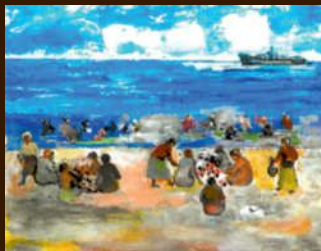
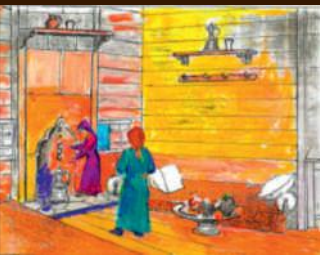


FOLK TRADITIONS AND RITUALS IN AJARA





Folk Traditions and Rituals in

AJARA





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An Ajarian peasant has suffered a lot through centuries: what a millstone did not turn on his head, what a windstorm, pain and misfortune he endured, but nothing could change his spirit, he could not forget the heritage of his ancestors, nothing could weaken the image imprinted in his soul and mind, and in all kinds of hardships, his soul blew like ember to the heritage of his ancestors, he preserved it in his heart, he wrapped it tenderly and, even in that unbearable hardship, he passed it on to his heirs by whispering, hiding it, and hinting, and with great efforts he brought the grace of the Georgian land, the scream of the Georgian spirit, Georgian tradition, Georgian holiday, and even today he meets the new year in the manner of his grandfather, blesses the bride, kneels down at the vine, ploughs, sows and cares for the preserved Georgianship like his grandmother cared for cross on the corn pie, because he knows very well that the universality of each nation is revealed in traditions. All nations, all ethnic groups exist as long as they maintain their identity, cultural identity embodied in traditions. That is why the established customs, unwritten customary norms and the laws of the fathers and grandfathers have survived in Adjara to this day.

Traditions and rituals are a kind of cultural monuments, as well as homes in Lazeti and towers in Svaneti, ancient fortresses and church-monasteries, because "if according to the monuments we study the art of the past era, the construction techniques, we find out the talent and skill of the masters, the manifestation of holidays and their protection, Also, it reliably leads to the disclosure of the moral wealth of the nation" (J. Rukhadze). Thus, traditions are important for studying the history and cultural heritage of each ethnic group.

In Ajara, as well as in other parts of Georgia, traditions and rituals have survived in a rather transformed form, as they were created and refined over the centuries. They preserve not only the empirical experience accumulated during the long economic and labour process, but also many different traditions related to the economic activity and life of the people, many important elements of spiritual culture: beliefs, representations, magical-religious rituals and holidays, symbols, verbal magic, various aspect of folk religious thoughts.

The uniqueness of the ethnographic heritage of Ajara lies in the fact that, despite the three-hundred-year domination of the Turks, even in the conditions of the conflict of religious beliefs and cultural values, the traditions formed over the centuries have been preserved.



 FOLK TRADITIONS AND RITUALS IN AJARA

Today, when a new worldview position is being formed in the rapidly changing cultural and political situation, new value orientations are emerging, many folk traditions are literally dying before our eyes, the presentation of rituals preserved in existence has got particular importance in preserving the nation's spiritual values and mentality.

Traditions in Ajara are preserved in the form of a complex cluster. Fragments of different religions and eras coexist in them. That is why it is difficult to separate these traditions according to their functional purpose. We tried to divide them into three main categories, although this classification is conditional, because each ritual contains many different moments.



RITUALS ASSOCIATED WITH DIFFERENT STAGES OF HUMAN LIFE





Traditions and rituals were related to the life cycle of a person, reflecting the path of a person's life from birth to death, everyday life and family traditions. Different stages of life, activities, raising children, eating or other moments of daily life obeyed certain rules developed over the centuries and were imbued with cultic content, because people lived in a reality nourished by religious ideas. What did the Adjarian man not do: he welcomed the new year with hope, planted and sowed in the spring, he got the harvest of his labor in the autumn with joy, he spent the long winter nights in spinning wool thread and weaving, he had a wedding ceremony or swinging a cradle, he welcomed a guest with joy, and he met an enemy with a Machakhela gun, he had fun or mourned, he was always entrusted to God, he prayed to him for his family, his wife, and expressed his gratitude to God. That's why the traditions related to different stages of life, together with rational actions, contained a lot of celebrations, magical actions, prohibitions, fun and games, rituals to protect against negative forces, verbal magic, sacrifices, etc.



RITUALS ASSOCIATED WITH MARRIAGE

Marriage is the most important event of family life. Traditionally, the marriage of young people in Adjara was considered a matter for the whole family and relatives. They were involved in all stages of the wedding cycle. Usually, the bride was chosen during a wedding of others, Nadi (helping each other in harvest), Shumatoba or some other various holidays. Mother's brother - Taya, along with his parents, enjoyed great rights in selecting the couple to be married. The selection of the couples was based on the interests of the families. Along with the personal qualities of the bride and groom, the prestige and honor of their family, the influence and authority of the family clan were of crucial importance.

Of course, over time, the wedding rituals changed and only the memory of the people preserved the betrothal, the engagement in the cradle or the request for the present. In this chapter we will try to recall some of the forgotten stages and traditional elements of the wedding cycle.



MATCH-MAKING

Choosing a daughter as a bride or a daughter-in-law was called "preserving", "keeping an eye" on a girl. If the woman was liked, a match-maker was involved in the case, who resolved the issue of marriage between two families. It was the match-maker who went to the young girl's family and informed the wishes of the "fan". The case was not resolved by this one visit. If the family did not want to marry their daughter to the proposed person, they would refuse to the match-maker. However, the latter did not give up so easily. After several visits and refusals, if the match-maker still came, the table was no longer set. In some places, as a sign of final rejection, the head of the family "broke a stick" and put it on the table (Shuakhevi). This was a sign of his final decision. "After breaking the stick, Muravi (Mouravi, match-maker) could not afford to





visit once more" - they said. If the case was resolved positively, they would say "the promise, the word has come out", "the case is tied up" (Kobuleti), "the case is settled" (Khelvachauri). The match-maker, waiting for the good end of the case, sometimes had a ring or other thing with him, and in case of final agreement, he left the present for the girl's parents as the sign of strengthening the promise. However, in most cases, "getting the word out" or a verbal promise was enough.



ENGAGEMENT

After the case was resolved positively, an agreement was made on the day of the engagement and the delivery of the presents (bokhcha). For the engagement, they chose days that were considered lucky - Saturday or Friday of the full moon, so that the family of the newly married couple would be full of goodness and joy like this moon. The pack of presents intended for the engagement included the necessary gifts for the bride: jewellery and rings, which the betrothed woman wore on her forehead, and it was considered especially honourable to receive a silver belt for the fiancée. They also brought a gift to the mother of the betrothed. If the wedding could not take place for a long time or the engaged girl was so young that they could not get married yet, along with the engagement gifts, the fiancé would also bring her clothes and other personal items - this was called wearable clothing. In Upper Adjara, the ceremony of promising (aghdi cutting) was often performed at the time of engagement.







OFFICIAL FORM OF MARRIAGE (AGHDI CUTTING)

Aghdi cutting is an official ceremony of marriage according to Muslim rules. At that time, a religious person - mullah in the Arabic language established the Nikakh - a marriage document, where the amount of money that the fiancé's family had to pay to the woman was determined, both at the time of marriage and in case of divorce. The couple themselves did not participate in this ceremony. Their consent was confirmed to the clergy by representatives of fiancé and fiancée. After the ceremony, the marriage was considered officially concluded.



NISHANLOBA

Sometimes quite a long time passed from the engagement to the wedding, so it was allowed to have a relationship between the bride and groom before marriage – so-called nishanloba. It was an old tradition of meeting the betrothed couple at fiancée's house. The first day of the engagement - the first arrival of the groom to the bride's family was officially celebrated with "invitation". It was a ceremony almost equal to a wedding. After the festive dinner, the fiancé stayed in the fiancée's family. After invitation ceremony, the son-in-law often went to fiancée's house, but he avoided meeting with his future father-in-law. The young man managed to secretly visit his future wife with the help of women close to his bride and sometimes even his mother-in-law; he often sneaked into the house through the window. The betrothal could last more than a year, and the woman could even have a child in her father's family, which was not considered shameful. Such a child was called Sasela. Even after giving birth, a woman could stay in her home and bring a full-grown child to her husband's family. This tradition has survived for a long time in Upper Ajara.





JACKAL WEDDING

After the engagement, the families of the betrothed agreed on the time of the wedding. Preparations for the wedding took place in compliance with all the rules, although before that a relatively small, so-called Jackal-wedding was held at the bride's house. The bridegroom himself did not go to the ceremony. For this purpose, the best men were sent - the groom's father, uncles, brothers, male relatives, and groomsmaid - a female relative, who had to take the bride to the groom. The bridal party was accompanied by musicians with their drum-zurna and chiboni. The wedding in the woman's family lasted for several hours - there was a feast, laughter, and fun.

At the end of the wedding, the drummer would place the drum in front of groomsmaid of the groom and say - "The belt broke on the drum". This ritual the sign of the end of the wedding in the bride's family. Groomsmaid would give gifts to the drummer and call the guests to leave. Before the bride was taken out of the house, she was covered with a wedding headdress - tvagh//duagh. Future father-in-law gifted the bride's mother with the "shield for breast"//"milk shield". The bride's grandmother, brother or cousin used to close the door from which she was to be taken out. Future father-in-law or the groomsmaid had to pay money here as well. This ritual had different names like door throwing or door locking (karis sadamkrelo//karsadamkrelo// karis sadamketo//Kafikharji). After that, the bridal party would prepare for leaving – "Let's sing the song of the road" and follow the bride riding a horse with joyful noise and "Orira" song. Before arriving at groom's house, they sang "Mgazavrul", "Khasanbegura", "Makruli" and sent the bride to the groom's family with great noise and celebration.







MUZHDEBALISHI (PILLOW FOR HAPPY NEWS)

Mujdej//Mujduj, the bride's male relative, who was specially chosen, was sent to the groom's house to take "Mujde pillow" for happy news, specially sewn by the bride, with a small mirror sewn and embroidered in the middle. The head of the family was waiting for the herald outside the yard, at whose request he brought out the bridegroom hiding in the yard. The herald was supposed to give the "Muzhde pillow" to the bridegroom, but first he would trick him - he would give him the pillow in vain, and then he would "throw" suddenly to him. The bridegroom had to grab the pillow and run away, but if he failed, he would be laughed at and ashamed. The hosts would offer sherbet to the herald, tie a red bow around his shoulder and present him with a spit - "shashlig". "Muzhde pillow" was not used and was kept hanging in the corner of the room for years.



CHANGING ENMITY INTO FRIENDLY RELATION

Earlier, if for some reason enmity broke out between two families or clans, the elder members of that clan or family tried to reconcile them and make a truce. One of the real ways to avoid enmity and bloodshed was to be related. "Let's get rid of enmity", they decided and married the woman of one family who was in disagreement to the son of another family or clan. This woman became a respected person for both parties. She was called "a woman given in blood" because she cleansed the blood of both families, both surnames.

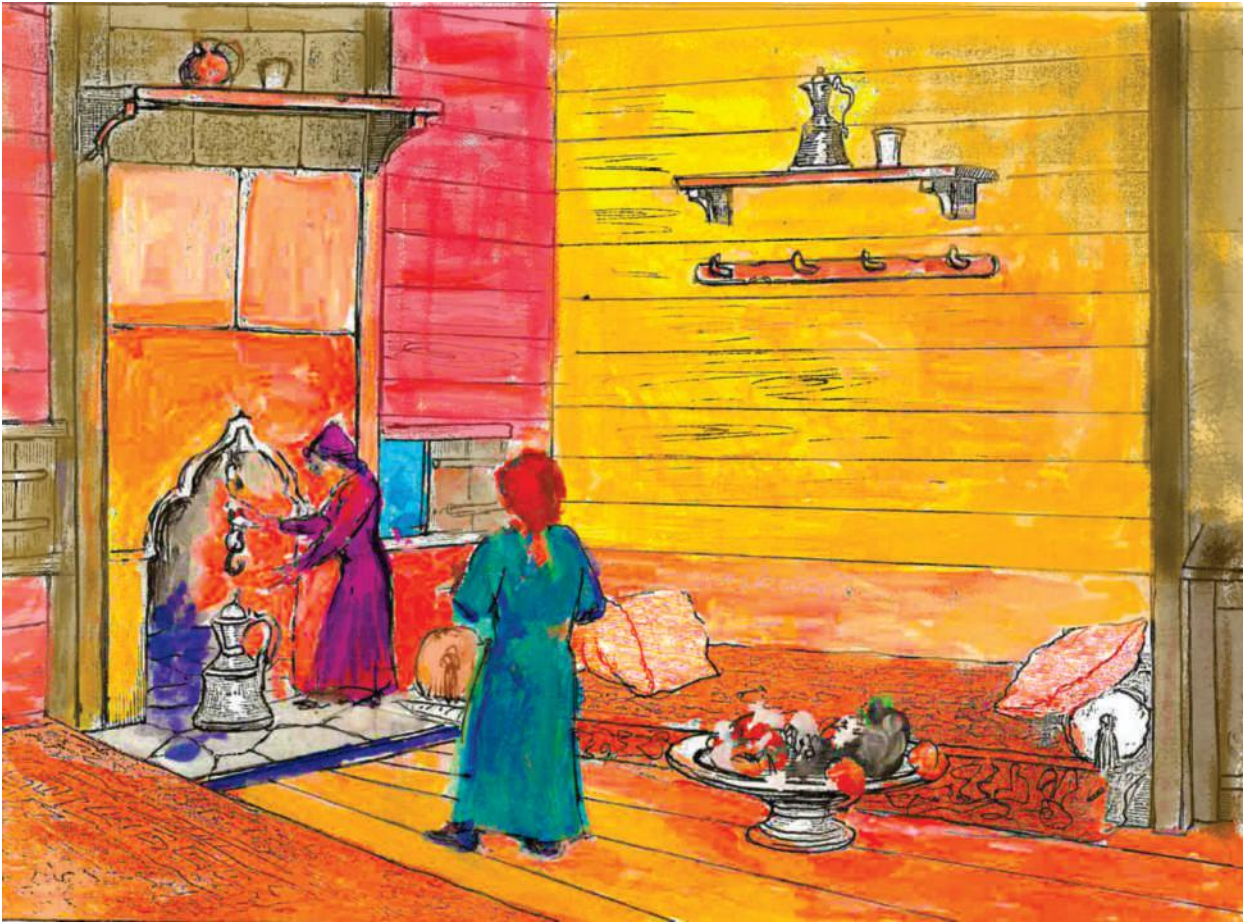




WEDDING FOR HOSTING A BRIDE

In the groom's family, a "hosting" wedding was held, where, traditionally, many rules were fulfilled to "ensure" the further happiness and progress of the newly created family. The bride who entered the yard was not taken down from the horse by her bridesmaid until the father-in-law gave the so-called "stirrup gift". The mother-in-law used to wait at the door of the house, she would take the daughter-in-law to the hearth/fireplace and in order for her to look happy and easily integrate into the new family, and she would follow various rules: She would make the bride put her foot on the hearth, touch the hand on the chain of the firebox, take maize pie from the clay pan, anoint the dough on the fireplace, and finally put her honeyed finger on the hearth - she would be "honey-handed".







TAKING OFF THE TVAGHI//DWAGHI (HEADWEAR)

On the day of the wedding, before leaving the parents' house, the bride's father or brother would put a wedding headdress on the bride's head, a red chador-tvagli//dwaghi covered over a cone-shaped cardboard hat, which was quite long and reached the bride's knees or ankles. During the wedding ceremony, in the bridegroom's family, after dinner, in a separate room reserved for the bride, the bride's brother or cousin - was invited, who would use the tip of a dagger to take off the dwaghi//tvaghi of the bride, stick his dagger into the cooked chicken and khachapuri and would run out. In some places, they used to stick the twaghi with the tip of a dagger to the top of the door, or they would hand it over to the mother-in-law and sing to her: "Hold it and crush well, so that not to be mocked". She didn't back down either, she would sit on the twaghi, put it into her inner pocket, even walk on it. Sometimes the bride's relative himself would take the twaghi and wrap it around the shoulders of any of the young girls, thereby hinting that he "had his eye" on her. The groom's side was given the opportunity to meet the bride after the taking off the tvaghi//dwaghi ceremony. Each visitor should receive a "face seeing" gift for the bride.



OCCUPYING THE TABLE

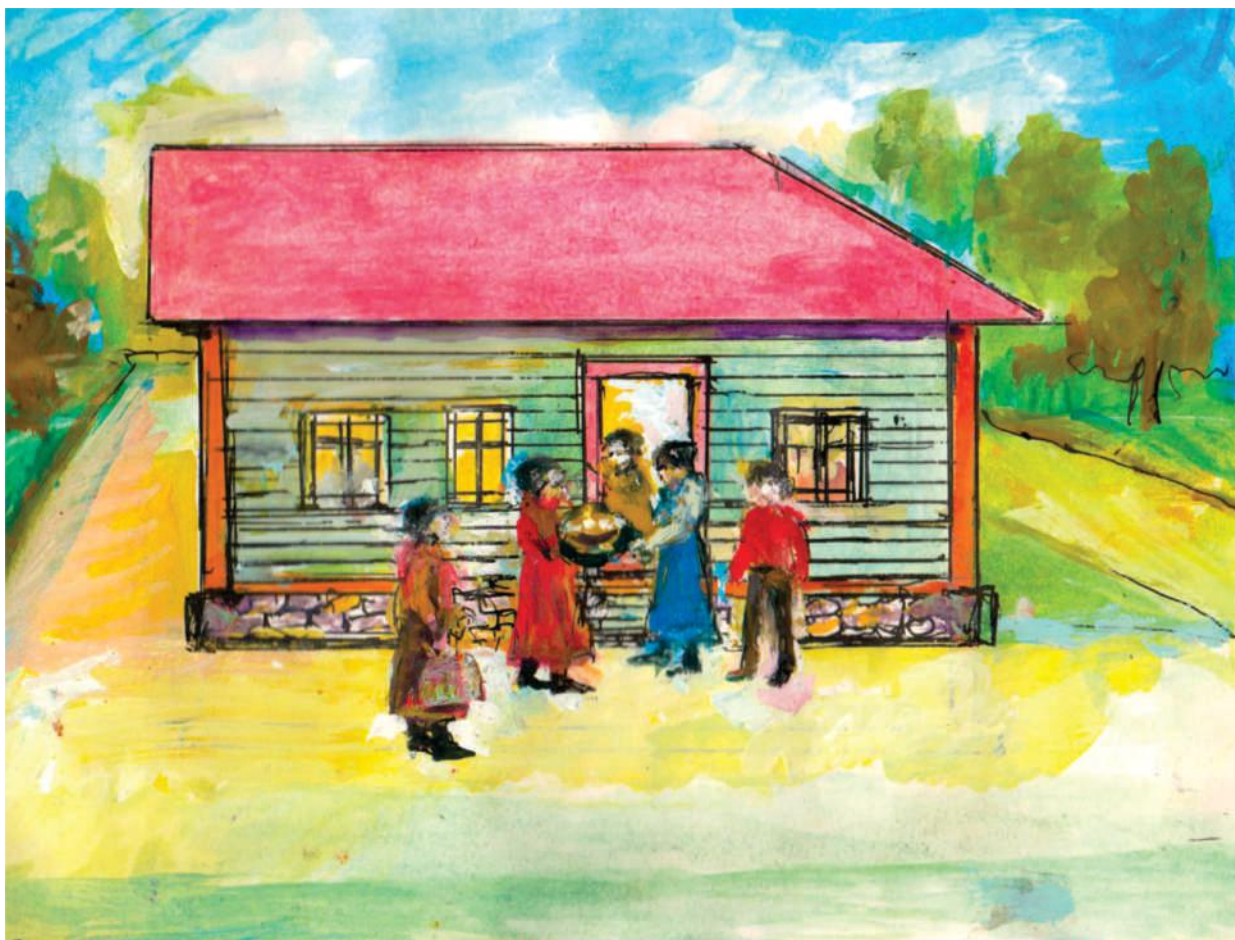
In the "hosting" wedding held in the groom's family, the bride's maids enjoyed great rights: They were captious, demanding, and they could ask for a new, hard-to-get-to-prepare dish or something else. This was called Rusum. As long as the hosts did not perform Rusum, the bridal party did not leave the table. This was the rule of occupying the table. There were several tables at the wedding. The invited guests had to be seated one by one, and "occupying the table" prevented the host from entertaining other guests. After meeting their demands, the bridal party "gave the table" to the hosts - they "released" the occupied table. If the participants of the bridal party were dissatisfied with something, they would shoot before leaving. This was considered a shame for the host family. "The party burnt the gun over us" - that's what they would say in this case.



