

# A Paradigmatic Tropology of the “Pillar of Light” in Nikoloz Gulaberidze’s “The Reading” and “The Chant”

The paradigm of “the pillar of light” (the same as “Sveti-Tskhoveli”/“living pillar”) is an essence of the Georgians’ spiritual life and an accompanying phenomenon of the Georgian writing (more generally, of Georgian Christian culture).

The scientific literature states that “the pillar of light” is met in neoplatonism (“the pillar of light” – a corporeal, an inseparable and an immovable place in the universum consisting everything), manikeism (“the pillar of light” or “the pillar of glory” – purified souls or light creatures accompany it to the moon and afterwards, to the sun. According to the other version, after going up to the moon and the sun the light or purified souls gather on “the pillar of glory”) and in Indian religion (“the pillar of light” is connected to the souls of the dead, which firstly go up to the moon and afterwards, to the sun. This is the treasure of India’s belief).

V. Nozadze does not connect any of the above-mentioned sources with “the pillar of light”, which is presented in the Georgian writing. The scientist believes that it “is related to the Assyrian–Egyptian–Greek pillar, which was dedicated to the heavenly bodies. I suppose that the Georgian pillar is not connected with a fire-pillar of the Bible” [Nozadze, 1957:87].

V. Nozadze quotes J. Karst, who believes that the “living pillar” (the same as “the pillar of light”), “which comes from the heavens is the Christianized old cult of a tree, a holy tree, the cult, which is known not only in Georgia, but in the traces of a pagan belief of mountain peoples” [Nozadze, 1957:88].

We believe that an archetype of a symbol and an idea of “the pillar of light”, which is presented in the Georgian writing is Biblical (however, the relation to the mythological world of a pillar and a pagan cult of a tree is indisputable - see I. Javakhishvili, M. Chikovani, Z. Kiknadze, I. Surguladze, R. Siradze). According to “Exodus”, “the pillar of a cloud”, “the pillar of fire” (the same as “the pillar of light”) pushes sons of Israel to the promised country – “By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light... Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people” [Exodus, 13:21-22].

The given text indicates that the phenomena of “the pillar of a cloud” and “the pillar of fire” (the same as “the pillar of light”) have the same content. The mark-pillars of “theophany” are visible images, which change each other during days and nights and lead God’s elect nation on a difficult way.

“The pillar of a cloud” does not leave the Jews, who left Egypt. When the Egyptians approach the Jews it backs and defends the latter, but darkens the way to the former – “The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long” [Exodus, 13:21-22].

The narration continues – “During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion” [Exodus 14:24]. It seems that “the pillar of fire” and “the pillar of a cloud” are saviors and protectors of God’s elect. However, they represent ire and wail for fierce Pharaoh and his army. The Egyptians feel this and perceive an approaching danger as God’s struggle for “Israel”.

N. Sulava writes in this respect: “the back-standing of “the pillar of a cloud” indicates that they were forbidden to turn back... looking directly at “the pillar of a cloud” was impossible. However, at dawn God appeared before them with the “pillars of fire and cloud”. Looking at God annihilated them” [Sulava, 2008:134].

“The pillar of a cloud” is presented several times in the “Book of Exodus”. After three months from leaving Egypt, Jacob’s house approached Mount Sinai. Moses climbed the mountain and God instructed him to inform the Israelis about his will - if they believed in his word and promise, he would make them his elects. Jacob’s house consented. Afterwards, “...the Lord said to Moses, “I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you.” Then Moses told the Lord what the people had said” [Exodus, 19:9].

The given passage reveals that “the pillar of a cloud” is the evidence of God’s appearance, which is disclosed by God’s word. God’s word came true - “...Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently” [Exodus, 19:18]. It is obvious that God appears with the image of the fire. The given passage reveals once again that “the pillar of fire” and “the pillar of a cloud” are the image-symbols, which have the same content.

The “Book of Exodus” presents “the pillar of a cloud” once again: “As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses. Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent” [Exodus, 33:9-10]. It has been mentioned for several times that “the pillar of a cloud” is a mark-pillar of God’s appearance, God’s existence. This is the way of God’s revelation before Moses. God reveals him his wish and Israel recognizes God via this miracle.

