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**The problem of interpretation of national painting traditions
on the example of Severian Maisashvili's work**

The Abstract of Dissertation submitted for academic degree by Doctor of Arts (PhD)

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Tbilisi
2022

Shota Rustaveli Theater and Film Georgia State University

Art Sciences, Media and Management Faculty

Doctoral Program:
History of Georgian Art
In the context of world art,
Art History
Code of the field of study 0213.1.5

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Purpose of the research topic

Among the painters, working in the most difficult and changing period of Georgian art of the XX century, there is an honored artist - Severian Maisashvili (1900-1980), whose work was still unexplored until now and the emergence of raising new research issues in modern scientific circles, I think, is vital in order to re-evaluate issue of not-so-distant past, which are considered to be already studied many times, and to present S. Maisashvili's work in a single line, which will further expand the research range of researchers interested in the latest Georgian art.

Despite of the particularly severe Soviet ideological pressure of the twentieth century, S. Maisashvili was distinguished by his multifaceted creative activity: in addition to paintings and graphics, he used to illustrate postage stamps, he created the flag of Soviet Georgia by the order of the government and several posters of agitation type. Under Soviet authoritarian regimes, the artist found his creative freedom in the book illustration - this aspect is the main research topic of my dissertation. Severian Maisashvili illustrates two of the most important monuments of Georgian literature - Shota Rustaveli's "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" and Sulkhani-Saba Orbeliani's collection of fables "A Book of Wisdom and Lies", the discussion of which occupies a large place in this work. Also, the portraits by the painter of Georgian classics such as Alexander Kazbegi, Iakob Gogebashvili, Vazha-Pshavela, Akaki Tsereteli and contemporary artists and poets like Irakli Abashidze, Giorgi Kachakhidze, Otar Chelidze, Shio Mghvimeili Kuchukashvili, Ketevan Elisabedashvili, Simon Mtvaradze are presented, and also the analysis of Maisashvili's illustrations of other works.

The dissertation aims to present the problem of the interpretation of national painting traditions on the example of Severian Maisashvili's work. When studying compositions performed by the artist, it is important to distinguish a continuous line enforced by the ideology of social realism and inspired by the traditions of medieval national painting. This factor, appeared in S. Maisashvili's book illustration and got related to Georgian miniature painting with secular content of the late Middle Ages. It is important in itself to discuss S. Maisashvili's works in the context of a wide range of contemporary artists and comparing them through the comparative method, which will outline artistic goals in S. Maisashvili's work - closeness to the traditional forms of national painting, will show us the artist's patriotic work and highlight his individualistic style. Severian Maisashvili's creative handwriting presents the synthesis of elements of Western-Eastern cultures on Georgian soil, characteristic of a bipolar country like ours.

Relevance of the research topic

From the last years of Severian Maisashvili's life, the personal oblivion of him began. The evidence of this is an unexplored multifaceted creativity of the artist, the existing works being scattered or the most of them being destroyed, and an informational deficit about the artist among history of art circles. **The relevance of the dissertation** lies in the fact that this work brought diverse works of Severian Maisashvili together with antiquities and private collections in almost all of Georgia, although the focus of the research is still on the key issue of creativity that manifests the problem of the interpretation of national painting traditions, based on the example of Severian Maisashvili's work.

As already mentioned, Severian Maisashvili, illustrated literary monuments of national importance, except for books by contemporary authors, such as Shota Rustaveli's "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" and Sulikhan-Saba Orbeliani's „A Book of Wisdom and Lies”, that is directly related to the issue of artistic interpretation, based on the painter's deep understanding of the traditions of national miniature painting. This is the cardinal problem that I have tried to present and analyze on the example of the artist's creativity. From this point of view, the aim of this dissertation topic was to follow the path of designing a book with Georgian secular content from the Middle Ages, on the example of the original research of Severian Maisashvili's work, which was gradually transformed from manuscript book painting to printed book art.

I am aware, that the previous work will raise many issues in the future, which will bring life not only to one particular artist's work, but also give certain hints to the latest Georgian art scholars that will make the dissertation more valuable.

The research methodology includes stylistic and comparative analysis of literary sources and compositions. In terms of comparison, the work analyzes the work of a group of 20th century artists who have created works on topics similar to Severian Maisashvili's creation. Using a complex method of research, we discussed the connection between miniature painting with Georgian secular content and illustrated books by Severian Maisashvili.

Since the research required to study the different stages of development of Georgian artists of the 20th century in general and to understand the distinctive features, we had to use the archeographic method, during of which S.Maisashvili's scattered works were found in antiquities and museums throughout Georgia. We also carried out exploratory work regarding the search of compositional specimens similar to the miniature paintings of the late Middle Ages in the funds of the K.Kekelidze National Center of Manuscripts and the National Archives of Georgia. The research was conducted using the systematization method, during of which, in the first stage of the research, literary sources were found and processed, the main part of which was the small articles in magazines and newspapers. It has been truly revealed that Maisashvili's versatile artistic creations have not been studied before. Moreover, in the latest art studies no one even mentions S.Maisashvili's artistic heritage as an example. As a result of systematization, a versatile range research material was defined, the placing of which side by side, presented the artist's most voluminous, fruitful and interesting field, in the form of an illustrated book that was processed through the method of stylistic and comparative analysis.

The results of research topic and scientific novelty

The scientific novelty of the research topic is represented by several aspects of the research: firstly, the national artistic interpretation of the book design in the plotline compositions illustrated by Severian Maisashvili, which was expressed by a peculiar reflection of the real world. Like Georgian secular miniature painting, where the plots strongly reveal the inseparable unity with the human biosphere, the excessive involvement of different species of animals, birds or trees in human passions, in S.Maisashvili's compositions, echoes the national feeling. This means, first of all, that the artist always felt the hostile perception of the world, both in the painting and literature, while revealing the Georgian national form: that the world of humans and animals is united and that nature has one creator that was perfectly reflected in Vazha-Pshavela's literary heritage. I think that the creative world,

distinguished by Severian Maisashvili in such a way, is one of the examples of speaking in the prism of nationality of the past.

The next aspect of the research was related to collection and complex study of Severian Maisashvili's works, which provided us with interesting material through comparative and stylistic analysis of both early and contemporary artists, due to the common and distinctive features of their work, and, against their background, regarding the manifestation of Severian Maisashvili's artistic handwriting. Such a comparative research, in turn, sheds light on the question – what similarities and differences are typical to and what are the features of the artist's work and to what extent is it possible that Maisashvili's work becomes a source of imitation or inspiration for the next generation of artists?!

One of the novelties of the research is that several presented graphic images from S.Maisashvili's work have been ascertained by me and published in the research for the first time. Also, as a result of a thorough review in the research, the name of the graphic images archived under the wrong name in museums has been specified by me.

As a result of research on the above-mentioned aspects, we have adopted a dissertation paper and articles published by me in the journals and collections of international scientific circulation and three papers at an international conference on following topics: 1. Anchiskhati Calligraphic school of the 17th and 18th centuries. "Grigol the artist's (Meskhishvili) hitherto unknown work";¹ 2. "The issue of creative interpretation of the national traditions of book decoration by Severian Maisashvili (on the example of the fables of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani)";² 3. "Origin and author of the portrait of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani in the XX century".³

Literary review

According to today's data, we know the information about Severian Maisashvili only through small articles published in Soviet newspapers: S.Giorgadze, "In the artist's studio",⁴ S.Natsiashvili, "Praise of Arsena",⁵ V.Nikolaishvili, "Poetic Pictures",⁶ L.Gachava – "Racket-press",⁷ M.Vardosanidze, "Colors whisper",⁸ Kira Kveidze, "Exquisite Art",⁹ Khatuna Maisashvili, "Time will give it a place".¹⁰ It

¹ Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, XXII Scientific Conference "Art and Modernity", November 11-13, 2018.

² Shota Rustaveli Theater and Film Georgia State University, XII Scientific Conference - "Europe and Georgian Culture", June 26-27, 2019.

³ Shota Rustaveli Theater and Film Georgia State University, XIV Scientific Conference - "Women and Art", July 5-6, 2021.

