

# EVENTS FROM THE PAST REFLECTED IN THE MEMORY OF THE ARTAANIANS ACCORDING TO THE RECORDS OF KONSTANTINE ODISHARIA (FROM MARTVILI)

NAILA CHELEBADZE

PhD in history, Senior Researcher at the Department of  
Ethnology and Sociological Research, Niko Berdzenishvili  
Institute, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University; Professor  
At St. Tbel Abuserisdze Teaching University of Georgian Patriarchate,  
Email: [naila.chelebadze@bsu.edu.ge](mailto:naila.chelebadze@bsu.edu.ge)  
ORCID: 0009-0003-2451-1753

**Abstract:** The work presents an attempt to reflect the historical past of the Artaani region based on materials recorded by K. Odisharia during stationary research in 1913-1920, only a small part of which has been approved in Georgian historiography. Currently, Artaani is within the borders of the present-day Republic of Turkey, which further increases the importance of its study.

The work presents in detail the real history of the Artaani region, as researched by K. Odisharia, and rich statistical data – up to 600 toponyms, aspects of ethnic situation and traditional life, meticulously described, often at great risk, historical and cultural heritage monuments or their remains, including up to 500 churches preserved with up to 40 Georgian historical inscriptions, More than a hundred fortresses, more than 8 canals and pipes (including a milk transit pipe), 5 bridges and many others add further credence to the fact that Artaani's cultural heritage is based on the roots of traditional Georgian culture.

The work discusses several historical facts and events based on the comparison of information received from the Georgian population of the historical region, legends and traditions. For example, an interesting interpretation of Queen Tamar's will to her son – Lasha-Giorgi – is revealed. The similarity of the date of the main characters' homage to the memory of Queen Tamar in the folk version of „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“ – the prayer at night on April 30 until dawn on May 1, and the date of Queen Tamar's death, set on May 15 of the church calendar, is clarified. Information is also provided about Otar-Beg about the ancient manuscript of „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“ dated 1435, copied on parchment in the Shervashidze family relic.

The chronicle of the history of Artaani is supplemented by various toponyms recorded by K. Odisharia. The name of the village of Sinodi is considered as a religious oikonym, which may be associated with the presence of a temporary residence of the Catholicos in Javakheti. Also, the village of Sinodi is assumed to be the place where the „Javakheti Council“ was held.

The Artaan records describe the story of the campaign of his successor, Lasha-Giorgi, against the apostate Atabag of Gandze after the death of Queen Tamar, which was not coordinated with the commanders of his successor, Lasha-Giorgi, which caused their indignation. It is precisely this fact that is related to the story of Lasha-Giorgi calling the village „Urchi“ (disobedient) in response to the protest of the nobles.

It is convincing that K. Odisharia imagines all the keys to the mythopoetic world of „The Rider in the Tiger's Skin“ in the Artaani region, which is based on individual places that actually exist in the imagination of local Georgians at the level of historical geography (Kajeti Fortress, Palace, Palakatsio Lake Tunnel, etc.). The issue of the localization of Kajeti Fortress, which is not uniformly defined in Georgian historiography, and the consideration of the Kajeti Fortress in „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“ as a prototype, is further supported by K. Odisharia's extensive description of the fortress. In addition, other names for Childiri Fortress – Mze-Kala Fortress and others have also been identified.

Thus, K. Odisharia's notes provide Georgian chroniclers with a real opportunity to study some unknown toponyms, many monuments of cultural heritage, and solve a number of problems of

Kartvelology, which makes the inevitability of using Artaani materials as primary sources and including them in scientific circulation undeniable.

**Keywords:** Artaani, history, legends and traditions related, toponyms, „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“, Queen Tamar, fortresses, cultural heritage.

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For centuries, the interest of Georgian patriots in the Artaani region, which had been separated from their native Georgia, has never waned. This area, which was under Ottoman rule until 1878, was visited and fragmentary, but very valuable information was left to us by D. Bakradze, G. Kazbegi, later N. Marr, Eqvtime Takaishvili, K. Sadovsky, A. Froneli, S. Bavreli, Koptonashvili and others. The little-known records which were found in the Artaani region by Konstantine Odisharia (from Martvili) from the end of 1913 to 1920 are distinguished by their informativeness and scientific value, and an important place was devoted to them in the second volume of „The Georgian Residence of Istanbul“.

