

Contribution ID: 49

Type: **not specified**

Sacred Healing: The Interplay of Magic and Religion in Georgian Folk Medicine

Friday 19 September 2025 11:20 (20 minutes)

Georgian folk medicine, deeply rooted in both Christian traditions and pre-Christian beliefs, preserved healing practices that combined herbal remedies with magical rituals, protective spells, and sacred objects. This paper examines the role of religious invocations, amulets, and symbolic actions in healing, as documented in medieval Georgian carabadinis (medical books) and ethnographic sources. By analyzing healing prayers, ritualistic treatments for ailments like eye diseases and wounds, and the use of sanctified substances (such as holy water and blessed oils), the study explores how spiritual and medical practices overlapped. It also draws comparisons with Byzantine and Islamic healing traditions, highlighting the shared belief in divine intervention as part of medical care. Ultimately, this paper argues that the fusion of magic and religion in Georgian folk medicine reflects a broader Eurasian healing tradition, where faith and medicine were not separate, but complementary forces in the pursuit of health.

Keywords

Healing, rituals, speals, Carabadinis, Georgia

E-mail

Gviniashvilisalio@gmail.com

Affiliation

Tusheti Protected Landscape

Position

Research assistant

Short Biography

Salome Gviniashvili is an art historian with a strong interdisciplinary background in medieval and cultural studies. She holds an MA in Medieval Studies from Central European University (Vienna) and an MA in Cultural Studies from the Tbilisi State Academy of Arts. Her research focuses on medieval visual culture, especially Georgian wall paintings, as well as the ways in which craft culture and healing practices shaped religious and social life in the medieval period.

Alongside her academic work, Salome is active as a curator and educator. She has curated exhibitions and cultural projects in Tbilisi, Warsaw, Zurich, and Yerevan that explored themes of dialogue, memory, and artistic exchange, and she teaches art and cultural history in both academic and community contexts. Her curatorial and educational work often aims to connect medieval traditions with contemporary cultural

practices, making historical heritage accessible to wider audiences.

Her broader interests lie in the intersections of art, belief, and knowledge-making, with particular attention to the role of visibility and material practices in expressing identity.

Primary author: Salome Gviniashvili (Tusheti Protected Landscape)

Presenter: Salome Gviniashvili (Tusheti Protected Landscape)

Session Classification: S.4.4. Medicine, Morality, and the Supernatural: Cultural Narratives of Health in Premodern Societies

Track Classification: Individual papers