⁴ S. Giorgadze, "In the Artist's Studio", Mag. "Literary Georgia", N52, Tbilisi, 1965. P.3

⁵ S. Natsiashvili, "Praise of Arsena", Mag. "Tbilisi", VIII.3.1967. P.4

⁶ V. Nikolaishvili, "Poetic Pictures", Mag. "Tbilisi", III.16.1967. P.3

⁷ L. Gachava, racket-press, Mag. "Tbilisi", VI.19.1968. P.3

⁸ M. Vardosanidze, "Colors whisper" Mag. "Young Communist", N35, March 24, 1970. P.3

⁹ K. Kveidze, "Exquisite Art", Gaz. "Tbilisi", II.20.1984. P.3

¹⁰ Kh. Maisashvili, "Time will give it a place", Mag. "Tbilisi", X.19.1989. Pp.4-5

seems that the public writing about S.Maisashvili's merits dates back to the 1960s, when the artist was over 60 years old, and mainly newspaper "Tbilisi" provides us with little information about him. This is also a very thought-provoking fact. In addition, the content of most of the given articles is devoted to the didactic characterization of specific historical figures, which is attached to graphic versions of Maisashvili's painting, and rarely provide biographical information or creative achievements about Severian Maisashvili. Exceptions in this regard are three catalogs dedicated to his personal exhibitions: Mamia Duduchava in 1967,¹¹ Gulnara Japaridze in 1970¹² and Nazi Eliashvili in 1978.¹³ The catalogs are in the form of small albums, where we mainly find S.Maisashvili's small graphic illustrations and a list of them; only M.Duduchava focuses on S.Maisashvili's painting and offers a list of works in chronological order. It should be noted that some of the works included in the catalog are lost today, some of them have even been destroyed, some belong to private collections and the location of a small part is unknown.

The information about another group exhibition of Severian Maisashvili and a work unknown to us is provided by the book "100 years of Restoration of The Georgian Theater"¹⁴ published by "Sakhelgami" in 1953, from which we find out the title of the work – "Georgian actors go after Georgian warriors on the battlefield to destroy Iranian hordes". Thus, only the presented literature is the main source that provides us with very scarce, informative knowledge about S.Maisashvili's work. While working on the research, it was only on the basis of this material that the artist's multifaceted creativity was studied, analyzed and important conclusions made.

The structure of the work

The dissertation consists of an introduction, a review of literary sources, 5 main chapters, 6 sub-chapters and a concluding section. The text is accompanied by a bibliography. Rich illustrative material is presented in the form of Annex N1. Annex N2 is the text of 8 fables of Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani, the illustrations of which belong to S.Maisashvili.

Chapter one

General description of Severian Maisashvili's creative life

1.1 Short biographical information

The first chapter of the dissertation discusses the short biographical information of the artist Severian Maisashvili. The more or less complete version is provided by a small catalog compiled by Mrs.Nazi Eliashvili in 1978, which was dedicated to the exhibition of Maisashvili's miniature works. I had to search for the rest of the information in archives and repositories in different regions of Georgia, in

¹¹ M.Duduchava, Honored Art Worker of the Georgian SSR Severian Maisashvili, Catalog, Tbilisi, 1967.

¹² G. Japaridze, "Severian Maisashvili, Catalog", Tbilisi, 1970.

¹³ N.Eliashvili, "Severian Maisashvili, Catalog", Tbilisi, 1978.

¹⁴ C. Bukhnikashvili, Jubilee Committee, 100 Years of Restoration of Georgian Theater, State Publishing House "Sakhelgami", Tbilisi, 1953. Pp.50-51

magazines published in 1940-1984, I also got to know and meet the artist's grandson several times – Mirian Maisashvili, who provided me with some information about his grandfather. In this regard, I think one of the most important parts of the work is this chapter, where I tried to gather all the information and data I have found that gives us an idea of the creative life of the twentieth century artist Severian Maisashvili.

1.2 Characterization of the historical epoch of the artist's work

This section assesses and analyzes the most difficult historical period of the Soviet era, in which artist Severian Maisashvili had to work. The burden of state orders and the thematic accents of that circle of artists and the importance of creative activities are discussed separately. In this regard, the most trustworthy and honest information is felt by reading their personal recordings, memoirs about the artists, especially from the ones, which were published after the harsh repressions (1930-1940s) or from unpublished interviews, where the restriction of artist's creative freedom and the order coercions from government is evident.

Critics did not trust the artists in their extensive articles, such as the well-known theatrical expert Mr. Dimitri Janelidze, who in 1935, in the part of the review¹⁵ published in the magazine "Mnatobi", criticized Maisashvili along with other artists and noted that although he is growing as a painter from an exhibition to exhibition, a passion for stylization is still noticeable that is unsuitable for a Soviet artist.

In this subsection, I have chronologically presented, in the following chapters, all the main topics related to S. Maisashvili's illustrations.

Chapter two

The main trends in the development of Georgian miniature painting of the late Middle Ages, as a source of creative inspiration for Severian Maisashvili

In order to understand Severian Maisashvili's creative impulses, through which he used to illustrate Georgian classic literature, it was necessary to define those artistic tendencies that characterized the national miniature painting of the late Middle Ages. Therefore, in this chapter of the work, certain stages of development of miniature painting over the centuries, from 5th to the 18th century, are discussed in retrospectives, each of which is characterized by well-established artistic-stylistic features. It goes without saying that I have tried to demonstrate more vastly the tendencies of late medieval book painting, from which the printing work begins, on the example of the last calligraphic schools in the capital before the XVIII century – schools of Anchiskhati and Sioni, and on the example of the last generation of the Meskhishvili and Mikadze dynasties. In the first half of the XIX century, in Georgia, mostly in Tbilisi, the number of printing houses increases significantly, the number of Georgian printed books rises as well. The "Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians" did a great deal for this cause. During the discussion of the issue through this sign, the

¹⁵ D. Janelidze, "Another Exhibition of the Soviet Union", Journal. "Mnatobi", N114, 1935. P. 329-344

interpretation of the continuous traditions of book painting in the XX century was manifested, which has been reflected in the work of Severian Maisashvili.

As the printing and distribution of books in the age of capitalism took on new features, technical innovations were laid, and before the final appearance of electronic printing, the administration of the XX century printing houses has been actively collaborating with contemporary artists, to whom it has been offering a collection of literary heritage to be published in a renewed edition, as well as - ordering various sketches and artistic designs for magazines and newspapers. Many famous artists worked during this period, most of whom tried to illustrate printed books, but this was not an easy task, as the technique was not yet a sufficient quality to allow literary works, expressed through painters' storytelling images, to be printed on the highest level. It was impossible to have the coloring of the polygraph in one of them and not to change the character of the work for technical reasons, many examples of which can be found in the artistic design of the literature of the Soviet period. The artist has drawn one thing however polygraphy offers something completely different – it makes the color so loud or so dim that the professionalism of the artist is not even read at all. That is why few of the many artists have followed this sphere of work. In addition to the essential knowledge of the literary monuments, the artist had to know the technical capabilities of the printing house and work in the original so that the printed would sit in almost accurately, both in terms of form, contour, color, size and volume, which obviously required hard work, ambitiousness and professionalism, and I am not even saying anything about thorough study of literary monuments and the issues of holding miniatures on it, without which the artist himself would not be able to convey the content of the image.

During this difficult period, the honored artist of the Soviet Republic of Georgia, Severian Maisashvili has been working for decades, the aspect of whose work is enough to look, in order to freely notice the interpretation of the national traditions of Georgian miniature in his work. The path that the manuscript history shows before the book is printed is continuous and intertwined. It is impossible for a person to set foot in the printing work of the XX century for so many years without being skilled and not knowing Georgian miniature painting well. I think this is the reason why the issue of interpretation of the traditions of natural miniature painting has found a peculiar expression in a large part of Severian Maisashvili's work.

Today, the internal structural frame of the book is diverse and reaches the highest point of development, which obviously would not have been possible without going through the many stages we talked about above, and the active worker of one of the important stages of which, in the book design process, was the artist Severian Maisashvili.