Georgian public figure, scribe and scientist, a permanent member of the Tbilisi branch of the Society for the Promotion of Literacy among Georgians, K. Odisharia worked as a correspondent for Georgian newspapers in Batumi at the end of the 19th century, where he developed into an passionate patriot (Sikharulidze, 1998:233; Putkaradze Sh., 2020:218-220). During the First World War, when the country was in the most difficult situation, K. Odisharia, as a member of the board of the Artaani branch of the Georgian Action Society, was entrusted with finding out the situation of Muslim Georgians in the war-affected districts of Artaani and Childiri (in police units). He understood perfectly well that Artaani was the cultural cradle of Georgians, and therefore he spared no energy to visit this region. K. Odisharia's scientific value, travel-style diaries describing the Artaani region were published in the form of letters in the newspaper „saqartvelo“ („Georgia“), and some are kept in various antiquities repositories. Part of the monument was later transferred by the author to Academician S. Janashia (Sikharulidze, 1998:23; Putkaradze Sh., 2020:218-220; Putkaradze E., 2023:413:422).

During his work in the Artaani region, K. Odisharia, in a list of antiquities compiled based on a survey of local Georgians, recorded more than 600 cities and villages, records reflecting the life of local Georgians, which the author included under the names of Muslim Georgians. The detailed inventory of numerous historical and cultural heritage monuments or their remains, sometimes at the risk of life, recorded by K. Odisharia is invaluable, including up to 500 churches with up to 40 Georgian inscriptions, more than 8 canals and pipes (including milk transit pipelines), 5 bridges, more than a hundred fortresses, etc., some of which are represented by historical stories or legends recorded according to the stories of the population. The importance of the aforementioned materials is further enhanced by the fact that the geographical names of Upper Kartli recorded in them are partially unknown to Georgian chronicles, which makes the reliability of using Artaan materials as primary sources and the inevitability of their inclusion in scientific circulation undeniable.

According to the opinion expressed in Georgian historiography, the origin of the Georgians is connected with their original homeland – A r i a n Kartli, the place from which the cradle of human culture emerged (Ingorokva, 1939; XXXI-XXXII). Part of this distant past of Georgia is the history of Artaani, which, according to the „Life of Kartli“, is the „land of Artaani“ (K/Ts., 1955:10,23), The impressions of K. Odisharia's travels in this one of the oldest historical regions of Georgia are special in that today it is part of the Kars province (villayet) of the Republic of Turkey and represents a significant part of historical Meskheti, as well as Childiri (Abotsi, Palakatsio) and Artaani (Artaan-Kola) itself. The territory, which changed in the wake of political cataclysms and went beyond the original area of settlement of ancient Georgian tribes, dramatically changed the historical geography of the Artaani province due to its crucial strategic location, although its name and influence still extended beyond Artaani itself within its general borders (Takaishvili, 1938:3). Like other parts of Georgia within the borders of the Ottoman Empire, in 1878. By the decision of the Berlin Congress, Artaani returned to its homeland, which from the late 19th

century. was included in the Kars region along with Potskhov, Kola and Childir (Sadovski, 1886:236). As for the church borders, Artaani, including the Talasho Zeiti Sula „within the borders of the Koli“, according to the historian Dimitri Bakradze, was considered within the jurisdiction of the bishop of the Erusheti (Bakradze, 1987:77). In 1914-1920, the Artaani region was a battlefield between Russia and Turkey. On October 15, 1921, by the Treaty of Kars, this region passed into Ottoman possession. The main part of K. Odisharia's notes is related to this period, the reliability of which was further strengthened by the author's long stay and stationary activity in Artaani.

The list of toponyms, meticulously compiled during several years of travel by K. Odisharia, is a historical and cultural guide for any researcher. The travel notes clearly demonstrate the author's attempt to fully convey the geographical and strategic picture of the places with the corresponding toponyms and histories. Of the more than 600 toponyms recorded in the Artaani region, the author explains their meaning as much as possible, most of which reflect the ancient fund of toponyms mentioned in ancient sources. The extensive list of toponyms best preserved in the memory of the population provides us with rich material not only about different eras of Georgian history, but also allows us to compare historical and current toponyms (Nikolaishvili...,2021:95-96; Bakradze, 1987:65; Sadovski, 1886:13,27,35-37,43; Froneli, 1914:137, Khutsishvili...,2021:529-591...etc.).

