

**FOR AGRICULTURAL TRADITION AND
VOCABULARY RELATED TO CHEESE WEEK
(BUTTER WEEK) IN WESTERN GEORGIA**

ABSTRACT

Cattle- and poultry-related rituals are one of the oldest original parts of folk religious practices.

The materials recorded by us during the years of expeditions to western Georgia revealed a rather interesting fact: in every region (Imereti, Lechkhumi, Racha, Samegrelo, and Svaneti), at the beginning or upon the completion of the cheese week (except for St. Theodore's Day), people performed a kind of ritual aimed at protecting domestic animals and poultry. The very ritual had to do with the fauna present in a particular regional environment. At the beginning or at the end of the cheese week, every family member puts one bite inside an egg shell, recites an incantation and takes it away from the house or throws it in the water.

In Imereti, the ritual is called "**Buzis ulupa**" (a portion of a fly), and the **buzura / buzara** as well. Here, the fly refers to an insect in general. A similar ritual named "**sindiopalas čili**" (a portion, a share of a weasel) is found in some villages of Imereti.

According to the materials recorded in Samegrelo, particularly, in Tsalenjikha, a similar action is called the "**Qvavis sajobinaro**" ("**Gorjgin Qvaria**" = a share, a portion of a crow), while in Chkhorotsku it is referred to as "**Qvavis čili**", ("**Qvariaş Tia**").

As follows from the materials recorded in Lechkhumi, the same ritual is called "**Meliaş Sarčo**" (nutriment of fox).

In Racha on Bosloba day (a moving folk day associated with the cult Bosle - the god of fertility and multiplication of the cattle), the whole family fasted before supper to protect the cattle from being hunted. In the same sense, "**mglis ukme**" "wolf's rest day" was introduced in Tusheti at the beginning of the Passion Week.

A prayer that is identical to the above-mentioned spells is attested in the ecclesiastical book "The Blessings".

We think the establishment of such rich and diverse traditions of these rituals in Georgia was facilitated by the addressed regional fauna and ecological conditions.

Keywords: Georgian ethnography, ethnographic vocabulary, agricultural rituals.