

Mythological Parallels in Georgian and Chechen Legends

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Abstract: Chechen and Georgian mythology confirm important plot parallels and similar elements of traditional culture. The existence of certain mythological motifs and plots in epic tales is explained by cultural influences and borrowings, while some are universal and are reflected in traditions rather distant from each other. Important questions of Georgian-Nakh cultural relations have not been discussed in academic literature to date, such as the kinship of Chechen tales and Georgian folklore; the similarity of mythologemes, plots and motifs in Chechen folk texts with Georgian oral tradition; and the reflection of mediaeval Georgian culture in Chechen legends. The parallelism of mythological motifs in Georgian and Chechen tales manifests itself in various aspects. From this point of view, among the myths of the two peoples, the subject of our study were hunting tales, in particular, the narratives associated with the patrons of beasts and forest mythical creatures; the names of mythological characters; the motif of struggle against demonic mythological creatures; secret signs/marks associated with the appearance of the character; mythological names of toponyms, as well as the cosmogonic nature of the mythologem of the dragon in Chechen folklore and its parallels with Georgian mythology. The article examines the typological and genetic links between Chechen mythopoetics and Georgian oral folk tradition, and reveals mythopoetic and narrative/story parallels. As studies have shown, the similarity of mythological motifs in Chechen and Georgian legends is not superficial but deeper. They include well-known plots reworked on the local soil, and completely original themes and motifs.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Caucasian Range has never been a blank wall between the North and South Caucasus. Between the peoples living on this and that side of the ridge, there was a constant exchange of cultural values. Accordingly, common mythologemes and elements of traditional culture are confirmed in Georgian and Chechen folklore. The appearance of some of these mythological motifs and plots in epic tales is explained by the influence and borrowing from different cultures, some are universal and are reflected in traditions that are quite distant from each other. In ancient times, cultures were not isolated from each other, and folklore was always open to foreign motives and plots.

As is historically known, in the XI-XII centuries, when the feudal monarchy of Georgia reached its great political and economic prosperity, Georgian culture spread in the North Caucasus, including Chechnya. This is evidenced, for example, by cult-religious terminology, sacral and household vocabulary brought into the Chechen language from

the Georgian language or through the Georgian language, the names of patron saints and the names of the days of the week, which have been studied quite well by scientists. From the Georgian language, the names of the beyond world entered the Chechen language: Yalsamani - cargo. "Samotkhe" - orig. სამთკხე (Paradise), the same Heavenly Jerusalem and Jozhakhate - Hell, which comes from the Georgian word "jojokheti" - orig. ჯოჯოკეთი ("hell").

The purpose of our study is to establish typological and genetic links between Chechen myth-epic creativity and Georgian oral folk tradition, to identify mythopoetic and plot parallelisms. As it turned out, the similarity of mythological motifs in Chechen and Georgian legends is not superficial, but deeper. Among them there are well-known stories reworked on local soil, as well as completely original themes and motifs.

At a time when Chechen and Ingush legends were collected and recorded in the second half of the XIX and early XX centuries, the life of the Vainakhs was not much different from the traditional life of the

Georgian highlanders neighboring them, namely, the Khevsurs, Mokhevs, Tushins and Pshavs. One must think that this should have been the case in the XVII-XVIII centuries. And it was in such a socio-cultural environment that the moral values of the Georgian highlanders and Chechens, the main motives of folklore and mythological plots, were formed.