TAKING “DINNER” TO THE BRIDE

Parents' care for their married daughter never stopped after her marriage. The mother and father of the woman in the new family were participants in all the important moments of her life. One of the necessary rituals was to bring "dinner" - various kinds of sweets - to a married woman. In Kobuleti, in addition to the commonly accepted sweets, it was necessary to present wholly cooked turkey and pies. The fact that bringing "dinner" is an ancient rule is also confirmed by the legend related to it. Prophet Noah had three carpenters and all three of them were promised to marry his daughter. When the time came to fulfil the promise, the bewildered man came up with such a plan: he locked one of his daughters, one female dog and one female donkey in the room and asked God for help. In the morning, he found three beautiful daughters in the room and let them to marry the carpenters. In two weeks, Noah visited his daughters with a specially prepared gift - dinner, and then he told that one of his daughters was very stubborn, another one was very evil and another was God-fearing and quiet. This is how he recognized his real daughter and the custom of serving dinner has also remained from that time - this is what is believed in Adjara.







WEDDING TRADITIONS IN LAZETI

For centuries, the Laz people have firmly adhered to traditional wedding customs, so all the stages of the wedding cycle are well preserved in the Laz ethnographic existence to this day, starting with mediation and ending with a beautiful, joyful, colorful wedding celebration. They are an interesting part of all Georgian wedding traditions and, along with similar rituals, are also characterized by local peculiarities.



MECHKINEY

Mechkinei is a custom of engagement before birth, which has been preserved by the ethnographic existence of Lazeti. If the friends' wives got pregnant at the same time, in order to maintain closeness, the future parents would negotiate that if they had a son and a daughter, they would make them marry each other. There was a ritual of engagement in the cradle, which was done by placing the cradles beside each other. After the birth of the children, the girl's side held an engagement-like party – so-called a small dugun. The son's family served gold jewellery to the future bride lying in the cradle, and the girl's family prepared various dishes, cakes and pastries for the guests. After that, the families were considered related.



ENGAGEMENT

The most common form of engaging a desired girl in Lazeti was patting on the girl's shoulders to be married or taking off her headwear. The young guy waited for the appropriate moment and, if possible, would remove the headdress of the desired woman or pat her lightly on the shoulder. Khementkhimei - the betrothed young woman could not marry anyone else. The guy kept her headwear, and if someone tried to get in relation with her, then he would show him the headscarf and thus remind him that he had already engaged the girl. If the young woman did not like the suitor, she could sneak away and marry someone else. This was called omtinu – marrying in secret.







MATCH-MAKING

The most common method of choosing a bride was match-making. An authoritative and respected elderly woman or man was chosen as a match-maker. Preference was given to mother's and father's brother. While visiting the family of the bride-to-be for the first time, the match-maker would bring sweets with him. If the case did not seem to be successful, then the match-maker was given back the candy he had brought, but if the case was to be crowned with success, the candy was opened and served to the match-maker. After receiving a positive answer, the match-maker would agree on the date of engagement with the bride's family.



SIJALIKOBA

After the engagement, the groom, the so-called Nishanli Sija, used to start going to meet his bride secretly before marriage to the bride's family. The groom's secret visits to the bride's paternal family took place on Thursdays. Everyone knew about it, but the bride's close relatives and family circle pretended as if did not notice anything. Thursday was considered the day of grooms. During the Sijalikoba, the groom was treated with respect in the future father-in-law's house, and the women even hosted him with sweets, although they avoided the men of the family. Sijalikoba in Lazeti could last for two or three years.





AGDI OKHVENU//NISHANI OKHVENU

Agdi Okhvenu was the engagement ceremony. A party was held in the bride's family, during which the mullah had to confirm the official document they had created, Agdi Nikkhi ("Deed of Engagement"), which defined the rights and obligations of the parties. About twenty to thirty people attended the engagement. The groom's family used to bring gold jewellery for the bride. The bride, on the other hand, prepared a gift bouquet to bring to the groom's family. The gift bouquet was home-woven and hand-made items intended for mother-in-law, father-in-law and sister(s)-in-law, and their children.



KUCKHESH QTALA (KUCKHESH QTALASHI)

Kuckhesh Qtala – “the turning of the foot” was called the bride's visit to her father's house on the fourth or seventh day. She usually brought specially made sweets with her. The bride stayed at her father's house for a day or two and then returned to her new home. After that, the son-in-law visited the father-in-law's side. That was the ending of the wedding period.





CHANDA

Chanda is a traditional wedding in Lazeti. Today, under the influence of Turkish, they call it dugun. The most desirable time for a wedding was autumn. No big table was set in the bride's – noghame's family. Sija - the groom's family needed more preparation. The head of the house led the wedding preparations. Guests were invited three days before the wedding. On the day of the wedding, his groom's makai – close relatives and friends - was going to pick up the bride without the groom. On the day of the wedding, the bride was specially prepared and dressed up. The cousins would wash the feet, putting money between the sock and shoes, which the bride would give to the girl who washed the feet when she arrived at the groom's house. Before leaving, the head of the household - Papuli (grandfather) prayed to bride's party. When the bride was taken out of the house, the queen's brother - Juma or cousin - Jumadishi had to stick daggers on both sides exit door, and groom's party had to cover the daggers with a banknotes. After that, daggers were pulled out of the doors. The bride was taken to the groom's father's house with a bridal veil. The bridal veil was to be taken off by the future husband for the bride. Having stepped into the groom's house, the bride was thrown over rice, money and candy by the mother-in-law – damtire and bride and groom together were to walk under daggers. Then the father-in-law and the brother-in-law would stick these daggers in the door. On the second day of the wedding, new relatives visited the bride and gave her gifts, and on the third day, in the morning, the bride was let to bake chadi. After that, she was involved in family affairs.





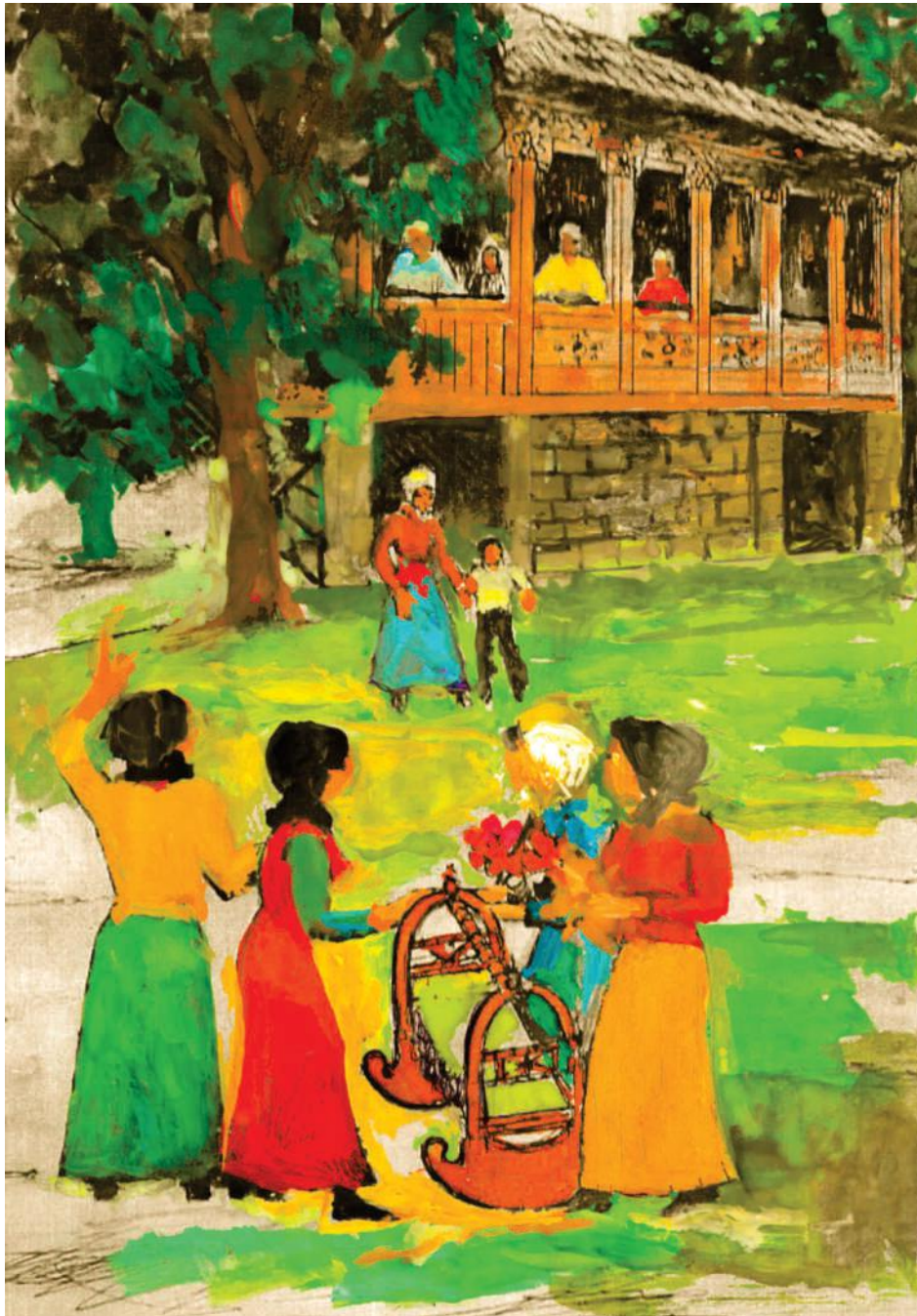


CHILDBIRTH/TAKING THE CRADLE

The birth of a child was greeted with great joy in Ajara. At first, the baby was placed in Khochichi (a board with soft matrass) until forty days after the birth, the grandparents gave the grandchild a cradle decorated with wood carve, specially made blanket-mattress and embroidered bed-sheets, decorated with rattles, because it was considered the duty of the parents of a woman to bring a cradle to a newborn baby. The family of a son-in-law held a special party for this day - posterity. For the delivery of the cradle, the family of a daughter-in-law invited their relatives, mostly women, who brought gifts for the mother and the baby. The family of a father prepared special meals for the posterity, on which there had to be "boy's porridge".

The baby was placed in the cradle for the first time during the birth, necessarily on the full moon, so that the child would be "full" like the moon, on a good, "lucky" day, so that the child would "be successful". The honoured guests of the ceremony were musicians, mostly bagpipers, because the birth of a baby had a festive character, and the invited women performed the dance "Fadiko" and the "Nai-nai, Ninaina" dance, the same as the women's choral dance, which was not accidental at all, because it was dedicated to Nana - the ancient goddess of fertility and childbearing - who was also considered the protector of babies.







TRADITIONS OF UPBRINGING A CHILD

Over the centuries, Georgians have created a very peculiar and original system of spiritual and physical upbringing and development of children, which contributed to the integration of the child into the society, his formation as a full-fledged member of the society. For this purpose, Georgian traditional society had developed the rules of children's initiation, i.e. the transition from one status to another, from one social status to another.

At a young age, the upbringing of the child was entirely the responsibility of the mother. She was obliged to pay attention to the upbringing of the child. In the later period, the methods of raising girls and boys were distinguished. From about the age of 6, the father was more responsible for raising the boy and preparing him for life. From the age of 6-7, the father taught his son how to ride a horse, shoot a gun and hunt, herd cattle, chop firewood, etc. The girl grew up under the influence of her mother, grandmother and aunts. Children's place was at home - near the hearth, in the women's section, in the children's corner. Along with the age change and the new situation, the child gradually moved towards the senior's part.



“NAVEL CUTTING”

The first initiation of a child into the family took place immediately after its birth. The child was usually delivered to the obstetrician – “Ebe”, and depending on whether it was a girl or a boy, the "navel cutting" ceremony was held. A son's navel would be "cut" on some agricultural or workshop tool (hoe, spade, plough, anvil...), and a girl's navel would be cut on a spindle weight, hoping she would love housework and fancywork. The rituals performed to celebrate the birth of a child in the family also include the tradition of preparing a special dish. In case of maleness, they made “boy's porridge”, and in case of birth of a girl, they made pilaw.







“GETTING OUT OF THE BOSOM”

The ethnographic existence of Ajara preserved the custom of simulating death-resurrection and rebirth. In case of frequent deaths of children in the family in Ajara, when a new baby was born, the child was taken to a happy mother with many children. The woman would hold the child in a wide shirt – “she would make the baby come out of the bosom” as a sign of rebirth. The child would also be given a new name. Or they weighed the newborn baby and buried a fish of the same weight in the ground. It was a symbolic exchange of the newborn's life with a sacrifice. According to popular belief, after such a symbolic "death-resurrection" ceremony there was no longer any danger to the baby's life.



DETERMINATION OF FUTURE ACTIVITY

In order to obtain the child's social status, the future activity was of great importance, that's why they tried to predetermine it in different ways. When the child started talking, they would show him the fur of different animals (goat, cow, or sheep) and ask him to pick it. Whatever fur he chooses, he will be lucky, i.e. he will be lucky to have a cow or a sheep or a goat - they would say. Or they would arrange various agricultural tools and believe that the one he chose would be used in that activity in the future. Choosing the path of life was determined not only by fortune-telling or by the child's choice of any item, but also by the so-called “the magic of the first day”. The first cut hair, cut nail, first tooth were hidden in the forge, field, and cowshed or in the foundation of another agricultural building, so that the child would be able to do this activity in the future.



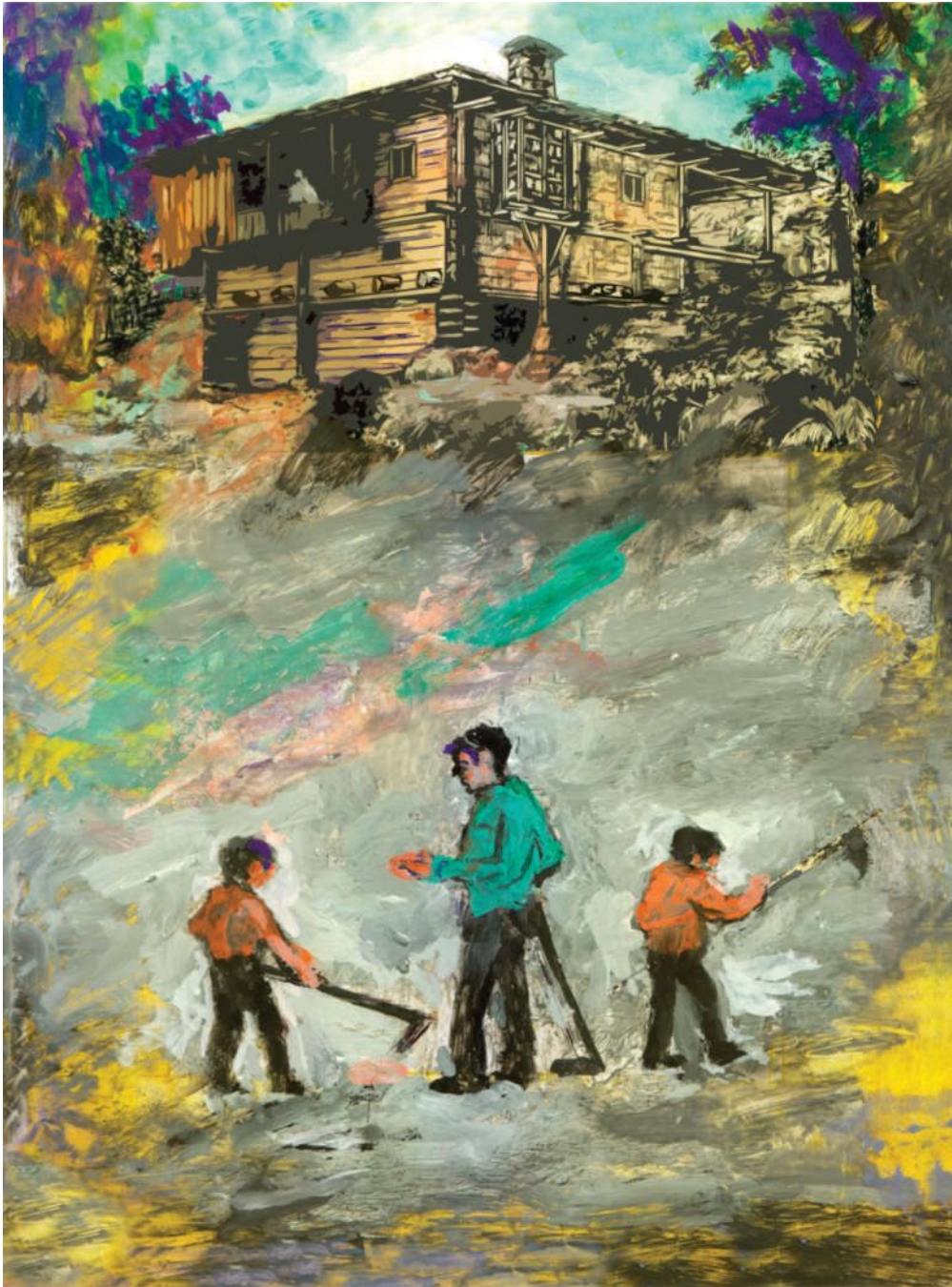




ACCEPTING IN “MANIDI” (WORKING PROCESS)

Fathers usually led the involvement of boys in agricultural activities. The boys got used to herding cattle since childhood, according to the story, "at first we were entrusted with goats and sheep, then with calves, and finally with cattle. In the summer, we took the children to the mountain. They helped us herd cattle. They also helped us to sell dairy products". The boys also took part in hoeing. They were delivered hoes of suitable size worked, but the involvement of the adolescent in farming activities with the elders was formalized during the nadi (working together in order to help each other in farming). When the son would become 16-17 years old, he would be invited to Nadi. This was called "accepting in the manid". After that, the teenager passed to a new level - he became a full-fledged member of the community of men.







TRADITIONS OF UPBRINGING GIRLS

The women of the family - grandmothers, mothers, and aunts - took care of the girls' activities. The girls participated in processing dairy products, washing dishes, cleaning the house and yard. Girls were often taken to mountains. From the age of 5-6, they were incorporated into the knitting process. From the age of 6-7, they were taught to knit, sew, and embroider. First, we started to teach the girl with simple embroidery, and then they made ornaments». Climbing to a new level in his social status was marked by special customs: A lump of clay or a piece of pottery would be placed on the girl's head and a small piece she had woven would be burned on top of it. It was believed that after that she would fall in love with weaving and master this work perfectly.







EXPERIENCES AND PROHIBITIONS

In almost all spheres of life in Ajara there are customs of certain actions or prohibitions. The reasons for this prohibition are forgotten. They are preserved only because it "comes from the ancients" - by tradition it is passed from one generation to another. But, nevertheless, their violation is prohibited, because they believe that in case of violation, human health, life, and activity will be in danger. That is why they care not to break them - they fear and avoid it. Many defence mechanisms have also been developed to protect these norms of behaviour created over generations.



MARRIAGE BANS

In Ajara, many types of prohibitions were associated with different moments of marriage. A widow or a spinster was not desired to participate in decorating the bride. That's why only happy women with husbands and children were employed at that time. In Ajara, it was considered harmful for the queen to use laces on her wedding clothes; this is why all the laces on the bride's clothes were removed so that her life would not be tied – "locked". Also, putting a knife into a sheath, locking a padlock with a key, tying threads, ropes or pieces, etc., was considered a "locking" action of fate and life. It was because of this belief that bride and groom would be taken on an unknown, winding way, they would not pass between two rows of people, or two rivers. Two new brides were not let meet each other. If the meeting was to take place, both brides would be made look through a sieve. For the same reason, the simultaneous wedding of two couples in the same family was forbidden. They avoided having two weddings parties in one area within forty days. If it was necessary, the blindfolded brides would be made exchange needles or drink water from the same plate.







