An example of how a pre-Christian worldview is Christianized. There is another Christian saint in Georgia who is begged for healing from children’s infectious diseases. This is John the Baptist. If Nana and *batonebi*, then St. Barbare, were asked for healing from smallpox and children’s and not only children’s infectious diseases throughout Georgia with some exceptions, according to the materials available to us, John the Baptist was considered to be the healer of these diseases only in Khevi. In the version of “Batonebis nana”, oral folklore has also preserved the name of St. Tekla, which we cannot confirm with other available materials today (Georgian Folk Poetry, 8, 1979, p. 127).² We think that in Georgia there should have been another saint who was asked for recuperation and healing from infectious diseases. We will talk about this saint below.

Smallpox (*variola vera* and *hemorrhagica*) is known to be the oldest infectious disease that spread to Europe in the fifth - seventh centuries, and often took the form of an epidemic in Middle Ages. This disease seriously hampered the development of Western society. Infections introduced by Europeans after the discovery of America, and especially smallpox, took lives of a large number of people (3.5 million). Smallpox is believed to have played a major role in the overthrow of the Inca and Aztec empires. In the eighteenth century, smallpox was also used as a biological weapon (Riedel, 2005, p. 21). The number of deaths caused by smallpox often exceeded the number of deaths in military actions (Simonyan, 2020, p. 95). The disease is estimated to have killed 150 million people. It is also known that two types of smallpox were distinguished in Georgia: female and male, Muslim and Christian, Georgian and Tatar. Georgian, Christian, female smallpox (natural smallpox), so to speak, was considered a local disease that was milder than the Muslim, Tatar, masculine and black (black pox), which according to people had come from some Muslim country. The latter was severe and characterized by high mortality (Riedel, 2005, pp. 21). As you know, universal vaccination of smallpox began in 1967 under the auspices of the World Health Organization, as a result of which the disease disappeared. Because of this, in 1980 the same organization recommended that the vaccination be discontinued. Main contribution to the fight against smallpox was made by Donald Henderson (Black pox, <https://www.health.gov.il/Russian/Subjects/disease/smallpox/Pages/default.aspx>; Suleimanov, 2013, p. 122-125). As V. Bardavelidze notes the epidemic of the

² “I will spread a carpet, *iavnantinao*, for *Batonebi*’s aunt, *iavnantinao*, for Tekle and Barbare, *iavnantinao*”

so-called Georgian pox took the form of a severe epidemic every 4-6 years. In the following years, the mortality rate decreased (Bardavelidze, 2007, pp. 78–81), and then there was the explosion again. The defeat of smallpox is recognized as the greatest event in the history of world medicine. When this fact was officially announced, many countries celebrated this with special events (Suleimanov, 2013, pp. 122-125).

Thus, smallpox was a serious global threat to mankind for many centuries. Nor were children's infectious diseases such as scarlet fever and measles considered safe. As a rule, religion was inseparable from the life of mankind. The wave of secularization may have invaded from the second half of the eighteenth century and accompanied technical revolution, formation of scientific fields, and reflection of a new vision in them. But this wave originated in the depths of Enlightenment. Until then, people had relied on supernatural forces as much as on the application of practical knowledge. It can be said that, where there were very few rational methods, people used the irrational more, but for them both were equally important. One of the best examples of this is the cult of great mother Nana and *batonebi*; the beliefs related to St. Barbare and John the Baptist. We believe that their resilience must be linked to the fact that smallpox and children's infectious diseases were dangerous and high-risk diseases, and that there were no radical rational means to defeat them.

But why did Georgian people choose great mother Nana, her children - *batonebi*, St. Barbara and St. John the Baptist as helpers? Why would a Georgian have faith in them? When Mircea Eliade speaks about the treatment of the diseased by a shaman, during which he tells the creation myth of given society with the accompanying songs, drawings, ritual, reviving what happened in the earliest, mythical time, he notes: at this time, “when symbolical creation of the universe takes place, modern diseased person completely returns to primordial fullness. Gigantic forces penetrate into him, and making creation possible at that time.... The diseased person goes through the profane time and gets completely stuck in the fullness of primordial time. He returns “back” to the beginning of the universe and thus attends the cosmogony ... During the healing ritual, the shaman not only briefly describes the cosmogony, but also invokes God and begs him to re-create the world ... Thus ... the purpose of the healing ritual is to return to the beginning” (Eliade, 2009, pp. 27, 29). According to Claude Levy-Strauss, individual and collective myths are interpenetrating, and both affect each other. Individual and collective myths differ only in the material by which they operate. Both types of myths have the same structure, for which the myth performs its symbolic function. The diseased is healed by the symbol that has its equivalent with meaning in another reality (Claude Levi-Strauss, 1963, pp. 200, 203). Figures of the unconscious always appeared in the form of protective and healing icons and in this way they moved from the psyche to the cosmos (Campbell, 1976, pp. 369). Symbol is an embodied archetype. In turn, it is a unit charged with psychic energy in the unconscious, which is directed into the space and returns to the psyche. This is Levi-Strauss' interpenetration and mutual influence. The feeling that is inappropriately symbolized may have an impact on health. This feeling is preserved and carried by the body (Miller, 2010, pp. 145). Possibly, in order for a trauma to be overcome, it must be symbolized for a person to some extent. We think that if a person meets the numinous, here too he will need a symbol as a mediator about which we will talk below.