The pillar is presented in prophet Ezekiel’s apparition „I looked, and I saw a figure like that of a man. From what appeared to be his waist down he was like fire, and from there up his appearance was as bright as glowing metal. He stretched out what looked like a hand and took me by the hair of my head. The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and in visions of God he took me to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner court, where the idol that provokes to jealousy stood” [Ezekiel, 8:3]. The given passage reveals that in prophet’s vision, the pillar of God’s image provokes jealousy and is the revelation of Israel’s glory.

The attention must be paid to the word denoting the image of “the pillar of fire” in John’s revelation: “Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars [Revelation, 10:1]. It is defined by Andrea Cappadocian in the following way: “...The feet of fire are the marks of abomination and suffering of the sinners, who are on the land... because the irreligious must suffer [Andrea Kesaria-Cappadocian <http://martlmadidebloba.ge/ganmarteba> 11. html]. According to this definition, “the pillar of fire” is considered as “the type of suffering of the sinners”. It must also be mentioned that the given consideration of “the pillar of fire” is not met in the redactions of “St. Nino’s life”.

“A sacral function of a pillar is important for the Biblical tropology, while the “fieriness” of a pillar is perceived as a representation of God’s will. The major lies... in a universal task of a pillar: it must uprise, introduce to the “heavenly look” sacral and respected, but leave a profane ... on the land...” [Abzianidze, Elashvili, 2012:49].

The above mentioned enables us to state that in the books of Bible (“Exodus”, “Prophet Ezekiel”, “Revelation”) “the pillar of a cloud” and “the pillar of fire” (i.e. “the pillar of light”) are image-icons of theophany and mark-pillars proving Gods presence, which is a leader, a savior, a benefactor and a protector of Jacob’s house. It seems that the pillars of cloud and fire - the benefactors of the Israelites - may become the pillars of revenge, when an elect nation abrogates God’s Testament. These interpretations of the above given Biblical paradigms will become the foundations of new images in the considerations of the creators of the following epochs.

The study of the Georgian hagiographic works reveals that “the pillar of light” is God’s appearance, God’s shiny word of truth, publicly verifying the merit and spiritual perfection of characters of “tortures” and “lives”<sup>1</sup>. Symbolically, it is “Jacob’s ladder”, taking the martyr to the sky. “The pillar of light” is a leader and a determiner of a working field of hermits similarly to “the pillar of a cloud”, which leded the Israelites coming from Egypt to a promised land. According to Giorgi Merchule, St. Fathers are “steadfast pillars as the strengthened pillars of the heavens” [Merchule, 1963:264].

The hagiographers will single out the essence of a pillar, particularly, the basis of the nomination as a "pillar" – "the pillar of a cloud", "the pillar of fire", "the pillar of light", "the life-giving pillar", "the pillar of truth" "the pillar of patience", etc. Former four are the mark-symbols of God's appearance, while "the pillar of truth" and "the pillar of patience" indicate that a perfected person approaches "the pillar of light".

Nikoloz Gulaberidze's works are important for the study of the paradigm of "the pillar of light". In the work – "The reading of a living pillar, Christ's tunic and Catholic church" – the Catholicos defines the reason of the praising of "three hypostases": "we have to decorate more brightly holy Catholic church and a living pillar erected by God, which is burning forever as a bright lamp and a lightning on our Savior Christ's tunic – the lightest among all lights..." [Gulaberidze, 2008:5].

In contrast to the redactions of "St. Nino's life", Nikoloz Gulaberidze narrates in "The reading" that fir trees were cut for building the church and "seven pillars were created. Six of them were erected according to the necessity, but the largest pillar was located in the middle of the church and was prepared for the erection [Gulaberidze, 2008:28]. The note about the preparation of seven pillars comes from Leonti Mroveli's redaction of "St. Nino's life" [Leonti Mroveli, 1955:112]. According to R. Siradze's viewpoint "the building of Svetitskhoveli Cathedral started in accordance with the opinion presented in Solomon's "fables": "Wisdom built a house for itself and put underneath seven pillars" (fables, 9,1...) [Siradze, 1992:116].