SHUNNING

Marriage prohibitions included the rule of banning the use of relative terms - the custom of shunning the bride, make her dumb, keeping her speechless. It was a kind of expression the respect for elders. The custom of silence was, first of all, related to the relationship between the newly-entered daughter-in-law and the father-in-law. Before the birth of the first child, they didn't even communicate with each other, if the father-in-law was in the room, the daughter-in-law who was there could not leave with her back turned, she would definitely leave the place backwards. Daughters-in-law followed the custom of separation not only towards their father-in-law, but also towards their husband's brothers, uncles, and cousins. Moreover, the husband and wife did not address each other by name and often spoke to each other through their children or in the third person. The rule of shunning was observed in relations with mother-in-law and older daughters-in-law as well, but in a less restricted form and only temporarily, approximately until the new daughter-in-law became a mother. This taboo was broken only if the elders wanted to talk to the daughters-in-law. Fathers-in-law did this by serving a gift to the daughter-in-law and asking her to break silence.







PROHIBITIONS RELATED TO PREGNANCY AND CHILDBEARING

A number of prohibitions also took place during pregnancy and childbearing. At this time, the woman was kept away from all troubles and anxieties. That is why a pregnant woman was forbidden to look at the dead. Even in the case of the death of a relative, they avoided wearing black, because they believed that it would suppress the foetus and the child would be born nervous. Also, a pregnant woman was forbidden to eat certain types of food, especially meat of a game animal, honey. It was also banned to allow a pregnant woman to attend the slaughter of livestock or poultry. A number of prohibitions were associated with giving birth and caring for a newborn. They did not pour the bath water of the newborn outside at night. It was also forbidden to pour the water after washing a baby on the place where it could be stepped on. It was also banned to step on spilled breast milk. Many taboos were associated with cutting a child's nails and hair. It was forbidden to burn them in the fire or throw them away carelessly. Because they thought that in such a case, evil power would possess them and harm the child. That's why the first cut hair and nails of the newborn were put on the young tree. It was not possible to leave the washed clothes of the newborn outside at night. The child was not shown to a visitor from outside at night, until he/she was "carried" on an open fire. They believed that it would be "purified" by the fire, which would remove evil forces, so-called "Uzhmuri" and would be safe for the child. It was banned to kiss the back of the child's head, so that the child's health and beauty would not "go backwards".





PUTTING AN EVIL EYE

Suppression customs were intended to protect humans as well as domestic poultry and livestock. People were especially afraid of evil eye contact and to protect themselves they tried to avoid those with "evil eye", but certain actions were also banned. Accordingly different prohibitions were related to cattle breeding, for instance: "You cannot play with a ball made of cattle's fur, the cattle will get sick", or "if the milk spills on the ground, you must not step on it, the cow will dry out" and others. It was also common to prevent the entry of a stranger into the cowshed, because it was a sign of "bad behavior" and "bad fortune". Also, they tried to "draw" foreign eyes from dairy products. That's why, "when they were making kuruti, they close the door so that no one can witness the process in order not to get "an evil eye". Giving milk to someone was also avoided, not "to let the milking stop". For the same reason, a small part of the sold milk, cheese or curd would be kept for "turning the hand". Circular objects, thorny or red branches, various amulets were hung on the doors of houses, barns, cowsheds, and hencoops to prevent evil eye contact.







THE CUSTOM OF PROHIBITING EARTHWORKS

In the ethnographic existence of Ajara, like other parts of Georgia, there is a custom of banning earthworks on certain days. This tradition was intended to protect the harvest and is known as "forbidden days". These were certain days of the year, which were mainly considered to be sacrificial on the occasion of good or bad weather. Such forbidden days in Ajara were Kvirkobachurugai and Elioba//bakhura.



KVIRKOBACHURUGAI

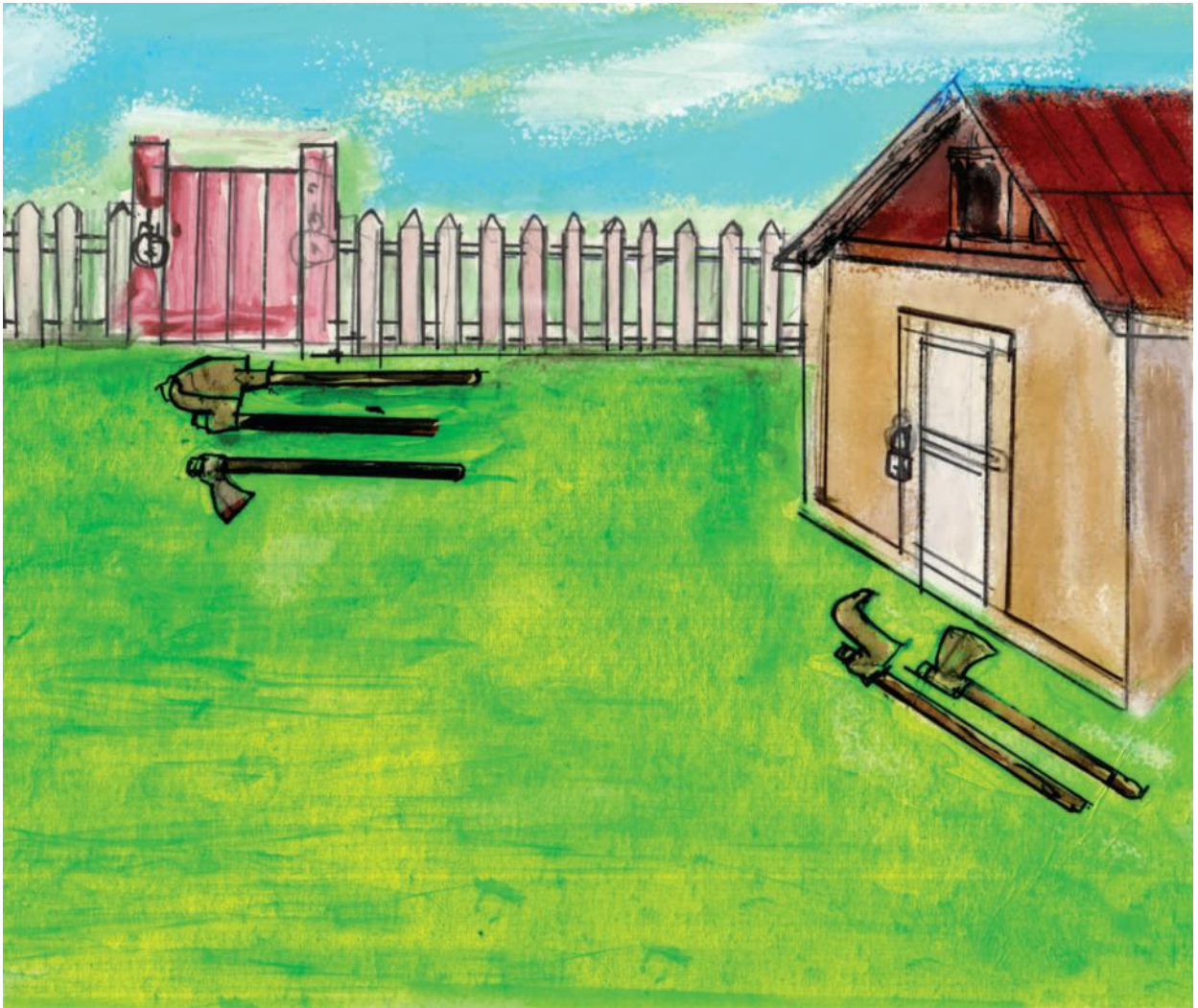
Kvirkoba//Churugai is the tradition of banning earthwork. In these days, in order to maintain the desired weather and to prevent from hailstorms and floods, a hoe, an axe, ploughing equipment, mouldboard and other tools were not used on the arable land, they did not even drive the oxen, so that the fields would not be washed away by the flood. In addition, earthworks were prohibited not only on one's own land, but in general "disturbing" the land was prohibited. As they say in such days, "You don't even have to chop firewood, you don't even have to walk in someone else's field, the ground will be scratched and you will fall down with sins." If someone in the village violated this prohibition, the person who broke the rule had to make an offering in the form of slaughter. During the banned days, they would not even go to the vegetable garden and "break" the greens, so as not to cause the crops to die. Churuga is called Kisirai in Lazeti. According to the narration: "Kisirai is a rotten month, the grass does not wither, there is no fish, it is rotten - it is rotten." It is true that during the "reserved days" earthworks were prohibited, but folk life allowed exceptions. If necessary, a piece of copper or other ironwork was taken to the field, and then work was allowed.



ELIOBA//BAKHURA

Elioba//Bakhura is also a period established to gain the favor of the disaster-relieving forces. Elijah, the lord of clouds in Georgian beliefs, is the leader of hail and thunder. Elioba is a holiday dedicated to the ruler of weather disasters. Earthworks were prohibited on this day. It was not possible even to swim. As for Bakhura, according to people's belief that is a spirit living in water. This water creature rules the water element on July 1-18 (14-27 BC), but no one knows exactly which day, that's why it was forbidden to swim in the water on all days during this period, otherwise the whole crop would rot. At the same time, even those who bathed in the water were in danger. If Bakhura touched him, he would get pimples and spots on the whole body. In these days, ferns were hung by the water's edge (river, lake, stream) to get good harvest on this soil.





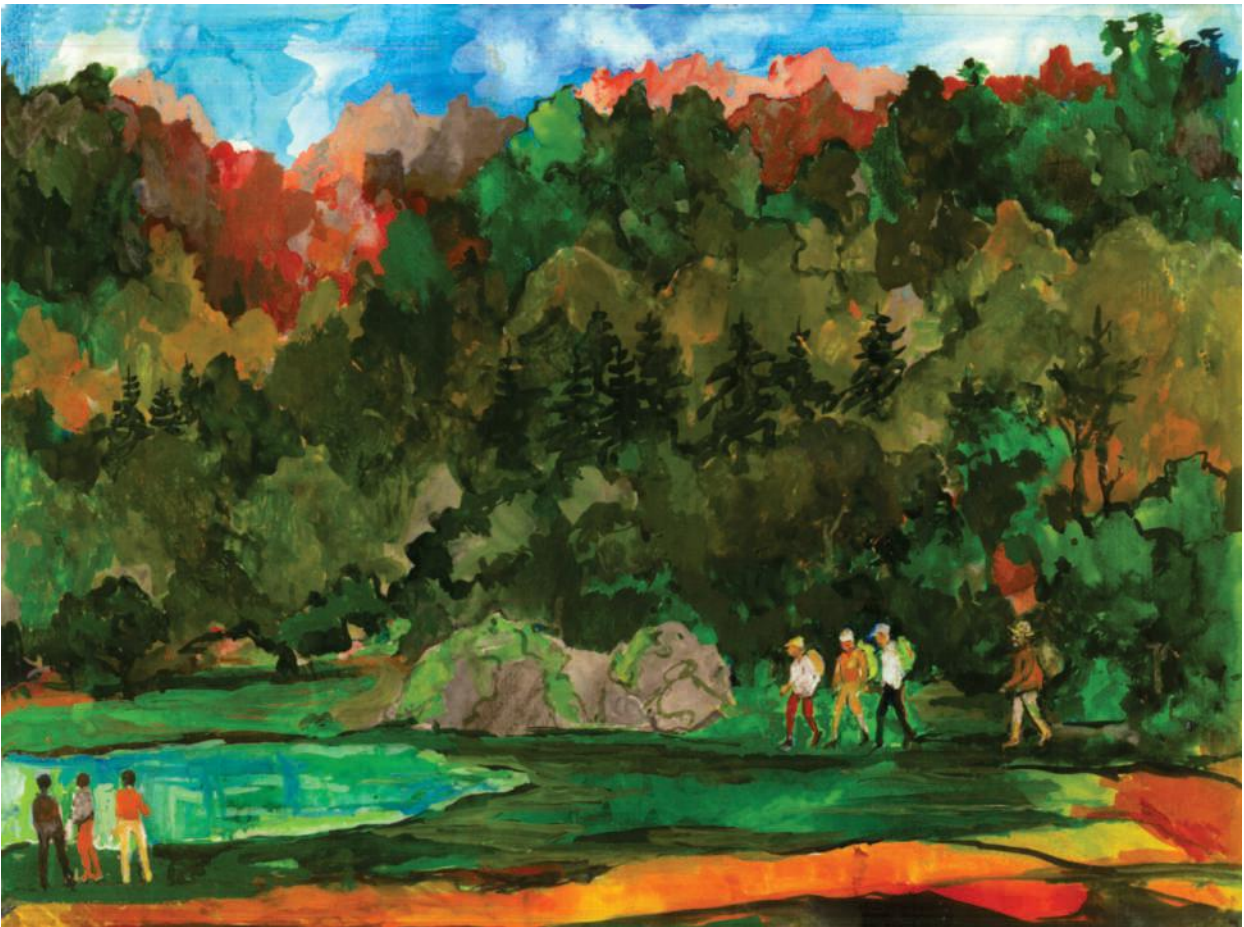


PROHIBITIONS RELATED TO PLANTS

Mountain villages are traditionally built on natural terraces, which are usually surrounded by a strip of forest. In Ajara, such a forest is also called cover forest, reserve, or fence (kori) forest. Protection of the forest was mandatory for the whole village. They especially took care of the forests grown on the slopes near the village. Trees were considered village-communal and family property. Each surname had its own sign – a taji. They cut down an old tree for firewood. A young tree could not be cut. Straight and less gnarled trees were used as timber. Folk rules for selection of wood for construction and timber protected the forest from destruction

In particular, there were many prohibitions in relation to wood. They would not use yew tree (red wood) and poplar wood for construction. They would not burn figs in Ajara - it is a sinful tree and it will "sin" the family, or "as long as there are fig tree ashes on the hearth, illness will not go away" - they say. They would not burn alder tree - it is the tree used for graves and burning it is a sin. When going to cut a tree, they wrapped the ax in a cloth, because according to folk belief, the trees seem to start shaking and crying at the sight of a bare ax. It was forbidden to cut down a tree with an ax, which is followed by the release of sap from the tree's bark, which people call "tree tears", "tree crying".







SACRED FORESTS

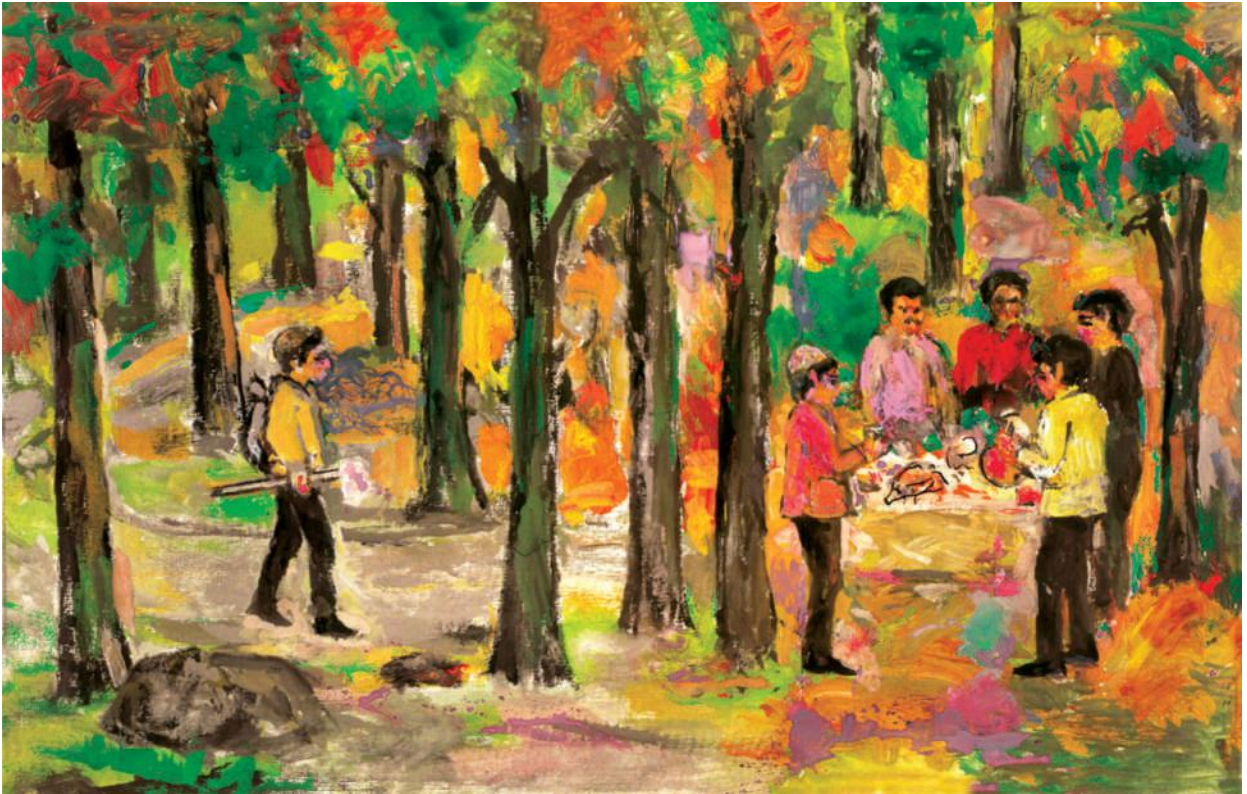
The presence of sacred forests in Ajara is also confirmed. Such forests were represented as the property of the deity, and not only a tree was cut there, even a naturally fallen tree or branch could not be taken out. There was such sacred forest in Kobuleti region, in Khutsubani, in the place of the Saint George's Cathedral complex in Tetrosani. There were such cult forests in the village of Sameba, on the former church Tetrula, in Village Kobuleti - Inaishvili family, in Chakhati village - on the place of a church in the land of the Noghaideli family, in Kokh village - on the land of Khutadze family. They even brought offerings to such places. In Kobuleti, there is often a "Sacrifice Stone" in the forests near such places. It is a round or square-shaped, specially processed stone, on which they used to put the things for sacrificing or offerings: cakes, chicken, money, pieces of candles, colourful threads. The best offering was considered to be a white rooster and, sometimes, metal objects (a needle, a nail, an axe, etc.)



GARGNOBA

In Ajara, there was a spring day when it was forbidden to bring not only large trees or firewood, but even dry branches into the family, because they believed that snakes travel on this day and they would follow the tree into the houses. That's why even though this day is known as Gargnoba it is also called the snake festival. In Kobuleti, this day is called as Gzoba (Palm Sunday). Palm Sunday is a celebration of giving blessings to the Lord with willow or palm branches or branches from various trees. In Kobuleti, this semantics of "bzoba" has been lost and replaced by "gzoba" and only the belief that the holiday is connected with trees and plants has remained. The name "Gargnoba" is also related to the tree, because in the Ajarian dialect, "gargani" means a big stick.







PROHIBITIONS ON HUNTING AND FISHING

Hunting-fishing was the oldest human activity and the first prohibitions are related to it. The bans are also preserved in the hunting traditions of Ajara. Observance of the complex system of prohibitions was the responsibility of both the hunter and his entire family. They went hunting early in the morning. The hunter was forbidden not only to utter offensive words, but also to utter a word. He had to leave the house without saying anything. He was also forbidden to have any contact with a woman before going hunting. He could not even touch his own wife. If he met a woman going hunting, he would turn back, because a woman was considered impure and meeting her was considered to bring bad luck to the hunt.

Many kinds of prohibition were associated with fishing. According to the common belief in Ajara, the water element is ruled by the spirit of water. To win the heart of the water ruler, the fisherman released every tenth fish he caught into the water alive. This custom is explained by the fact that God has established it in this way and everyone is obliged to obey this rule. However, these customs should be based on the popular belief in Ajara that fish is the ancestor of man – “A man grew from fish”. Belief in fish as the origin of life should also be the basis for tabooing certain types of fish. In some places in Ajara it was forbidden to catch and eat salmon. “All fish can be caught, except for salmon. Catching salmon is a sin, it is from there that man grew and therefore it cannot be eaten”- they believed in Ajara.



TRADITIONS RELATED TO SOCIAL AND FAMILY LIFE





The village, community, and family carried a special role in the preservation of national traditions. It was the family that preserved the main values reflected in the historical memory, the native language, traditions, customs, relations built on guest-hospitality and kinship ties, beliefs and ideas spread in the past. Unlike other parts of Georgia, where there were a lot of common-community and common-country holidays, the majority of traditions in Ajara were a family ritual and were performed in the family, in the yard, near the hearth, because in the conditions of the prohibition of massive traditional holidays by Islam, they could be performed only in the family, protected from the prevailing ideology. However, several public holidays have survived here as well. The purpose of the family rituals was to protect the sanctity of the family, to keep the family members healthy, to provide the wealth and abundance, to serve the spirits of the ancestors, and to transfer centuries-old empirical experience between generations.