Chapter three

The issue of artistic understanding of Sulkhani-Saba Orbeliani's literary heritage in the work of Severian Maisashvili

If we look at the chronology of remained painted manuscripts with secular content, their abundance can be seen from the late Middle Ages: many lists of "The Knight in the Panther's Skin", "Amiran-Darejaniani", "Visramiani", "Rostomiani", Sulkhani-Saba Orbeliani's dictionaries and others. The latter is noteworthy, as four very famous works by the important public figure - Sulkhani-

Saba Orbeliani of the 17th century, have survived to the present day: the dictionary, "A Journey Through Europe", "Admonition to Youth" and "A Book of Wisdom and Lies".

Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani's collection of fables "A Book of Wisdom and Lies", with its content structure, should have been one of the most distinguished for medieval miniatures in terms of the possibility to create story images and express artistic style. Surprisingly, in the circle of calligraphers of the XVII-XVIII centuries, the "dictionary" compiled by Sulkhan-Saba turned out to be more interesting, because we find many lists of dictionaries. After the original text of the dictionary, the earliest one is rewritten in 1730 by Alexi Meskhishvili, the archpriest of Anchiskhati, a modern figure of Sulkhan-Saba. The dictionary rewritten by Alexi Meskhishvili is the only one (unlike the dictionaries rewritten later), where along with the artistic decoration, headings and upper letters, we find the image of the author of the text – Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani.

The manuscript "Kilila and Damana",¹⁶ preserved in the Oriental Studies Foundation, in Petersburg, numbered as P3, should be mentioned as well, which was edited by the order of Vakhtang VI with the participation of several editors, calligraphers and miniaturists, the majority of which is depicted in the manuscript with scenes of its dedication and devotion before Vakhtang VI; including Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani, who has done a great deal of work in editing the book. The P3 manuscript "Kilila and Damana" preserved in Petersburg, is a manuscript of the fable genre, the artistic decoration of which is important, as it is the only secular manuscript after "The Knight in the Panther's Skin", which is illustrated with plotline images; it is true that this work is perfect thanks to Vakhtang VI, but it is surprising that before him no one in the associations of Georgian miniaturists would become occupied with illustrating secular content manuscripts vastly, not even those who worked so selflessly on the artistic decoration of manuscripts of religious content. It is in this context that the 20th century printing work is important, where the care for the artistic decoration of fables begins, not only from the aesthetic point of view, but as well as in terms of its content and textual correction.

This chapter of the dissertation briefly discusses the stages of philological study of „The Book of Wisdom and Lies” that was first published in 1859 by D.Chubinov in St.Petersburg. This edition is the result of working on the manuscripts in the antiquities of Georgia. As the original of the book personally written by Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani has not yet been discovered, the text was mainly based on the of "The Book of Wisdom and Lies" rewritten by Nikoloz Chachikashvili in 1778. The mentioned is placed in the collection of manuscripts "Shekhvetiliani".¹⁷

In 1928, for 270th anniversary of the birth of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani, „The Book of Wisdom and Lies” was published under the editorship of Solomon Iordanishvili, accompanied by his own foreword. The book presents the whole dialog of the characters "drawn" by Saba. It is noteworthy that in the manuscripts these dialogues are divided by titles written with red ink. The inscriptions are accompanied by the corresponding illustrative fable that indicates which of the speakers belongs to which word. Thus, in the present edition as well, the speaker's words are remarkably separated from

¹⁶ L. Khoferia, T. Tseradze, Description of Georgian Manuscripts of Religious Content of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Tbilisi, 2017. P 44

¹⁷ National Centre of Manuscripts, A-858

the main text. In general, to make the text easier for the reader to understand, old and difficult-to-understand words were added to the dictionary, and in order to consider the life and work of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani, the publication is accompanied by a research by Giorgi Leonidze: “Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani and “The Book of Wisdom and Lies”.¹⁸

For Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani’s next birthday anniversary date, on the 280th anniversary of his birth, in 1938, Solomon Iordanishvili’s editorial team reprinted and edited version of the text of “The Book of Wisdom and Lies” that was the closest one to the original, which is quite labour-intensive task. The novelty here is the artistic decoration of the book. Lado Grigolia took care of the cover decoration, endpaper and the title of the mentioned edition, and Severian Maisashvili took care of the illustrations. Here are his nine illustrations printed in high polygraphic quality.

The coloring in the book is presented in one of them in relation to the original. Severian Maisashvili’s illustrations follow the content structure of fables. It seems that the artist first studied the text properly and only then began to take care of its artistic decoration. This kind of approach to book design is traditional, and, at the same time – unambiguously specific – in which I mean a kind of collaboration between a miniaturist and a calligrapher. It can be said that Severian Maisashvili’s individual attitude and approach to the author of the text, directly to Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani, is clear. Although they lived in completely different eras, Severian Maisashvili’s work clearly shows the deep knowledge of the national traditions of book decoration in 17th century. The artist seems to be trying to design the text using the artistic motives that characterized the era of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani. Perhaps that is why he did not reject the influence of Eastern European culture either. My above-mentioned assumption or opinion is reinforced by my in-depth study of his work as an illustrator. An illustration, for Severian Maisashvili, is a transformation of what is written by the writer into the language of line and color. It is a creation about the already created, where the artistic decoration is presented as an artistic double of the main motives and faces of literary works – through the significant means of expression for painting. However, the issue of interpretation of the national traditions of book decoration in S. Maisashvili’s many years of work is most strongly expressed in relation to fables so much that the author gives up even his own individualism while creating illustrations. The flowing and plastic artistic line characteristic of Maisashvili’s work is often influenced by the reverse-perspective typical for oriental style. National motives are brought to the fore by the use of architectural forms, traditional clothing, simple but plain, abundant ornamental decor of the interior decoration and secondary artistic details, which the master combines with the function of the background and the frames.

3.1 The peculiarities of illustrating the fables of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani

In this section of the dissertation, we first discussed the Severian Maisashvili’s illustrations of “The Book of Wisdom and Lies”, in sequence, printed by editorial office of “Sakhelgami” in 1938, and then compared them with illustrations by Lado Gudiashvili of the same period, for foreign publications

¹⁸ Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani, “The Book of Wisdom and Lies”, S. Iordanishvili editorial office, “Sakhelgami” Publishing House, 1938, p. 01-02

(in Armenian and Russian languages), because these artists are the first illustrators of Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani's fables.

As I have already mentioned, S. Maisashvili created 9 graphic drawings for the publication of "Sakhelgami", one is a portrait of Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani and the others are for fables: "The sweetest and the bitterest", "A fox composited into monk", "Kosa and Khadi", "Camel and donkey", "Donkey, tiger, fox and wolf", "Two riches", "The holder of sorceress wife" and "The holder of bad-tempered wife" that have plotline illustrations. Each of them is discussed on the basis of a detailed artistic description-analysis, which is compared with the miniature paintings of the late Middle Ages and Gudiashvili's paintings, through the same comparative analysis.

In all the stories illustrated by S. Maisashvili, there are details on the interior decoration (floor, arches, windows, etc.) of character's clothes and presented items (king's throne and crown, vase, shield, etc.), but at the same time, combined, simple shapes can be seen decorated with plant and geometric ornaments; this ornamentation fully responds to the schematic look of late medieval book painting. For example, we can cite with head-end ornaments of the text of the manuscripts copied in the Anchiskhati Calligraphic School of Tbilisi: Tipicon 1760. A-459; Kondak XVIII.S.1446/511.1r.

Ornamentation made of gold and generally the decor of manuscripts and a printing house founded in the XVII-XVIII centuries by Vakhtang VI, where traditional painting merges and is greatly influenced by oriental culture, traces of Persian miniature art are left in the painting. The illustrations made by Severian Maisashvili clearly show the meaning of ornamental decoration, which responds to the above-mentioned schematic look of the late medieval book's embellishment. The artist has so comprehended the forms of old traditional and national architecture that he has used them in his independent works, especially when describing the environment or as a landscape background; this and many other stylistic similarities are a trustworthy premises to say that Maisashvili is well acquainted with the tendencies of Georgian book decoration and introduces old traditional forms with his own, original artistic transformation, both from painted manuscripts and engravings from the first printed book.

It is remarkable that illustrations made by S. Maisashvili are deeply connected to the text, with its symbolic-essential and artistic-stylistic motives and the content synergy of the painting in relation to the text. His artistic narrative follows the developments in the textual narrative of the fable. The symbolism with which the artist enriches the ideological transmission of the parables and makes them difficult to notice in the plot details, makes the content meaning interesting and presents the intangible in a compositionally visible way.