As a rule, the formation of a national epic is influenced not only by the traditional environment within one society, one people, but also by the cultural, political and religious processes taking place around it. In Chechen legends, the main actions take place in the vicinity of the Georgian mountains, in the vicinity of the Georgian highlanders, in the gorges of the Arghun River and its tributaries. Georgian highlanders, Chechens and Ingush, in contact with each other, formed a very complex, but highly ordered system of oral laws and customs, based on the daily life of traditional Khevsur and Nakh societies. Through the exchange of knowledge and experience, the religion of neighboring peoples, oral judicial practice, norms of behavior, and public morality were formed. In such a traditional environment, Georgian mythological narratives based on similar motifs and plots, and Nakh heroic tales about Narts-Ersthoists were created.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Unfortunately, the recording of Chechen folk texts began late, in the second half of the XIX century. Even in Georgia itself, a country with an ancient culture of writing, in the Middle Ages there was no tradition of collecting and fixing folk texts in writing. The oldest examples of the Georgian oral tradition have been preserved mainly in the records of medieval European missionaries. The systematic recording of both Chechen and Georgian folklore began late, from the second half of the 19th century. As you know, folk texts reflect traditions, ideas and beliefs coming from the depths of centuries. Therefore, due to the traditional and conservative nature of folklore, we can have some idea of what the genre system of Georgian and Chechen folklore should have been like in the Middle Ages.

The article uses completely authentic Georgian and Chechen oral material, which was recorded by famous folklorists in the second half of the XIX century and the 20th century. For the first time, these samples were published in popular publications, such as "Collection of information about the Caucasian highlanders", "Collection of materials for describing the localities and tribes of the Caucasus", "Notes of

the Caucasian department of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society", the newspaper "Kavkaz", etc. Samples of Chechen folklore published in these collections are also included in U. Dalgat's book "The Heroic Epos of the Chechens and Ingush" (Dalgat, 1972). Most of them, as well as folk texts written in Georgian, have an indication of the time and place of recording, as well as the identity of the narrator and writer. Thus, completely reliable and authentic folklore material is used to study Georgian and Chechen mythological parallels.

In the article, the elements of Chechen and Georgian traditional culture are considered in the context of comparative studies, since the method of historical-typological and historical-genetic comparison of studies allows a deeper understanding of socio-cultural aspects. When studying mythological parallels, I used data from related scientific disciplines - ethnography and linguistics.

3 RESEARCH RESULTS

Chechens and neighboring Georgian highlanders lived in traditional societies until the middle of the XX century. No one knows how long their patriarchal way of life, based on archaic elements, would have lasted if not for the deportation of Chechens and Ingush. In 1944, by decision of the Soviet government, the Chechens and Ingush were deported to Central Asia, and in 1952 the Khevsurs were evicted from their native mountains and settled in the lowland villages of Eastern Georgia. Khevsurian villages and Chechen auls, carved into the rocks like eagles' nests, were empty. Since then, nothing significant has been created in the folk art of the highlanders, cut off from their native land. The era of the disappearance of traditions and a number of folk genres began. Gradually, oral texts, cut off from traditional folk life, were forgotten. Fortunately, folklorists have recorded and preserved in writing for new generations the sad heroic songs, religious rites and mythological narrations heard in the impregnable gorges of the Caucasus.

The Georgian highlanders were well acquainted with the neighboring Chechen villages, teifs and gorges, with their specific, concrete names. Pshav-Khevsurian ballads and legends mention Chechen characters by their own names and toponymic names: Mitkhoy (Melkhi) - orig. მიტხოელი (მელხი) (Georgian highlanders called Melchist "Mitkho" - orig. "მიტხო" and Melkhistev - "mitkhoeli" - orig. "მიტხოელი" ("Mitkhoy"). Mitkho is especially

often mentioned in the Pshav-Khevsurian heroic poetry), Maistins - orig. მასტელი, Tereloyans - orig. ტერელოელი, Sakhanoi - orig. სახანოელი etc. We find a similar picture in Chechen folklore, especially in the folklore texts of the "Illi" genre, which often involve Georgian characters with their positive and negative qualities (Mamisimedishvili, 2018). The national name of the Chechen tribes living in the highlands - "Nokhcho", "Nokhchiycho" - later became the ethnic name of the Chechens. Neighboring Georgians knew them under this common ethnonym. In medieval Georgian historical sources, in the heroic ballads of the mountains of Eastern Georgia, in the works of Alexander Kazbegi and Vazha-Pshavela, Chechens are referred to as Kists. Georgian highlanders, in fact, until the end of the twentieth century knew them under this ethnonym. More ancient Georgian sources call the Chechens "dzurdzuki" - orig. „ძურძუკი“.

