

**Heinz Fähnrich – “The Queen of the Forest; Myths and Folk-tales  
from Georgia**

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**Abstract:** In 2012 the König Publishing House issued the book by the outstanding German Kartvelologist Heinz Fähnrich „Königindes Waldes; Sagen und Mythen aus Georgien“. The book includes materials which depict the Georgian reality and views them from different perspectives. Namely, the Georgian mythological-poetic thinking vision not only as exemplified by folkloristic faith and images but also by means of folk interpretation of historical and religious stories. It is worth noting that Heinz Fähnrich has published numerous works in the field of Georgian folk studies. They have already been reflected in the Georgian scholarly circles.

**Key words:** *Georgian folklore, Heinz Fähnrich*

After opening the borders between the Soviet Union countries and the civilized West were opened at the end of the previous century, interest in Eastern culture gradually increased in Europe. This idea may seem debatable for some since it was the Humanists who started to long for studying and learning the benefits of its culture in Europe. Obviously, we do not aim to argue with this well-known fact. We will only need to take into consideration the idea given here related with almost half-a-century break, which cut numerous states, including, Georgia, off from the western course and its prospects of development. A sudden change of the mentioned situation again gave way to bilateral cultural relations. Obviously, this two-way longing and aspiration is subject to risk as well unless such a sparse nation as Georgia finds the way to retain its originality. Therefore, it is essential to immediately find the form for such nations to choose the proper way in the process of civilization. This way is nothing but a reversible process of mutual exchange of cultural heritage, which enables small nations to prove their own full

rights in the eyes of the world and become worthy cosmopolitans only through patriotism [3, p. 584].

What is the current situation in present-day Georgia? To what extent is the issue of popularizing Georgian culture met throughout Europe? To reply to the question, I would like to recall an interesting initiative of one German author, researcher and writer in the 1970's to introduce the work of Vazha Pshavela to the German reader. As a result of this initiative, Rainer Kirsch published the translation of "Aluda Ketelauri" in the Journal "Sinn und Form" in 1970 which is accompanied by his research.

In the present article I would like to focus the reader's attention on the latter. Although the research of the author is small-scale, it includes numerous interesting observations through viewing the basics of Vazha's realism on the basis of realistic folk roots. However, it needs to be stated that the real Georgian traditional phenomenon of the duties of the chief priest is still unidentified for the European researcher; what I mean here is the opinion according to which the translator compares the words of the chief priest Berdia with fascist pogrom. This example here is not used with the view of diminishing the importance of the translator. The thing is that unmistakable depiction of the strange reality and mentality is utterly unimaginable without the interference of the inhabitants of reality. Besides, the adequacy of content, special attention is also given to the formal aspect, which various thinkers call transplanting of text from one reality to another and this undoubtedly should be regarded as the strong side of Heinz Fähnrich book – "The Queen of the Forest"[1]. The present work aims to introduce it to the Georgian reader. Before moving to the analysis of materials published in the book, it needs to be mentioned that the letter of Elene Gogiasvili about the work has already been published in the March issue of the "University Newspaper". The article briefly and concisely views the contribution of Heinz Fähnrich to the Georgian people and focuses attention on various interesting qualities of the present book. According, our article is not the first response to the work of the German Kartvelologist. However, it envisages the present presentation and by focusing on the stylistic side tries to introduce a novelty in to the already existing views [4, p. 12]. Let's get back to the above-mentioned approach of the author towards the translation

material. That searching the special form for envisaging the use of color of the given factor is not accidental is proved by the afterward attached by the author to the text which consists of several thematic parts. Each part aims at making the Georgian reality obvious to the European community [2, p. 638-649].

Before coming to the issues of style we are interested in, I offer the reader a list of the topics discussed in the afterward/epilogue, which will make the importance of work carried out by the author even more obvious:

- 6) Fähnrich reviews foreign versions of the designations of Georgians and their possible etymology;
- 7) Then the reader is informed about the geographical location and borders of present-day Georgia;
- 8) The ancient Georgian tribes and the area of their settlement is also mentioned here, which serves as the basis of the history of the establishment of first Georgian states – Diaokh and Kolha;
- 9) The historical path the Georgian people have traversed is briefly presented in the afterward. What mainly is stressed here is the toughest combat situations and the identity of powerful enemies, which the researcher uses with the view of proving the special qualities of Georgians – steadfastness and fearlessness;
- 10) Then there is a brief historical overview, the main area of concentration is shifted to the main material of the book, folk peculiarities, relationships of the Georgian writers and folklore which is followed by the identity of folk text recorders and the history of their research.

We now get back to the stylistic peculiarity which we focused on at the beginning of our letter and illustrate to what extent the direction of the author is targeted to retaining the internal originality of the material “transplanted” into another language reality. To illustrate this, I use the citation from the above-mentioned afterward: “The materials which the given book includes are related to the history and life of the Georgian people. Accordingly, they represent various aspects of the Georgian reality. One of their qualities is conveying the reality/truth in an unvarnished way, which is followed to a greater extent in our translation envisaging the editions of text

recorders.” This is followed by a comparative analysis of Georgian folklore in the context of the folklore of the world’s nations: “Depicting the truth in an unvarnished way differentiates the Georgian folk-tales from those of other peoples. For example, the Greeks, Romans and Indians. Their myths and oral narrations are refined and literary-esthetically sophisticated. The Georgian material is far more realistic compared with them and, therefore, often terrifying. Such a method of depicting the reality/truth grants it the status of authenticity and deep historical reality despite the fact that texts, thanks to oral narration, experienced quite a significant transformation” [2, p. 645].