It should be noted that in some cases the disposition of illustrations in the book is inaccurate. Most likely, the fact that the illustration is in some places 3-4 pages away from the text and is not disposed in the right place when binding, can be considered as a mistake of the binder.

While I was searching for the next editions of the artistically designed "The Book of Wisdom and Lies", a very interesting circumstance came up. The artist Lado Gudiashvili is known as an illustrator of fables, who twice in 1930 (8 fables) and 1950 (14 fables) illustrated the editions of "The Book of Wisdom and Lies". It goes without saying that it was very important for the research to specify

the first illustrator between S.Maisashvili and L.Gudiashvili in order to avoid certain question marks. An interview with Lado Gudiashvili, published in newspaper „Советское искусство“ in October 1934 is the only trustworthy information confirmed by himself that he had completed the work on the fables “just recently”. Regarding the information about Mr.Severian Maisashvili’s work on the same topic or its dating, we do not meet it in any source. However, the S.Maisashvili fund of the Sh.Amiranashvili Art Museum of the Georgian National Museum keeps graphic drawings made of ink, dating to 1931. This is a trustworthy proof that the artist S.Maisashvili had already finished working on the fables of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani in 1931 and therefore had started thinking about this artistic decoration even before. These graphic works are unknown to the general public as they have not yet been published. By 1938 the printing press may not had been properly developed, or the overlay compositions made of mascara, which in terms of decoration were decided in the style of “Ar Nuvo”, 8 years before the publication of “Sakhelgami”, may had been blocked by Soviet ideological censorship. Censorship did not allow its publication, however, the fact is that based on the content, these pictures are illustrations of Sulkhan-Saba’s fables and not a decoration of “folk tales”.

Thus, until 1938 there was no precedent for decorating Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani’s fables in Georgian printed book painting, and the first Georgian edition was illustrated by S.Maisashvili, and based on the material preserved in our archives, the first attempt of graphical drawing in “Ar Nuvo” style has been revealed, made in 1931 by the artist Severian Maisashvili on the same subject, which is made through calmer and more restrained artistic taste than the first illustrated Georgian edition in 1938, due to the danger of ideological censorship and attack of critics. At the same time, in 1939, the publishing house “Zaria Vostoka” was working on the decoration of “The Book of Wisdom and Lies” translated into Russian and Armenian and gave a specific order to the artist L.Gudiashvili, apparently through considering the compositional orientation of the Georgian edition of “Sakhelgami”. This is confirmed by L.Gudiashvili’s artistic-thematic decision and by Severian Maisashvili’s more content-allegorical expansion through the use of specific symbols and the interpretation of the national painting traditions in an original creative way, which is more revealed in his case.

3.2 Iconographic countenance of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani

In this sub-section of the dissertation, firstly, I briefly discuss the biographical data and creative work of a public figure, Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani of the XVII-XVIII centuries. In addition to his active political-diplomatic activities as a person close to king’s court, Sulkhan-Saba’s literary merit is great, in this regard he has left us a rich legacy. Saba’s literary activities had the same national-liberational goals as diplomatic ones. He saw that the political liberation of the country was not possible, so he intended to fight in a literary way to save the national identity of the Georgians and to prevent their degeneration. Saba, for this purpose, addressed to the revelatory fable and homiletic genre. Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani’s works can be divided into three groups: artistic, ecclesiastical-religious and scientific works.¹⁹

¹⁹ G. Tavzhishvili, Pedagogy of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani. Anniversary collection, published by Iv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, 1959, p. 103

To this day, many iconographic features of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani's portrait have been found. Both by his contemporary artists and by the representatives of modern art have created many different variations of Saba's portrait in various fields of art. The fact is that the countenance of Sulkhan-Saba was formed and today when we remember him, we see a man with long, white hair and a beard, dressed in a long black dress, with an ascetic appearance in his middle age; The same iconographic look was offered by the artists: Severian Maisashvili, Lado Gudiashvili, Lado Grigolia, Silovan Kakabadze, Zurab Samkharadze and others. In such diversity are found the portraits of the still young layman Sulkhan, as well as of the young worshiper Monk Saba.

The portraits of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani are almost equal in quantity to the portraits of Shota Rustaveli and the interest regard this great historical figure is still inexhaustible. Against this background, it is surprising that the content of the text of "The Book of Wisdom and Lies" gave all the conditions in terms of its artistic decoration and illustration, although the full text is still not illustrated.

Among the portraits that have reached us, the first attempt in chronological order can be found in the 18th century manuscript – "Kilila and Damana", which was translated into Georgian by the order and direct participation of King Vakhtang VI. On his instructions, various figures were involved in this work; some were involved in translation, some were engaged in text editing, some were artistically decorating and so on. At the request of Vakhtang VI, his guardian – Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani was actively involved in this process. The manuscript is kept in the collection of Georgian manuscripts of the Institute of Oriental Studies in St.Petersburg under the number P3. All we know about its copying is that it was created after 1717 and its completion is presumed after 1724, that is after the emigration of Vakhtang VI to Russia.²⁰ The illustrated manuscript of "Kilila and Damana" preserved in St.Petersburg preserved the first, most realistic iconographic image of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani, created during Saba's lifetime. It is from this image that the countenance of Sulkhan-Saba, artistically conceived by twentieth-century Georgian artists and sculptors, takes an example. The inspiration for the portraits attached to Saba's works published during this period also comes from this miniature.

The author of the second portrait of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani in chronological order, is a contemporary figure of Saba, a prominent representative of the Anchiskhati Calligraphic School – Archpriest Alexi Meskishvili, who attached his self-made and only miniature portrait of Saba to Sulkhan-Saba's "Bunch of Words", copied by him from the original, to commemorate the memory of the modern writer and figure, five years after his death in 1730. Based on the extensive stylistic analysis of the portrait, various signs were identified in the paper, including the issue of accentuation of Sulkhan-Saba's literary merit by A.Meskishvili, which is suggested with symbolic-allegorical references.

Although Sulkhan-Saba had been dead for five years in 1730, it is a fact that Alexi Meskishvili had direct touch with him as a prominent representative of the Anchiskhati Calligraphic School, an executor of numerous orders of high-ranking royal court officials, an archpriest, a copywriter of many books and "the son of the artist Gregory" of Vakhtang VI's royal court. "One of the best masters of 18th

²⁰ I. Khuskivadze, Georgian Secular Miniature XVI-XVIII centuries, Publishing House "Science", Tbilisi, 1976. P.116

century Georgian Nuskhuri manuscript book”²¹ in creating his portrait would definitely take into account Saba’s personal characteristics, however by using his imagination and not directly from life painting, because considering the historical facts, exorcism or missionary work of Saba, Alex would have seen Sulkhan-Saba only in his youth. It is for this reason that we find such an image of a younger Saba in the portrait made by Alexi, than we saw it in the miniature of “Kilila and Damana”.

The work of the archpriest Alexi Meskhishvili is very important both in terms of preserving the literary heritage and artistic decoration. He preserved the portrait of such an well-known scientist as Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani for the next generation. At the same time, we must take into account that Alexi Meskhishvili did not need to use the portrait created in earlier period, because he knew Sulkhan-Saba personally, had seen him many times and even collaborated with him. Therefore, we can freely say that the depiction of certain characteristics in the portrait of Sulkhan-Saba is trustworthy in this case as well, although it is less realistic due to the conditional nature of the image.

The iconographic manifestation of Sulkhan-Saba’s character, which has survived to the present day, is based on these two portraits, which we have discussed above, as both of them were made directly by the contemporary calligraphers of Saba. However, afterwards the inspiration of the artists became the portrait in the manuscript of the so called Saba’s “Killila and Damana”, which is better known for the general public. Based on the artistic analysis we can freely talk about the benefit from the attempts of both images of some artists of XX century.