We believe that the above-mentioned must be considered together with the symbolism of numbers, particularly, the symbolism of seven, which is sacral for the pagan thinking<sup>2</sup> and the Cristian world. First of all, the Biblical symbolism of seven relates to the cosmogony. According to "Genesis", the seventh day completes God's acts carried out during preceding six days. The seventh day is God's day. According to the Biblical viewpoint, thousand days are one day for God. The belief, which arose among Christians, considers the eighth day (after passing 7000 years) as an eschatological time. Therefore, number seven is the ending of a group of numbers preceding it. At the same time, it is a forerunner of the renovation. N. Sulava writes about this: "The seventh day is different, confronted, because on the seventh day a qualitatively different act takes place. However, the completeness cannot be achieved by ignoring one of them. Completeness necessitates the unity" [Sulava, 2000:224].

The given symbolism of seven is vividly revealed in the Georgian hagiographic works. Let's recall "The martyrdom of Shushanik" – six years of queen's martyrdom were followed by the seventh year facing "the death of Christ's daughter-in-law". It is noteworthy that Ioane Sabanisdze considered the lifetime "likewise seventh" as remembering-cautioning the approach of the eschatological eighth year to the Georgians frightened with the Arabs' violence (see K. Kekelidze, R. Siradze). It is important that the conversion of Kartli took place seven years after St. Ninos' activities.

The above mentioned enables us to consider the preparation of seven pillars (for building the cathedral) in accordance with the symbolism of numbers. The seventh – "the largest" "astonishing" pillar of light erected via a divine force – is a central pillar joining and crowning the latter six. Its erection is the guarantee of the building of Svetitskhoveli Cathedral and Georgians' ecclesiastic life.

Nikoloz Gulaberidze in "The reading" and "The chant" "decorates" an erected pillar with different epithets – "the alive pillar", "the pillar of light", "this pillar – pure, enlightening and lighting", "outstanding, beautified with a lot of various miracles", "the tower comprising a vast light", "the pillar of light shining brightly", "the pillar shined by God", "the pillar, the decoration of the church and our hope", "the shiniest than the sun and exalted than ether, the guardian of lights of matins and lightning, unfelt and untouchable by a human's hand", "our watchman and guard", "the Georgians' hope and fence", "an unuttered brilliance", "paling the sun's light and disappearing its rays", "holy", "desired", "divine", "Moses' accomplice and attorney", "an unconquerable fighter-leader", etc.

R. Siradze indicates in respect to the naming of "Sveti-Tskhoveli" – "Tskhovelis mkopeli" is a divine name... "Sveti Tskhoveli" will become a divine name too. "Tskhoveloba" / "living" of this pillar is expressed by the fact that it is filled with a divine light. "Tskhoveli" means "living" and implies a divine life. Saba defines: "the Lord

lives and as you live" (IV kings. 4. 30). A divine life is eternal. Christ "is not God of the dead, but of the living" (Mark. 12, 27). Christianity is an eternal life (Mt. 19, 20). Christ is a word of life (I i. 1,1), a soul of life (I cor.15, 45), "the light of life" (i. 8,12), oppressing the death with the life (com. II cor. 5, 4). Everything can be summarized with the words from the Gospel of John: "that life was the light of all mankind" (i. 1, 4)... Svetitskhoveli Cathedral is a symbol of Sveti-Tskhoveli" [Siradze, 1992:115-116].

