

**SACRED CROSSROADS OF THE CULTS OF METALLURGY AND  
AGRICULTURE: EXPLORING THE MYTHIC SAGA OF PIRQUSHI AND ITS  
INDOEUROPEAN PARALLELS – ZEUS KERAUNOS, HEPHAESTUS,  
PERCUNAS, APOLLO PAEAN, AND HELLEN OF TROY**

მეტალურგიისა და სამიწათმოქმედო კულტების საკრალური გზაჯვარედინი -  
პირქუშის მითური საგა და მისი ინდოევროპული პარალელები: ზევსი „კერაუნოსი“  
(მებთამტყორცნელი), ჰეფესტო, პერკუნასი, აპოლონ „პეანი“ (მკურნალი) და ტროელი  
ელენე

**NINO GAMBASHIDZE**

Dr., Associate Professor, Department of Politics  
and Diplomacy, New Vision University,  
11 Nodar Bokhua St., Tbilisi, Georgia  
tel +995 599 90 91 10, ngambashidze@newvision.ge  
ORCID: 0000-0002-8084-7185

**Abstract:**

The distinguished hero of the Khevsurian Mythology – Pirqushi, exhibits a notable resemblance to the Indo-European god of blacksmithery in various aspects, like Hephaestus and Percunas, being blacksmiths and sharing an unattractive appearance. However, distinctions emerge as Pirqushi undergoes transformations through the lenses of Paganism, Christianity, Islamic influence, and finally, Atheism, whereas our comprehension of cults of metallurgy and agriculture is confined to the pre-Christian era.

The similarities gradually diminish under the sway of different religions and cultures. The name Pirqushi was interpreted as a 'Georgian' homonym with compounds: 'piri' (the face, mouth) and 'qushi' (dark, angry). Speculating on identifying Pirqushi with the Baltic god Percunas, as described by Frazer<sup>1</sup>, may be premature. Frazer notes, “*The chief deity of the Lithuanians was Perkunas or Perkuns, the god of thunder and lightning, whose resemblance to Zeus and Jupiter has often been pointed out.*”

I propose that the coincidence is more than mere chance. The Georgian term 'Pirqushi' possesses a distinct lexical etymology – 'piri' and 'qushi' – words that remain in colloquial usage. In contrast, the Latin etymology of the noun 'percussion' is a beating, striking; a beat as a measure of time, derived from the past participle stem of 'percutere,' meaning 'to strike hard, beat, smite; strike through and through.' In texts where Pirqushi is the central figure, his actions are closely linked to the cult of metallurgy. Pirqushi is characterized by a heavy hammer and the act of striking the anvil. In one of the texts from the mythological cycle of Pirqushi, he is associated with the Middle Eastern cult of Helen

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<sup>1</sup> Frazer, (1906) *The Golden Bough - A Study of Magic and Religion*. p. 145.

(‘Pirqushi’s Origins’, sentence 6), whose echoes from Kwareli resonate with Pirqushi's striking of the anvil in Khevsureti through the sounds of her golden jewelry.

Pirqushi is a tough defender of morality in his congregation. He obliges his followers to wear the wooden arc (presumably of an oak tree) and live pure lives, otherwise, he sends them diseases, which “burn people from inside”. For this reason, Pirqushi’s epithet is “Fireflame”, which reminds of the Georgian name for syphilis – Atashang. In this article, we present speculations of dating the existence of Syphilis before the 7th century. A.D. connecting it to the Zoroastrian god of Fire – Atash.

Finally, the article presents the English translation of myths connected to Pirqushi’s cycle. However, for those researchers, who are interested in deeper linguistic analyses of the texts, in their verbal representations, we have provided Georgian transcribed texts in the footnotes.