It can be boldly said that the toponyms collected by K. Odisharia are a short historical essay about the past of the Artaani region, the demographic picture changed by the results of migration at the beginning of the 20th century (Karapafakhs, Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, Aysors, etc.), almost all branches of economic life (Kobali, Martsvaletubani, Sagometi, Sabughari, Sagoreti, Saikhve, Ghvinia, Sakire, etc.), great cultural traditions (Upper and Lower Khelovani), the defense system (Kajeti, Mgeltsikhe, Mze-Kala, etc.), Christian saints and relics (Meriemi-Mariam, Nino-Nunisi, Tamar, Stepantsminda, Zedatsminda, Giorgi-Ubani, Miriani, Peter-Paul, Synod, etc.), famous kings (Tamar, Lasha-Giorgi) and others.

As an example, we will focus on the toponym of the village of Urchi, which is connected to the name of the village and the associated tradition, which not only fits the aforementioned episode of the reign of Lasha-Giorgi, but also offers us a unique interpretation of this story (Odisharia, 2020:113). It was Urchi Ur, mentioned in ancient Georgian sources as Artaani Hur, where the longest-lived Muslim Georgians lived (Kavtaradze, 2001:17; Berdzenishvili D., 2009:104-105). According to the locals, the reason for the village being called „Urchi“ was the situation after the death of Queen Tamar, when the Atabag of the Gandza stopped paying tribute to Georgia, and Lasha-Giorgi's commanders went on a campaign against him without the consent with the Georgian commanders-in-chiefs. Although the Georgian warriors drove back the enemy, in response to the king's behavior, the enraged nobles declared that if something like this had happened again, they would have turned their army back. Lasha-Giorgi apologized to them, although in response to the nobles' protest, he called the village disobedient (Urchi in Georgian). Lasha-Giorgi's closeness to this side, as the co-regent of Queen Tamar, must have been due to the fact that his princely domain was Javakheti, which, according to the „Life of Kartli“, included the territory „from Fanavri to the Mtkuri River“, including Artaani (K/Ts., 1955:4).

It also seems noteworthy that the name of the village of Sinodi, which was bordered by the villages of Tetri Koshi and Shigamelia (Martvileli, 2020:191). This historical oikonym may have been based on the historical fact of the temporary transfer of the „Javakheti Council“, or rather, the Catholicosate of Mtskheta to the „Kingdom of the Georgians“, which was dictated by the transfer of the Georgian political center to the south during the difficult period of Arab domination, as well as the strengthening of the ambitions and claims of the Armenian Church and its penetration into Georgian regions.

According to Bishop Anania, during the mentioned period (of Mtskheta), the Catholicos was not seated in Mtskheta (the city), but first in the „Samamplo“ of Guaram Mampali, which included Samtskhe, Javakheti, Trialeti, Artaani, Tashir and Abotsi, and later in the „Kingdom of the Georgians“ of David Kurapatat. „It is evident from the life of Grigol Khandzteli that during his time the council of the Georgian Church, attended by many bishops, was held not in Mtskheta, but in Javakheti. This council was supposed to elect a new Catholicos and enthrone him, therefore it was expected that the

council would be held in Mtskheta, or the Catholicosate city, but the Catholicos of Mtskheta is elected in Javakheti... In the 9th century, a political-administrative unit called Samamplo existed in the southern lands of Kartli... It seems that Samamplo is the political district where the Georgian Church operates freely" (Japaridze, 2009:662-663).

In the villages of Artaani, almost empty of Georgian population, for K. Odisharia, the history of Georgia came alive through meeting with fellow citizens, talking with them, and hearing the Georgian language, because each „fine orator is an eloquent speaker of our essence and the greatness of our culture“. He once wrote with pride that „there are Georgians from the village of Badeli to Childira – and they behaved like Georgians!“ (Martvileli, 2020:186). This is what strengthened him, and, filled with hope, he continued to visit and record every detail of the historical site, often at great risk.