"The reading" presents desacralization and modification of old layers and image-symbols, especially, the transformation of a pagan cult of a tree into the Biblical "pillar of fire" – the pillar erected by an adolescent adorned with light "turned into light..." [Gulaberidze, 2008:29] and "the pillar, which turned into the fire and a shining pillar", "...the pillar of light arisen to the sky as the fire" [Gulaberidze, 2008:52]. The given depiction of the transformation of a pillar (according to "The life of St. Nino" that "pillar is seen as fire") reveals that the pre-image of Sveti-Tskhoveli is the Biblical "pillar of fire" – "considered by prophets and fathers as the holy pure fire-pillar", "foretold by prophets and fathers as the holy pure fire-light pillar" [Gulaberidze, 2008:68]. Similarly to the pillars of fire and cloud accompanying the Jews, "Sveti-Tskhoveli" is a guardian of the Georgian believers, the leader and the determiner of a new way, because God is in it and is seen via a mark-pillar of light – "...Let's aspire to see that surprising light, because this light is the appearance of that light, which was considered as the son on God by the prophets..." [Gulaberidze, 2008:34].

Here is the passage from "The reading" related to Sveti-Tskhoveli. It is a particular attempt of desacralization of pagan images and their Christian interpretation. Gulaberidze praises the "pillar of light" in the following way: "Be joyful, a pillar of light, similarly to the sun's eye you peer over light, a tunic of light, lightning-like light of the rays of the fire..." [Gulaberidze, 2008:59]. Therefore, the author considers "the pillar of light" as an "eye of the sun", which similarly to the sun "peers over", lights down at Christ's tunic and lightens as a lightning with the rays of the fire. In this passage the "eye of the sun" is the ownership of the mythological sun, which exists even nowadays in some expressions – "the nine-eyed sun", "the sun – an eye of the sky", "an eye (of the sun – N. G.) went into a bunch of grapes" – told during ripening of grapes, "an eye of the sun" (V. Nozadze, M. Chikovani, V. Bardavelidze, I. Surguladze, R. Siradze, etc.). Therefore, Nikoloz Gulaberidze unloaded "an eye of the sun" from pagan and used it for the embodiment of Christian sanctities.

Nikoloz Gulaberidze's "The reading" and "The chant" reveal that "Sveti-Tskhoveli" is the same as "the pillar of fire" accompanying the Israelites: "Be joyful, the pillar living and pure, initially acknowledged and beautified with many different miracles! You led the Israelites infallibly, because every source of light wanted you, via your miraculous acting and Moses leadership God was glorified in that desert during forty years, your dedication was directed to help the Israelites and to annihilate foreigners!" [Gulaberidze, 2008:59; see also pp. 50, 54, 67-78, etc.].

Nikoloz Gulaberidze's idea is very interesting in this respect. It is presented in one of the miracles of Sveti-Tskhoveli, which describes fording the furious river Aragvi by Queen Soji (via the assistance of Sveti-Tskhoveli). The author mentions: "and similarly to the first miracle, the same God wanted Sveti-Tskhoveli to travel under the leadership of a pillar, which earlier made miracles for the Israelites. When they went on the dark Red Sea and waters became fences from right and left, a light pillar led them. This queen started fording a furious river... fences were from right and left, but the main nation crossed the river drily and the whole nation, which heard and saw everything praised and glorified God and Sveti-Tskhoveli" [Gulaberidze, 2008:50-51].

N. Gulaberidze reveals the similarity of "Sveti-Tskhoveli" and "the pillar of fire". He compares the miracles of the Red Sea and Aragvi and makes an unexpected conclusion: "My dears, these miracles are no less than the miracles, which happened to the Israelites. I suppose, they are even more, because there was a calm river, while here is a furious one, furious like a wolf. Both were from God" [Gulaberidze, 2008:31].

It seems that according to the author's viewpoint, the miracle of Kartli is more significant. He states the reason – a miracle belongs to God, it is performed by the heavenly power. We believe that the comparison of the split of the calm Red Sea and furious Aragvi is not correct. The text reveals that the author realizes this fact. Therefore, in one case, he adds: "I think". Nikoloz Gulaberidze tries to emphasize a divine glory and power of "Sveti-Tskhoveli" via presenting the superiority of its miracle. Moreover, the "change" of a pillar into "the