The article explores several key topics related to Pirqushi:

1. Etymology of Pirqushi and variants of his origin: The article delves into the linguistic roots of the name Pirqushi and discusses various theories regarding his origin.
2. Pircushi’s Ancestors – pre-Christian Polytheism in South-Eastern Caucasus: It examines the religious beliefs and practices that preceded the emergence of Pirqushi, shedding light on the polytheistic traditions prevalent in the region.
3. Influence of Hellenic polytheism: Dual face of the hero – Feminine (beautiful) and masculine (ugly): The article discusses the influence of Hellenic polytheism on the characterization of Pirqushi, particularly the portrayal of his dual nature as both beautiful and ugly.
4. Pirqushi the healer: Smallpox, Leprosy, and Syphilis: It explores Pirqushi's role as a healer in combating various diseases such as smallpox, leprosy, and syphilis, highlighting his significance in folk medicine.
5. Pirqushi’s Treasury: The article investigates the concept of Pirqushi's treasury, exploring its symbolic and practical significance within the mythological framework.
6. Pirqushi and Percunas: It examines the relationship between Pirqushi and Percunas, exploring potential connections and influences between these two mythological figures.
7. Influences of Christianity and Pagan Cult: Lastly, the article explores the interplay between Christianity and pagan cults in shaping the mythology surrounding Pirqushi, highlighting the syncretic nature of Georgian religious traditions.

**Keywords:**

Myths of South-Eastern Caucasus: Khevsurian Mythology;  
 Cults of Metallurgy and Agriculture;  
 Greek cult of Zeus 'Keraunos';  
 Lithuanian cult of Perkūnas;  
 Helen of Troy – the Middle Eastern cult of the Sun and her presence in South-Eastern Caucasus;  
 Indo-European cult of metallurgy and agriculture in South-Eastern Caucasus;  
 Smallpox; Leprosis; Syphilis – Atashang in Khevsurian Mythology.

## ნინო ღამბაშიძე

განათლების მეცნიერებათა დოქტორი, ნიუ ვიჟენ უნივერსიტეტის  
პოლიტიკისა და დიპლომატიის დეპარტამენტის ასოცირებული პროფესორი,  
საქართველო, თბილისი, ნოდარ ბოხუას ქ. 11  
ტელ +995 599 90 91 10, ngambashidze@newმჭვიision.ge  
ORCID: 0000-0002-8084-7185

## აბსტრაქტი:

ელნიური მითოლოგიის საყოველთაოდ ცნობილი პერსონაჟები - ჰეფესტო და პერკუნასი და ხევსურული მითოლოგიის გამორჩეული გმირი - პირქუში, გარკვეულ მსგავსებას ავლენენ სხვადასხვა ასპექტში. (მაგალითად, ჰეფესტოცა და პერკუნასიც მჭედლები არიან და არამიმზიდველი გარეგნობა აქვთ). თუმცა, სხვაობა მათ შორის მკაფიოა, ვინაიდან პირქუში განიცდის ტრანსფორმაციას წარმართობის, ქრისტიანობის, ისლამისა და ბოლოს, ათეიზმის გავლენით. რაც შეეხება მათ წარმომშობ მეტალურგიისა და სამიწათმოქმედო კულტებს, ცნობილია. რომ ისინი განეკუთვნება ქრისტიანობამდელ ეპოქას.

ტრადიციულად, სამეცნიერო ლიტერატურაში, სახელი პირქუში განიმარტებოდა, როგორც „ქართული“ ჰომონიმი ნაერთებით: „პირი“ (სახე, პირი) და „ქუში“ (ბნელი, მრისხანე, გაბრაზებული). სპეკულატიურია პირქუშის გაიგივება ბალტიისპირულ ღვთაება პერკუნასთან, რომელსაც, ფრეზერი წარმოგვიდგენს საკულტო ნაშრომში „ოქროს ტოტი“. ფრეზერი აღნიშნავს: „ლიტველების მთავარი ღვთაება იყო პერკუნასი ან პერკუნსი, ჭექა-ქუხილის და ელვის ღმერთი, ხშირად საუბრობენ მის მსგავსებაზე ზევსსა და იუპიტერთან“.

წინამდებარე სტატიაში წარმოვადგენ ვარაუდს, რომ აქ არა გვაქვს საქმე შემთხვევით მსგავსებასთან. ქართულ ტერმინს „პირქუში“ აქვს მკაფიო ლექსიკური ეტიმოლოგია – „პირი“ და „ქუში“ – სიტყვები, რომლებიც რჩება სასაუბრო ხმარებაში. თუკი დავუშვებთ, რომ ეს სიტყვა წარმოდგება ლათინური არსებითი სახელდან „პერკუსია“ ლათინური ეტიმოლოგია არის „ცემა“; „დარტყმა“, როგორც დროის საზომი, რომელიც, თავის მხრივ მომდინარეობს წარსული მიმდებარე ფუძედან „percutere“, რაც ნიშნავს „ძლიერად დარტყმას, ცემას, დარტყმას“;