NEW YEAR CUSTOMS IN AJARA

In people's consciousness and life, the New Year holiday has always been given the greatest importance, because it has always been perceived as the most important date of the year. It is the special sacred event, which usually brings about a complete and comprehensive renewal of the world for people, opens a new page of life for each one, and instils in each of them the hope of a better future.

In Ajara, the people used to stock up early for the New Year: they would pay off their debts, if they had borrowed anything, they would get everything back, because they believed that household items, as well as people and livestock, should spend New Year's Eve in their homes. During the New Year's preparations, they neither asked for anything, nor gave things to anyone, so as not to "lose good fortune" and keep abundance in the family. To meet the New Year's holiday, all family members gathered in the base-house, because the New Year, although it is a universal, public holiday, but at the same time, it is mainly a family celebration. The New Year is the most important date of the year, the loudest, most important holiday, which can bring people's health, prosperity and well-being to families. That is why many rituals are associated with it. The New Year's celebration in Ajara lasted for several days. It represented the entire cycle of New Year celebrations, in which all rituals had their sacred purpose.





“CUTTING DOWN THE HORNBEAM”

The New Year's celebration in Ajara lasted for several days. In Kobuleti, on the eve of the New Year, it started with the ritual of "tskhemli cutting"(hornbeam cutting): the head man of the family went to the forest with a cart, selected the multi-branched hornbeam (so-called "tskhemla"), cut it and brought it home. Hornbeam branches would be arranged at the entrance of the house, in front of the hen house and cowshed, because in the morning of the New Year, both people and livestock must pass over the hornbeam branches. He would prepare hornbeam logs to light the New Year's fire. In the morning of the new year, the head of the family would arrange firewood on the hearth, light the fire, then shovel for the embers, let the sparks rise and pray: "As many sparks fell, so much corn, bread, gold, cattle, poultry, good harvest and abundance in my family!" On the night of "hornbeam cutting ", a bonfire was lit in the village from hornbeam wood, around which the men of the village gathered and performed the New Year's hymn - "Mekvle"(the first visitor of the year). Every family took care of the fire lit on New Year's Eve and kept it burning, because in Ajara they attached sacred importance to the hornbeam tree and considered it a bringer of prosperity and fertility. Perhaps that is why in Ajara, a man who did not grow a hornbeam tree in his yard was considered as an unlucky marriageable person.



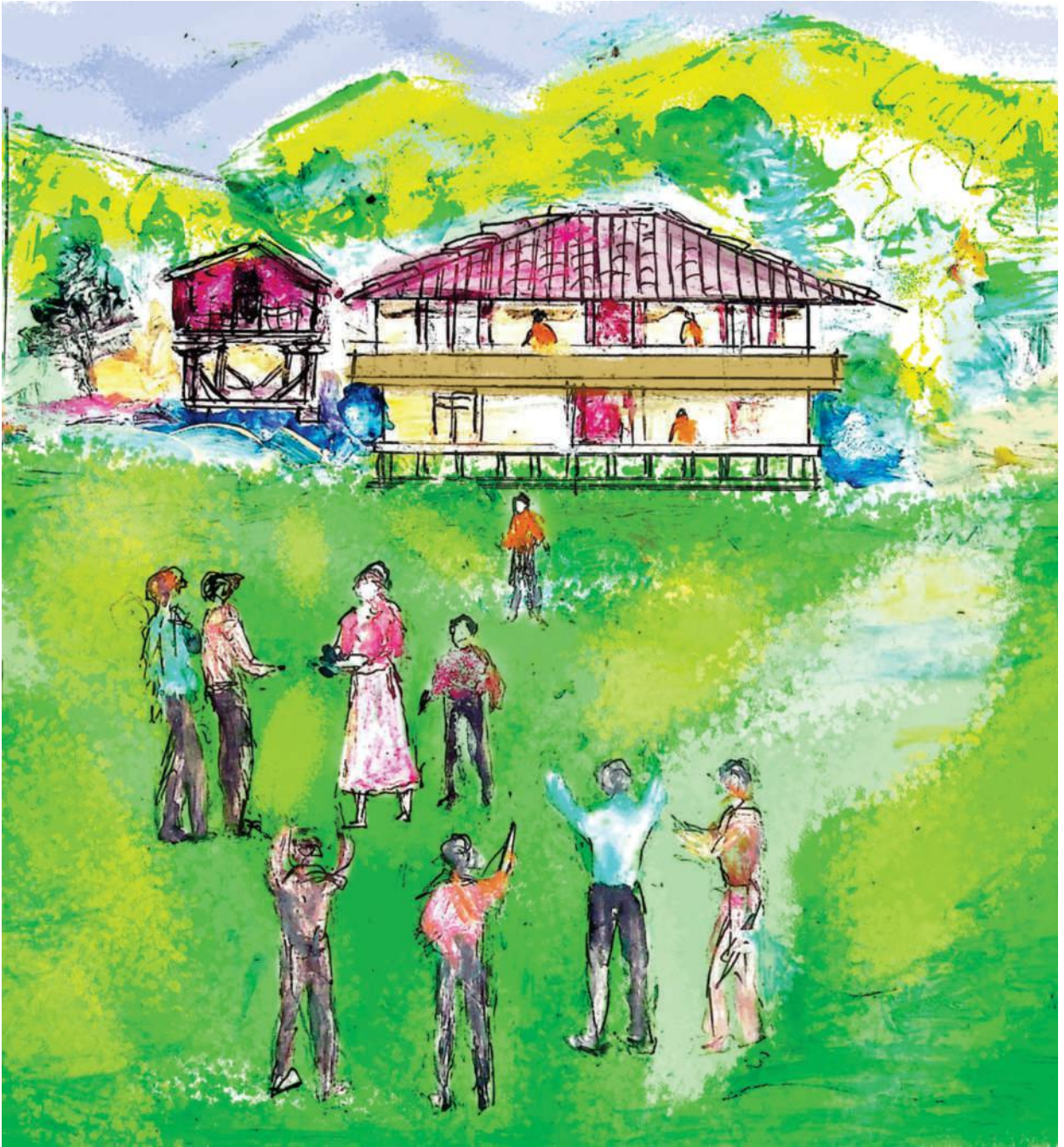




ALILOOBA (CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION – GIVING COLLECTED PRESENTS TO POOR)

In Kobuleti, the custom of "Alilooba" was widespread. It was a ritual of Christmas celebration - the custom of going door-to-door and congratulating. Pilgrims started arriving door to door in groups on New Year's Eve, walking almost until dawn. They congratulated the families on the coming of the New Year with chants. The hosts also presented the pilgrims with money, sweets, and fruits. At the end, the pilgrims congratulated their own families and sang to them. At the end of the Alilo walking, the participants gathered somewhere; sometimes they stayed in the family of the last host and spent this day in fun. Letting the Alilo participants go without a gift was considered to invite bad luck and damage to the foundation of the host family.







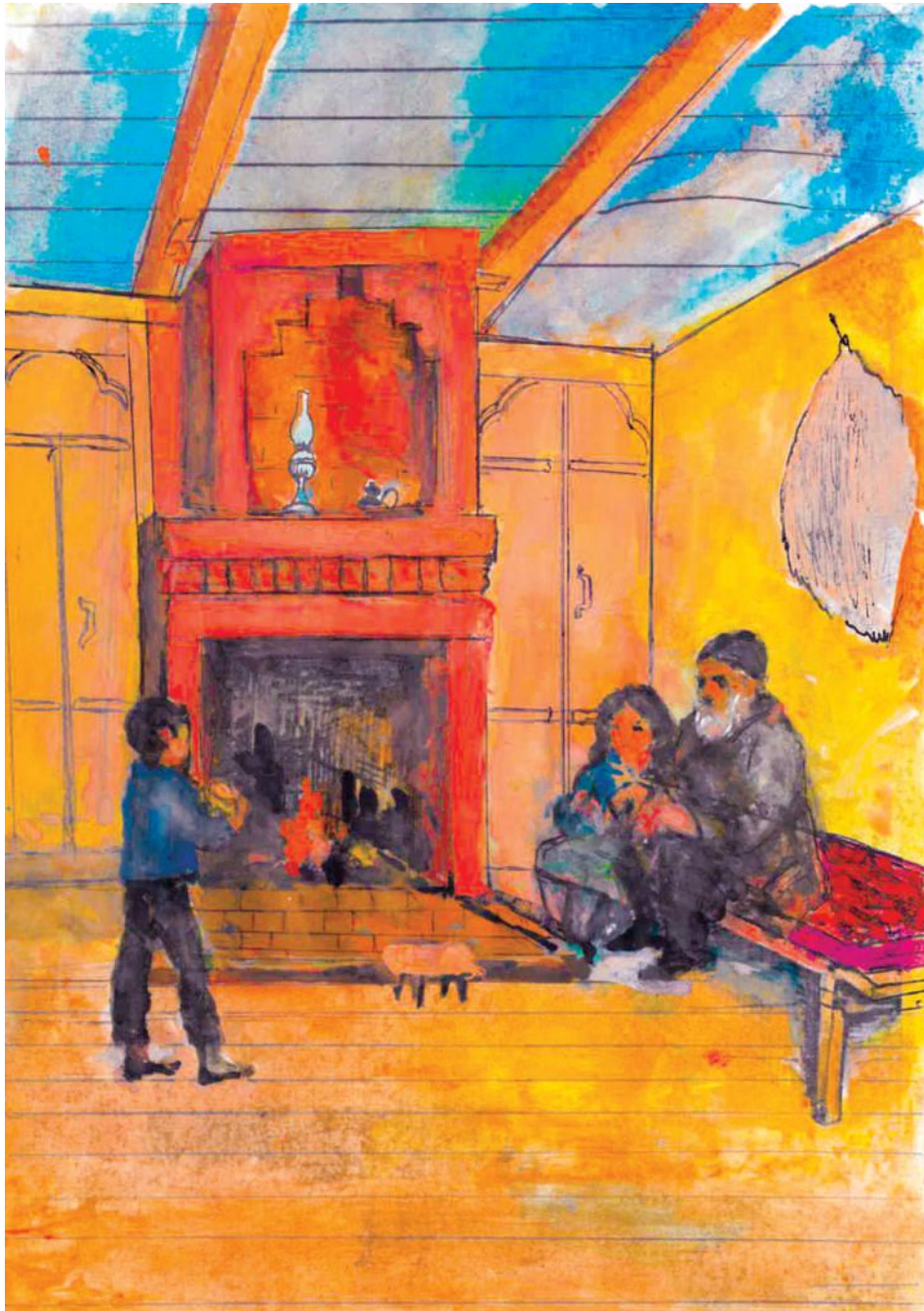
KEEPING THE FIRE BURNING

Fire was given magical power in the beliefs and imaginations of the Adjarians. It was perceived as a part of the sun, a divine power, an eternal symbol of family purity and unity. Therefore, the disappearance of the fire in the hearth was considered a sign of great misfortune. This is why, before going to bed, the head housewife of the family would "wrap" the embers thrown from hornbeam firewood - she would pound the burning charred logs in the middle of the hearth and cover them with sprinkle and ashes, and praying at the same time:

“Wait for me, fire, wait,
Wait for me and the sun, wait,
Worship the moon,
Morning is soon,
Meet me to be cool”.

The fire “saved” in this way, as a symbol of life and warmth, had to meet the next morning's sunrise unextinguished.



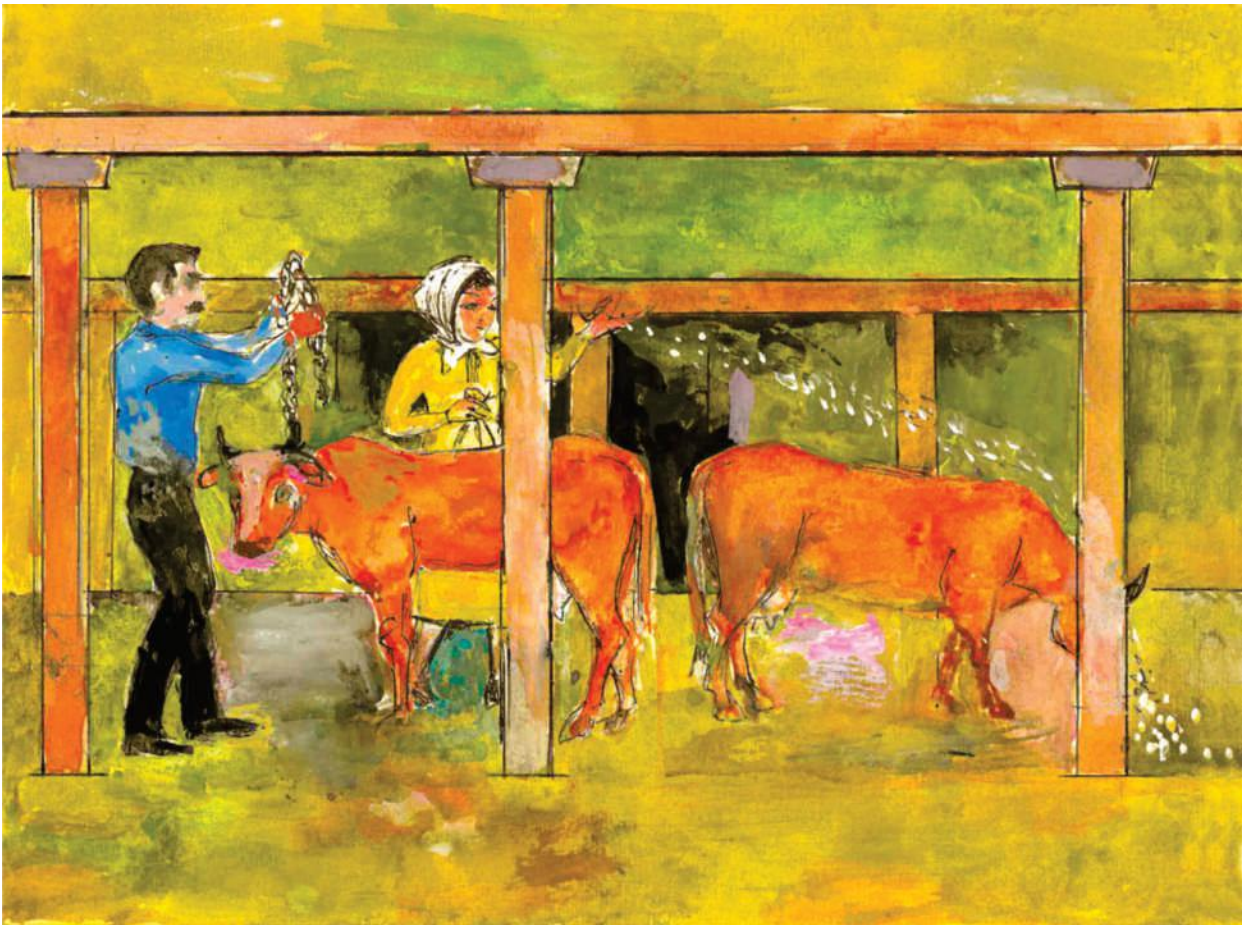




COW-SHED CEREMONY

Most of the New Year's customs in Ajara were related to the magic of fertility and were intended to ensure the abundance of crops, poultry and livestock. The agrarian-religious holiday "Bosloba" (Cow-shed ceremony), preserved in the form of fragments in Ajara, served to strengthen the forces causing fertility and abundance, the purpose of which was to revive the forces of nature and ensure the fertility of the land and cattle. "Bosloba" took place on New Year's Eve: the head man and woman of the family would silently remove the chain from the hearth, go to the cattle stall, go around the cattle three times and perform the symbolic ritual of fertilization. According to another version, the man had to scatter the grain while walking round the cattle.







OVERCOMING POULTRY

According to popular belief, the first day of the year determines the fate of the whole year. That is why at this time people in Ajara performed a number of rituals, the purpose of which was to ensure good luck for the coming agricultural year. In Ajara, they tried to be especially adroit on the morning of the New Year, not to suffer failure in anything, to meet the New Year satisfied and full up. For this purpose, on the night before the New Year, they used to put a bite of Mchadi under the pillow. Each member of the family tried to wake up before dawn and eat a bite of the preserved mchadi before the crowing of the rooster or the first chirp of the bird, so that they would not be defeated by the bird and the next year would not be unlucky for him.





“FIRST MAN” RITUAL – MEKVLEOBA

In ancient times, the calendar new year coincided with the beginning of a new agricultural year. One of the main duties of the first congratulator of the New Year was ritual plowing and sowing, the first ritual seedbed (“kvali” in Georgian). That's why they called him the “Mekvle” – the first visitor. After the New Year's holiday was moved to January 1, mekvleoba lost its original function of making the first seedbed, and it survived only in the meaning of "foot-happy" congratulator or "first visitor".

According to the belief established in Ajara, the fortune of the family depended on the “feet” of the «first visitor”. That's why the first congratulator of the holiday was chosen to be the person with a “lucky foot”, who was well experienced in previous years. On New Year's morning, he should be the first to enter the host's house, that is, he should come to the family early in the morning with sweets in his hands. The first visitor would be met with a bowl of rice on a small chair (stool) at the door. The visitor would take the bowl, sit on the stool and move forward three times – that was the sign to let the family business move forward. Then he would throw rice and candy round the rooms to bring fertility, abundance, joy and happiness to the family. The “first visitor” was treated with great respect. During the whole day, it was not possible for him to leave the house, so as not to take fortune with him.

In Ajara, the custom of using livestock for a congratulator was widespread. On the morning of the New Year, for the first time, a young calf, lamb or sheep was brought over the threshold of the house, and the house was “first-stepped”. It was believed that the four-legged animal brings good fortune, fertility and abundance.





CHICKEN STEPPING

New Year's congratulating, first stepping and wishing good fortune and well-being were mandatory not only for people, but also for livestock and poultry in Kobuleti. That's why, in the cycle of New Year's celebrations in Kobuleti, together with the traditional celebration of the New Year on January 1, chicken stepping and livestock stepping are celebrated on January 2 and 3. Chicken stepping was held in Kobuleti on January 2. On this day, early in the morning, one of the female members of the family, or a female stepper specially invited for this day, would go to the door of the hen house with a chicken food in her hand, open the door for the chickens and pray:

Nice, nice hens,
Nice, nice cocks.
Hundred cocks and hundred hens,
One more hundred chicks to them!
They do walk up and down,
I beg you coming round,
Wish you breed like plush
And sea sand to make me fun!

At these words, the stepper would turn over the bowl with chicken food on the head – to breed crested pullets. The stepper was usually a woman. There was a fear for a man stepper, because it was thought that in this case, a lot of cockerels would be hatched out. And the woman's stepping was intended to ensure the abundance of pullets. In addition, many prohibitions were observed in Kobuleti on this day. According to folk beliefs, on this day, "no crumb should fall in the house, the hen will lose the eggs, laying them in a everywhere"; The stepper or the housewife of the family used to put a sieve on the chicken's head - "crested chickens will be hatched"; No scissors, knives, and needles were used on this day - "chickens will get improper beaks"; an axe was not used either - "It makes noise and the chicken will crow». When the chicken stepper was seated on a low chair (stool), on that day it was forbidden for anyone else to sit on the same chair. They would wrap a rope around this chair - "A broad-hen won't go far"; on this day, it was also forbidden to sweep the floor - "the chicken will crush everything in the vegetable garden".