pillar of light” indicates to the fact that a hidden life-giving force of a pillar made from “the Cedar of Lebanon” was brightened and beautified with a heavenly mercy. The newly-converted Georgian nation could see one more divine miracle and convince itself in the almightiness of Christian God. Symbolically, it is the “Transfiguration of Jesus” consecrated by God: for a pillar – “the pillar of fire, (“the pillar of light”), the guarantee of the building of Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, its central pillar, arisen on the earthing-place of Christ’s tunic, fed with belief and “beautified”. A harmonic coexistence of three lights (Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, the pillar of light, Christ’s tunic) enables the author to consider the figurativeness of the trinity. “Three lights representing the holy trinity...” [Gulaberidze, 2008:63]. “And these three – representing the holy trinity – Catholic church, Christ’s tunic and Sveti-Tskhoveli give us the fruits of an immortalizing treasure...” [Gulaberidze, 2008:5]. Nikoloz Gulaberidze addresses the Georgians’ three most precious treasures in such a way.

In “The reading” the pillar of light is considered as the aspiration of earthly to heavenly and as their visible connection – the king “saw the light, which trembled as a lightning stretching up from a low edge of the garden to the heavens...” “ ...saw the light, which trembled as a lightning stretching up from the lower paradise to the heavens ...” [Gulaberidze, 2008:30]. Let us recall the similar phenomenon, which was described in “The martyrdom of St. Abo”: on the place of Abo’s buried bones “... came out a pillar-like light as the lightning. It “stood” for a long time and the rock on the benches of the river, the environment and the bridge were lit up. All the citizens saw this...” [Sabanidze, 1963:75] – “...stretched up from the land to the heavens, arisen from the land and topped the heavens, stretched up forever by God, which lives in it and God settles among us via it” [Gulaberidze, 2008:62].

It has already been mentioned that the given consideration of Sveti-Tskhoveli is related to the revelation of Jacob and to the pagan cult of a tree – the Biblical narration about the tree of life planted in Paradise.

In “The reading” the paradigm of “the pillar of light” is related to other miracles of New Testament, particularly, to Transfiguration of Jesus and baptizing in Jordan: “Be joyful, the pillar of light. You witnessed the glorification of the son of God. When you shimmered on Mount Tabor, you notified about the second coming of man-god Jesus. The observers of your glory – main apostles, witnesses of God’s son... were astonished by the light of your glory... and similarly on Jordan (shined a pillar of light – N. G.), while the human beings’ sins were drowned by him...” [Gulaberidze, 2008:61]. The similar passage is presented in “The chant”: “This pillar served the son of God on Tabor and Jordan” [Gulaberidze, 2008:68, see also – 74, 76].

The given passages reveal that Nikoloz Gulaberidze relates the appearance of “the pillar of light” to the miracle, which took place during Christ’s baptism in Jordan by John the Baptist (At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him – Mat. 3:16). It is supposable that in this case the author considers “the pillar of light” as a mark-pillar of God’s appearance and therefore, he assumes it as the witness of the divulgation of God’s son by God [see Mat. 3:17].

We believe that Nikoloz Gulaberidze identified “the pillar of light” with “the pillar of a cloud” in case of denoting the appearance of the former during Transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor (which does not appear in the texts of the Gospels).

“The pillar of light” is considered as the symbol of Christ in “The chant”, in the trope dedicated to the Virgin: “Oh! Mother and Virgin, light, presenting the pillar of light...” [Gulaberidze, 2008:70]. In the compositions, Nikoloz Gulaberidze expresses the idea that the pillar was erected by “light-possessing” Christ: “Be joyful, a holy pillar, living and life-giving, which was erected as the light of lightning and a living-pillar by a light-possessing son of God...” [Gulaberidze, 2008:52]. The author also presents the importance and the task of the erection of the pillar of light: “... for the enlightenment of the heart of the Georgian nation darkened via idols’ temptation, for burning unbelievers in the fire unmercifully, requiting for parting from your holy light, oh, holy and living pillar!” [Gulaberidze, 2008:58].