ტექსტებში, სადაც პირქუში ცენტრალური ფიგურაა, მისი ქმედებები მჭიდროდ არის დაკავშირებული მეტალურგიის კულტთან. პირქუშის ატრიბუტებია მძიმე ჩაქუჩი (ხვედა, ურო) და ჯარჯ-გირკალი(წნელის რგოლი)

ასევე საყურადღებოა, რომ პირქუშის მითოლოგიური ციკლის ერთ-ერთ ტექსტში იგი დაკავშირებულია ელენეს ახლოაღმოსავლურ კულტთან (შდრ. „პირქუშის წარმოშობა“, წინადადება 6), რომლის სამკაულის ჟღერს ევარლიდან ესმის პირქუშს ხევსურეთში, თავის სამჭედლოში.

პირქუში თავისი საყმოს ზნეობის მკაცრი დამცველია. იგი თავის ყმებს ავალდებულებს, ატარონ ჯარჯ-გირკალი (სავარაუდოდ მუხის ხის) და წმინდა ცხოვრებით იცხოვრონ, წინააღმდეგ შემთხვევაში, მათ უგზავნის დაავადებებს, რომლებიც „ადამიანებს შიგნიდან წვავს“. ამიტომ პირქუშის ერთ-ერთი ეპითეტია „ცეცხლი“, რომელიც სიფილისის ქართულ სახელს – ათამანგს ეხმიანება. ამ სტატიაში წარმოგიდგენთ ვარაუდებს სიფილისის არსებობის შესახებ ქ.მ. მე-7 საუკუნემდე. ვვარაუდობთ, რომ მისი კულტის დაკავშირება ზოროასტრიულ ცეცხლის ღმერთთან – ათამ-თან, სწორედ ამ პერიოდს უნდა განეკუთვნებოდეს.

ბოლოს, სტატიაში წარმოდგენილია პირქუშის ციკლთან დაკავშირებული მითების ინგლისური თარგმანი. თუმცა, იმ მკვლევარებს, რომლებიც დაინტერესებულნი არიან

ტექსტების უფრო ღრმა ენობრივი ანალიზით, მათი ლექსიკური წარმოდგენებით, სქოლიოში მივაწოდეთ ქართულად ჩაწერილი ტექსტები.

სტატიაში განხილულია პირქუმისთან დაკავშირებული რამდენიმე ძირითადი თემა:

1. პირქუმის ეტიმოლოგია და მისი წარმოშობის ვარიანტები: სტატია იკვლევს სახელის „პირქუმი“ ენობრივ ფესვებს და განიხილავს სხვადასხვა თეორიებს მის წარმოშობასთან დაკავშირებით.

2. პირქუმის წინაპრები - წინაქრისტიანული პოლითეიზმი სამხრეთ-აღმოსავლეთ კავკასიაში: წარმოვადგენთ კვლევას რელიგიური რწმენა-წარმოდგენებისა და კულტმსახურების შესახებ, რომელიც წინ უძღოდა პირქუმის გაჩენას.

3. ელინური პოლითეიზმის გავლენა: გმირის ორმაგი სახე - ქალური (ლამაზი) და მამაკაცური (მახინჯი): სტატიაში განხილულია ელინური პოლითეიზმის გავლენა პირქუმის კულტზე, განსაკუთრებით მისი ორმაგი ბუნების გამოსახვა, როგორც ლამაზი და მახინჯი.

4. პირქუმი მკურნალი: ჩუტყვავილა, კეთრი და სიფილისი: სტატიაში წამოვადგენთ მსჯელობას პირქუმის, როგორც მკურნალის როლის შესახებ სხვადასხვა დაავადებებთან ბრძოლაში, როგორცაა ჩუტყვავილა, კეთრი და სიფილისი.

5. პირქუმის საგანძური: სტატიაში წარმოვადგენთ კვლევას პირქუმის განძის კონცეფციის შესახებ. მასთან დაკავშირებული განძის სიმბოლურ და პრაქტიკულ მნიშვნელობას მითოლოგიურ ჩარჩოებში.