K. Odisharia's overall impression of the Georgians of Artaani was further strengthened by the fact that they treated the names of their fathers and grandfathers, the remains of their ancestors, with great respect (Martvileli, 2020:192). While in the village of Guguba, the author was impressed by the local old man Teimuraz Kadir-ogli Tsitlanadze, who spoke Georgian fluently, knew how to read and write, and knew the history of Georgia well. It is noteworthy that Platon Ioseliani taught him how to read and write in Tbilisi, and he received from him as a gift a large leather-bound manuscript of Vakhushti Bagrationi's „History of Georgia,“ which he had carefully kept in a chest wrapped in a red cloth. The elderly Teimuraz honestly admitted to K. Odisharia that „today I prefer this book to my children“ (Odisharia, 2020:120). Perhaps as a result of such a close connection between Teimuraz Kadir-ogli Tsitlanadze and Pl. Ioseliani, one of the important sources of Georgian history, the „Chronicle of Meskhi Davitni“, or the Meskhi Annals, was found in the latter's possession, which Dimitri Bakradze discovered in the archive of the famous figure (Materials..., 1961:102).

In the historical stories reflected in the memory of the people of Artaani, a special place is dedicated to Queen Tamar, who became a legend during her lifetime. The Georgian people associate her name with many ancient buildings – fortresses, towers, churches, monasteries, roads and bridges. In this regard, the historical part of Artaani is distinguished, which Queen Tamar often visited with her entourage – „Spring ... they pass by Kola, head of Artaani...“ (K/Ts., 1955:100). K. Odisharia's records counts sixteen „Tamar's Way“ and nineteen different places associated with the name of Queen Tamar. The numerous references he recorded are an expression of the great veneration of the name of Queen Tamar in the memory of the Artaani people. According to the Artaani people's belief, Tamar „was taken alive to heaven by (angels) and we are looking for her grave here“ (Odisharia, 2020:128). K. Odisharia saw an icon of Queen Tamar donating an earring in the Artaani Temple, which is a depiction of the reality of a well-known tradition (Odisharia, 2020:123). It is unknown which historical story from the many other traditions was reflected by the toponymy linking the „Golden Pot“ to Queen Tamar, as well as the story of S. Bavreli's guide, about the existence of a „wooden „throne“ on a sheer cliff, where Queen Tamar's council was held“ (Bavreli, 1878:1).

In addition to the will of Queen Tamar, which is well-known in history, the memory of the people of Artaani has also preserved a separate will for Lasha-Giorgi, in which Queen Tamar reminded her son that „I have created a golden age for my people“ (Odisharia, 2020:128).

The people of Arta have preserved a precise account of the day of Queen Tamar's death. In the folk version of „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“, the main characters pay great respect to the memory of Queen Tamar, vowing to „come here every year and pray for Tamar – from the night of April 30 until the dawn of May 1“ (Odisharia, 2020:130). In fact, this day coincides with the day of the death of Queen Tamar on the church calendar – May 15. It is noteworthy that S. Bavreli also informs us about the commemoration of Christian holidays. It turns out that during the Christian era, on the mountain of Maghlosi, above the village of Veli, the population gathered from all sides to celebrate the Ascension. After the holiday, horse racing and wrestling were held (Bavreli, 1878:2).

According to K. Odisharia, „Shota Rustaveli, with his powerful talent and lofty thinking, reached for the sun with his hands, and that too in the 12th century.“ It was precisely this circumstance that



determined his main goal – to find Shota Rustaveli's native land, the possibility of which was further strengthened by the impressions he received in Artaani. He also pointed out this in a 1937 note, stating that „...researchers could achieve greater fruitfulness in their study of Shota Rustaveli's life and identity by studying the Artaani region“ (Odisharia, 2020:211). The fact that the crown of human culture – „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“ has an indelible monument in the heart of the Georgian nation was clearly demonstrated to K. Odisharia by the Georgians filled with love in the style of the immortal poem, by Otar-Beg Shervashidze from Artaani in the village of Orkiz, who knew the text by heart, and by his family relic – the sight of an ancient edition of „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“ dated 1435, copied on parchment. We would also like to note that several years ago, the founder of the Caucasus and Anatolia Research Center, the famous scientist, the now deceased Giorgi Kavtaradze, specially traveled to Artaani due to K. Odisharia's statement, although the story of the search for „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“ ended in vain (Kavtaradze, 2001:17).