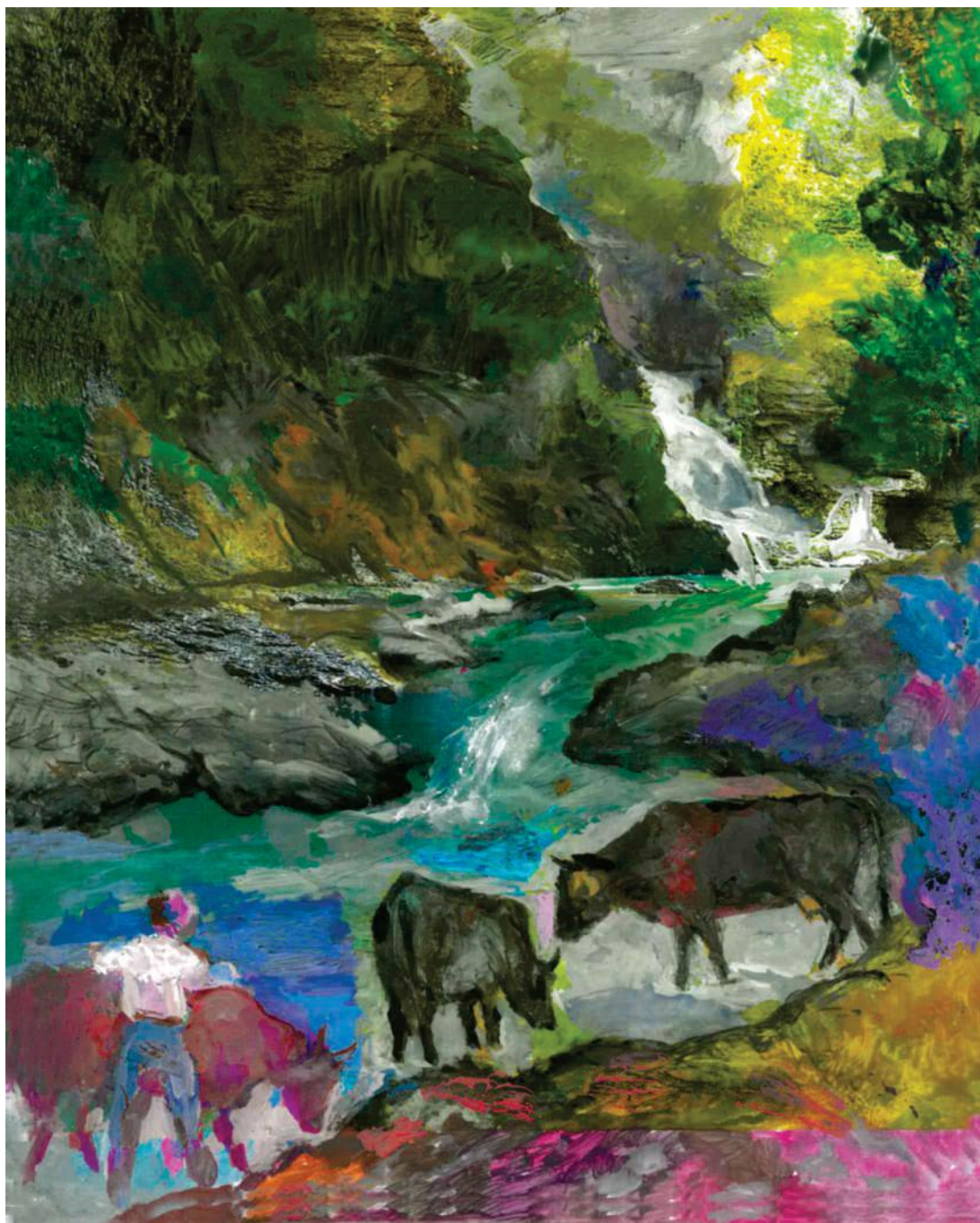


LIVESTOCK STEPPING

There was a special stepping day for livestock as well. They used to step livestock on January 3. An "experienced" person or the head of the family was chosen for the stepping ritual, he would enter cowshed in the morning without uttering a word, and would pray: "let it grow in number and be fruitful!" And to ensure good fortune and abundance of livestock, he would scatter corn and rice. Then he let the cattle drink water, gave grass on them and fed them with corn. On this day, they would not touch the back of the cattle - flies and worms will appear on them.

Rituals intended for the abundance and health of livestock were performed in Upper Ajara on the New Year day. The custom of taking cattle on the water on New Year's morning was widespread here. At the dawn of the New Year, the Adjarian herdsman would let his cattle out of the stall and go to the spring or the river to drink water. Everyone tried to fulfil this rule as early as possible, because they believed that bringing the cattle even close to water and "wetting their mouths" on the New Year Day contributed to the health and reproduction of the cattle.







NADI (VOLUNTARY HELPERS IN WORKING PROCESS)

“A lonely person is miserable even in eating” and who would leave a peasant alone to work in Ajara?! Whether it was ploughing or harvesting, cutting forests or making hay - the residents of Adjarian villages always supported each other. When there is a lot of work to do, the Adjarian man would either call a neighbour, a kind person, a relative, or anyone else, or he would send someone close to him and invite them, gather them, and ask for help, so that they could work together on hoeing or weeding the field, felling or making building materials, mowing or reaping. At one call, the guests would gather and support the nadi host without any compensation. They didn't even need to call to help the widow and the orphan! They would make a list by themselves and help a needy family even without asking. Moreover, if anyone finished working in his field, he would move to the neighbour's estate together with his group of helpers and would give a hand the neighbour as well!

Early in the morning, the group of helpers would start working in the fields and the housewives at home would prepare a suitable dinner for the men. Despite the tiring work, the workers in Nadi had fun, accompanied by “Naduri” songs. Kobuleti four-voice naduri songs were especially famous. It turns out that more than 30 folk songs were performed only in the Kintrish valley. Nadi participants were divided into two groups and competed with each other not only in labour but also in traditional songs. Nadi became faster and faster, enchanted and did not allow the participants to relax. To encourage Nadi's work and encourage the workers, the host sometimes specially invited good singers. Along with the singers, musicians were also invited to the Achariskali valley, and the rhythmic tunes of the bagpipes sobered up the nadi participants. In Khulo, after the end of the nadi, a special ritual was also performed: A few men would hold the hoe in the both ends, put the host on top of it and take it to the house shouting: “Owner of the field, let the field get better for you!”, and accompanied with a song for travelers. Nadi's last chord was the most pleasant - dinner! Housewives did not pity themselves and prepared the best dinner for the invited helpers. The delicious meals were accompanied by dance-singing and entertainment-games, and often the Nadi dinner lasted until the daybreak.





FAVOURABLE AND UNFAVOURABLE DAYS

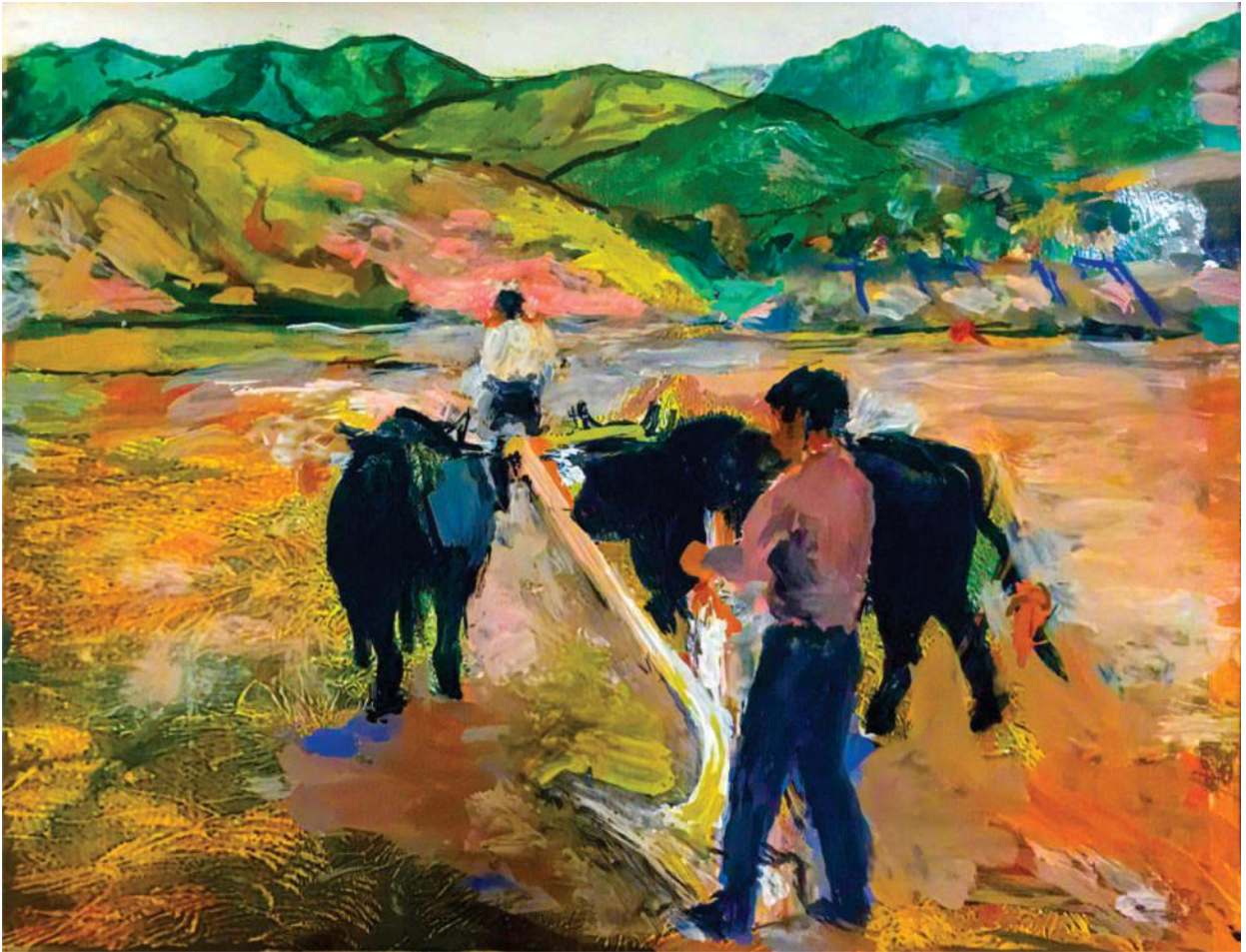
In Ajara, there were widespread beliefs about favourable days for the beginning of various works - lucky days and unfavourable days – unlucky ones. The work would definitely start on the favourable day. They were reluctant to do anything on unfavourable//unlucky days. Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday were considered as favourable days. Monday and Wednesday were the unlucky days for two-legged and four-legged beings, that's why on these days they didn't go on the road, they didn't sell poultry and goods, and they didn't give dairy products and eggs. Tuesdays and Thursdays were considered especially "abundant" days. According to popular belief, on these days working is blessed and harvest will be good". However, this principle of selecting days was not followed everywhere. In some places, they started work on the day that this or that family or farmer had "experienced" or bequeathed from their ancestors – "the ancients". It was an "experiment", i.e. knowledge based on empirical experience, on the basis of which the day was selected". Sunday was considered a perfect day, because according to the narration, "this land was foam at first." Then it became gold, then silver, then copper, and then it became black ground. The land, the world was founded on Sunday, so we took the ox for the first time on Sunday.



GIVING A PORTION//SHARE

In ancient times, the custom of hosting insects and rodents, i.e. pre-opening their parts – portions/shares - was widespread in Ajara. As soon as the Adjarian peasant started sowing, he immediately started taking care of the next harvest. That's why when scattering the seeds, he took into account the share of all kinds of pests. In Ajara, this was called "khise" - portion or "opening the archive" - sharing. Before sowing, the farmer would mix the grain in the ploughed land and pray: "This is the portion for a bird, the portion for a mouse, the portion for a fly, the portion for a pregnant woman, the share of two legged, the share of four legged". They believed that by giving their share in advance, they would "bribe" rodents and birds and protect crops and harvest from their attacks.







RITUALS RELATED TO THE MOON

In Ajara, the full moon was especially waited for and tried to meet with a full hand. As soon as the full moon appeared in the sky, the people would "show" a coin, candy, gold things and asked the moon in prayers to let them have abundance and fertility. They believed that in return they would receive fullness and well-being from the moon. The beginning of various activities was also associated with the phases of the moon. According to people's belief, the beginning of earthworks was also accepted during the old moon phase. They used to sow and plant on the old moon, because they believed that the vegetables sown on the new moon would be bitter, tart and moth (worm) will eat it up. According to people's observations, the moon should have passed one Thursday before the starting to work on the ground. Beans were not planted at the moon waning (the end of the moon and transition to a new phase) – "It will not creep up the pole". They paid special importance to the position of the moon at the beginning of harvesting. They knew how to harvest corn on the old moon. They didn't even store seeds on the new moon, because they believed that the seeds, corn and vegetables taken on the new moon would "be eaten up by worms" and "darkened". In general, it was not the new, "baby moon" that was considered favorable for harvesting, but the "after supper", i.e. the moon had to pass at least one Thursday before the harvest began. According to tradition, corn, vegetables, and pumpkin were taken "for storage" "when the moon was full" so that everything would be full of pulp. A newborn baby would be placed in the cradle on the old moon (if one Thursday had passed), "it will be as cool as the moon."







MAKING THE FOUNDATION OF THE HOUSE

The place to build a house was chosen with special care in Ajara. In addition to the fact that they chose a sunny, fertile plot close to the water and the road as a place of residence, they also paid great attention to the fact that this place would not be "with bad fate" (cursed), or the settlement of an extinct family. In the place where the foundation was to be laid, the ground was dug up in advance and a large stone was placed inside. After 2-3 days, they would remove the stone and if a worm appeared in the place where the stone was, they would not build the house in that place - it would be a damp place. The appearance of ants was considered a good sign. During the construction of a new house, the custom of putting grains of wheat, cattle fur, sugar and some coins in the right side of the foundation of the house was widespread. They believed that only after these procedures the foundation stone "recognized its place" and it was possible to start building the house. In some places, especially in low part of Kobuleti, they used to sacrifice domestic animals (poultry, small or large cattle) and pour the blood into the foundation.





RAISING THE BANNER

Building a house was a solemn and important event everywhere, but in Ajara, the end of the construction was celebrated with a special ritual – placing the roof on the house. After the completion of the works, the chief craftsman – “Usta” would hung a banner - a large coloured, mostly red fabric - on the main pole of the roof of the house, which represented a kind of symbol of the end of construction and the fate of life and joy for the owners of the house. Invited neighbours and relatives also participated in this ritual. They brought gifts and arranged at the banner. Then a ceremonial feast was held for the guests, after which the banner was taken down and handed over to the masters along with the wages.







CULT OF THE SERPENT

The snake is perceived ambivalently in the traditional life of Ajara. On the one hand, it was considered as a sign of good and the guardian of the family's well-being, and on the other hand, it was a source of fear and a portent of evil. That is why it was feared and worshiped as the protector of the house and hearth. According to folk belief, the family had its own trunk snake, which lived in the lucky trunk and was therefore treated with great care. Milk used to be put in a bowl, making the snake angry, the “guardian of the family”, or killing it was considered a great sin and was forbidden, because it might lead to the death of a family member.







TYING UP A BEAST

The well-known “Wolf holiday” ritual in the mountains of Georgia and the Caucasus, which is known in Ajara as “tying up a beast”, has been preserved in the ethnographic history of Ajara. Scissors, a comb, a knife and a lock were taken during the ritual of “tying up a beast”. They tied everything with a belt and spelled:

“A wolf will soon arrive,
With the spark in the eyes,
We are preying on the knees
God, meet him with nine seals
Make its mouth locked
And his friends order to stop”.

After the mentioned spell, the bound things were placed near the hearth and a pot was poured over it. The bound objects were untied when the goods were returned to the owner.



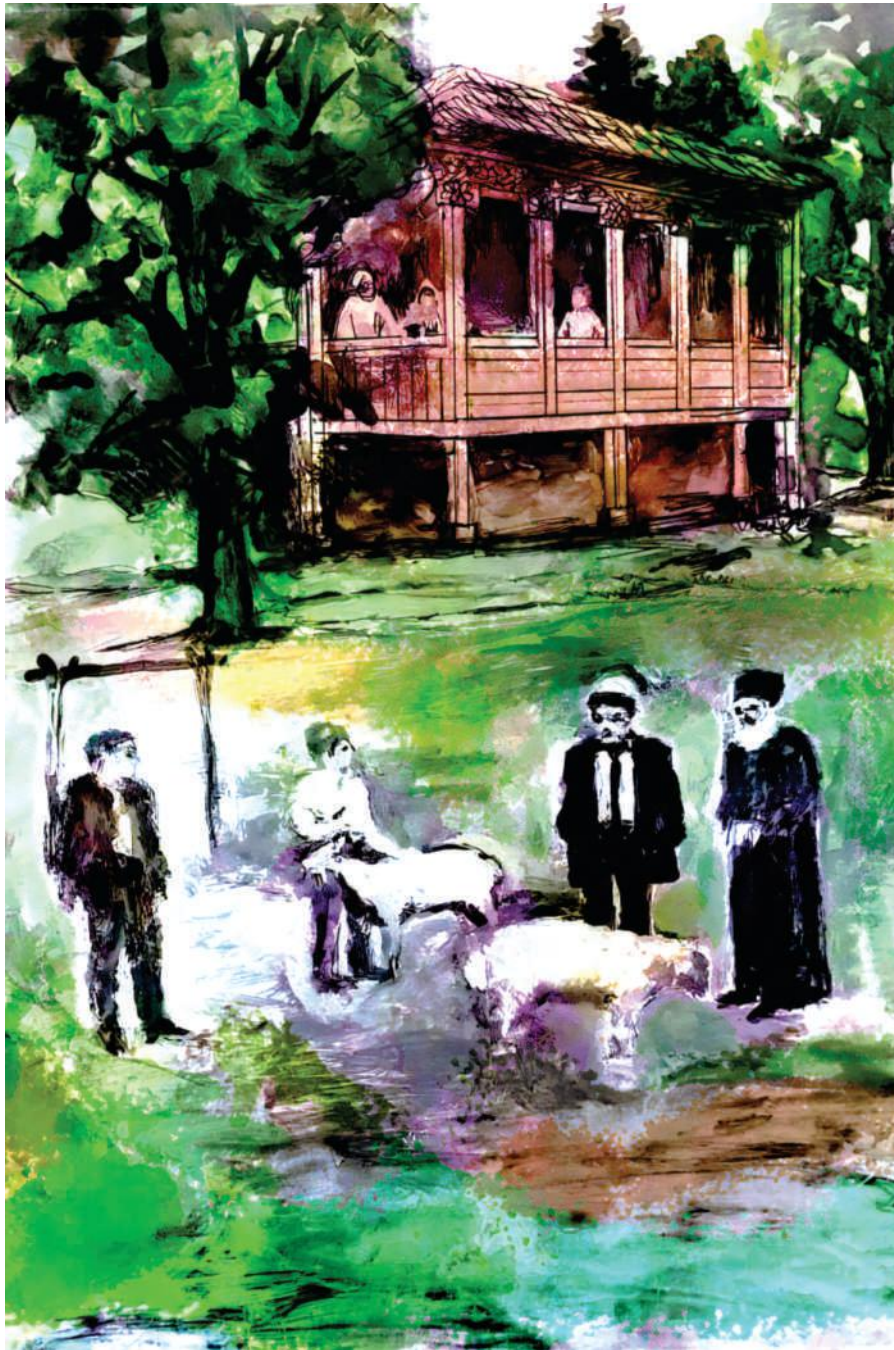




DIVINE SACRIFICE

The custom of "Divine Sacrifice" was widely spread in Kobuleti Municipality. This ritual used to take place in case of frequent illnesses and death in the family. At such times, in Kobuleti, they believed that the family was cursed, "given over" and punished for some sin. To protect the family from death, they would buy a sheep or a goat, bring a mullah (in the neighbouring villages of Guria, also a priest), slaughter the sheep, feed the meat to the invited guests and the mullah (or priest), as well as the daughter-in-law of the family, and wrap the bones and remaining parts in a white cloth and bury them in the ground. It was a symbolic "giving" of the remnants of a ritual meal to the earth, a certain rule of making a sacrifice for the earth, which was carried out in exchange for someone's life, to protect a family member.







MOURNING

In Ajara, the fiesta is as beautiful and mourning. "A good cry is good for people, even if they are dead," it was said. The ability to mourn the dead was highly valued, and special rules for mourning and crying were also developed. The mourning texts were examples of folk oral art. In the mourning speech, they listed the merits of the deceased, his positive qualities, remembered episodes from his life. Mourners, who had a special ability to improvise texts while crying, were especially honored. Especially the daughters-in-law of the family were responsible for crying over the dead. Each daughter-in-law tried to pay special respect to the deceased with her mourning "speech". One cried aloud, others listened. It was not possible to interfere in other people's speech and crying. Only "crying off" was allowed - taking turns crying - if one got tired of crying, the other would continue, it was considered a shame to stop the loud mourning. If the deceased was mourned not by the close relative but some other woman, it was customary to receive honor in return for weeping by weeping for the deceased of that family. In addition, according to the custom established in Kobuleti, throughout the year, the women of the family went out to the yard, took out the clothes or things of the deceased and, one by one, took turns to cry. It was forbidden to light a fire in the family before the burial of the deceased, so the neighbors prepared food for the mourners. When the deceased was about to carry out, everyone had to stand up, even the sick. They even lifted the cradle with the baby.