In chronological order, the next portrait of Sulkhan “in the time of youth”, which has not yet been properly studied and which I have discussed in the framework of this work, is the youngest iconographic picture of Sulkhan’s image and is attached to the endpaper of “The Book of Wisdom and Lies” rewritten by Prince Bagrat (Orbeliani) in 1814. Based on the contrast between the text and the miniature, I suggest that the manuscript was painted by Prince Bagrat Orbeliani. Due to the date of copying the book, the miniature artist is not a contemporary of Saba, he has not physically seen him and creates an image based on the example of the portraits mentioned. When comparing them, the artistic parallels are obvious, both in the example of shape and form, as well as in the use of color palettes, interior decoration, clothing modeling, or other accessories. It is obvious that the artist uses both of the above-mentioned miniatures and, through taking them into account, he creates the image of Sulkhan “in the time of youth”.

For a book published in 20th century, in order to create Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani’s portrait, artists have such a circumstance that their goal is to convey a realistic image. In a world where photography existed on a certain level of development, considering the colorful printing polygraphy and other technical possibilities of book printing, it was deemed important, for greater clarity, to demonstrate the authors of literary works and public figures with almost naturalistic accuracy. In 20th century the re-editing of texts, the work of finding and filling the missing, the creation of new artistic faces, or the painting of the still unpainted and the production and perfection of other scientific and artistic works began. (As already mentioned, special preparations for the anniversary dates with the active involvement of scientists and artists, celebrating and preparing new editions). This common work was served by Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani’s “The Book of Wisdom and Lies” printed in three languages (Georgian, Russian and Armenian) in 1938-40, and a more complete version of the same work was

²¹ V.Beridze, *Old Georgian Masters*, "Soviet Georgia", Tbilisi, 1967. P.158

artistically designed by L.Grigoia (cover, endpaper, title inscription) and S.Maisashvili (portrait of Saba and painted 8 fables), which was the first artistically decorated version of “The Book of Wisdom and Lies” and was published by “Sakhelgami” publishing house in 1938.²² Naturally, when a text is thoroughly studied and held in literary terms, then care begins to be taken for its artistic decoration. In this regard, the decoration of fables, which did not exist before, is important, completely new versions of which are created by S.Maisashvili (1831-38) and L.Gudiashvili (1934-40), and as for the portrait, of which we have discussed three samples of the late Middle Ages above, it is the basis of the portrait of Sulkhan-Saba already created by S.Maisashvili.

For the printed book, on the first attempt to create a portrait of Saba, proposed by S.Maisashvili, the image of Sulkhan-Saba given in the manuscript P3 “Kilila and Damana” is clearly more artistically influential; at the same time, it is a fact that S.Maisashvili has seen a portrait of 1814, the engraving of which is made by L.Grigoia and is attached to the endpaper of the same edition, and the following pages of the book are illustrated by Severian Maisashvili. How much Severian Maisashvili has seen the version of the portrait of Meskhishvili’s saba is relatively difficult to say, because based on the comparative artistic analysis, little parallel is sought between them.

Thus, while creating the portrait of Saba, S.Maisashvili directly uses the miniature paintings of the XVII and XVIII centuries, which is clearly revealed in the iconographic character of Saba formed by him that cannot be said with such an accuracy in case of the portrait of Saba by L.Gudiashvili, which is attached to the Russian and Armenian editions of 1938-40 and is a foreign language repetition of the Georgian edition.

The connection between the traditional and the old portrait’s countenance is very noticeable from the stylistic point of view in the case of Sulkhan-Saba’s portrait, while L.Gudiashvili is much more self-sufficient in this case as well, and moreover, at some point more connection with S.Maisashvili’s portrait is revealed than with Saba’s image of late medieval. The similarity with the modeling of hair and beard or the shape of skullcap, indicates the arise from about one iconographic form, the first creator of which is S.Maisashvili. It is characterized by a relatively bolder formation of an artistic line with a well-defined contour outline and portrait solidity than it is in a miniature painting. S.Maisashvili establishes realistic iconography of Saba’s portrait and I think only after S.Maisashvili are iconographic images, similar to Sulkhan-Saba, created by L.Gudiashvili and other artist-sculptors.

Severian Maisashvili created the stereotype of the portrait image of Sulkhan-Saba based on the dedicated miniature, which is used as a model by artists of the whole XX century, with an exception of the portrait created by L.Gudiashvili in the 50s, although here too there is a weak reflection of S.Miasashvili’s artistic face.

It is similar to the portrait painting of Sulkhan-Saba proposed by S.Maisashvili: the decoration of the cover by Lado Grigoia on the 1938 edition of “Sakhelgami”; bust of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani by sculptor Silovan Kakabadze in 1947, pendant, anniversary medallion 1948, 1959 stamp of the USSR Post with the image of S.Maisashvili’s Sulkhan-Saba; Thus, until the end of the 1960s, almost all editions

²² Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani, "The Book of Wisdom and Lies", with the foreword of G.Leonidze and Edited by Sol.Iordanishvili, “Sakhelgami” Publishing House, Tbilissi (Georgia), 1938.

of Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani were using portraits by S. Maisashvili, linocuts and prints, posters for anniversary editions and medalions were being created.

Chapter four

Severian Maisashvili – Interpreter of Shota Rustaveli’s immortal classics

4.1 Severian Maisashvili’s illustrations of Shota Rustaveli’s “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”

Shota Rustaveli’s poem “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” was written in the XII century, when the historical “golden age” was in Georgia and it is still the most significant monument of Georgian secular literature. Over time, the didactic content of the poem became so well-known worldwide that “383 editions were published in 46 languages in 37 countries, including 100 Georgian editions”.²³ This is according to data of 2008, and since then two dozen more editions have been published. The original text and the direct handwriting of Shota Rustaveli, unfortunately, have not survived to this day – moreover, the earliest one among the texts of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” dates back to the XVI century and is kept along with other manuscripts in Tbilisi, at the National Center of Manuscripts, with the number of H-44.

In this part of the dissertation, the main goal of my research was to discuss the illustrations of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” by the artist Severian Maisashvili from an artistic point of view and to establish a place in the rich, diverse and national work that is still unexamined. I think this issue will be another step forward in the history of recent Georgian art to perfect the cycle painting of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” and also to study one of the most distinctive artistic cycles of the multifaceted work of XX century artist Severian Maisashvili.

As only six lists of the painted manuscript in the form of a book “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” have survived to the present and all of them date back to the XVI-XVIII centuries, it was necessary to review them in artistic point of view. Especially the three of them, which are illustrated with thematic miniatures: 1. “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”, the so-called “Avalishvili’s” list, XVI century. Painted by an unknown artist;²⁴ 2. “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”, “Mamuka Tavakarashvili’s” list, 1646. Painted by Mamuka Tavakarashvili;²⁵ 3. “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” so-called “Tsereteli’s” list, XVII-XVIII centuries. Painted by two unknown artists.²⁶ Various lists of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” are also preserved in foreign repositories: Bodle Library of Oxford University, National Library of France (Paris); Harvard University, Houtson Library; National Library

²³ M. Chkheidze, Levan Taktakishvili, Bibliography of "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" Publications 1712-2008, Tbilisi, Cezanne, 2009. P.3

²⁴ Protected in Tbilisi, At the K.Kekelidze National Center of Manuscripts, H-2074

²⁵ Protected in Tbilisi, K. Kekelidze National Center of Manuscripts, H-599

²⁶ Protected in Tbilisi, K. Kekelidze National Center of Manuscripts, S-5006

of Russia (St.Petersburg); Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St.Petersburg); State Archive of Literature and Art (Moscow).²⁷

In the XVI-XVIII centuries the paintings of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” show influence of the Iranian miniature school in some places, in others the tendency towards national paintings is less noticeable, or there is a striving for European and creating a new artistic form. However, on the whole, the fact is that the paintings of all three manuscripts reveal a stylistic connection towards each other, which cannot be avoided by the toiler masters of almost one generation and epoch. A much different picture is painted in the case of the painting of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” of the later period, of XIX-XX centuries, which is much more diverse. Artists are also distinguished by more individualism. However, neither in these centuries are artists free from state ideological influence.

“The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” was first printed in 1712 under the editorship and commentary of Vakhtang VI. This edition is known today as “Vakhtang’s editorial office”. Vakhtang’s “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” is not illustrated with thematic images. The artistic decoration of the publication is only the ornamentation of the pages, head-end ornamentations and the engraving of the portrait of Vakhtang VI and the heraldic emblem of the Bagratians attached to the endpaper.