6. პირქუმი და პერკუნასი: ასევე სტატიაში წარმოვადგინეთ მსჯელობა პირქუმისა და პერკუნასის შესაძლო ურთიერთიმართების შესახებ, პოტენციურ კავშირებსა ამ ორ მითოლოგიურ ფიგურას შორის.

7. ქრისტიანობის გავლენა და წარმართულ კულტზე: ბოლოს, სტატიაში წარმოვადგენთ კვლევას ქრისტიანობისა და წარმართული კულტების ურთიერთკავშირის შესახებ პირქუმის მითოლოგიის ჩამოყალიბებაში, რაც ხაზს უსვამს ქართული რელიგიური ტრადიციების სინკრეტურ ბუნებას.

### საკვანძო სიტყვები:

სამხრეთ-აღმოსავლეთ კავკასიის მითები; ხევსურული მითოლოგია;

მეტალურგიისა და სოფლის მეურნეობის კულტები;

ზევის ბერძნული კულტი "კერაუნოსი";

ლიტვური პერკუნასის კულტი;

ტროას ელენე – მზის ახლო აღმოსავლური კულტი და მისი სამხრეთ-აღმოსავლეთ კავკასიური ვარიანტი;

მეტალურგიისა და სოფლის მეურნეობის ინდოევროპული კულტი სამხრეთ-აღმოსავლეთ კავკასიაში;

ჩუტყვავილა; კეთრი; სიფილისი – ათაშანგი ხევსურულ მითოლოგიაში.

## Preface:

The article delves into the "Pirqushi Myths," which revolve around a trio of deities—Kopala, St. George, and Pirqushi—uniting to combat the enemies of humanity known as Devis and Kajis. These mythical adversaries possess reversed feet, symbolizing their unreal nature, and pose a threat that none of the deities can individually overcome. However, by joining forces, they form a powerful alliance capable of facing any challenge.

Central to the discussion is the concept of Andrezi, a collection of myths passed down through generations in verbal form. These narratives serve as the foundation of societal values, reflecting religious and secular institutions, moral principles, and community norms. The phrase "Andrezi Martal As" emphasizes the authenticity and significance attributed to these stories, underscoring their integral role in shaping cultural identity and collective consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

The unwavering faith of congregation members in the truth of Andrezi is reinforced by the validation of these narratives through the landscape and current events. In the cycle of Pirqushi, Christian saints coexist with characters from non-Christian traditions, reflecting a diverse cultural tapestry that includes elements from Zoroastrianism, Islam, and Judaism. Despite their varied origins, antagonistic beings such as Devi, Kajs, and Eshmaks ultimately acknowledge the authority of "The Creator," contributing to a unified monotheistic pantheon with a distinct hierarchical structure.

The imposition of atheism as the dominant ideology by Russian influence in the late 19th and 20th centuries had a profound impact on religious practices. This historical context may explain the blending of religious traditions observed in the narratives, as individuals, lacking formal religious education, sought to reconstruct worship practices from memory. In doing so, they endeavored to preserve their cultural identity amidst suppression from Russian imperial policies, adapting and evolving their beliefs to maintain a sense of tradition and continuity.

The idea of three heroes uniting in their fight against devil forces, are common in all regions of Georgia, especially in mountainous regions of Southern slopes of Great Caucasus. Supposingly, the pre-Christian cult of the blacksmith, with its attributes of Silver bowls, Cult of Moon and striking anvil, was widespread from East-Georgia to the West. Namely we find connotations of the Pircushi cult in Svanetian mythology: "The Bull of Ilori"<sup>3</sup>:

*"In times past, Ilori didn't solely dispatch a live bull each year to Latali's Kuuldash jgrag<sup>4</sup>; such offerings also graced Langer's shrine during his era. What distinguished the bull sent to Langer was its peculiar adornment: a Svanetian hat fashioned from red cloth<sup>5</sup>. This detail captivated the watchman of Langer's icon, a member of the Antoshier<sup>6</sup> family, who became consumed with desire for the hat, unable to rest day or night. One Jgragi's Day, at the dim break of dawn, a sentry from Ilori trampled a bull en route to Langer's shrine. The bull, hastening with its hat on, stirred Antoshier's heart beyond*

<sup>2</sup> Kiknadze Z. (2004), mitologiuri entsik'lop'edia akhlagzrdebistvis. t' III, kartuli mitologia [Mythological Encyclopedia for Youth. vol III, Georgian Mythology].