According to Barbara Helen Miller, a Jungian psychotherapist and anthropologist, a good healer is the one who can help the sick and facilitate the process of symbolization. Sharing the opinion of Greenfield and Droogers, she notes that social and symbolic structures influence people in public life.

These structures contain the idea, which allow interpreting the events. In turn, this process, the interpretation of events, can create new meanings, which change social and symbolic structures. This is what Barbara Miller calls the formation process of idea. On the one hand, the combination of healing remedies (rational, empirical methods) generates symbols, which are regulated by the system of beliefs, and on the other hand, it is one of the main processes of symbol creation in culture. Naming and treatment, in turn, are the mechanisms for maintaining identity. What is harmful and damaging, is also symbolized in the healing practices of different cultures, (Miller, 2010, pp. 80, 81). We think that when a symbol, in our case the healing symbolism, symbolic structures, lose meaning, they lose equivalents in the other world; on the one hand, they can no longer affect people, and on the other hand, to these people they are meaningless. Thus, they lose the ability to influence. Closer the symbol and its meaning is to a person, the more perceived, the more effective is “irrational therapy”, as I call it.

The study in the existence of the Georgian cosmogony myth led us to the conclusion that it should be preserved in “Mze Shina”, “Zashinava”, “Mze chaghma chavida”, “Mze da mtvare” and “Zetsas viqav, zetsa vnakhe” (Georgian Folk Treasure, I, 1991, p. 8)³, “Batonebis nana” and their folk variants. As in the Egyptian myth, according to one of the version, cosmogony is also apparently connected with egg. In our myth too, the sun is born in the form of a golden egg. The egg, the yolk of which looks so much like the sun and which probably laid the foundation for such a myth-association. Obviously in our text this egg was also laid by the chaos duck, because myth-poetic association compared it to a beautiful duckling through a pearl (Sakhokia, 1979, p. 372).⁴ Heaven and earth, light and darkness appear after the division. First the cosmic duck gives birth to the sun in the form of a golden egg, and then the Sun gives birth to the Moon. In turn the sun and the moon are siblings, the children of the cosmic duck, followed by the appearance of a future hero / god / king. The hero also has siblings in the form of stars. The newborn is a golden-haired baby. It is the developed image of this Georgian metanarrative, the creative myth, that is reflected in the text and ritual of “Batonebis nana”, which, until recently, was performed for the diseased with smallpox; the ritual with Nana – Georgian great mother of life, revival of nature, reproduction, as central figure. If the mentioned ritual is truly a developed form of cosmogonic metanarrative, then according to Eliade it undoubtedly is the ritual with a powerful healing effect, in the developed form of this meta myth with given symbolic structure charged with meaning, the embodiment of the greatest life-giving energy by the bed of the diseased. Its sustainability may also be explained by this. Actually, this metanarrative is a metasymbol consisting of the structure incarnated by symbols. It has a strong healing effect, which makes it sustainable in everyday life. There is another important aspect of this issue, which is related to ritual in general.

The function of the ritual is to recreate order in the world. It transforms a person, e.g., through the initiation ritual, causes rain, gives health to the diseased, etc. Allows experiencing collectivity and solidarity; experiencing connection with the other world, with gods, deities, angels, supernatural forces, connects with past and future. The ritual structure can be divided into three main phases: separation, transformation and reincorporation or return again. During separation, the ritual participant loses the sense of real time and space. Transformation consists of liminality and

³ They may be an archetypal example of the "Heavenly journey" (see Marie-Louise von Franz, *The Feminine in Fairy Tales*, Shambala, Boston and London, 1993, p. 155).