Seeing „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“ further intensified K. Odisharia's desire to find all the keys to the mythopoetic world of the poem in the Artaani region. Indeed, this insatiable desire enabled him to verify individual nuances by observing the speech of the locals, finding the places where the heroes fought, and collecting related traditions. In this regard, the author's study of the issue of fortresses is particularly noteworthy. According to the author, in the memory of the population, Rabat Fortress is represented as the fortress of Mze-Kala (Mze-Kala was identified with Nestan-Darejan), while the domain of the witches is the underwater world of the tunnel that emerged from Palakatsio (Childiri Lake) near the village of Pikrasheni Temple (Odisharia, 2020:125-127). The mysticism of „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“ unfolds in this city in all its fullness, in which the author has given an incredible meaning to the symbols that are characteristic of the world of this city. K. Odisharia was able to find a multi-story hall in the depths of the tunnel of the island of Lake Palakazio and describe it in quite detail (Odisharia, 2020:132-135). It is known that Palakatio is a region in historical southern Georgia, which was referred to as „Shadow“. It is noteworthy that the cave and mine seen in Artaani are described in „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“ as the residence of the exiled Tariel. Also interesting is the issue of „Treasury of Devis“, which was located two versts from the village of Sardzeve (Odisharia, 2020:128).

According to the traditions of Artaani inhabitants, there was a city built by Georgians on Lake Palakatsio in ancient times, which was covered with water and then settled there by the witches. These interesting traditions are further supported by the uniformity of the legend about the fortress, Tariel, Mze-Kala and Queen Tamar recorded in two different places by local informants – Tarkhnishvili – in the village of Rabati and Temur-Rostom Beg Khimshiashvili (Odisharia, 2020:132-135). According to E. Takaishvili, the island was connected to the shores by a stone bridge, and despite the fact that there was a fortress of Kajeti (witches) and Tmogvi in the region, it still represented the most important defensive center (Takaishvili, 1909:45-117). According to researchers, the old, authentic, Georgian name for the fortress located on the island is the term „Tetrtsikhe“ (Tavadze, 2018:27; Georgian.,2018:31). Scientific research has revealed many ancient artifacts on the island. Among them are monuments from the Neolithic era. Among the structures are cromlechs (Neolithic megalithic structures – circular or rectangular stone slabs). There is no doubt that this was an earlier Bronze Age settlement. Burial mounds have also been recorded. In the case of the Shadow Lake region, such fortified points are megalithic fortresses (Tavadze, 2018:46).

The village of Kundzuleti (cmp. Kundzuleti-Georgian.,2018:137), which consisted of several settlements, is of interest. In addition to its high agricultural culture, Kundzuleti was distinguished among the villages of Artaani by another factor – it is said that the best Georgian warriors and patriots grew up here. The distinctive military-physical forge of this part of Artaani (Odisharia, 2020:144) seems to be similar to Rustaveli's description of Kajeti, that this is a collection of men who excelled in martial arts and fortified themselves in the rocks, who were called Kajeti precisely for this reason (cmp. Khintibidze, 2011-13).

Thus, K. Odisharia's study of the Artaani region convinced him that Artaani is the area of action of the heroes of „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“, which in the imagination of local Georgians is based

on individual places that actually exist at the level of historical geography (the palace, Kajeti Fortress, the Palakatsio Lake Tunnel, etc.). Also, fictional characters are perceived as real characters, who are mentioned in the poem with renamed names. As evidence of this, we will use Al. Baramidze's view that the author of „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“ took the building material necessary for the construction of his magnificent work from the real-historical world“ (Baramidze, 1958:80).

A vivid expression of Georgia's heroic historical past is K. Odisharia's detailed description and fairly accurate classification of the Artaani defensive system – fortresses and their remains, the total number of which exceeds 100. The folk tales recorded by K. Odisharia about the fortresses are proof that they „contain not a little information about the ancient layers of the population“ (cmp. Chitaia, 2022:111).

Of particular interest is the author's description of several fortresses, the localization and clarification of whose names are still controversial in Georgian historiography. In this regard, the issue of Kajeti Fortress stands out, which could quite possibly have been the prototype of the Kajeti Fortress of „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“, which was suggested by Levon Melikset-Beg as early as 1943. K. Odisharia was able to show that the name of Kajeti Fortress is not entirely the result of metaphorical naming. This is really Kaji Fortress, Shota did not come up with it (cmp. Berdzenishvili N., 1990:577; Nozadze, 2024:577).

In Georgian historiography, among the versions of Kajeti Fortress that are common, to which the Kajeti Fortress described by K. Odisharia fits, not only the geographical location of the fortress is taken into account for comparison, but also the structure of the surviving complex and the legends and traditions related to it. Based on all this, K. Odisharia's notes reveal the coincidence of the author's vision of the localization of Kajeti Fortress on the right bank of the Mtkvari River, near the village of Sabaduri, in the Artaani settlement (Odisharia, 2020:138, Martvileli, 2020:178) with the views expressed in Georgian historiography (Javakhishvili, 1983:57; Takaishvili, 1909:59; Gurjistani., 1941:272; Jikia, 1958:402,404; Kudava, 2003; Nikolaishvili., 2021:651).