“MZOGHAS ONCHVIUSHI DGHA” (SWIMMING DAY IN THE SEA)

Until the 20s of the last century, the tradition of mass bathing in the sea “Mzoghas Onchviushi Dgha” was widespread in Sarpi and many coastal villages of Eastern Lazeti. This ritual was held on “Marashinash Shkviti” (the Seventh of Virgin Mary month), i.e. on August 20. Laz women used to go to the sea to bathe in groups, and they brought with them various fruits, freshly ripe grapes, boiled pumpkin and ate them by the sea shore. According to Niko Mari, who witnessed this celebration himself, it was celebrated in some places on June 24, the day of commemoration of John the Baptist, and was known as Litrop//Mitrop. Researcher Zurab Thandilava considered this term as the belonging to the Greek-speaking world, denoting atonement, repentance, purification from sin.





DADEGI//DADEGOBA

In Ajara, the evils were always startled of and many rituals were used to protect themselves from them. Among the days directed against evil spirits, the most important was Dadeji//Dadegoba. It was held on September 1 (Enkenistve 1), because according to popular belief, the festival of tailed or witch took place on this day. They roamed all over the world in order to harm people. On the night of the dadegoba day, they stamped corn in the field - they glued the corn leaves to each other with a candle, so that the evil spirits would not take the abundant harvest away. In order to protect them from devils, the housekeeper of the family would stick a cross of a candle at the bottom of the children's ears. They would also stick a candle cross at the entrance of the house, ask the younger daughter-in-law to stay in the door and would tell her: "Daughter-in-law, close the doors, don't let anything happen to the children tonight." According to people's belief, evil spirits and demons could not enter the house protected by the candle cross.



FLEA AVOIDING RITUAL

In the spring, there used to perform the ritual of cleaning the family from fleas in Ajara. In Kobuleti it had a name of "flea sending", in Khulo – "flea gelding". The ritual was completed on the first day of March. A housewife in Kobuleti would silently catch three fleas early in the morning, put them in a jar, pick up the ashes with a scoop, take them to the edge of her yard, throw them across the yard and say: "Let March take away all the fleas from my area".

On the 1st of March, the ritual of "flea gelding" was performed in Khulo: one person climbed up to the roof of the house with a broom in his hand. The other one would stay in the room and shouted to the one in the ceiling: - What are you doing there? The person in the ceiling would answer: "Violets and roses". They would repeat this three times. When the person at the bottom would ask him for the fourth time, "What are you doing there?", then the person in the ceiling would shout: "I'm gelding a flea". At the same time, he hit the ceiling with a broom and shouted: "March, March, March, there is not a single flea in my house, there are a lot in the stream banks!".

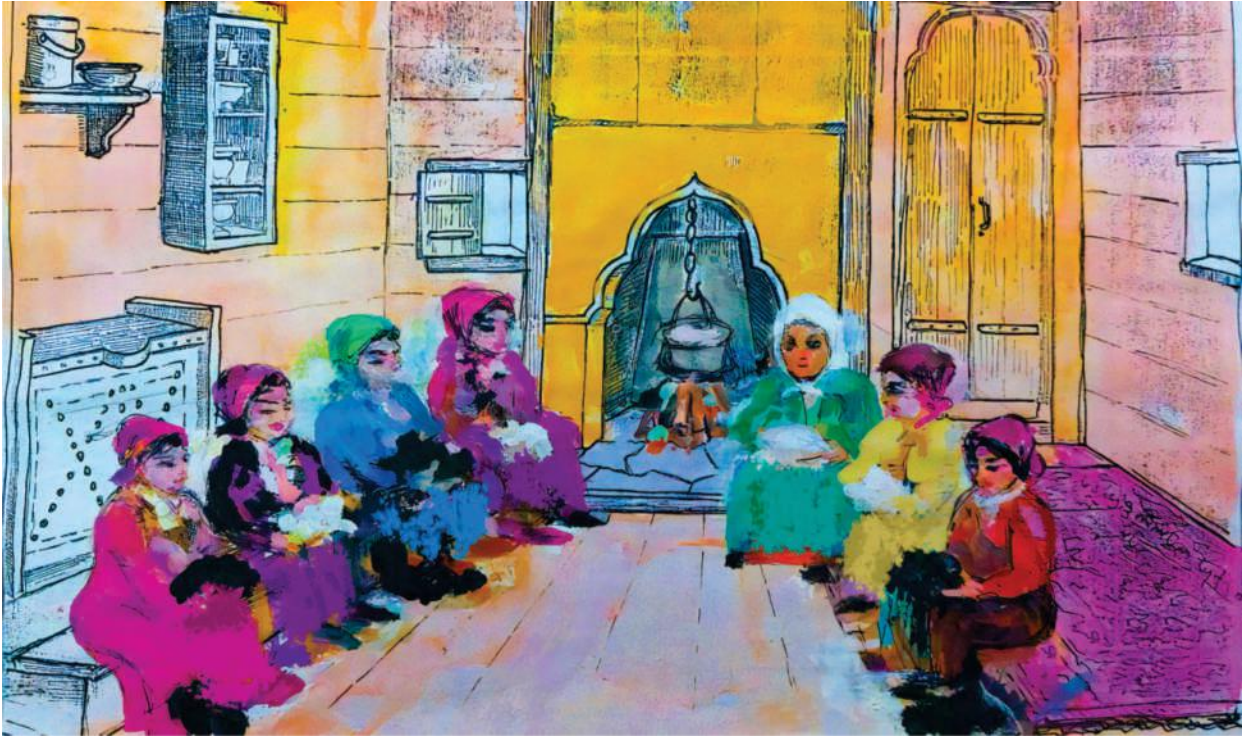




HELPING (NADI) IN SCUTCHING / SWINGLING

Processing wool and obtaining yarn is a difficult, laborious process and requires a lot of time. In connection with this activity, it was common to invite women to help in "wool scutching" or "wool yarn swingling" in Ajara known as "swingling machine nadi". Processing of wool was done mainly at night, after finishing other household chores. 20-30 women from neighbors or relatives would be invited, each of whom would bring their own scutching tool, sit together and swingle the wool. In this way, women worked together and had fun together as well. Even today, many people remember the song poem "Sleep, why do you make us fall asleep" that was a common song at that time. This melodious and moderate-tempo song made the women be awake throughout the night and kept the speed of labor. Invited women were sometimes given a few pairs of woolen scutches in advance, which were called "advance distribution". All the women participating in this process had to swingle at least one spindle (hand spinning) threading. If the invited women swingle the distributed wool scutches in advance at their homes, they would have more time for entertainment. When the wool is being scutched, the "wool is ruffled" (scattered) and it's hard to have fun. While scutching, women could entertain themselves only by singing and telling stories. But during the swingling process, they had more fun: they played, sang, danced. On this day, those who had invited helpers were especially preparing. It was necessary to entertain the participants of helping process (nadi). Among the abundant meals there must have been boiled pumpkin. The host could not help being generous and in order not to get ashamed. If the setting of the table was delayed, the invited participants would sing to the host and demand "serikudi", which means having meal late at night after supper.







SILKWORM CARE

Home-made silk was widely used in Ajara, the thread of which was spun at home from a silk bag. In the past, large quantities of silkworms were taken care of. In the family where the silkworm was raised, many rules were followed: The name of the worm was rarely mentioned before the "kachi" (silk worm) made a bag; They would not burn mulberry wood and leaves, when cutting mulberry branches, would not throw weapons (axe, bill-hook, knife, scissors) down from the tree – "silk worm would not be productive" and other rules too.

The silkworm is gentle and averse to noise. According to popular belief, a worm is especially "afraid" of thunder. At this time, it may "sag" and fall down on the ground. During a thunderstorm, they used to darken the room where the silkworm was kept, and to cover the sound of the thunder, silkworm breeders would start to bang the metal dishes so that the worm would not be "scared". The silkworm breeders were especially afraid of "evil eyes" affecting badly on the silkworm; they tried not to let anyone stranger into the silkworm's storage room – "not to let them see the worm". According to the old saying, "it is not good to look at the silkworm, because the master of the eye is not a man!" If a stranger sees the worms, he should bless them: "Let the Cross defend you from my eyes, and give you a hundred of my weight, a hundred of my weight..." or "God, give them my heaviness". On the doors of the building they would hang branches of thorny trees (sweetbrier, acacia...) or iron objects, and they would bless the silkworm.





KNITTING

Traditionally, every woman in Ajara had to know how to knit. It is symbolic that the first thing the Adjarian bride was given was a "started sock" to finish knitting. According to the rules, she herself had to have at least 50 pairs of socks in her dowry, as a gift for her groom's relatives. "The bridegroom sock" was knitted in a particular way, with a special selection of fabric, colours and ornaments, and, of course, with great skill. Weaving, rather, bringing out faces in the weave requires great observation, dexterity and taste. Playing with a string, which is called "Abandula" or "Bandibunda", served to train the girls in this matter. Two girls are playing: they tie up the ends of a long hemp thread and put the thread on both palms, which they "twist" with their fingers - they twist it and move it from finger to finger. Basically, images are drawn with two fingers - the index finger and the thumb. Each of them has its own name: a bridge, water, a sledge, bull-eyed, a cradle, a vine stake, (picket), a saw, a bowl, a woven basket and others. Those lose who cannot "recognize" a new image during the game.







ZIARETOBA (HOLY PLACES)

In Ajara, the custom of visiting holy places was widespread. Such places were considered to be the graves of "sheids", i.e., holy men in the high mountains, who, according to people's belief, had great grace and healing-magical properties. Often, such locations were found at the places of the destroyed churches or nearby. Mostly childless women, sick or distressed people went to pray there. Going to ziareti meant spending the night on the graves - mezirs and offering sacrifices. It was necessary for the those who was went to holy places to sleep there, even on the grave, and to see a dream, where he would be reported about recovery or the necessary actions to achieve the goal, which was mainly related to sacrifice. In order to fulfil the desired wish, the pilgrim was obliged to fulfil the promise made in the dream and sacrifice a chicken, a sheep or a cow. Those who went on a pilgrimage stayed in the holy places for several days, often brought their own handmade candles, lit them on the graves and prayed. They believed that after that, the sick would be cured, the childless would have children, and the problems would be solved.



MEIDAN-ODA//MISAFIR ODA

You can't surprise anyone with hospitality in Georgia, because Georgians from any corner have ingrained the unwritten laws of guest-hospitality with their mother's milk, but Adjarian hospitality was still different and outstanding, because here receiving and entertaining guests with dignity was not only a family concern, but also a common concern of the entire village, community. That is why not only every house in Ajara had a room specially designed for guests – “Meidan Oda”, which was isolated from the common house and the guest could enter and spend the night in such a way that the family would not even know, but also in the village there was a separate guest house, which was always ready for the guest to receive. There was always wood in the fireplace, a candle or a oil lamp, a bed with clean linen, water and fruit on the table. That was to start for the newly arrived passenger, otherwise, as soon as the light of the candle shone in the window of the house, the village would move to the Meidan-Oda, to host and entertain the guest, without even asking who he was, what business he had come for, for how long, because it was well known in Ajara that “the guest is from God!”. Even if it was an enemy who came to visit, the inviolable rules of hospitality had to be performed. No matter how long the guest stayed in Meidan Oda, the village would not get tired of serving him, and even if the valley was closed for a long time by the sudden snow, the village would winterize the guest, no one would raise an eyebrow!



TRADITIONS RELATED TO ECONOMIC LIFE





The main form of agriculture in Ajara was farming in the lowland, and cattle breeding in the mountains. In addition, in all villages of Ajara, various branches of handicrafts-domestic industry were developed. Agricultural work was characterized by a kind of seasonality. That is why the economic existence was mainly reflected in the agrarian calendar, which was formed over the centuries in the process of people's labor activities. The agricultural calendar traditions have preserved both the individual stages and sequence of the activities of the Adjarian farmer, the rational ways and methods of farming developed as a result of many centuries of experience, the empirical knowledge formed as a result of many centuries of observation of nature, as well as the worldview formed at different levels of folk religious thinking and the system of rituals based on it. These traditions reflect the desire to ensure the fertility of the land, the constant renewal of the forces of nature, the worship of agrarian cults and the care to gain their favor, the daily lifestyle, and the rich traditions of agricultural production.



AFTER MARCH 9TH

In Ajara, it was allowed to start earthworks after the end of March 9, because, according to folk traditions, it was on March 9 when the governing force of natural disasters - the spirit of water, the mother of the water//the mother of the sea//the "Nenei" of the sea and the man of the sea, as they were referred to by name, came out of the sea. They had the function of managing the weather. According to people's belief, if the water man coming out of the sea on March 9 met good weather and warmed up, he would be blessed and there would be good weather and harvest that year, but if he got cold, he would curse, after which the weather and the harvest would go away.



THE CUSTOM OF "CHEATING" NATURAL EVENTS

In mountainous Ajara, fog was often a hindrance for both travelers and shepherds. That's why, like in other parts of Georgia, the well-known fog spell was often used here:

"Oh, foggy fog,
Rise up in the sky,
Go away with your fly;
Care for either the blind,
Or the lame child;
Try to save and not let them die!"

There was also a custom of "wind trap" to control the wind. During strong winds they congratulated:

"Fly, fly wind away,
Look! The wind jumped away."

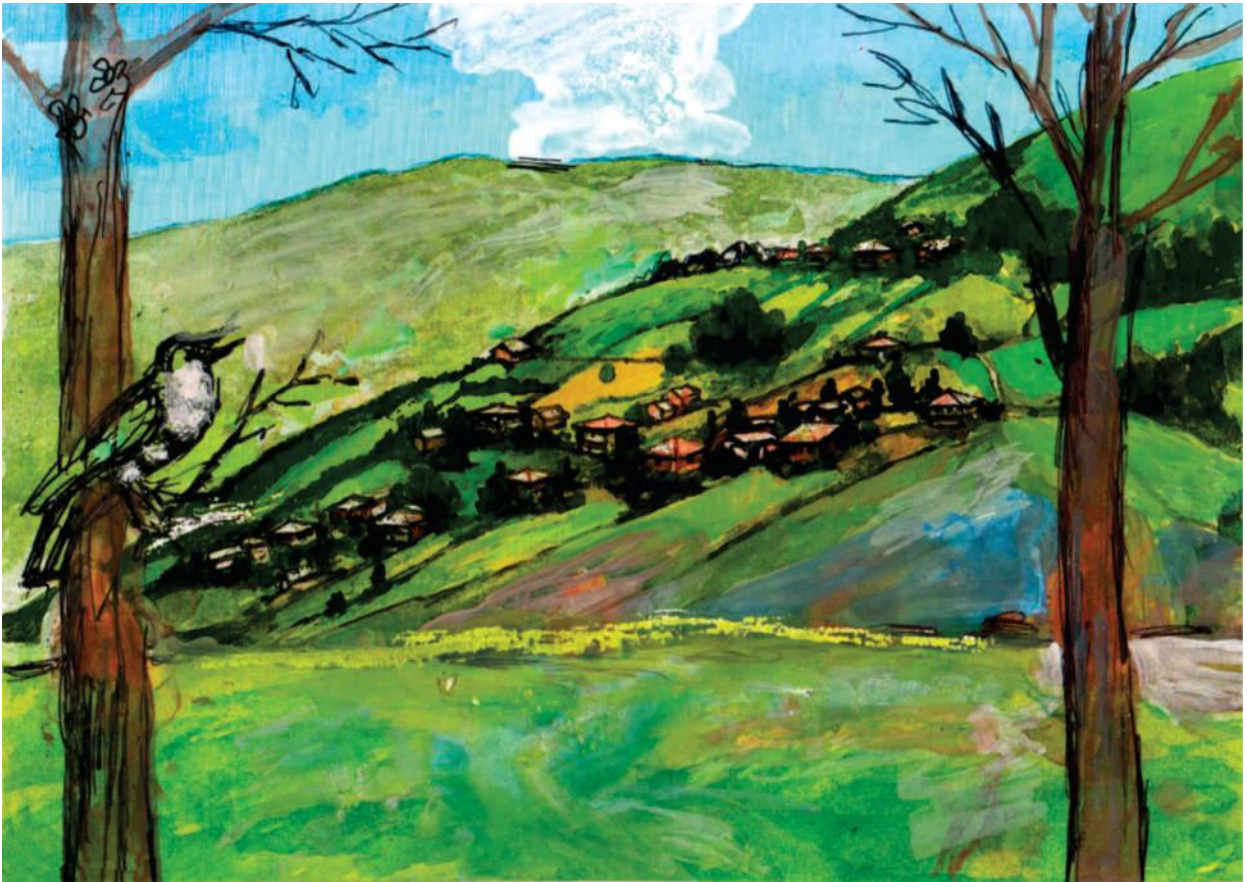
After that, they poured water under the door and knocked over the overturned pot - the wind will soon fall.



“VICTORIOUS” CUCKOO

According to folk tradition, the beginning of plowing and sowing is connected with the arrival of the cuckoo. According to the common belief in Ajara, a cuckoo with its sounds and chirp brought the news of starting work. This bird was the harbinger of the awakening and revival of nature, and according to the belief of the people, those who met this moment hungry and without breakfast - even if they could not manage to put a symbolic bite in their mouth, was considered as “overpowered by the cuckoo”, i.e. he would remain empty-handed. When they had an unlucky year, they would say: “This year, the cuckoo is better than me.” According to folk beliefs, the cuckoo is a “conquering” bird. To overcome it, in Ajara, they would get up early in the morning and put a “snack” (a piece of breadcrumbs) in their mouths, and as soon as they heard the sound of a cuckoo, they would call out: “I’m better, I’m better!”







OX HARNESSING

An ox is one of the oldest and universal symbols in Georgian mythology and beliefs. The Adjarian peasant treated an ox – a bread-winner animal with special respect in his daily life and tried in every way to protect it, keep it with honour, and take care of it.

The ox was first taken to the field and the first plough was taken out on Sundays. It might have happened on Monday or Tuesday, but not on Friday, the Muslim holy day of cuma. To yoke the oxen, they used to make fixing peg made of red wood - apple, wild plum, and sweetbrier wood. They knew how to put a red cloth on the tail or on the horn of the bull, or they painted the bull's horns red with a red paint. In Ajara, red colour was given magical power. It was associated with the colour of blood, life, the sun. People gave it the function of protection from the evil eye.

When the oxen were yoked for the first time, other rules were followed as well: an egg was broken on their forehead or carried on their back on New Year's morning, or rolled so that the oxen were full like eggs, and the corn came out as yellow and healthy as egg yolks.





LEGENDS OF THE LAKE BULL

In the vicinity of Arsian mountain there is a lake - Bugha-Gol, which means Bull Lake. According to the legend, a red-colored bull lived in the lake, which came out of the lake in the summer and mated the cows of the neighboring villages. This bull has defeated all the bulls of the village in fighting. In the end, one man used such a trick: he tightened the iron rings on the horns of his bull and made it to fight against the bull from the lake. A iron-horned bull wounded the red bull, which returned to the lake. The blood of the bull dyed the lake red; the water spilled over the banks and washed away the whole village. That's why this place is called Vernebi (neglected).

A similar legend about the lake bull is also preserved in the village of Gegelidzeebi. During a great drought, near the village, on Satibia Mountain, a bull dug up the ground with its horn, where a lake appeared. As promised, the shepherd boy sacrificed his favorite bull here. After that, fearing drought, the villagers sacrifice a bull at the lake every year. The fact of sacrificing a bull by the water ponds is also confirmed in other villages of Ajara. During the great droughts, the inhabitants of the Chvana valley used to slaughter a sheep or an ox in Shedi Lake as a sacrifice.





MAKING A BED IN THE FIELD

In Ajara, this ritual is also called "taking a trace". Long before the start of earthworks, even if there was snow, they would dig the ground at the entrance of the arable land, on the plot near the house - on the "foundation" or in the garden, and symbolically scattered all kinds of grains inside. They used to say that the more you put your foot forward when making a bed, the easier the work ahead will be. Bed making was performed on the full moon. It was the prerogative of the head of the family to make the first bed in the arable land; and in the yard, in kitchen garden the same action was performed by a woman. All kinds of grains were thrown in the bed, but these seeds should not be of bitter fruit plants (pepper, leek). Yet for the first time, they threw in a grain of corn - let the year go sweetly! At the same time, they took 7 grains from each kind of seeds, put them on a copper plate and took them to the field. They also used to put eggs and iron (horseshoes, nails) in the seeds. When taking out the seeds, they should first step on the top of the door with their right foot and perform a proper prayer. On that day, they would not give anything from the family in order not to let abundance and productivity leave the family. According to tradition, in ancient times, they knew how to save seeds for harvest, which they kept separately in the barn. It was unacceptable to start a big ploughing and sowing without opening the bed, or "kanugi".