Some regions of Chechnya (Melkhist, Mayst, Teretego, Terloi-Mokhk, Khildekha) were directly adjacent to Khevsureti and partly to Tusheti. The Melkhists, Maystinians, Terloi-Mokhkians and Khildikhaians were in frequent contact with the Georgian highlanders. Between them there were frequent cases of twinning. Due to blood feuds or other conflicts, many Georgian highlanders left their native lands and permanently moved to Chechen villages. Representatives of many Chechen families living in the Argun Gorge pointed to their Georgian origin. According to A. Ipolitov, members of the Zumsoy clan believed that their ancestor came from Georgia to the Argun Gorge and settled there; according to the tribal tradition, the founder of the Kelo clan was a Tushin; Varando came to Chechnya from Khevsureti, etc. (Ippolitov, 1868). Mountaineers from Chechnya and Ingushetia live in almost all the mountain communities of Eastern Georgia, who once moved here for various reasons, believed in local shrines, swore allegiance to local patron saints, adopted Georgian surnames, mastered the Georgian language, Georgian customs and customs, settled forever in Georgia and became a blood part of the Georgian people.

Presumably, in the Middle Ages, the same religious rites and sacrifices were carried out in the cult centers of Chechnya, as in the neighboring Georgian highlanders. Extremely important in this regard are the records of Amand von Schweiger-Lerchenfeld (1846-1910), showing that the Chechens in the XIX century still adhered to Christian customs. He writes: "Near the old church on the Sunzha River, which is said to have been built by the Georgian Queen Tamara, Chechens perform a religious

ceremony twice a year (on Easter and Trinity) in order to make sacrifices to the patron saint. Sheep and bulls are sacrificed. The blood of slaughtered animals is sprinkled on the walls of the church, and their heads are driven into the walls" (Schweiger-Lerchenfeld, 1887). As it turns out, many customs and folk rituals of the Georgian highlanders and Chechens had a similar structure, content and meaning. Often they were indistinguishable from each other.

4 DISCUSSION

It is known that until 1944, all Chechens from the border villages went to pray and make sacrifices in the mountainous regions of Eastern Georgia, in particular, in the Khevsur shrines - at the cross of Anatori (orig. ანატორი) and Khakhmati (orig. ხახმატი). The clergy treated the Chechens who came to the religious holiday in Anatori with special respect. According to the soothsayer/preacher of the Anator's cross, "The Bachakuri (ritual kada (Kada - rich puff pastry stuffed, often with flour and sugar, fried in butter)) brought by the Kists for the Anatori Cross were preferable to the cattle donated by the Khevsurs for slaughter, so the Kists were received by the Anator's Cross" (Mamisimedishvili, 1997). By the Kistins, the soothsayer SagIira means prayers who came from the neighboring mountain villages of Chechnya. The Chechens called the Anatori cross "Nakarin tsIiv". The well-known Chechen scientist A. Suleimanov also confirms that in the sanctuary of Anatoris Jvari - orig. ანატორის ჯვარი (Anatori Cross) "Until recently, both Vainakhs and Khevsurs came to worship and hold various religious rites and holidays" (Suleimanov, 1997).

It is known that before the establishment of Islam, the Tushol/Tishol cult was very popular in mountainous Chechnya and Ingushetia. As Y. Aliroev rightly points out, in the mythological consciousness of the Chechens, Tushol, as the patroness of fertility, personified the "Great Mother" (Aliroev, 1994). A similar shrine, called Adgilis Deda-Ghvtismshobeli - orig. ადგილის დედა-ღვთისმშობელი ("Mother of the Place-Virgin Mary"), was erected near almost every village in Khevsureti.