According to K. Odisharia, „According to the ruins, it is clear that the city was once located on the other side of the Mtkvari River, but in 1878 it was moved to the other side of the Mtkvari River, which is confirmed by the name itself – Old and New City (Odisharia, 2020:139). As for the strategic importance of the fortress, the author adds that the fortress of the city of Artaani occupies the first place in the entire region in terms of its importance, although in other cases he also gives the fortress the second place. According to the author, despite the fact that the fortress has remained unattended, even today, even the storm of this greatest world battle could not fail to impress its towering, steep, crenellated walls (Odisharia, 2020:140, Martvileli, 2020:179).

The presentation of materials recorded by K. Odisharia about the unreachable Artaani Fortress will significantly enrich the source knowledge base for its study. As for the repetition of the data of the description of the fortress complex, it should not exclude the author's attempt to visit the fortress multiple times and describe it in detail. Given the importance of the issue, we offer excerpts from the descriptions of the fortress:

“The Artaani fortress stands on a plain. It extends sideways for half a verst, from where its walls descend into a deep ravine of the Mtkvari riverbed and there joins the Mtkvari river itself with another wall, outside of which, several dozen sazhen (1 sazhen = about 152 or 170 cm) above the Mtkvari, there is a two-hole tunnel. Inside the tunnel are mines, the area of which exceeds 15 sq. m. From above the tunnel a wide but dangerous road descends, the head of which leads to the fortress gate from the inaccessible mouth of the Mtkvari. Outside, in the Mtkvari valley, there are many ruins of fortresses and houses, of which only high walls remain.

From the Mtkvari to the top of the castle, I think there will be two versts. The inner courtyard, as I said, runs sideways from south to east and is divided by high walls into several dozen courtyards. There are many houses everywhere in the courtyards, some are ruined and some are intact. There used to be a large church in front of the castle, but it has been ruined and is just ruins. In the back courtyard, the pipe for bringing water from the Mtkvari is short and made of red clay, which, attached to the mountain that forms a wall, flows into the Mtkvari and is still intact today.

Nearby is a bathhouse built of beautifully laid white stone slabs with pools and basins, near which is a pipe cut for dirty water. The large iron doors leading into the fortress from the plain are topped with marble stones with Khutsuri inscriptions. Above are two stones, one with Arabic script, the other with an Armenian inscription that looks like new. .... To the east, above the fortress, are many ruins. Nearby is a round, thin stone with an area of more than a sazhen, which is pierced in the middle. This stone is very similar to a millstone. Here you will often find human bones. An entrance door has been built into the prison. Above it is a stone of the same size with an inscription in Arabic letters. This stone ... is probably newly installed“. Nearby there is a round, thin stone with an area of more than a sazhen, which is pierced in the middle. This stone is very similar to a millstone. Here you will often find human bones. An entrance door has been built into the prison. Above it is a stone of the same size with an inscription in Arabic letters. This stone ... is probably newly installed. ...Nearby, in the valley, there are ruins of many castles and houses, some of whose walls still stand today (Martvileli,2020:178-179,190). The Artaani Mtkvari ravine, two versts away, near the village of Sazar, is crowned by a large church, the ruins and walls of which still stand proudly today (Martvileli,2020:190).

It is true that K. Odisharia's notes show that the Kajeti fortress is the Artaani fortress, however, it is also worth considering the fact that „the cities of the Kajeti“ (with fortresses) and „the plots of heroes“ in ancient Georgia were called ancient centers, namely, cyclopean structures, analogues of which we find in the same Urartu“ (Janashia, II,1952:12,285). Therefore, it is conceivable that there may have been another Cyclopean structure in Artaani itself under the name of Kajeti Fortress. The great influence of the Rabati-Kajeti Fortress of Artaani should also be indicated by the fact that, according to local reports, K. Odisharia recorded the name of the impregnable, impenetrable Kajeti Fortress in the Artaani region, Q O R – O G L I S T I K H E (N.C. Qorogli or a son of blind ) near the village of Merdenek (Odisharia, 2020:154;Martvileli,2020:190;cmp.Khutsishvili, 2021:72). It is possible that Vakhushti Batonishvili called the Kajeti fortress the present-day Tsikhisdziri (Kobuleti) fortress on the same basis, although Vakhushti does not seem to deny the existence of a fortress of a similar name in Artaani (cmp. Bakradze, 1987:21).