<sup>3</sup> R. Cholokashvili, Z. Kiknadze, I. Ratiani, O. Oniani, A. Papirze, N Gambashidze (Editor), (2024), Georgian Folk Proze III, p. 213.

<sup>4</sup> Jgrag – in Svaneti, is the taboo name of St. George. Only St. George can be called as Jgrag, other humans, whose name is Giorgi / George, can not be called as Jgrag. The name shows linguistic similarity to Georgian Jarj-Girkal – the Wooden (presumably Oak tree) rhode, which is one of the attributes of Pirqushi.

<sup>5</sup> Onating sacrificial bulls in red, reminds of Pre-Christian, namely Biblical tales of Moses and Golden Calf. As well believe of building the Third Temple and sacrificing the red (or sometimes white) bulls.

<sup>6</sup> See discussion about Anatori cross and origin of the cult of Antari / Aftari / Woolf.

*endurance, compelling him to seize the hat. Following this incident, Ilori ceased sending bulls to Langer's domain. During the era of Ilori's bull offerings to Svaneti's icons, a candle was annually sent from Svaneti's shrines to Ilori. These three icons—Ilori, Latali, and Langer jgrags—were regarded as siblings. Among them, Iloria was deemed the eldest by the Svans. All three originated from Kakheti<sup>7</sup> and were established in the region.”*

The same attributes of St. George of Ilori, we see in the myth from Samegrelo “Saint George of Ilori and a man from Lazieti (South Western part of historical Georgia, not in Turkey)”<sup>8</sup>:

“In Ochamchire, a wealthy Lazi resident held contempt for the faith in the strength of the Ilori St. George. According to Magrelian beliefs, every November 10th, on the feast day of St. George, a **robust white bull** would be brought forth. If those who gathered to observe the night before would happen to doze off, St. George would purportedly lead a fattened bull into the church enclosure, releasing it. Come morning, all would find a bull with imposing horns standing placidly, to be sacrificed and distributed among the faithful.

This tale reached the ears of a Muslim Laz, who challenged the Ilori people, declaring, "I'll believe in your faith if the best bull from my Ottoman home is indeed brought by your Saint George." Intrigued, the Magrelians accepted the challenge, while the Laz harbored amusement in his heart, confident in his skepticism. Yet, to his astonishment, St. George indeed delivered the bull mentioned by the Laz during the night, and come daylight, it stood in the courtyard, witnessed by its owner. Impressed by the miracle, the once-skeptical Laz embraced Christianity and became a devout follower of St. George, offering a silver-plated satevari (a dagger) to the icon as a token of gratitude.

In the Ilori church, an **iron bow was preserved**<sup>9</sup>, carried by various sick individuals seeking St. George's intervention for **healing**<sup>10</sup>. The priest, or icon keeper, hereditary in this family, acted as an intermediary before St. George<sup>11</sup>. Additionally, the family safeguarded the **axe**<sup>12</sup> used exclusively to slaughter the bull brought forth by St. George, deemed sacred for this purpose alone.

St. George was **revered as a healer** of diverse afflictions. Those suffering pledged offerings of sacrificial bulls and silver coins<sup>13</sup>, while parents vowed to present silver cradles for their ailing infants. Indeed, surviving children were brought to St. George's Church, accompanied by miniature silver cradles offered in reverence to the saint.”

<sup>7</sup> The narrator testifies the concept of sharing the Pirqushi cult from Kakheti to Svaneti. Thus can be suggested that the cult of metallurgy had spread out from East Georgia to the Western parts, where metallurgy was not the

<sup>8</sup> (Cholokashvili R, Z. Kiknadze, I. Ratiani, O. Oniani, A. Papirze, N. Gambashidze (Editor), (2024), p. 223.

<sup>9</sup> In this case an **Iron Bow** can be considered as an alternative of the oak bow – (jarj-girkali).

<sup>10</sup> **St. George** of Ilori, as well as **Pirqushi**, are patrons and healers of those, who ask for healing.

<sup>11</sup> Here we observe a similar practice of serving Pirqushi or St. George of Ilori, where the priesthood and the honor of serving the shrine are hereditary and confined within the bounds of a specific family clan.