The etymology of the word "Tushol" cannot be explained by the data of the Nakh languages. Some scholars point to its Phrygian origin, which is incorrect. The well-known Georgian linguist Al. Chinchrauli clearly mentions the fact that the word Tusholi and the cult of Tusholi comes from the

worship of the Virgin and to clarify the fact the scientist use the various types of linguistic material (Chincharauli, 1979). In the Chechen language, Tisholi appeared from the Georgian name of the Virgin. In Khevsureti, the shrine of the Mother of God near the village of Mutso is called by all Chechens the shrine of Tisholi (Tisholi ← Tishobeli ← Ghvtismshobeli (lit. Mother of God) (Suleimanov, 1997). "(orig. მშობელი) - parent: Ghvtismshobeli (orig. ღვთისმშობელი) - Mother of God. In general, the heavenly beings represented in the legends of the peoples of the high mountains of the Caucasus are those saints who have taken a folk form among the new Christian peoples since the first millennium.

Khevsur legends tell sacred stories: the journey of the Khevsurs-Hevisbury (Hevisbury is an elder among the highlanders of Georgia) to the high-mountainous and hard-to-reach villages of Chechnya with the cult banner of the Holy Cross, the Treasury Cup and clergymen, where they held services on the roof of traditional Chechen houses, baptized and consecrated residential buildings, blessed the sacrifice made to the patron saint.

As it turned out, common religious holidays played a big role in the religious life of Chechens and Khevsurs. Chechens and Georgian highlanders living in the border villages spoke each other's languages perfectly. Folk religious holidays further deepened the friendship and good neighborliness between the two peoples.

It is remarkable that the Chechen tales have parallels not only with the mythological tales of the mountain regions of East Georgia (Khevsureti, Pshavi, Khevi, Mtiuleti and Tusheti) but also with the folklore of other parts of Georgia. Parallelism of mythological motifs appears in many aspects in Georgian and Chechen legends. In this context, of Chechen mythology, the subject of our interest is hunting tales, in particular, the narratives associated with patrons of beasts and forest mythical creatures; names of mythological creatures; the motif of fighting demonic-mythological creatures; mythological representations associated with the appearance of a character; mythological names of toponyms; legends associated with a mountain peak as a sacred place, etc.

A deep archaism is felt in Georgian and Chechen hunting tales, in which the protector of beasts is the main character. He is also the guardian and protector of the beastly places. The Chechen tale of the witch-giants confirms the motif of the hunter going astray, according to which the three brothers, who went out hunting at night, find themselves in an alien, unknown world, in the cave of the witch-giants - the

Almazov (Dalgat, 1972). In both Georgian and Chechen legends the beast shepherds are invisible patrons of wild animals. They gather the bones of the killed and eaten game and wrap them in the skin of the killed animal, then hit it with the herdsman's club and revive the animal. As M. Eliade points out, the reanimation of a killed animal from its bones is a common belief in hunter societies (Eliade, 1987).

In Georgian and Chechen legends, the hunter attends a secret meal of the patrons of beasts, where he participates in stealing the shoulder (blade) of a slain beast, replacing it with a wooden spatula, and reviving the animal with its bones. This motif underlies the Chechen tale of the Giant Sorceress. As it turns out, the miracle of the beast with the "wooden spatula" is the basis of Caucasian hunting legends. In Abkhaz texts, the tale of the three female giants is replaced by the family of the patrons of beasts Ajweipshaa. The Ajweipshaas kill a mountain goat or a deer (according to different versions) of a guest hunter (Salakaya, 1974). In the Abkhazian legend the plot develops similarly to Chechen and Georgian hunting legends. The hunter the next day kills a deer in which he unmistakably recognizes the prey slaughtered and brought to life by its owners the previous evening. According to L. Chibirov, "Ancient Ossetians naïvely believed that the killed game was revived by a deity if its bones are intact" (Chibirov, 2008).

In contrast to Chechen myth, the Georgian oral tradition is not familiar with the forest women giants, who are represented in Chechen folk texts as terrible and ugly-faced, with large breasts and long blond hair. Tkashmapa, the original ტყაშმაფა (Queen of the Forest) from Mingrelian legends and Dali (original დალი), the patroness of beasts from Svanian songs, are of rare beauty. In Georgian hunting legends this story has the following continuation: the hunter becomes a secret lover of the patroness of beasts Dali. According to E. Virsaladze, "The woman patroness of beasts, the hunter she ruined and the dog Kursha (original ყურშა) are the most ancient characters of Georgian mythology" (Virsaladze, 1964). In general, the theme of the relationship between the hunter and the patron of beasts or the hunter and the daughter of the patron of beasts is popular in the folklore of Georgia, Abkhazia and the peoples of the Northern Caucasus.