According to recent research, it is believed that „the fortress must have been built in the 9th-10th centuries, based on its construction techniques and architecture“ (Georgian., 2018:34).

The material obtained by K. Odisharia about the Childir fortress is also very interesting. Shadow is a combination of Abotsi and Palakacio. The city of Childiri is in the Childiri district of the Artaan province in Turkey, which bears the name of the Childiri (Shadow) lake located nearby. The old Georgian name of the settlement was Dzurdzna. Similarly, near Zurzuni – Dzurdzna and to its north was the Childiri fortress, also known as Rabati, described by S. Jikia (Gurjistani...1941:272). It is noteworthy that K. Odisharia, the great chronicler of Georgian history and culture, introduces a completely different name for this fortress – Mze-Kala fortress. The main thing is that in relation to the mentioned fortress, K. Odisharia presents Mze-Kala fortress as one of the main areas of action of the characters of „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“.

According to K. Odisharia's description, above the village of Zurzuna, on the top of the mountain, is the village of Rabati, where the Tarkhnishvili-peasants and Tarkhan-Mouravi lived. „The village of Rabati is not particularly remarkable, only here is the fortress called the Sun Woman. The tunnel enters the fortress – it is white, built with architectural art. Three rivers flow under the fortress: Mtkvari – to the right of Artaani, Tskararosmani and Tetri Tskara. There is a valuable bathhouse with red pipes here. The houses built on the wall of the fence (4-5 sazhens high) were probably the living quarters of the army commanders. There is a white two-story house in the courtyard... It seems that this house was supposed to be the residence of the king or the spasalari. A three-story house is built on the southern wall, with 40 rectangular boxes inside“ (Odisharia, 2020:124-125). K. Odisharia recorded a story about the fortress from locals – Tarkhnishvili and Ibrahim-beg Sulkhan Mouravi – that when Georgia was great, this fortress was built by Tamar (Letters, 2020:126). Her cousin Taniel came to Tamar with his fiancée – Mze-kala (Odisharia, 2020:124-130), who was kidnapped by the king of the magical witches living in a tunnel under Lake Palakatsio and, since a person could not live in a tunnel under water, Mze-kala locked him

in the palace of the Padishah, which is why the Rabati fortress was named after Mze-kala (Odisharia, 2020:124-125,127). The people of Artaani connect this event with the death of Queen Tamar, which is a bright page in the past of boundless respect for the memory of Queen Tamar. K. Odisharia's notes show that the main characters of „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“ have great respect for the memory of Queen Tamar, who swore „...to come here every year, kiss the ground where her footprints were and pray for Tamar – from the night of April 30 until the dawn of May 1“ (Odisharia, 2020:130). As is known, the Georgian Church has canonized Tamar as a saint and established May 1 (14) as her memorial day.

Thus, the goal set in parallel with K. Odisharia's charitable activities, to find Shota Rustaveli's birthplace, was carried out against the backdrop of a complex study of the Artaani region. The author's search for the ancient text of „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin“, the peculiarities of the local speech, the realistic perception of the names of the characters in the poem and their world of action (castle, palace, lake, tunnel, mine) added special credibility to Shota Rustaveli's Meskhet origin. In addition, K. The national consciousness of the Georgians of Artaani, shown in Odisharia's records, the memory of many real stories of the past deeply imprinted in the memory of the locals over the centuries, news related to the lives of historical figures – Queen Tamar, Lasha-Giorgi, historical inscriptions, historical geography, unknown Georgian toponyms, related legends and traditions, several new historical and cultural monuments, roads and highways will contribute to a new view of a number of important issues, the compilation of various types of guides or topographic maps about the Artaani region, the search for the manuscript text of 'The Knight in the Tiger's Skin', the expansion of the source knowledge base of Georgian history and the new coverage of certain problems of national historiography. In addition, the publication and popularization of K. Odisharia's Artaan recordings will significantly contribute to the responsibility of Georgians living in the Republic of Turkey to maintain and preserve Georgian cultural heritage and to the problem of correctly understanding its place in a multicultural world.

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