<sup>12</sup> The presence of a ceremonial axe, exclusively reserved for religious rituals, is a distinct characteristic of Colchian culture, to which Samegrelo is affiliated. This artifact serves a unique purpose within the religious practices of the region. Consequently, the absence of a parallel tool for serving Pirqushi in the Khvesuretian tradition can be attributed to this cultural distinction.

<sup>13</sup> Silver coins in Samegrelo – and Silver bowls in Khevsureti. Sacrificial bull in Samegrelo and every male tied with Jarj-Girkali – in Khevsureti.

### a. Etymology

Pirqushi's name in Georgian, with its etymology rooted in "[piri]" meaning "the face" and "[qushi]" signifying "angry" or "gloomy," reflects his distinctive character. Moreover, Pirqushi is closely associated with the oak tree, epitomized by his attribute, the Jarj-Girkali, a cattle-tether crafted from wooden rings and lattice.

The linguistic connection between Pirqushi and the oak tree is palpable in Georgian. The term "Grak-al-i" refers to acorns or oak seeds, while "Grk-o" or "rko" denotes the fruit seeds, illustrating a direct correlation between the tree and its produce. Although the term "Mukha," originating from Dagestan, later supplanted the Georgian word for oak, the roots of the term in Georgian are evident.

The Chanic root "kurk-" forms the basis for the Latin word "quercus," meaning "oak," indicating a clear origin in the Georgian language. The evolution of the term from Svan-Georgian \*grak-al- to Kartvelian "grak-al-i" and "grk-o," as well as Zanuri "Kurk-a," further solidifies this linguistic lineage<sup>14</sup>.

Before becoming "God's Child" – the protective spirit, or deity, Pirqushi used to be a man. His name was David (Daviti), and his father's name was Mgelika. David in Georgian is a distinguished name for many reasons:

- a. The Bagrationy dynasty, a prominent royal lineage in Georgia, traces its origins back to the biblical figure King David of Jerusalem. According to legend, one of the ancestors of the Bagrations was none other than King David himself. This myth gained traction as the Bagrations regained royal authority in Kartli, eventually becoming an official narrative that bestowed unparalleled legitimacy upon the dynasty. The legend of the Bagrations' biblical descent was not confined to Georgian borders but extended to neighboring regions like Armenia and Byzantium. This is evident in the writings of Ioane Draskhanakertel and Constantine Porphyrogenet, who referred to Ashot I the Great and his successors as descendants of God. The first written documentation of this legend dates back to Giorgi Merchule's "Life of Grigol Khandzteli" in the 9th century. As the Bagrationy dynasty solidified its power, the legend evolved and became more refined, as demonstrated in the chronicle of Sumbat, David's son, in the 11th century. This powerful political ideology enabled the Bagrations to maintain their rule in Georgia for over a millennium. By claiming descent from the line of King David, the Bagrations asserted kinship with Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary, reinforcing their legitimacy as the noble anointed of God.<sup>15</sup>
- b. King David IV Bagration, revered as David the Builder, holds an esteemed place in Georgian history as a symbol of the nation's Golden Age. His remarkable legacy is defined by his pivotal role in defending Georgia against the Seljuk Empire and achieving a decisive victory at the Battle of Didgori on August 12, 1121. This historic triumph, made possible through a coalition of Georgian, Kipchak, Ossetian, and Armenian forces, along with the unexpected support of 100 French Crusaders, led to the unification of the Georgian kingdom under his rule. King David IV's leadership and military acumen earned him

<sup>14</sup> Chukhua, (2003) The Kartvelian Comparative, Dictionary. pp 83-85.

<sup>15</sup> Rapp, Stephen H., Jr. (2000). „Sumbat Davit'is-dze and the Vocabulary of Political Authority in the Era of Georgian Unification“. Journal of the American Oriental Society. 120 (4): 570–576; *See also*: (Toumanoff, 1949–1951)