It seems that the pillar of light gives a new life to the Georgians, who live in the darkness of idolatry. Therefore, it is life-giving. Here is one more nuance. According to the author’s statement, “Sveti-Tskhoveli” is unmerciful to the unbelievers: “eating as the fire” and requite-giving. The similar idea is presented in “The

chant": "The pillar of light, an image of fire, a burner of an irreligious nation. When unbelievers entered your cathedral and tried to touch it, you burnt them with your fire. When an irreligious nation captured it conceitedly, the fire flashed and burnt them unmercifully..." [Gulaberidze, 2008:70]. We believe that the given passages are the echo of one of the miracles of "Sveti-Tskhoveli" presented in "The reading", which narrates about the barbarians, who "ferociously" rushed into Svetitskhoveli during the Turks' invasion. We infer from the text that the Sultan "investigated" the essence of the sanctity, which was placed in the vault. When he heard about a divine essence and power of "Sveti-Tskhoveli", he believed in "God's grandeurs" and left that place. After the Sultan's departure, his wife, Shahri-Khatun, went into Svetitskhoveli. She did not pay attention to advice. She thought there was a lot of treasure there and placed the ladder for "observation". At that moment "a pillar of fire flashed immediately and unmercifully burnt and rotted all Barbarians, who were at the bottom of the ladder..." [Gulaberidze, 2008:52]. The survivors got frightened and rushed away. The Sultan's wife got more furious and ordered to burn the cathedral. God's revenging nature appears in this passage: "See here the revenge of powerful God. How the punishment appeared without delay. God's divine revenge was taken immediately and burnt the intestines and entrails of the extinguisher of the light. She hurried to Persia and died on her way..." [Gulaberidze, 2008:52].

In the given passages our attention was captured by "the pillar of fire", which is a precursor of destruction for the Egyptians (according to the Bible). Therefore, it becomes clear, why Nikoloz Gulaberidze mentions a revenging nature of "the pillar of light". The above mentioned viewpoint (a dual nature of "Sveti-Tskhoveli") is proved by Catholicos' praise of "Sveti-Tskhoveli": "Be joyful, a living pillar... cheering the souls with a fire-coloured wing stretched up in the sky like the lightning, which burns evil souls and protestors..." [Gulaberidze, 2008:65].

It has already been mentioned that in "The chant" "the pillar of light" is the symbol of Christ. The Savior says: "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" [Mat. 10:34]. Christianity is an absolving religion... but not to Satan. Satanic must be crushed with a sword, with a spiritual sword and a fighting one. Christ's sword is of this type.

In his compositions, Nikoloz Gulaberidze relates "Sveti-Tskhoveli" to God, which often appears as an "old man" and is mainly seen as an image of "old days": "and let's say why everyone calls him a pillar of light and a living pillar. He has been seen in such a way by many from the very beginning (when he led in old times the people of Israel), but here he is often seen as an old man..." [Gulaberidze, 2008:54]. Nikoloz Gulaberidze says that he tries to define a deep content of such "appearance". First of all, he remembers a listener and a reader the essence of the dogma of consubstantial Trinity. He says: "This pillar of holy light united as a single light depicting Holy Trinity will join as one expressive light..." [Gulaberidze, 2008:55]. Catholicos cites Prophet Daniel's telling about the second coming of "old days" and a "single light". According to his viewpoint, a "single light" and "old days" of Trinity will come during the second coming. Similarly to this, a "single light" and "old days" of Trinity will be viewed as "old days" by those, who are worthy to see it. He cites genuine sayings related to the miracle of Sveti-Tskhoveli: "...seeing many times as old days, while sitting on the top of the pillar and sometimes while being in church, the other time - sitting in front of the pillar, mainly - on the top of the pillar [Gulaberidze, 2008:55].

R. Siradze writes in this respect: "an old man" in the image of Sveti-Tskhoveli is a mystic apparition. Imagining it means spiritual communion with it i.e. a liturgical consciousness waiting for a miracle. This miracle is "subjectified" i.e. iconized among the sanctities of Svetitskhoveli" [Siradze, 1992:94].

L. Grigolashvili makes an attempt to define the meaning of seeing "the pillar of light" as an image of an "old man" by N. Gulaberidze. He singles out the relation of an image of an "old man" and "old days". The scientist cites Daniel's prophecy, where the deity "old days" is presented as an "old man". "According to Nikoloz Gulaberidze's viewpoint, "old days" and an "old man" indicate to one and the same aspect. Therefore, "a light pillar as old days" is seen" [Grigolashvili, 2005:94].