“The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” was published for the second time in St.Petersburg in 1841 under the editorship of Marie Brose, Zakaria Palavandishvili and Davit Chubinashvili. This edition is commonly known as the “Brose’s Edition”.²⁸ Vakhtang’s and Brose’s publications of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” laid the foundation for a short edition of the poem. Subsequent editions, with a few exceptions, rely mainly on them (an extensive version of the poem was also published several times in the twentieth century). None of them contain any images related to the poem, neither in the form of a portrait of the author nor a depiction of the text.

From 1881, at the request of the leading Georgian intellectuals, the Hungarian artist Mihály Zichy was working on the illustrations of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”. Although he was commissioned with only 14 paintings, he made 34 drawings, of which 27 were selected by the publishing commission. Zichy donated the works to Georgians free of charge. His illustrations are kept in the State Museum of Art of Georgia.²⁹ The next, that is the ninth edition of G.D.Kartvelishvili in 1888, “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”³⁰ is very significant for us, as it already includes the graphic design of M.Zichy in the form of story compositions, and the text is decorated with ornamental motives

²⁷ L. Jeladze, "The Knight in the Panther’s Skin" - Manuscript Heritage, Mag. "New Education", 12/05/2013. P. 4-5

²⁸ Sh. Rustaveli, “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” by Marie Brose, published by Zakaria Palavandishvili and Davit Chubinashvili, St. Petersburg, 1841.

²⁹ I.Uznadze, Georgian Soviet Encyclopedia, Vol. 4, Tbilisi, 1979. P. 521-522

³⁰ “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” of Shota Rustaveli, G.D. Kartvelishvili's edition, I.Martirosyants Printing House, Tbilissi (Georgia), 1888.

by G.Tatishvili. This is where the multifaceted illustrations of the poem begin to be published in various editions and soon a whole generation of artists engaged in this process, which continues to this day.

Most of the plot images of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”, which are made in the XIX-XX centuries, are attached to the printed versions of the poem in different years. For example, the illustrations of the famous Hungarian artist Mihály Zichy were first published in G.Kartvelishvili’s edition in 1888 (these paintings have been reprinted many times). The public got acquainted with the illustrations performed by L.Gudiashvili, S.Kobuladze, T.Abakelia and Ir.Toidze in the jubilee editions of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” in 1934-37 in Georgian, Russian and Ukrainian languages. Based on the chronological review of the artistic illustrations of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”, it was revealed that Severian Maisashvili’s occupation in this work is preceded by nine examples: three of them are miniature paintings of the manuscript of the book: the painting of manuscripts of “Avalishvili’s” list dating back to the XVI-XVII centuries by an unknown artist (H-2074), painting by Mamuka Tavakarashvili in 1646 (H-599) and a miniature painting of two unknown artists of the so-called “Tsereteli’s” list of XVII-XVIII centuries. For already printed books the illustrations had been made by: Mihály Zichy in 1888, Lado Gudiashvili in 1934, Sergo Kobuladze in 1935-37, Tamar Abakelia in 1936, Irakli Toidze in 1936 and the Italian artist Fulvio Bianconi in 1944.

On the whole, while in the miniature drawings the influence of the Iranian painting is observed, the creations of the illustrators of the printed book are distinguished by a special originality of artistic style, individualism and representativeness of the characters of the poem. However, in some places the complicity with national painting is more emphasized and in others less so. The artistic cycle of Severian Maisashvili’s excellent, drastically different from his predecessors, made of small graphic illustrations of the poem, dates back to 1962-65 and can be said it offers the tenth variation of the poem’s thematic painting, which is also self-sufficient. His artistic-stylistic vision sets his illustrations apart from his predecessors and take its place in a whole cycle of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” illustrations from the 16th century to the present. It is unfortunate that “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” decorated with S.Maisashvili’s illustrations has not been published so far. I think that in the future it is necessary to publish and thus appreciate the work done by Severian Maisashvili to illustrate the poem and make it known to the general public.

Severian Maisashvili has made 12 illustrations for the poem “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”. Two of them are portraits of the author – Shota Rustaveli, and ten of them are plot illustrations of the text and follow the thematic chapters of the poem in a certain order. I reviewed each image in the order of the chapters illustrated by S.Maisashvili and compared them with the illustrations of other artists of the same chapters in a comparative method. The 13 tabulations presented in annex N1 of the work provide a rather interesting picture for thematic clarity, even without detailed artistic analysis. Illustrated chapters of the poem by S.Maisashvili, before and in the following years, were revealed. I think this comparison better emphasized the issue of establishing an artistic scheme for the depiction of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”, the various attempts of dividing the poetic nature of the text, the content, or the idea into compositional stories; it shed light on the vectors of different interests of artist-illustrators, however – on the ones towards a unified tendency and an assimilation of the national tradition. Tabula 13 of the annex N1 presented Severian Maisashvili’s attitude towards the traditions of national painting, against the background of stylistic and thematic similarities and differences of illustrators. It is obvious that the tradition for Severian Maisashvili did not mean the exact copying of

the artistic methods and laws established over the centuries. The examples discussed show that the main thing for him was to give a new spirit to the work, on the basis of mastering the basic artistic principles. It was as if the artist had tried to read a modern national literary classic, to give an adequate new feature or form of time to the narrative provided. This made the artist's attempt clear to organically connect the past with the present and the future.

The forms of S-5006 manuscript painting that resembles Iranian and the strong oriental influence are completely rejected by S.Maisashvili. It transforms every detail with traditional Georgian variations, which is revealed in sharply expressed formation of accessories, clothes, character type, landscapes, or more. Severian maisashvili uses only schematic partition of these miniatures, the most prominent of which are the arrangement of conditional, brightly colored landscapes, the mountainous nature of Khevsureti and the rocky landscape reflected on the miniatures. It seems that the story does not take place in Arabia and India, as the author of the poem suggests, but in the entrails of rocky and mountainous nature of Khevsureti, Svaneti, Teleti or Racha, the whole series of which S.Maisashvili has performed with small graphic techniques during his work. In comparison, in addition to the specificity of the landscape, the external similarities between the characters of them poem and the local people are evident, both through facial expressions and through the anatomical structure and the temper of the figures, where the Georgian ethnic identity is revealed.

S.Maisashvili always tries to create an image based on a deep understanding of the content of the poem. He creates a picture of such synergic phrases in the poem, where a unified connection of soul and flesh is formed. Making such accents by the artist once again deepens his profound knowledge of the poem, in the context of perceiving the multicultural character of the writing. Just as the multifaceted phrases of the poem reflect the spiritual, moral and carnal unity of the characters, or the unity imbued with other high ideals, so with the ornamentation and various details used by S.Maisashvili, symbolic references appear. In order to express the intangible – feelings, attitudes and other – he uses the ornamental system of ecclesiastical art, which is expressed in traditional architectural elements. It can be said that the artist harmoniously conveys the relationship of the characters depicted in the foreground with soft lines, and balances it with monumental decor in the background and even strongly frames their carnal feelings. The artist does not allow us to think any other. Through ecclesiastical ornamentation he equally restricts the superfluous carnal senses, and by the anatomical structure of the characters he weakens only the pedaling the spiritual content. In other words, in Severian Maisashvili's illustrations a kind of intermediate "fur bridge" is created in order to comprehend the author's narrative, where not a body, relieved by blind "love", and a momentary obsession is reflected, but the whole obligation that unites under Christian morality. The abundant use of Georgian architectural elements is justified by this idea and it follows all the compositions as a leitmotif.