CORN HARVEST (KHARMANOBA)

In the mountainous region of Ajara, corn was cut whole - it was strawed, piled, and cobs were removed before being bundled into bunches. Corn cobs in the husk were thrown in some room of the house or under the granary, after which the kharmanoba//threshing time - the process of separating the corn from husk started. Separating corn from the husk is a very time-consuming and difficult task, so men and women were often invited to threshing. The threshing of corn sometimes went on all night, and the participants in this process entertained themselves with songs and dances. Sometimes it was a variety of Adjarian "Berikaoba" - a dance performed by women and men to a musical melody – "Fatiko" // "Fadiko", the traditional dance "Ohoi, Nano" or the so-called "Women's Chorus", women's song "Nai-nai, Ninaina".







LAZAROBA

When the summer drought would affect the fields or the sky would open and excessive rains would create a danger to the village, the children of the village would gather, they would make a broom with a "head" and "arms", put on it a dress or decorate it like a queen, and start to go from door to door with the doll. This doll was called Lazaria, Lazariko, Queen/Dodophala, Kepcha Khatun (little lady) and they would carry it from yard to yard, from house to house with great trepidation, because they believed it to be the weather-governing goddess and expected mercy and favourable weather from her. The procession stopped at every resident. The children sang praises of Lazaria and asked it for "rain-water" during the great drought, and during the incessant rains - "the eye of the sun", the weather. All families met Lazariko with great hope and joy. If they wanted rain, they would pour water on it, if it rained, they would throw embers on it, and especially for the children, they would bring eggs, cheese, butter, and flour prepared to win Lazaria's heart. In this way, with poems and songs, the children would take the lazaria from door to door and collect the donated products. Finally, they would gather in one of the families and fill up the table prepared with these products. They believed that before the children finished their meal, the desired weather would arrive!

"Lazar got to the door way
Swinging the head in a strange way:
At last I am in again,
The bird got me afraid,
Broke my leg with a trick,
Left me single-legged with a stick!

Stand up deer auntie,
Check the shelf for butter,
Auntie searched the shelf soon,
And got curved like the moon,
We are fed up with water and rain,
God please send us the sunshine again!"







“EIGHTY THOUSAND PEBBLE SPELL”

The people of Ajara had a number of ancient weather management rituals. Pagan mysteries were often mixed with Muslim elements here and were formed in a syncretistic form over time. Archaic belief in the magical power of stone was widespread in Ajara. During the drought, a prayer for rain was widespread in Ajara, which in Ajara was called the "spell of eighty thousand pebbles". During the drought, the people going to one mosque would gather, and the mullah would divide them into two groups. Pilgrims climbed the high mountain. Each group had to collect forty thousand pebbles. Mullah would spell the pebbles in Arabic. Then they went down to the river's edge, threw the enchanted pebbles into large basket, and put the basket into the water so that the pebbles were covered with water. At this place, they killed a sacrificial bull by the river and distributed the meat to widows and orphans. They believed that rain would come as soon as the ritual was over. If the rain continued long enough, the basket would be pulled out of the water and the rain would stop.







STONE MEN

The ritual of asking for the desired weather was often held in the mountains of Ajara from the stone men. Stone men were cone-shaped figures built by stacking small pieces of stone on top of each other, which resemble a human image from a distance. Stone men can be found in abundance in the highlands of Ajara, especially in the valleys of Mariti, Skhalta, Chvana and Adjariskali. Stonemen were erected between Mariti and Skhalta valleys on three big mountains, which are called "Didgora", "Direct Hill" and "Samarile (Salty) Hill". Among them there is a plain, which is called Hajetlama//Hajetnama//Hajetnamazi Hill (Arabic for "wishing prayer" hill). On this day, public prayers and sacrifices were organized to request the necessary weather. In addition, this happened both during mass public holidays and individually. A sacrificial bull was bought with the money collected in advance, it was taken to the top of Hajetnamaz, and after mass prayers and supplications, it was offered as a sacrifice to stone men. Beef was cooked in large pots and distributed to all who participated in this mass celebration.





MEMKHLIANOBA//MENKHLIANOBA

In the early morning of late July and early August, men and women, children and old people, everyone who was able to walk, set off the path leading from the valleys of Ghorjomi, Khikhadziri, Chvana, Mariti to Goderdzi pass and the alpine settlement near Beshumi and the mountain pastures of the Ghorjomi valley. They rushed to Shuamtoba - the best-preserved ancient festival of herdsmen-farmers in the Ajara mountains. The holiday was held in the middle of the herdsmen's stay on the alpine pastures, and that's why it was called Shuamtoba, however, according to the elders of Ghorjomi, the holiday was called Memkhlianoba//Menkhlianoba, because the main participants of the holiday were women, they also decided the issue of leaving and they went to the mountain. Memkhliani//Menkhliani was called only for those who attend the festival. In other cases, "a woman who goes to the mountain to look after the cattle would not be called Memkhliani". Nor could a man be a Memkhliani. Men only accompanied the women sitting on fair, elegant, graceful horses for women on foot or on horseback from the basic homes. The group was accompanied by the Chiboni and drum-accordion players. Each woman tried to harness a horse beautifully, buy new, colorful clothes and pamper herself with a smartly decorated umbrella. However, the umbrella appeared later in the decoration of Adjarian women. Before that, women specially wove a headgear from wool dyed in red, yellow and green colors to protect themselves from the burning sun. The memkhliani women also brought gifts to relatives staying in pastures: specially prepared chicken and various kinds of cakes and sweets. Menkhlians going in groups climbed the slopes of the mountain, rested by the spring waters on the way, where they danced and played games and shot guns. Having reached to Yailas, the Memkhliani were hosted by Memthevri women.







MEMTEVROBA (NOMADIC CATTLE-BREEDING)

Care of cattle and management of the dairy farm on summer pastures or during the grazing period was the responsibility of women, later mentioned as "memtevre". A woman with experience in cattle breeding and farm management was chosen as a memtevre. During the alpine season, he led the entire farm together with the herdsman. In the Ajarian family, an older woman or an older daughter-in-law was appointed as the memtevre, who should be acknowledged in the care of livestock and the production of dairy products. That is why her knowledge and experience was formed and developed in the family from childhood. Cattlemen's stalls, or yailas, were two-storeyed wooden buildings, with cattle on the first floor, and the cattle-breeders on the second floor. There was a special section here - a small room called a milk room. Dairy products were made and stored here. Along with his cattle, Memthevri also took care of the cattle that were often entrusted to her in the mountains. Entrusting meant to bring cattle to the memteuri for caring and milking other's cattle in summer, i.e. handing over of someone else's cattle by Memthevri. Memteuris not only took care of these cattle as if it was their own own, but also prepared a stock of products from the milk of the entrusted cows for the family of the recipient and gave the products received to the owner without any deduction. The duty of the memtevri women was not limited to taking care of cattle in the mountains, butchering and making dairy products. In addition, a they grow a vegetable garden in the mountains, take care of children, prepare a stock of dairy products for the winter, and weave. The processing, production and distribution of dairy products was also considered the duty of the farmer in the basic home too.

The memtevri women were especially happy to prepare for the holiday of Shuamtoba. While expecting the Menkhlians, they prepared various kinds of dishes, various and abundant products made from milk. They greeted their missing relatives and guests with great joy. After meeting and entertaining each other, a general celebration and entertainment began.



SHUAMTOBA

Shuamtoba celebration lasted for several days. The guests and hosts gathered at specially selected places, at the slopes of mountain. During the whole day, there were dance-games, entertainment-shows, cult performances, and improvised light (mocking) verses, horse-riding and wrestling competitions. In the evening, bonfires were lit, around which dances and games were held until late at night, as well as poetry and riddle-solving competitions. Masters of playing folk instruments, especially chiboni and drum, folk speakers, singers, dancers were considered guests of honour on Shuamtoba holiday.

Among the songs, Vodelia, Vosa, Bride's song, Shvidkatsa, Abadelia, Khasanbegura, etc. were performed. The dance repertoire included Gandagana, Shekhdomilai, Kaluri, Lekuri, Bagdaduri, Kurtbari, Shamili, Karabagh, Kolsama and others. The central place in the celebration was occupied by the dances: Khorum, Ohoi-Nano, Kocheguri, etc.

A special dance "Memtevruli" was performed in the Mariti Gorge, in which women in their seventies took part along with young men. The culmination of the celebration was the traditional dance-spectacle Fadiko.



FADIKO//FATIKO

Fadiko is an ancient ceremonial ritual preserved today as a kind of entertainment and game, which was held "Shuamtoba" festive holiday and at weddings. It was a grotesque staging of marriage. Six men and one woman participated in "Fadiko". One participant, dressed as a woman - Phadiko/Fathiko, was placed on one of the players, who was depicted as a horse. One would lead the horse with the bridle, and the others would follow him with a song; Two player-rivals - Fadiko's grooms - were fighting each other to get Fadiko. Whoever was the first to throw the silver coins over Fadiko would have the woman. Finally, these two rivals would agree that Fadiko would be owned by one groom during the day and by the other at night. Then Fadiko would be surrounded by the animal to be sacrificed, which later was slaughtered. This was followed by a dance-game. During the dance, Fadiko would suddenly hide. At that, there was an uproar and everyone was looking for Fadiko. Finally, they would find Fadiko and sit down for dinner. At dinner, one of the grooms would fall asleep, and the other would invite Fadiko and fondled. At this time the first groom would wake up, jump up and take out the sword. He would wound his rival and abduct Fadiko. The woman objected and did not follow. The groom tried to persuade Fadiko and take her away, promising gifts. Finally, the woman agreed and followed. As a musical accompaniment to the ritual in Upper Ajara, they used a variation of Kolsama – "Kocheguri", that's why in some valleys (Skalta, Mariti, Dioknis, Riketi) the ritual was also called "Kocheguri". Today, "Fadiko" has become a dance to be performed at weddings and in fiestas, an entertainment spectacle, but in terms of content, it represents the Adjarian variation of the ancient folk festival of berikaba//keenoba.







ZIRIKOBIA

The herding nomadic Kurds who lived in the Kakhaberi Valley before the deportation (1944) and used the alpine pastures of Ajara in the summer were distinguished by their activity in the dances. It is true that the Kurds and Hemshils did not have the traditions of Shuamtoba, but on festive days they also participated in festive entertainments and spectacles together with the Adjarian herdsman. Among them were wandering Kurds, who were called Zirik Kurds. They often wore colorful, torn clothes and walked barefoot. "Zirikobia" included in Shuamtoba repertoire is also considered a folk play to make fun of them. "Zirikobia" was basically a staging of childbearing activities: they would lay a carpet that represented a house. The husband and wife sitting on the carpet (the wife was pregnant) were visited by a Zirik. The hosts would prepare some meals for the guest, but he would not touch the food. An angry husband made the guest "get out" with a stick. Barefoot Zirik stood in the "snow" and shivered. The wife was sorry for the guest and opposed her husband. Now the disagreement between the husband and wife would begin. The wife started to have a stomachache and she was going to give the child birth. During the game, the role of a woman was played by a man dressed as a woman. "Zirikobia" caused a lot of fun among the participants of Shuamtoba. This game was so popular that, except for Shuamtoba, it was performed throughout the year at weddings, village gatherings, to spend long winter evenings and have fun, but in fact this folk spectacle must be a remnant of an ancient ritual intended for fertility and reproduction.

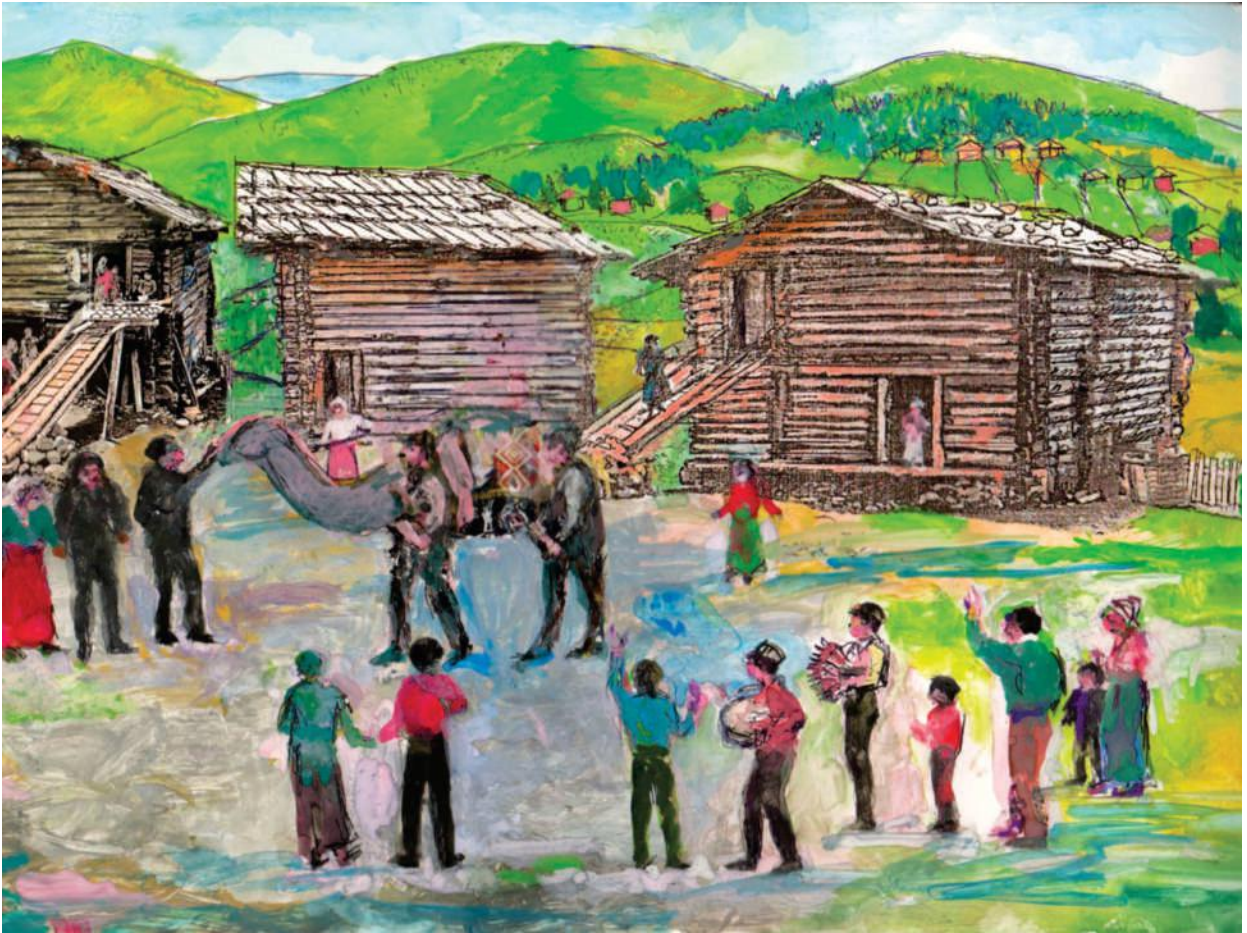




HARNESSING THE CAMEL//CAMEL HARNESSING

"Camel harnessing" was a part of Shuamtoba, an ancient holiday dedicated to the cult of fertility. This is an ancient theatrical spectacle of door-to-door visits. The head and body of the "camel" was carved out of wood and carried on the shoulders by four men who "represented" its legs. This device was wrapped in hides and furs so that it resembled a camel. A rider was put on this camel, and the procession, accompanied by players of various instruments and singers, went from door to door in the Yailas with joyful noises, loud shouts and songs, asking for provisions from each herdsman. At each yard, the rider would make the camel "dance", open its mouth with a stick, and the herdsman would put a gift in its mouth: cheese, butter (yagh), eggs, flour, or bread. In the end the collected provisions, would be taken in one family and the collective feast would start.







“DISTINGUISHING THE FIANCE”// INVITING THE BRIDE

It was a necessary rule to invite the bride or newlywed daughter-in-law. On the day of departure, future father-in-law or brother-in-law followed the bride on a white, curvaceous, specially decorated horse for the bride, the back of which was covered with a red silk cloth. The horse's mane and neck were decorated with various colored skeins, laces, and fringes. The saddle should be soft and decorated with pillows. A wedding dress and a specially decorated umbrella were specially made for the bride. In addition to the relatives, the bride was followed by the sister of the groom or another relative. The horses of the bride and her attendants were led by future brother-in-law and a father-in-law on foot. The bride would first be taken to her parents' yaila, and then the groom's family would invite her to her yaila along with some women relatives. She stayed here until the evening. And then she returned to his father's Yaila. After the celebration, the same men took the bride and her attendants back to her parent's basic house.





GAMES

Some rituals of cult purpose under the influence of different religions and eras, are preserved in existence in the form of entertainment and games.

The fact that they represent a remnant of a serious cult action and reflect an ancient worldview is also clearly visible in the games spread in Ajara.



“BULL FIGHT”

In Upper Ajara, “bull fight”, which was included in the cycle of spring holidays, has been survived as a very interesting entertainment-spectacle. “Bull fight” started from the first week of April.

After months of preparation of the bulls, the owners of the bulls announced the day and place of the competition in rural areas. In the villages of Chvana and Ghorjomi valleys, special places were allocated for such competitions. For example, in the village of Intskirveti – there was “Dubechala” square, in the village of Nagvarevi – “Gorikula”, in the village of Mekeidzeebi – “Kintavra”, etc. On the day of the competition, huge crowds gathered. The owners of the bulls, standing by, cheered on their bulls with shouts during the fights. The victory of bull, together with the owner, was met by the villagers with cheers and shooting of guns and the defeated side quietly left the field and, filled with the desire for revenge, repeatedly called the owner of the winner. In the arena, new couples were replacing each other. “Bull fight” in rural areas lasted for about a week.





“BEAR GAMING” (DATVOBIA)

“Bear gaming” (Datvobia) is a folk holiday dedicated to the revival and fertility of nature, which has survived as a game. This game was performed during Bayram, wedding or other holiday. During the game, a chief, a judge or a king was chosen who was holding the knotted bashlyk in his hand. The second participant pretended to be a bear. The rest players represented goats. The bear, which represented nature in winter sleep, stood bowed before the king. The king used to beat the bear with the knotted bashlyk and wake it up. The awakened bear was looking for his goats, trying to catch them, and if he found one, then this player would impersonate the bear and start the game over.



FIRE GAMING//ATESHOINI

Traces of the deification of fire and special care and protection of it, which was due to the role and vital importance of fire in the life of ancient people, have been preserved in the form of the game “Fire Gaming” or “Ateshoini”/“Artoshani”. During this game, two “fires” are placed on either side of the dividing line, equidistant from the line, guarded by two teams. The participants of both teams try to take fire from each other. Whichever team representative was able to catch the “fire” and move it to the “border” is considered the winner.

The starting point of the game is fire protection. It cannot be left without control. One player constantly guards it. If the opponent gets possession of it, the game is lost.

“Fire gaming” is considered to be the embodiment of the mythological story of Amirani stealing the fire for the gods. It should represent a kind of dramatization of a desperate fight for the captured fire.