Chechen tales of the hunting cycle know a character named Khun Sag, who is a mythological creature similar to Ochokochi (original ოჩოკოჩი) from Mingrelian legends (Mingrelian texts, 1991). The Chechen Khun Sag and the Mingrelian

Ochokochi literally mean Forest Man. Both Khun Sag and Ochokochi live in a dense forest and constantly clash with hunters; both have on their chests a huge axe-like or horn-like sprout with a sharp blade, with which they overpower the enemy.

In different parts of Georgia tales about the sacrifice of a deer are widespread, according to which St. George or the patron saint of beasts sent a deer to the temple for sacrifice on feast days (Kiknadze, 2008). On the day of the feast the deer itself went to the shrine, and the minister of the cult sacrificed it, and then the people gathered for the service at the communal table ate its meat. Presumably, a similar narrative was widespread in the Chechen highlands. There is a micro-toponym "Tsoiussabei" in the Galanchozh district, near the village of Khoŭrga. According to A. Suleimanov, the above toponym consists of three components: "TsIloys," "Say," and "Bey." Hence, Tslu means patron saint or sanctuary, Say in Chechen means deer, and Bey means slaughter or sacrifice. The name of the toponym can be understood as: "a place where a deer is sacrificed to a shrine". In A. Suleymanov's opinion, there must have been a temple of the patron saint because there were many aurochs and deer antlers in this place (Suleymanov, 1997). It is noteworthy that in the neighbourhood of the Chechen mountains, in the sanctuaries of the Georgian highlanders until recently it was customary to sacrifice deer and aurochs horns to the patron saints.

Oral texts of the Caucasian peoples, including Georgian and Chechen traditions, transmit mythological representations connected with hunting, with similar plots and motifs. We might say that the peoples of the Mountain Caucasus had a single myth of hunting. This circumstance indicates close contacts between neighboring peoples, in particular, professional hunters. They met during hunting and shared their knowledge and experience with each other. It is during hunting, against the background of the meeting of Kista and Khevsur hunters, that the plot unfolds in Vazha-Pshavela's poem "The Guest and the Master".

The traces of mythological beings are imprinted on the landscape where Georgian highlanders and Chechens have had to live for centuries. According to Chechen and Georgian beliefs, the strange outlines of the relief, the stone split in the middle, and the cracked rock are the work of mythical beings.

In the highlands of Chechnya, near Galanchozh, on Mount Tumsoi-Lami, a mythical legend, namely, the heroism of Seska Solsa, is connected with a boulder split in the middle. According to legend, the stone, which is larger than the tower, was struck by

Seska Solsa's sword. The reason for splitting the boulder was Seska Solsa's curiosity. It turns out that he wanted to test his sword, how sharp it was (Dalgat 1972). In Georgian, particularly in the Pshava tradition, the motif of splitting in the middle of a rock (boulder) is associated with the struggle of holy patrons (Sons of God - original ღვთისმშვილდები) against demonic forces (Devs - original დევო), liberating land and water and seizing territories. Contrary to Chechen legends, the split in the middle of a boulder or rock is completely mystified in the mythological verse Yakhsari (original ახსარი), and this episode is the climax of the battle with the Devs. To the patron saint power is given from God. A folk round dance song sung by the patron saint, Yahsari, recounts the splitting of the rock in two:

"One Dev the Giant fled,

I caught up with him at Roshkigori, he hid behind the rock,

I threw a heroic lahti at him, O Lord, you gave me strength!

The rock split in two, I gouged out the Deva's eye" (Ochiauri, 1991).

E. Meletinski connects the motif of fighting the forces of evil with one of the main activities of the cultural hero. He writes: "As for the fight against devas and dragons, i.e. cleansing the land from monsters, it was often a part of the cycle of deeds of the cultural hero" (Meletinski, 1963).