L. Tsereteli discusses Davit Aghmashenebi's contemplation of "old days" in Gulaberidze's "The reading". He mentions that "... the Holy Trinity appears as an old man (representing Svetitskhoveli)" [Tsereteli, 2005:144] to the king. This is the prerequisite of Davit's spiritual transfiguration and "rebirth".

The above mentioned reveals that Nikoloz Gulaberidze considers "the pillar of light", Christ's tunic and Svetitskhoveli Cathedral as the consubstantial of Trinity and relates "Sveti-tskhoveli" to hypostases of Trinity.

R. Siradze mentions in this respect: "...Sveti-Tskhoveli or a light pillar represents the consubstantiality of Trinity - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Moreover, Sveti-Tskhoveli represents the Father. Its symbol must be imagined as an "old man". The "old man" appears and embodies himself in Sveti-Tskhoveli. "Old days", which "can be felt only by the soul", embodies itself at once. An old day will be renewed in a "new day" i.e. in Christ (in the "sunny night")" [Siradze, 1992:113].

The Virgin is also called "Sveti-Tskhoveli" in "The reading" and "The chant". According to the author, prophets and Holy Fathers name her as "the light of fire", which rooted in the earth and "topped" in the heavens, which is seen with God. "God exists among us via her" [Siradze, 1992:62].

On the basis of this, Nikoloz Gulaberidze considers that Virgin Mariam incarnates a pillar: "Oh! Mother and Virgin, light, presenting the pillar of light, named as a pillar ..." [Gulaberidze, 2008:70; see 74, 78]. The author singles out one more feature similarizing "Sveti-Tskhoveli" and the Virgin: "Our light pillar, mother of God's son, who nursed Jesus Christ, you familiarised us with the chrism" [Gulaberidze, 2008:77; see 65, 68, 70, 74]. Therefore, chrism-issuing "Sveti-Tskhoveli" (via the mercy of "the spring of sweetness") is manifested via a deep content of the Saviour of the Georgians' soul, the Saviour's mother.

"The chant" presents one more significant interpretation of "Sveti-Tskhoveli" - Nikoloz Gulaberidze interprets the separation of fire-tongues (during Holy Spirit's appearance over twelve apostles) as the appearance of "the pillar of fire": "Be joyful, appearing as twelve parts of fire- tongues over the apostles!" [Gulaberidze, 2008:76].

If we consider Nikoloz Gulaberidze's words from this point of view, the lighting of the pillar and its turning into the image of fire will symbolically indicate to Holy Spirit's appearance over St. Nino (similarly to 12 apostles), who decrees the Georgian speech and "conversion".

According to R. Siradze's viewpoint, "Sveti-Tskhoveli and Svetitskhoveli Cathedral symbolically relate to: the Father, Holy Trinity, Christ's tunic and the idea of resurrection, the Virgin, 12 apostles and St. Nino, ...who was our "new apostle" [Siradze, 1992:119].

The study of "The reading" and "The chant" reveals that Nikoloz Gulaberidze's theological-philosophical discussions as well as the attempts of the representation of national-religious ideals and singling out the determining factors present the multi-stage symbolically loaded paradigm of "Sveti-Tskhoveli", particularly:

1. An image-symbol is a face-image of light Trinity of "Sveti-Tskhoveli": "This holy pillar united as a single light of the image of Holy Trinity..." [Gulaberidze, 2008:55];
2. "Sveti-Tskhoveli" is the image of the Father ("As old days" [Gulaberidze, 2008:55]), "an old man". This is mentioned in "The reading" many times: "... Here it is mainly seen as an old man by everyone" [Gulaberidze, 2008:55]; "...This light pillar is seen as old days..." [Gulaberidze, 2008:55]; "...On the top of this pillar was sitting an old man as an image of old days..." [Gulaberidze, 2008:55]; "...Sveti tskhoveli appeared as an image of an old man surrounded with an inexpressible brilliancy..." [Gulaberidze, 2008:56];
3. "Sveti-Tskhoveli" is Christ's light pillar: "The pillar of light went down,... he was sitting on the top of the pillar, he, who was crucified by our fathers" [Gulaberidze, 2008:35]; "Oh, Mother and Virgin, light, presenting the pillar of light..." [Gulaberidze, 2008:70]. "Sveti-Tskhoveli" is too high, the light superior to