DEFINITION OF WORDS

ABANDULA – A game of girls with spun thread

ATESHOINI//ARTOSHANI – A game with fire; a folk game

AKAKBULI - Well-dressed

ALTUNI - Gold

AMBAVZE TAVIS MOTIKVRA – finishing discussing or negotiation about something

AMODZRENA – make pass//go through (something)

ARCHIVI – share, deserved benefit

ASTAMI - shovel

ASTMITARA – An image applied to the fabric, an ornament

AGHDI - Written contract of marriage

AGHDIS GAKVETA – Drafting and execution of the marriage agreement in writing

AGHDIS GACHRA – see Aghdis gakveta

ADGDI OKHVENU//NISHANI OKHVENU - (Laz.) engagement ceremony

AKHORI – cowshed, cattle stall

BAIRAGHI – flag, banner

BANDS – image, ornament in knitted item

BANDIBUNDAS – see Abandula

BAGHANA – a child

BAKHURA – 1. water creature

2. Forbidden days in July, when it was forbidden to swim in the water, so that Bakhura would not harm people

BE – pledge

BEREKETI - abundance

BES DARIGEBA – When inviting helpers for wool picking or spinning, distribution of wool or yarn to the participants in advance

BEHI – see. be

BOSLA - The patron deity of cattle

BOSLOBA - Ritual dedicated to Bosla

BOKHCHA – a bundle, a package; (here) Personal belongings and clothes given to the bride during the engagement

BOKHCHIS MITANA – Bringing clothes and basic necessities to the bride from the groom's family during the engagement

BZHOLI - mulberry

BRDZNA – experience, prohibition

BRDZNILOBA - To fulfill the prohibition

BUGHA – uncastrated bull

BUGHIEBIS WEDOBA – Bull fighting; Entertainment-spectacle included in the cycle of spring holidays

CHATKHI - Cloak made of dyed wool

CHECHVIS NADI - Women invited to touse wool

CHVILI TVARE – New moon

CHURUHGAI - 1. July;

2. custom

CHANDA - (Laz.) traditional wedding in Lazeti

CHELI - a small cone of straw

CHVANKI - talon; katikvancha – ornament in knitting



CHIBONI - a wind instrument

CHIBOSHANI - wood sharpening tool; chiboshana - ornament in knitting

DABUKEBA - numbing

DADE - bridesmaid, at the wedding, the attendant of the groom or the bride,
helping woman

DADEGI – September 1st. New Year in old times

DADEGOBA - A ritual, a custom that took place during New Year

DADIANI - see: Dade

DAVLI – A shoulder-mounted percussive instrument larger than a drum

DAVLZE KAMARI GAMITSKDA - (fig.) the player requests gift at the end of the wedding

DAVAKHSHMEBULI MTVARE - 1. Late moon rising; 2. Full moon having past Thursday

DATVOBIA - folk game-spectacle

DAKOCHVA - binding (fig.) possession by evil spirits

DAPAIJNA - inviting

DAPEPLVA – a rash on the skin

DARKILVA - to damage a tree or wood material from a worm

DACHICHVA - moth damage

DATSDA - gaining experience and taking into account

DATSODVILEBA – committing a sin, bad behavior

DACHEDEBA – wrestling; fighting

DGHA - (Laz.) day

DODOPALA - Poor quality silkworm cocoon

DONCHKHAURI - sparked

DUAGHIS AKHDA - take red headdress off the bride

DUGUNI – wedding

DWAGHI//DUAGHI - A bridal headdress cloth that covered the bride from head to toe;

Mostly red

DZGVENI - Specially prepared chicken and various kinds of cakes and sweets to be taken to the Shuamtoba holiday

DZUDZUS PARA - see "rdzis para"

EBE – midwife, accoucheur

ELIOBA - The holiday dedicated to the Prophet Elijah

ELCHI – match-maker

ETSERI - fern

FADIKO/FATIKO – amusement-spectacle; It was performed during weddings, Shuamtoba and other celebrations

FALAKA - 1. Honeycomb;
2. Falakeba – ornament in knitting

FERKHOBA – first stepping on New Year Day

FINCHKHI - crumb

FUSKULEBI – fringes

GABAREBA//ABAREBA - entrusting the cattle to the herdsmen in summer pastures

GADANADEBA - Transfer of helpers to other field upon early graduation of working process

GADATSEMA – to curse

GADANATSEMI – having cursed

GATVALVA - The impact of the "evil eye"

GANRIDEBA - avoidance, prohibitions in relations with family members

GARGANI - a stick, cudgel



GATSARTSALEBA - to scatter, to lay disorderly

GEVEZOBA – arrange trouble, quarrel

GHELIEBI - streams

GLAKHOBA - bad behavior, doing bad things

GOBI – wooden bowl

GOLI – lake

“GZAS SIMGHRERA VUTKHRAT” – (fig.) Let's walk the road with song, cheerfully

HAJETNAMAZI - prayer of wishes

IAZMA - headwear

IAILA - 1. Summer pastures;

2. Herdsmen shelters

IJEBI – doing something

JAZI – evil spirit, devil

JAZ-EKALA - A thorny plant coiled in a circle

JERI - food taken at a fixed time of day

JILGHA –ploughing tool, plough

JORKO - A small backless chair made of wood

JOKHIS GATEKHVA - hint at a negative answer

JUMA - Friday

KAI - OK

KAI FEKHI – a good foot bringing happiness

KANUGHI – garden bed

KANUGHIS GAGHEBA – make a garden bed

KARAVI - Branches of plants arranged in triangles to make a shelter for the silkworm

KARIS SADAMKETO - The money paid by the relatives of the bride to get her out of her father's family at the wedding

KARIS DASAMKRELO//KARDASAMKRELO – see "karis dasamketo

KARKALI - clucking

KAFIKHARJI - see "karis dasamketo

KHAPI - pumpkin

KHARMANI - 1. threshing;
2. Abundance of wheat
3. a pile of things thrown in disorder

KHARMANOBA - threshing period

KHASHARI - high vine stake

KHELTAPLIANI – person who makes delicious meals

KHELIS MOBRUNEBBA - success after failure

KHELISTATSNELI – bride's friend at the wedding

KHEMSI - snack

KHELNAKMARI - made by hand

KHERTALI - spindle

KHERTLIS NADI - women invited to spin wool

KHIZARI – saw; khizrikbila - ornament in knitting

KHISE - share, possession

KHLIBVA - twist, knot

KHOCHICHI - Baby bed made of tree bark

KHTSALA - rotten

KISIRAI – unfruitful, infertile



KOTKHO - A round lidded vessel

KOKOTAI – thick haired

KONAKHI – home, dwelling

KUDIANI – evil soul

KUTI – disabled. Unable to walk, move

KUCHKGESH KTALA (KUCHKHESH KTALASHI) – (Laz.) a step back home – On the fourth or seventh day, the bride's visit to her father's house

KVIZHGHI - Reinforcements on the trunk of the tree

KVIRIKOBA - 1. July;

2. Custom

KEPTCHA KHATUNI - 1. Little lady

2. Doll to be carried during Lazaroba

KVAKATSI - Conical figures in the shape of a human image, carved in stone or made by stacking small pieces of stone on top of each other in the alpine zone of Adjara

KILIMI - 1. Carpet, mat;

2. Kilimura – ornament in knitting

KORI - blind

KOCHEGURI – a kind of dance

KUNCHELA – see “Kuchechi”

KUCHECHI – cover of maize cob

KAMA – dagger

KACHI – silk worm

KACHIS DABUKEBA – silk worm disease

KOLIFERI - everything

KOLSAMA – a kind of dance “Gandagana”, dance arming

KORI – fenced, bordered

KORI TKE – forest reserve

KURBANI - sacrifice

KURUTI – dry cheese made from curds

KHEMENTKHIMEI - (Laz.) young woman, being wanted by someone

LAZARIA - 1. a ritual to invoke the weather during droughts or heavy rains;

2. A doll to be carried during the ritual

LAZARIKO//NAZARIKO – see “Lazaria”

LEKHTI - A log of alder tree divided lengthwise into four

LITROP - (Greek.) Repentance, cleansing from sins

MAGARI MTVARE – full moon

MANIDI - invitihb people for collective helping when there is a lot to do for a single family

MASKLAVI – a star; an ornament while knitting

MAKAI - (Laz.) bride's party

MEMTEURI, MEMTEVRI - A woman taking care of livestock taken to alpine pastures in the spring-summer period

MEMKHLIANI//MENKHLIANI - A woman going to the Shuamtoba holiday

MEMKHLIANOBA//MENKHLIANOBA - Shuamtoba holiday

MECHKINEI - (Laz..) engagement in cradle

MEFEKHE - First stepper; The person who must first enter the house on New Year's morning

MZOGHA - (Laz.) the sea

MITROP – see “Litrop”

MOTIKVRA – to bind

MOKAVRA – tiled roof



MOKVANIS KORTSILI – wedding taking place in the groom's family

MOCHALVA - Cutting and collecting dried corn plants in the field

MOCHECHEBA – scatter around

MOCHOCHITULI – done badly, with difficulty

MOCHKHOROZI – offspring, descendant

MTROBASHI MOKVROBA - Reconciliation between two families,

MURAVI – match-maker

MUZHDEBALISHI - A small pillow for the bridegroom at the wedding

MUZHDEJI – a person carrying a muzhdebalishi at the wedding ceremony

MDZLEVARI – someone or something overtaking

NABEDVARI – been cursed

NABRALEVIS KVA - A stone on which sacrifices were put to ask for the forgiveness of sins

NADI - A form of mutual assistance at work

NAKSI – 1. bad omen;
2. Naughty, restless

NENEI - 1. mother;
2. grandmother

NIKARTI - beak

NIKAKHI - A document containing the terms of marriage

NISHANLOBA - Permissible sexual intercourse of the bridegroom with the bride before marriage

NOGHAME - (Laz.) bride

OMTINU - (Laz.) to marry by stealth

ONCHVIRE, ONCHIRE - (Laz.) swimming

PAPULI - (Laz.) Grandfather, head of the family

PIRISAMKHDELI - A brother or cousin of a bride who, at a wedding, removes the veiled ride from the bride's face with the tip of a dagger and reveals his face

PIRISANAKHZVI - Gifts given to the bride at the wedding after removing a veil

PIROBIS SIMAGRA - strength of promise

PTSKILI - flea

PTSKILIS GADALOCVA - Anti-Flea Breeding Ritual and Spell

PTSKILIS DAKVERVA – see ptskilis gadalocva

RASHINA - (Laz.) St. Virgin Day

REIZA - why

ROKI - see kvizhghi

RUSUMI - Asking for something special at the wedding

RDZIS FARA - Money intended for the bride's mother or guardian at the wedding

SAIA - plain, simple

SAMA - dance

SANEFO TSINDA - A sock knitted by the bride for the groom

SARDZIE - Room for making and storing dairy products

SARDZLOS GAMORCHEVA - Inviting the bride or newlywed daughter-in-law to Shuamtobi celebration.

SASELA - 1. Early pear variety;

2. A child born before marriage as a result of nishanloba

SAKMIS MOCHRA - Settlement of the case as a result of negotiations

SATSVETI BOKHCHA - Clothes brought by the groom's family for the bride to wear before the wedding



SAKHACHUNA - a toy, jingling toy

SERISKUDI - Food taken after dinner, dessert

SHASHLIGI - roast meat

SHEBECHDVA - Sticking a cross made with a candle

SHEGULEBA - see "Tvalis dakaveba"

SHEIDI - saint

SHERBETI - sweet drink

SHETEKHVA - Selective removal of leaves on the plant

SHEFUTEBA - let smoke go somewhere

SHEKHRCHOLEBA - see "Shefuteba"

SHISHA - firewood

SHUAMTOBA - A herdsman-farmer's holiday, this was held during the presence of cattle
in the alpine pastures

SHKVITI - seven

SISKHLIS MOTSMENDA - Cessation of enmity between two clans or families

SISKLSHI MICEMULI KALI - A woman marries to the son from the enemy family

SITKVIS GAMOTANA - Voicing the outcome of the negotiation

SIJA - (Laz.) son-in-law

SIJALIKOBA - (Laz.) Secret meetings of the bridegroom with the bride in the bride's
family after the engagement

SUFRIS DAKAVEBA - Sitting at the wedding table for a long time from the bride's party

SUFRIS CUKEBA - Release of the wedding table occupied by the bride's party

TABIKI - part of the yoke

TAYA - uncle, mother's brother

TWAGHI - see "Dwaghi"

"TURAKORTSILI" - small-scaled wedding

TAVZE SHEMOREBA - take care of

TAVIS ADGILS ITSNOBS - It will suit the place

TAJI - mark

TETROSANI - a place in Kobuleti

TVALIS BATONI KATSI ARAA - You can't command the eye

TVALIS DAKAVEBA - select someone for oneself

TVALIS TSAKVRA - see "gatvalva"

TVALKVETARA - a person with "evil eyes"

TVARIS TSKVETA - The transition of the moon from one phase to another

TOFI GADAGVATSVVA MAKARMA - As a sign of the end of the wedding, shooting guns
and damaging something

TSAKHI - a silkworm's house made of raw branches of a plant, tied into a triangle;
See "karavi"

TSETSKHLZE MOREBA - move something over fire flame

TSKHEMLA - hornbeam

TSALTE - bitter

TSAMOSRUJVA - take down with one shake of the hand

TSANATSVLEBA - move forward

TSARMO - good, positive

TSARNAKI - red ground; used as a paint

TSAGHMARTI - good, positive

TSAKVANIS KORTSILI - wedding at the bride's house

UZANGIS SACHUQARI - A gift for bringing the bride off her horse

UKMO - backwards, bad



UZHURI - 1. disease;
2. The disease-causing evil spirit

USTA - craftsman

VEKILI - (here)witness, representative of the bride or groom

ZEMBILI - plaited basket

ZIARETI - Holy place of worship

ZIRIKOBIA - folk game-spectacle

ZOLI - a thin, long piece of leather or cloth

ZURNA - A large wind instrument

ZGHVIS NENEI - Sea/water spirit, protector



MATCH-MAKING



ENGAGEMENT



OFFICIAL FORM OF MARRIAGE
(AGHDI CUTTING)

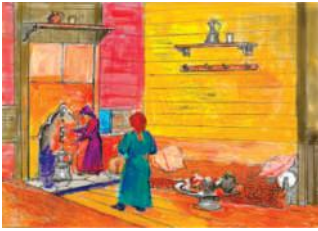


JACKAL WEDDING



MUZHDEBALISHI
(PILLOW FOR HAPPY NEWS)





WEDDING FOR HOSTING A BRIDE



TAKING OFF THE TVAGHI//DWAGHI
(HEADWEAR)



TAKING "DINNER" TO THE BRIDE



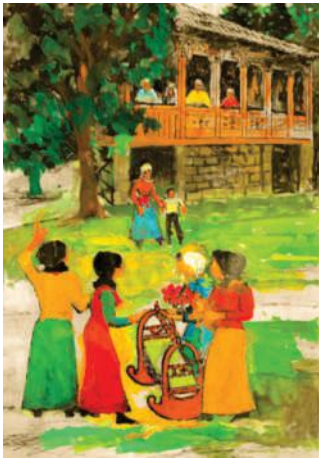
MECHKINEY



MATCH-MAKING



CHANDA



CHILDBIRTH/TAKING THE CRADLE



"NAVEL CUTTING"



"GETTING OUT OF THE BOSOM"





ACCEPTING IN "MANDI"
(WORKING PROCESS)



TRADITIONS OF
UPBRINGING GIRLS



MARRIAGE BANS



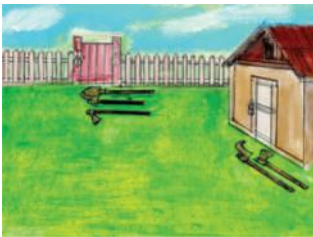
SHUNNING



PROHIBITIONS RELATED TO PREGNANCY
AND CHILDBEARING



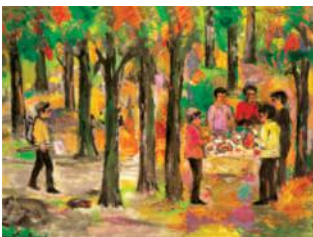
PUTTING AN EVIL EYE



KVIRKOB//CHURUGAI



PROHIBITIONS RELATED TO PLANTS



SACRED FORESTS



PROHIBITIONS ON HUNTING AND FISHING



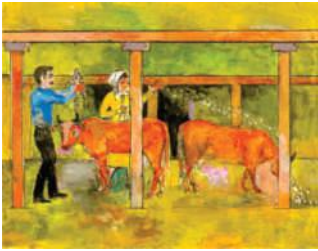
NEW YEAR CUSTOMS IN AJARA



“CUTTING DOWN THE HORNBEAM”



KEEPING THE FIRE BURNING



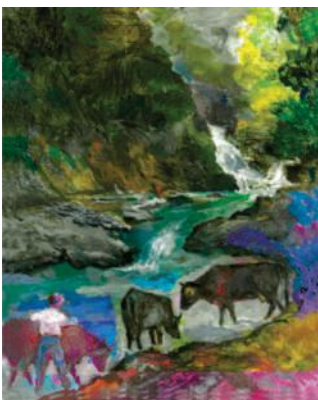
COW-SHED CEREMONY



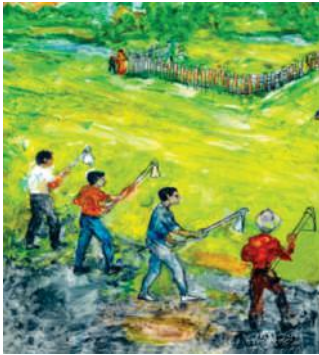
“FIRST MAN” RITUAL – MEKVLEOBA



CHICKEN STEPPING



LIVESTOCK STEPPING



NADI
(VOLUNTARY HELPERS IN WORKING PROCESS)



GIVING A PORTION//SHARE



RITUALS RELATED TO THE MOON



MAKING THE FOUNDATION OF THE HOUSE



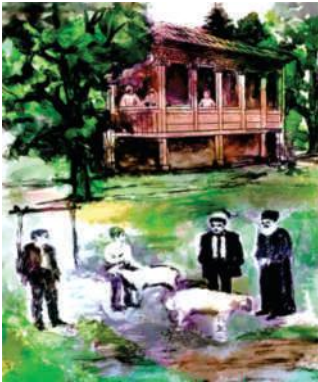
RAISING THE BANNER



CULT OF THE SERPENT



TYING UP A BEAST



DIVINE SACRIFICE



MOURNING



“MZOGHAS ONCHVIUSHI DGHA”
(SWIMMING DAY IN THE SEA)



DADEGI//DADEGOBA



HELPING (NADI) IN SCUTCHING / SWINGLING



SILKWORM CARE



KNITTING



ZIARETOBA (HOLY PLACES)



MEIDAN-ODA//MISAFIR ODA



AFTER MARCH 9TH



“VICTORIOUS” CUCKOO



OX HARNESSING



LEGENDS OF THE LAKE BULL

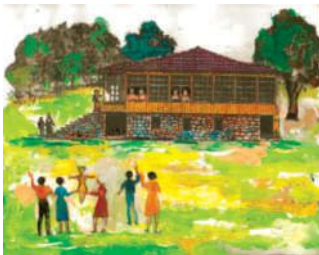




MAKING A BED IN THE FIELD



CORN HARVEST (KHARMANOBA)



LAZAROBA



"EIGHTY THOUSAND PEBBLE SPELL"



STONE MEN



MEMKHLIANOBA//MENKHLIANOBA



MEMTEVROBA
(NOMADIC CATTLE-BREEDING)



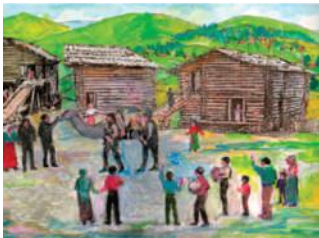
SHUAMTOBA



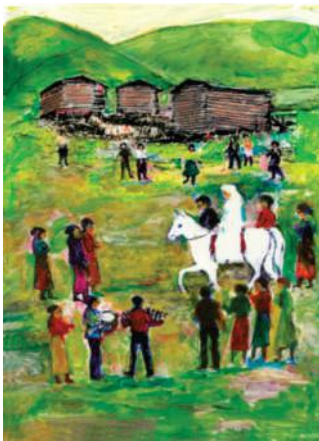
FADIKO//FATIKO



ZIRIKOBIA



HARNESSING THE CAMEL//
CAMEL HARNESSING



“DISTINGUISHING THE FIANCE”//
INVITING THE BRIDE



“BULL FIGHT”



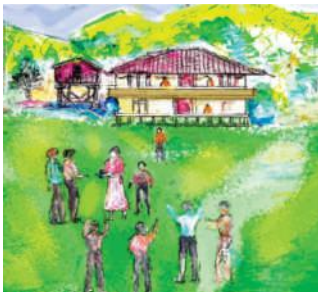
FIRE GAMING//A TESHONI



AGDI OKHVENU//NISHANI OKHVENU



OVERCOMING POULTRY



ALILOOBA (CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION –
GIVING COLLECTED PRESENTS TO POOR)





THE GUIDE IS PREPARED BY
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