⁴ In his dictionary Tedo Sakhokia defines pearls as follows: a person or a subject, or absolute, beautiful, delicate, and precious.

communitas. During the former, the ritual participant is between two identities: neither here nor there, neither old nor yet new. It is a condition when a person is beyond time and social structures. The state of liminality is sacral, strong, and sacred. During communitas there is an experience of unity that is devoid of segregation. Here segregation may be between the leader and the community. During reincorporation, after the transition phase the participants experience a renewed sense of identity in the society and in space. They return renewed to the community. One of the most common forms of reincorporation is common feast after the ritual (Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou, 2012, pp. 296-302.). But the most important is the middle stage of the ritual, especially in our case or during irrational therapy; particularly important is liminal phase, when, in our opinion, the ritual participant meets the numinous. According to Eric Erikson, the numinous in the ritual makes us experience ourselves, know that I am (Wulff, 1997, pp. 534). The term was introduced in the nineteenth-twentieth centuries by Rudolf Otto – famous German theologian, philosopher and religious scholar. According to him, there is a numinous consciousness or a complex emotional state containing an irrational component, which is an irrational feeling. Otto notes, that understanding his reasoning will be difficult for those who have not experienced this numinosity (Wulff, 1997, pp. 534). Jung noted, that the archetype, which is expressed by a symbol, is mesmerizing or numinous, it allows us experience eternity and does not depend on our willpower. It was Jung who introduced the notion of numinous into psychology and psychoanalysis. He believed that myth acts directly on the unconscious because of numinosity. Regardless of whether it is realized or not (Jung, 1968, v. 9, 342). The ego or I want to interfere with the autonomy and numinosity of the archetypal process; however, it does not know how this should happen. The essence of religion is a practical discussion of this process (Jung, 1989, pp. 353). The archetype is given numinosity by its own dynamism (Jung, 1975, v.8, pp. 275). That is, specific energy of archetypes helps us experience numinosity. Social systems of primitive societies, which lost their numinosity, disintegrated and collapsed. “The mere use of words is futile if you do not know what they stand for. This is particularly true in psychology, where we speak of archetypes like the anima and animus, the wise old man, the great mother, and so on. You can know about all the saints, sages, prophets, and other godly men, and all the great mothers of the world, but if they are mere images whose numinosity you have never experienced, it will be as if you were talking in a dream, for you do not know what you are talking about. The words you use are empty and valueless, and they gain life and meaning only when you try to learn about their numinosity, their relationship to the living individual. Then only do you begin to understand that the names mean very little, but that the way they are related to you is all-important.”– Jung writes (Jung, 1973, vol. 18, p. 257). Obviously, the collective symbols associated, with great mother Nana, *batonebi*, St. Barbare, St. John the Baptist were distinguished by a strong numinosity for the community; this was related to the recovery of the diseased. People had both a strong faith and strong fear, due to the failure to comply with the established, to great mother Nana – the giver of universal life, and to her *batonebi*, to St. Barbare, the healer of diseases and rash, and John the Baptist is the patron saint of children. As mentioned above, in Georgia, in addition to Tekla, there should have been another saint the helper during illness. As a result of many-years’ work throughout almost all Georgia, our attention was drawn to the fact that many villages had the churches or the ruins of the church constructed in the name of St. Marineh. In our opinion, people asked her for health, possibly even during epidemics and infectious diseases. However, this time we have not been able to obtain ethnographic data related to this. The only proof of this I found in Niko Lomouri’s (1852-1915) story "Little Friends", where Saint Barbara, together with Saint Marineh, are asked to restore sight to a little girl who suffered from measles. People made small balls

of wax like eyes, string them on a thread and put on a child who lost sight because of infectious disease. Then bring them to St. Marinet's church as an offering, slaughter an offering and vigil the whole night (Little Friends, <https://library.iliauni.edu.ge/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/67-niko-lomouri-krebuli.pdf>, Lomouri, pp.106, 110). In the Catholic Church, Great Martyr Marineh together with St. Barbare and St. Catherine was among the fourteen so-called helper-saints, whose faith and worship come from the fourteenth century Europe, when Bubonic plague spread there. It was these 14 saints who were asked for help during the epidemic in Europe.

Finally, I think the symbol that has an equivalent in the other world is the opportunity for a person to meet the numinous, accept and experience it. In my opinion, when meeting the numinous the human would not withstand its grandeur and horror without the symbol. Thus, the symbol is a kind of curtain filled with mental energy, and at the same time, a bridge between the surreal and the real worlds. Moses himself could not see or meet the Lord without the burning blackberry.

In my opinion, it is the numinosity experienced via the symbol with the equivalent in the other world that can heal a person, which can be accomplished through a ritual based on a myth, on religious beliefs.

I also think that basing on the research results, it can be said that in the fight against infectious diseases in Georgia, mainly the great mother and goddesses were asked for healing, which once again emphasizes the importance of women, their power and historical role in Georgia.

A symbol is an embodied, realized archetype that has the meaning equivalent in the other world. The elements, archetypes charged with the psychic energy of the unconscious, are realized in the symbol. Symbols - these unconscious icons also have a protective and healing effect; they are sent into the space and return to the Earth and consciousness.

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