Despite the variety of chapters, the material given in the book can be divided into three parts:

a) Faith of the Georgian nation – impressions about the heroes and pagan deities/gods (the Amiran epos; Tqashmapa; Ochokocki; goddess Dali, etc.);

b) interpretations of the saints turned into folk; shrine; mother of the place and cult legends;

c) Folk-tales about historical people which is included in the book under the name of “historical faces”.

I would like to focus the attention of our reader on the peculiarity of narrating the historical folk-tales, which, obviously offers folk interpretation of real facts. This retains local color to the narrative and, instead of simple establishment of facts, introduces the reader to an evaluative-value analysis as well. I think, such a synthesis of objective events and their subjective depiction is the best means to illustrate to the European reader the national attitude and philosophy of life. To make the discussion and reasoning more obvious, let’s give a specific example from the given monograph. In one of the sub-chapters, the researcher offers the legend about Queen Tamar visiting Kakhaber. Attention is focused on such a problem as contradiction of the origin and dignity in the Middle Age. The story is related with to love story of the daughter of the Racha duke Kakhaber and her servant Pavlia Gotsiridze. Queen Tamar plays a significant role in the successful happy end of the story. Together with the poet singers, she visits the principality and knowing about the love of the couple which does not match each other according to their ranks, stealthily asks her escort members about the significance

of the origin of the man. The poets are divided into two parts. On the one hand, we have Shavteli and his supporters who develop the following view: "The origin of the human being is like the sun which spreads its rays and through its light gives essence to life; the rose grows even in the dung but, obviously, it constantly spreads the smell of the dung around". On the other hand, there is Rustaveli, the verse singer who has just returned from Athens and after Shavteli and his like-minded individuals addresses the Queen: "What benefit does origin give to a man who is no good and useless?" According to the legend, with these words the verse singer captures the heart of the king, whereas, on the other hand, deserves a terrible fury of the noblemen [1, p.392-393].

As for the language of the German translation, like the above-mentioned extract, it exactly follows the folk speech style which is expressed by short syntactic constructions not so much close to the German language.

The folk-tale "The Fairy"(Die Fee) also needs to be mentioned among the legends included in the book about Queen Tamar, which accumulates the views of the Georgian nation about the cleverness and beauty of the woman sovereign, her royal power and fearlessness. [1, p.371-374].

The image of the hero Giorgi Saakadze, hyperbolized by the people, is also unchanged. He is identified with Saint George, using the power of depiction and, similar to it, defeats the dragon. Here, I mean the sub-chapter from the series dedicated to Giorgi Saakadze. As a title, the author uses the exact phrase from the theme ("Giorgi Saakadze kills the dragon/WieGiorgiSaakadsedenDrachentötete) [. Every element of the folk-tale clearly illustrates the tendency of the people to make the hero ideal, which is achieved by means of transferring the regalia of the saint to the hero (like Saint George, Giorgi Saakadze has a white horse, possesses the weapon and defeats the dragon living outside the village in the river Mtkvari upon the request of the people). Furthermore, the legend does not escape mentioning the object of comparison and directly stresses the fact of identifying Saakadze with Saint George.

Thus, Heinz Fähnrich offers the German reader an extremely significant part of the Georgian reality – by means of folklore space he brings together almost all peripeteias of the road passed by the

nation and, what's really worth noting, does not leave out of his vision the scope of creating folk-tales and legends, retains the speech style taking account of the syntactical constructions and with the help of emotional charge, informs the German reader what the attitude of the nation living in this reality is towards specific phenomena instead of simple statement of facts, which I consider is the most significant factor for proper popularization of Georgian culture and color.

In conclusion, for more clarity and obviousness, I offer the reader the spectrum of themes of the material submitted by Heinz Fähnrich:

- 1) Folk-tales about Amiran (Amirani-Sagen);
- 2) Folk-tales about Mesepi (Mesepi-Sagen);
- 3) Folk-tales about Dali (Dali-Sagen);
- 4) Folk-tales about Tqashmapa (Tqaschmapa-Sagen);
- 5) Folk-tales about hunters (Sagen von Wilhütern);
- 6) About devil/Satan and spirits (Von Teufeln und Geistern);
- 7) Wizards (Hexensagen);
- 8) Folk-tales about gremlins (Tschinka-Sagen);
- 9) Ochokochi and Ochopintre (Otschokotschi und Otschopintre);
- 10) Folk-tales about the moon and Saint George (Sagen vom Mond und vom heiligen Georg);
- 11) From the history of the old world (Vonderersten Zeit der Welt);
- 12) Folk-tales of places (Ortssagen);
- 13) Expressive name (Namens deutende Sagen);
- 14) Legends of saints and martyrs (Legenden von Heiligen und Märtyrern);
- 15) From the history of life and battle of Georgians (Vom Leben und Kampf der Georgier);
- 16) Historical images (Gestalten der Geschichte);
- 17) Folk-tales of Northern-eastern Georgia about the goddess (Göttersagen aus Nordostgeorgien);
- 18) Places of cult and their servants in north-eastern Georgia (Kultstätten und ihre Dienerin Nordostgeorgien);
- 19) From the life of the highland of north-eastern Georgia (Vom Leben in Nordostgeorgiens Bergland).

It needs to be mentioned that each sub-chapter is then divided into sub-titles which unite relatively small-scale specific historical facts and offers the reader various types of interesting information through simple style.

**References:**

1. Heinz Fähnrich, „Königin des Waldes; Sagen und Mythen aus Georgien“, Buchverlag König 2012.
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