In Chechnya, on Mount Tumsoi-Lama, next to the split stone there is another boulder, on which there is a notch with an imprinted horseshoe of a horse. Chechen tradition ascribes the appearance of the horseshoe print on the stone to Seska Solsa's horse. Seska Solsa's horse is said to have kicked into the stone, and the imprint was imprinted on it forever. Such mythological signs depicted on the surface of the earth must also have had a sacral meaning in Chechen lore, but the oral text seems to have come down to us with flaws. In my opinion, this is indicated by a trace left by Seska Solsa's horse hoof on the Tumsoi-Lama stone. The fact that the Chechens once considered it sacred is testified by the covering over the imprint of the horse's horseshoe. According to the legend, people covered the horseshoe print with earth, so that it would not get into the eyes of man and would not be touched by a human foot (Dalgat, 1972). The traditional society so carefully and cleanly kept only the traces of supernatural beings. Therefore, we must think that Seska Solsa must have had an even higher sacral status in the original versions of Chechen legends.

One of the Khevsur communities adjacent to Chechnya keeps an anvil in its innermost place, on which the horseshoe of St George's horse is said to be depicted. According to Khevsur legends, the anvil was taken from the abode of demonic beings, namely from the forge of Kajety (original ქაჯეთი), which the celestials under the leadership of St George broke, and there, on the anvil standing in the middle of the forge, militant George of Khakhmat (St George) left the imprint of his horse's horseshoe (Kiknadze, 2009). According to mythical tradition, the anvil as a special shrine was assigned a secret storage in one of the sanctuaries in the village of Khevsureti in Kvrivi (original კვრივი), a sacred structure where no one was allowed to enter to conceal it from human eyes.

It is noteworthy that in the mountains of Eastern Georgia and in the Chechen mountains, near or next to religious buildings large stones on which are imprinted typologically similar, often the same secret signs: geometric figures, images of the sun, human, animal, cross, and the hand are preserved up to now. Stones with secret signs are mainly placed in the walls of sacred crosses and towers (Gigaury, 2010). The mystery of the mythological symbols and geographical ornaments depicted on the stones in the mountains of Georgia and Chechnya is still unresolved and requires comprehensive, interdisciplinary research in the future.

The plots attested in Chechen and Georgian mythological narratives are peculiar, mythologised reflections of past historical events. But this historicity in folk works, according to M. Eliade, "cannot resist the destructive influence of mythology" (Eliade, 2017). The historical event in the memory of the people usually persists for a short time, changes its form and fits into the general mythological archetypal model. We encounter such a situation in both Chechen and Georgian tales.

One part of Chechen tales tells of the same confrontation between Narts Orstkhoi and local giants for territorial conquest, as reflected in the mythological narratives of the East Georgian mountains about the battles of the Sons of God, the same angelic beings and Devs-idols. According to the Pshava-Khevsurian legends, the Devs, beings-giants, oppressed people, hid the secret of blacksmithing from them, did not give them working tools, deprived them of their wives. The sons of God, the same patron saints and angelic beings were sent by God to help people against demonic forces (Kiknadze 2016: 22-23). These Georgian and Chechen tales are based on heroic motifs. Sons of God and Devas, Nart Orstkhoi and local heroes fight with stones. However, there is an essential difference between Chechen and

Georgian legends that probably should not have been present in the archetypal invariants: the Pshava-Khevsur narratives, in particular, the battles of patron saints (Sons of God) and Dev-idols have sacral significance for local residents and are considered truthful stories, while Chechen legends have retained only heroic-adventure content and have almost completely lost their sacral significance (Mamisimedishvili, 2020).

Devas and Giants are characters of many folklore genres. They take part in fairy tale, mythological and heroic epics. However, the Devs, as they appear in the mythological tales of the East Georgian mountains, find parallels only with the legends of the Erstkhoi Narts, specifically Chechen folklore texts, in which the Erstkhoi Narts are represented as enforcers possessing various secrets, wealth, lands, water, castles and fortresses, and giving them up after bloody battles or defeats in sports competitions.