In this case as well, S.Maisashvili offers interpretations of different ideological and artistic accents from contemporary artists. S.Maisashvili does not hesitate to offer us in an artistic-allegorical way the spiritual beginnings and motifs of the narrative of biblical parables, richly used in the text by S.Rustaveli, and enrich the national forms of Georgian architecture. Such an artistic perception of the context of the text distinguishes S.Maisashvili from contemporary artists. It is noteworthy that S.Maisashvili dared to do so in the 1960s and did not avoid the hostile attitude of the Soviet censorship towards such issues. Perhaps the historical-cultural interpretation of the perception of the

world presented in the poem, from a certain position, and the transformation of this narrative into a work of art, has become the reason why none of the editors has published the poem “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” illustrated by S.Maisashvili. Anyway, these illustrations were created for that period, in order to print, but probably could not pass Soviet censorship, and then for some reasons they were forgotten. Were in not for such a deep understanding of the text by the artist, the whole medieval architectural decor that S.Maisashvili often brings as the main unifying element of the composition, would have been completely irrelevant for the context. Elements of traditional decor and constructions of Georgian architecture, as well as secular architecture predominate, which can also freely say that the author of the illustration is well acquainted with and even has mastered the artistic building of complete constructions. He gives a kind of national interpretation to the action presented in the poem and offers the traditional Georgian fortification building spread in the Middle Ages as a clarity of the strong narrative character of “The Castle of Kadjet’hi” - „on all sides round about is rock, a foe may not come up to it...“. The towers and fences of “Kajeti” fortress-city are built of tuff and flat stones, and in some places with horizontal and monumental laying. The fortress-city given in the illustration, with its landscape, the arrangement of the parts of the building and the peculiarities of the proportional ratio of its forms, is very similar to the Tmogvi fortress built in Javakheti in IX-X centuries. It is not excluded that S.Maisashvili had presented Tmogvi fortress as a prototype of “Kajeti” fortress.

Against the background of sorting the works of other illustrators into separate groups, the artist’s individualism, more specificity and a sharper interpretation of the Georgian national painting traditions were revealed, through their clothes, or even their interrelationships and gestures, accessories, architectural details, landscapes used or other aspects, which were created based on artist’s deep understanding. Such a national factor is not found in any other artist. Each of them presents their own self-sufficient artistic hand and it is in this self-sufficiency that S.Maisashvili’s work conveys the national character of an advanced artistic style. Some of them, while depicting the characters, try to introduce oriental elements and reflect them in their attire or accessories, due to the content of the poem. But S.Maisashvili utterly denies this tendency and completely addresses the Georgian, national tradition. This kind of principality does not necessarily contradict the content of the text. S.Maisashvili’s characters are pure Georgians and he does not even give a hint that any of them is Indian, Arab or have other nationalities. This does not necessarily violate the narrative part of the text. The illustrations and action of the the drawings are thematic and serve as an individual manifestation of the artist’s understanding of the poem.

4.2 The epoch of King Tamar and the portrait images of Shota Rustaveli in the work of S.Maisashvili

When arranging this part of S.Maisashvili’s work, which deals with themes of King Tamar and Shota Rustaveli, it makes sense that the artist is painting the era of Rustaveli, which is Ruled by Tamar, and not the era of Tamar, where Rustaveli also worked. It is as if the narrative of “The Knight in Panther’s Skin” follows all the works of the historical genre that S.Maisashvili offers to us. The ideological data is reviewed in this subsection of the dissertation. All the plot images from the artist’s work are discussed in detail, where there are both individual and group portraits of Shota Rustaveli and King Tamar.

It is important to discuss the origin of such an iconographic image of Rustaveli's portrait, which is used by artists of almost the entire 20th century, including S.Maisashvili. This is a portrait of Shota Rustaveli from the so-called Zaza's manuscript of "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" (Q-1082).³¹ The author of the portrait of Shota Rustaveli in Zaza's "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" is unknown. We can say about his artistic style that he is well acquainted with medieval Georgian painting. The portrait of Rustaveli, proposed by an anonymous artist, is also full with traditional elements, although the oriental influences typical for the 17th century are obvious. Since the theme of Shota Rustaveli and "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" is infinitely large and inconceivable to put it completely into one work, on tabula N17 and N18 I have presented the paintings and sculptural portraits of Shota Rustaveli as much as possible, by the artists and sculptors of the XX century, which show the artistic closeness with the portrait of Shota Rustaveli in Zaza's "The Knight in Panther's Skin", because this image is the basis of the iconographic face of Rustaveli, which was further expanded.

In the 20th century there are many inspiring paintings of the idea of personal respect for Tamar reflected in Rustaveli's portrait compositions, as well as plot images on the legendary theme – how Shota Rustaveli dedicates a poem to King Tamar. This kind of understanding of the story was first introduced to us in 1881 by Mihály Zichy, and then this theme became quite popular in the works of artists. However, a strict distance between them is violated in S.Maisashvili's work. According to his imagination, Shota is a closer person to the door of the palace. It is as if he has more rights before her, is in direct touch with her and not in veneration that is offered by the XX century artists. Niko Pirosmashvili, who is known for presenting direct interrelationships of the characters in the image, had never created a general portrait of Tamar and Shota. He had not even tried to put them in one composition. He paints them on the separate oilcloths – Tamar as a symbol of Georgia and Rustaveli as her worshiper. However, a kind of serial pairing of two different drawings is clearly felt. As L.Gudiashvili recalls in his memories, when he mentioned to Pirosmashvili the fact that he has seen various portraits of Tamar and Shota at his place, Pirosmashvili said such a phrase to him – "why are you surprised, brother Lado? These are the icons of my homeland. Tamar is the mother of Georgia and Rustaveli is the glory of Georgia as well, so I do not separate them from each other".³²

Portraits made by Severian Maisashvili do not go beyond the principles of miniature painting. Its artistic characteristics corresponds to the deep requirements of the book's illustration – which in this case means the feeling and bringing the literary energy of the poem "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" written by the poet with this appearance directly to us; which is understood due to the content structure of the text and because of that the artist's mastery is revealed with a diminished taste, and the poetic image of the author of "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" – formed by National Georgian traditions. From the samples presented in the dissertation, with this circumstance, the expression of such a diminished taste for the illustration of the book is felt in case of French artist Murat, D.Shevardnadze and R.Sturua. However, in the manner of their artistic writing, one feels an approach to the easel painting and cannot fully reflect such a portrait of the author of a work, whose appearance

³¹ The miniature is preserved in Georgian National Muzeum Of Fine Art

³² N.Kvitsiani, Pirosmashvili, Niko Pirosmashvili State Museum in Mirzaani, Album Tb. 2018 P.59

fully agrees with the inner character of the writer of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”. If we observe, S.Maisashvili is very similar to the main characters presented in his illustrations: Tariel and Avt’handil. The same can be seen in the case of Tamar’s image – here too, we can freely compare the faces of women represented in the illustrations of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” by S.Maisashvili with his portrait of Tamar, which is also taken from the medieval Georgian wall paintings from Vardzia, Betania, Kintsvisi, Bertubani. These are the four temples where we find the frescos depicting King Tamar.³³ Accordingly, the author of the illustrations considering the mentioned stylistics could not miss the abundant use of the national painting tradition in order to convey his own artistic thought.

In the works of XX century artists, the portrait of Shota Rustaveli is often accompanied by the image of Tamar. In creating the portrait of Tamar, the source of inspiration for the artists is the medieval wall paintings: frescoes of Vardzia, Betania, Bertubani and Kintsvisi. Until the end of the late Middle Ages, no other image of King Tamar can be found anywhere, except for one of the manuscripts of the XVIII century, which was copied by the calligrapher Davit Tumanishvili and is decorated with conditional poor-quality samples of graphic painting.

The portrait images of King Tamar are painted with special frequency from the XX century, which was conditioned by the popularization of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”, deep study of the poem from the literary-scientific point of view and so on. the artists of the 20th century take the example of Vardzia and Betania, a relatively better preserved fresco, for the depiction of Tamar’s royal attire and accessories. However, with a few artists there is clearly an attempt to find something new. For the first time, a modified iconographic image is offered by Mihály Zichy in a story of dedication “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” by Shota, where the model of Anna Eristavi, Raphiel Eristavi’s wife, was used as a prototype of King Tamar. This tendency of creating a portrait of Tamar later became more relevant. For example, one of the most common portraits of King Tamar, painted by artist Ketevan Magalashvili in 1944, is a synthetic image where the artist uses the example of a famous Betania fresco to create the king’s clothes, and uses the model of the famous actress – Tamar Tsitsishvili to depict the face.