the sun, stronger than the universe and the sun – “You are the unuttered light and brilliance, a conqueror of the universe and the sun, a pillar, which gives life...” [Gulaberidze, 2008:70; see also 65,72];

4. “Sveti-Tskhoveli” is the embodiment of the Virgin: “Oh! Mother and Virgin, light, presenting the pillar of light, named as a pillar, frightfully glorified by angels, tirelessly chanted and praised by us” [Gulaberidze, 2008:70]; “Be more joyful, you, representing the Virgin” [Gulaberidze, 2008:76; see also 62, 74, 78];
5. “Sveti-Tskhoveli” is the symbol of the communion with the Georgians’ highest light: “This holy pillar, which enlightens and lightens our souls and minds” [Gulaberidze, 2008:39]. An “enlightener” is directed to the mind, a “lightener” – to the soul. A believer, who approaches “Sveti-Tskhoveli” sharing its holy chrism, is heightened to the divinity. “Sveti-Tskhoveli” converts those, which rush to it: “Be joyful, a living pillar, ... you convert everyone who rushes to you” [Gulaberidze, 2008:65];
6. “Sveti-Tskhoveli” is the symbol of the eradication of irreligiousness and evilness of idols, repression of enemies, renewal of the belief and presentation of a new religion: “...Be joyful, a destructor of the evilness of idols!” [Gulaberidze, 2008:77]; “Be joyful, a renewal of a deprived religion!” [Gulaberidze, 2008:77];
7. “Sveti-Tskhoveli” is a connector of the earth and the heavens. It represents “Jacob’s ladder”: “...The pillar of light, which topped to the sky, came down to us...” [Gulaberidze, 2008:35; see also 30, 62];
8. “Sveti-Tskhoveli” is the Georgians’ hope and defending fence, which stands among us invisibly: “Oh, a miraculous pillar, the hope and the fence of the Georgian nation, which stands among us invisibly [Gulaberidze, 2008:66]; It is the hope of hermit-fathers and believers” [Gulaberidze, 2008:76].
9. “Sveti-Tskhoveli” is the symbol of disclosing the Georgians as the “heavenly nation”<sup>3</sup>: “Be joyful, you became God’s elect nation for the holiness and reigning of your descendants!” [Gulaberidze, 2008:76].

On the basis of the above discussed we can conclude that Nikoloz Gulaberidze defines the essence and the purport of “the pillar of light” (the same as “Sveti-Tskhoveli”) from a national-religious viewpoint and presents its deep theological content in “The reading” and “The chant”. He singles out a multi-stage symbolism of “the pillar of light” (“the pillar of fire”) in accordance with the Biblical paradigm and enriches this paradigm with new transformations. Therefore, it can be mentioned that according to the given consideration, “the pillar of light” is the purport of the Georgians’ life and consciousness, a determiner and a “director” of the national introspection, a divine stretched-down mother-pillar, a leader of the Georgian nation (“God’s elect nation”), which rises to the heavens.

<sup>1</sup> See our letter – Paradigmatic tropology of “the pillar of light” in “The knight in the panther’s skin” (In the context of the discussion of the Georgian writing), *Rustvelology*, 3013–2015, VII, pp. 7–28.

<sup>2</sup> See E. Chkheidze’s letter – Symbolism of numbers of the Georgian folklore, *Researches*, XII, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> For the comprehension of the “heavenly nation” see N. Sulava’s research Nikoloz Gulaberidze in the book Nikoloz Gulaberidze, “Sakitkhavi and chants of Svetitskhoveli”, Mtskheta, 2008.

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