Georgian and Chechen tales of that type reflect the names of specific geographical places where contests, battles or clashes took place between the Sons of God and Devi idols, on the one hand, and between the Erstkhoi Narts and local heroes, on the other. Legends retain information about the places where the Devs and the Erstkhoi Narts lived. According to Chechen legends, the Narts-Orstkhoi are not Chechen ancestors, though they lived in the neighbourhood, just as the Devs and the humans in the Pshava legends.

According to the legends, both Devs and Narts-Eorstkhoi had their kings, whose patronage was limited to a certain place. Following the Pshava legends, Muza (orig. მუზა) was the king of the Devas, who lived in Tsikhsetgori (orig. ციხეთგორი). The devs also had their own king in the Iori Valley. Chechen legends tell of Nauraz, the king (Pachchach) of the Nart-Erstzkhoi. The Pshava legends mention the Devs and the Chechen tales refer to the Narts-Erstzkhoi by their proper names. The Devs are referred to as: Avtandil (orig. ავთანდილი), Muza (orig. მუზა), Beghela (orig. ბეღელა), Musa (orig. მუსა), Verkhvela (orig. ვერხველა), Narts-erstkhoi are Nauraz (orig. ნაურაზი), Ghala (orig. ღალა), Ghera (orig. ღერა). Despite the fact that Daves and Narts live as humans, in the tales they appear as characters of different origin and different formation. The Devs, unlike the Narts, have more demonic traits. Although they share some common features: in legends of this type, Daves and Narts possess more physical strength than humans and are hostile to locals.

According to Chechen tradition, the Nart-erstskhoi Ghala carried a huge boulder to a mountain three kilometers high, then threw it from afar and stuck it in the ground (Dalgat 1972: 340). It is not clear from the legend for what motives Ghala carried the huge boulder up the mountain. It may reflect the rivalry and the test of strength of the local population and the Narts-Erstskhoi during the seizure of territories. The place where, according to legend, the Erstskhoi Nart Ghala lived and where he drove the huge boulder into the ground is called "Ghala's Stone". In the Pshava legends, the Sons of God and the Devas also compete with each other in throwing stones over long distances in a peaceful contest. The defeated Davi relinquishes his possessions and leaves, giving the Son of God the place where the cult of the Son of God, the patron (Kiknadze, 2008) is founded.

Since in the mountainous regions of Eastern Georgia the legends about the stones have a sacred meaning, we can assume that at one time they must have had a similar meaning in the Chechen legends. However, those mythological plots and motifs are completely desacralised in Chechen legends. No rituals are performed near the stones, which represent the battle-confrontation of local heroes and the Nart Orstskhoi. The connection of those stones with the sacral sphere seems to have been forgotten by the locals at the time the texts were written.

According to Chechen, namely, Khorachoi legend, the creation of the Sunzha riverbed is connected with the dragon. The seven Khorachoi brothers encountered a mighty dragon, which slaughtered humans and livestock. The valiant brothers are not afraid of the dragon and fearlessly fight the monster. They fight for a long time and finally the dragon retreats. The Horachoi brothers do not let go of the enemy and pursue it to the end. The dragon retreats, wriggling, and the brothers follow. Where the dragon slid, the weight of its body bent the ground and formed a deep channel, in which now flows the river Sunzha (Dalgat 1972: 344-345). The plot of the legend is of cosmogonic nature. It tells the story of the formation of the riverbed of the Sunzha. In Georgian tales of this type the function of seven brothers is performed by an ancient mythological archetype - an ox. The bull fights the dragon. The defeated dragon retreats and, according to various versions, forms the channels of the rivers Iori (Ivri) and Alazani.