Based on the artistic-stylistic study, the countenance of King Tamar performed by S.Maisashvili reveals obvious similarities with Magalashvili’s Tamar, although difference between them is also evident. The background of S.Maisashvili’s painting is distinguished by special color intensity and compositionally offers the whole figure of Tamar against the background of a simple landscape. At the same time, if Magalashvili presents his version of Tamar on the example of the Betania fresco, S.Maisashvili’s painting feels more close to Bertubani fresco. However, the shape, face and character correspond to Magalashvili’s portrait of Tamar made in XX century, and texture, color and ornamentation of the dress are taken together by S.Maisashvili, both from the Bertubani fresco and Magalashvili’s painting. It is impossible that the accents of color intensity such as Magalashvili offers us through the environment in the background of Tamar’s portrait, play only a decorative role. The

³³ Г. Алибегашвили, Четыре портрета царицы Тамары, Тб., 1957; Sh. Amiranashvili, History of Georgian Art, Tbilisi, 1971. Pp.267-274; V. Beridze, Old Georgian Architecture, Tbilisi, 1974. P. 156; Ir.Tsitsishvili, History of Georgian Art, Tbilisi, 1995. P. 99, 101-114, 117-118; A. Kldiashvili, Comparison of the Paintings of Vardzia Ananuri Church and the Near West Satvaso, Jour. Friend of the Monument, Tbilisi, 1986. P. 31-39

artist is obviously trying to put specific artistic words, and to bring the same theme of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” closer to Tamar’s historical persona.

In summarizing the chapter of the work, if we take into account the fact that the above-mentioned compositions were performed by S.Maisashvili in different periods of his work, there is always a sense of ideological closeness between Shota Rustaveli and King Tamar, reinforced by the narrative of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”: “Three poets” in 1936, “Portrait of Shota Rustaveli” in 1936, two compositions – “Riddle Theater XII century” performed in 1946 and 1948, one of the illustrations of I.Abashidze’s poem – “What Tbilisi Survived” in 1950, two graphic portraits of Shota Rustaveli made in 1963, “King Tamar” in 1946, and graphic illustrations for O.Chelidze’s poem – “Legend – King Tamar’s grave”. The thematic portraits of Rustaveli and Tamar are so important in Georgian contemporary art that their discussion allowed us to look at S.Maisashvili’s works in a relatively wide range of works by artists of almost the entire 20th century. And allowed us to define the artist’s artistic goals, closeness to traditional forms of national painting, work with Georgian patriotic boldness, synthesis of Georgian-Oriental elements, sometimes very cheerful, sonorous character of color palette and in some cases – the work of demonstrating illustrations, based on a deep understanding of the content of the text.

Chapter five

Severian Maisashvili – an illustrator of prose work

The thematic portraits of Rustaveli and Tamar are so important in Georgian contemporary art that their discussion allowed us to look at S. Maisashvili's works in the context of a wide range of works by artists of almost the entire twentieth century, and to compare them through the comparative method. This allowed us to express the artist's artistic goals, closeness to the traditional forms of national painting, work with an artistic patriotic boldness. Severian Maisashvili’s creative handwriting presented an attempt to synthesize elements of Western-Eastern cultures on Georgian soil. The cheerful, sonorous character of the color palette became apparent to the artist in some places, while in other places, - a calmed, restrained coloration, where the semantics of the work required it. All of the above gives us reason to conclude that the form proposed by the artist is always conditioned by the ideological content of the text to be reflected. I have tried to analyze the above not only on the basis of the classic literary works given in the previous chapters, but also on the example of illustrations by different series of prose works by Severian Maisashvili. It is noteworthy that the main time range for the discussion of his work in this regard is the years 1940-1950, which gave an interesting picture of the relation and cooperation with government orders imbued with the socialist realism characteristic typical for the modern era of the artist.

It is noteworthy that the artist had started caring and thinking about the artistic decoration of the two most important monuments of Georgian literature, “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” and “The Book of Wisdom and Lies” discussed in the previous chapters, earlier. These texts were thoroughly studied from the philological and scientific point of view and strengthened by philological and medieval artistic iconography. However, in case of compiling prose works S.Maisashvili had to walk through an uncleared way. While in the work of describing his own contemporary poets and writers, them from the principles of socialist realism. It should be noted that even the prose, which had to be

illustrated by the artist, had a strong Soviet conjuncture, so it was completely impossible for S.Maisashvili, as an illustrator, to become completely free from the shackles of socialist realism and to create images entirely in line with national traditions. Yet he still tries to illustrate the texts of the 19th century writers for new editions, by combining national artistic traditions. Where the content of the text itself allowed, there the artist was more free in interpreting his own vision and traditional forms, and where he designed a book and a magazine with modern, cognitive, prosaic, children's or so-called „admonishing“ content, his artistic manner was significantly changed. Severian Maisashvili's work in the illustration of the prose works can be divided into two main signs, which clearly show us, the artificial, or due to the influence of the order, his stylistically changed artistic manner, which truly does not reveal the great skills of the honoured artist Severian Maisashvili such as: well-trained masterful technique, individualism, diversity of compositional construction, freedom of artistic style, which was restricted due to conjunctural requirements that was clearly reflected against the free will of the artist in the artistic design of the book by him. Also, a book printed before 60s of the XX century was mainly polygraphically low-level, but it was acceptable for the ideology of totalitarian rule.

On the other hand, in terms of content, while illustrating the literary works that thematically reflected the historical events of Georgia, which served narration of heroic, battle or historical stories, S.Maisashvili is more creatively free and original. He creates each figure with almost thorough accuracy and proportional-thematic calculation, with something of his own, in orderly regularity. He seemed to envisage the low possibilities of that period's polygraphy even more and performed the corresponding drawing in such a way so it could be free from any unnecessary decor. In such case, conveying only the main action becomes important to the artist. This is especially reflected in the movement of the figures, in the unified, linearly flowing character of the composition, in the harmonious interrelationships of the characters and the environment. Each illustration expresses the expressiveness of a particular section, the tense energy that forms the core of the text, and from which artistic impulses are transmitted throughout the story. Despite the low level of polygraphy at that time, Severian Maisashvili has well studied and comprehended the possibilities of polygraphy and the illustrations of the books he designed are still expressive, thematically specific, laconic and in line with the text. Thus, the portrayal of Soviet prose by Severian Maisashvili was under ideological pressure. However, from today's point of view, it seems that the artist still managed to focus on vital values and, by artistically interpreting Georgian reality, still tried to give a national spirit to each work. In this regard, such ideological devotion to the national heritage of S.Maisashvili and artists of his generation became exemplary, which in turn paved the way for further research on individual ways of development of Georgian painting.

Conclusion

Today when we have the opportunity to review the artist's diverse and multifaceted creative pursuits in retrospect, it can be said that the greatest stage of Maisashvili's creative path and the leading place, where the artist managed to perfectly express his artistic abilities are occupied by dozens of miniature graphic works performed by him, most of which are related to the artistic decoration of a printed book. Therefore, in the work, the main focus of the artist's multi-genre creation is shifted to the issue of book illustrating. Here, however, is evident the manifestation of the whole continuous chain, which the artist has transferred from medieval miniature painting through the decoration of a printed book of the 20th century with a new artistic vision. This is especially noticeable in the example

of the decoration of two most important monuments of Georgian secular literature – Shota Rustaveli’s “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” and Sulkhani-Saba Orbeliani’s “The Book of Wisdom and Lies”, as well as of one group of prose works, and the other part has traces of Soviet order.

The artist has not depicted religious compositions and thus his work is entirely of a secular direction. Severian Maisashvili’s paintings reveal the principle of real-world reflection, which uses the traditions of miniature painting developed over the centuries and at the same time presents them in the prism of his own, individual handwriting. This, in turn, provides an interesting example of the past’s continuous connection with a modernity. Through his individual, slightly mannerical, graphic expression of the handwriting, which is the cornerstone of his artistic creation, the artist fully responds to his contemporary artistic pursuits.

In Severian Maisashvili’s work, one often feels a self-developed, kind of restrained, “defensive” tactic, which, from today’s point of view, satisfies the requirements of socialist realism somewhere far above. However, at the same time, the most part of his creations appear to be nationally inclined. It should not have been so easy for the artist in the conditions of authoritarian censorship, when the return to his own roots was inevitably baptized as „bourgeois vestiges“ that had to be overcome. However, today we can say with certainty that Severian Maisashvili’s creative tactics were justified and such stylistic decisions and creative assimilation of past traditions significantly differentiated the artist’s compositions, both from his contemporaries and the creative attempts of many artists of the next generation as well.