The bull fighting the serpent/dragon, as an archaic symbol of land and agriculture, is not known in Chechen and Ingush tales. The Georgian name of the dragon, ვეშაპი ("Vashapi" → "Eshapi"), is, however,

familiar in Chechen and Ingush languages. The word "eshapi", which in Chechen fairy tales means an old witch, a sorceress, and in Ingush tales means a monster-guardian/guardian of the beyond, derives from the Georgian word "veshapi" (eshapi ← veshapi, original ვეშაპი). The dragon is referred to by the word Veshapi in ancient Georgian literary monuments, in particular, in works of the VIII-XII centuries, including Shota Rustaveli's "In the Knight in Panther's Skin": "Mze Veshapsa daebnela" (original. "მზე ვეშაპსა დაებნელა") - "The dragon hid the light - we will hardly be granted light," Rustaveli writes. Georgian sources of the late Middle Ages refer to the dragon as Gveleshapi (original გველვეშაპი) - Serpent-Smith (from the word gveli (გველი) - snake, veshapi (ვეშაპი) - whale.) That is why the name of the demonic creature Eshapi was fixed in the Chechen language under Georgian influence even in times immemorial.

The traces left by the dragon on the landform can be seen in Chechen toponyms. Mount Bashlam, the same Kazbek (Georgian Mkinvartsveri, original მკინვარცხერი), is also known by Chechen toponyms. It is called Sarmak Bizhina Korta - "The Peak Where the Dragon Lied", which is a mythologeme and preserves a certain mythological history in concise form. The mystery of the Chechen mythological name of the glacier can be explained by the Mokhoe version of the famous Georgian epos, Amirani. According to the legend, a dragon descended from the mountain top to devour Amirani, who was chained to a mountain slope. But immediately Saint George appeared to Amirani and said to the dragon: "- Stop, I chained Amirani so that he might repent of his sins, not for your satiation. Freeze where you are!" Hearing these words the dragon immediately petrified (Kiknadze, 2008). As both names - Chechen 'The Peak Where the Dragon Lied' ('Sarmak Bizhiina korta') and Mokhya's Dragon turned into mountain - are associated with one and the same mountain - Kazbek, one may suppose that they are based on one and the same mythological representation. The myth connected with the mountain Kazbek was preserved in Chechen tradition only as a mythological toponym, while in the Georgian epos it was preserved as a plot.

Georgian-Chechen mythological parallels are not limited to the motifs and plots presented in this article. Both Georgian and Chechen tales confirm the stories of fortunate people who wear shining marks (markings) on their bodies as a sign of their chosenness. The Khevsurs called such a person a partaker of God - natsiliani (original ნაწილიანი -

having a part). Secret signs on the body were sometimes expressed in astral symbols, images of the sun and the moon, which also kept the mystery of the hero's unharmedness (Mamisimedishvili, 2021).

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this article, I have considered only a few details of Chechen-Georgian mythological parallels, which were formed as a result of a long exchange of cultural values in the folklore of the two peoples. Deeper and more genetic affinities are revealed between oral folk texts of the highlands of East Georgia and Chechen folklore samples, both in terms of mythological plots and motifs and in the form of individual mythologemes and traditional elements scattered in the folklore texts. Chechen and Georgian traditional cultures are alike in many aspects, which demands further comprehensive and interdisciplinary studies.

Chechen and Georgian mythology reveal important plot parallels and similar elements of traditional culture. The existence of certain mythological motifs and plots in epic tales is due to cultural influences and borrowings, while some are universal and are reflected in traditions rather distant from each other.

The study demonstrated such important aspects of Georgian-Nakh cultural relations as the kinship of Chechen tales and Georgian folklore; the similarity of mythologemes, plots and motifs fixed in Chechen folk texts with the Georgian oral tradition; and the reflection of mediaeval Georgian culture in Chechen tales.

Parallelisms of mythological motifs in Georgian and Chechen tales manifest themselves in many aspects, in particular, in the narratives associated with patrons of beasts and forest mythical beings; in the names of mythological characters; motifs of fighting demonic mythological creatures; secret signs associated with a character's appearance; mythological names of toponyms; and the cosmogonic character of the dragon mythologem in Chechen folklore and its parallelism with Georgian mythology.

The article examines the typological and genetic links between Chechen mythopoetics and the Georgian oral tradition, and reveals mythopoetic and narrative/plotological parallels. As studies have shown, the similarity of mythological motifs in Chechen and Georgian legends is not superficial but deeper. They include well-known plots reworked on the local soil, and completely original themes and motifs.

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