- widespread acclaim and admiration throughout Georgia. His name has become synonymous with courage, resilience, and national unity. Across Western and Eastern Georgian provinces, numerous myths and legends have emerged, immortalizing his achievements and the enduring impact of his reign on Georgian society. King David IV's diplomatic efforts extended beyond the borders of Georgia, as he sought to engage with North Caucasian peoples and forge alliances with Crusaders. In the rugged terrain of Khevsureti, the northernmost fortress bears the name "Shatili," reminiscent of the French term "Chateau," highlighting the cultural exchange between Georgia and Western Europe. Moreover, the fighting sword, known as "franguli" in Khvesuretian and other mountainous regions of East Georgia, reflects the influence of French Crusaders on Georgian weaponry and martial traditions. These cultural exchanges underscore the lasting legacy of King David IV's reign and his pivotal role in shaping Georgian identity and heritage.
- c. Some Davit Chelize (uncnowon person), whose name is mentioned in one ritual dances, connected with wheat harvesting<sup>16</sup>:

Goodbye mother, wife and children,  
 You no longer have your Datiko!  
 Bless you, Chelidze,  
 That you made me dinner!  
 You had a lot of old wine  
 Nuts and chicken.  
 You know what I was doing  
 The poisoned drunk-man?!  
 I fired one gun  
 I shoot the guardian his ass.  
 They captured me, and we passed a hundred  
 Mountains of the Caucasus.  
 There was fog over the Black Sea.  
 Three girls were mowing hay.  
 All three belonged to Circassian master.  
 They were holding scythes in their hands,  
 With the blades of trout.

The narrator recounts learning the poem from his father, who, in turn, inherited it from his ancestor. This rendition of the poem-song holds particular significance, as it reflects the vibrant oral tradition of Klarjeti, where traditional folk poems were once sung during harvests, mowing seasons, and gatherings in harvest festival dances.

- d. What sets this version apart is its incorporation of a premise found in broader Georgian folklore—a possessed individual traversing a mountain road and encountering mountain women.

<sup>16</sup> Tina Shioshvili (2017), "HistoricalSouth Georgian Folklore", pp. 27-29.



David Guramishvili, the 18th-century Georgian poet, recounts his biography, describing how he was captured and transported across a hundred Caucasian mountains to Dagestan:

"They captured me, they took me;  
They tied me hand and foot,  
They threw me over a hundred mountains,  
And nine times more fields." (Guramishvili, 2011: 72)

However, in Klarjeti, this premise takes on a more mature form, with the aggression typically attributed to "leks" being replaced by the hostility of a Russian, known as "Trajnik (Guardian)."

As T. Shioshvili thinks: *"This substitution likely reflects the negative sentiments of the local population towards Russian rule, which was established in the region following the conclusion of the Russian-Turkish war. Numerous variants of the poem exist in the oral tradition of Adjara, with many beginning with the line "If the Leks caught me." These versions then transition to the narrator's sighting of the Circassian field with the phrase "I saw you in the Circassian field." This variation highlights the diverse interpretations and adaptations of the poem across different regions and communities within Georgia."*

Many variants of the poem are recorded in Adjara <sup>17</sup>; Their part is characterized by the beginning "If the Leks caught me", and the part begins directly with the sight of the Circassian field ("I was looking in the Circassian field"); In some variants, it is simply a field ("I looked at Che's field"). One of the perfect Adjarian variants is as follows:

When the Leks caught me,  
It was for the Mkatatve (July).  
They traversed a hundred mountains with me,  
The mountains of the Caucasus.  
When I looked at the Circassian field,  
There was a fog of the Black Sea;  
Three women were mowing,  
All three belong to a Circassian master.  
They were holding scythes in their hands,  
Their blades were like diamonds.  
With marble grindstone;  
They would sharpen the blades.  
All three were singing alike  
The angels in the sky.  
I had never seen before  
Women working in the fields. (BSU NBIFA, Case No. 277: 17-18).

#### **b. Pircushi's Ancestors:**

Pirqushi's father is **Mgelika** – a homonym derived from 'Mgeli,' meaning 'the wolf,' with the suffix 'ika/iko' used as a diminutive suffix to create a homonym. The Nart hero Soslan, on the other

<sup>17</sup> BSU Nbifa, Case No. 171: 74; Case No. 151: 58-59 and others

hand, was purportedly born from an inseminated stone, emerging as a red-hot infant. He underwent tempering in cold water, wolf's milk, or molten steel, rendering him invulnerable except for his knees or thighs, which remained unaffected by the liquid. His downfall occurred when they were severed by a flying wheel.<sup>18</sup>

In the pre-Kartvelian language, the wolf ('Mgeli') was symbolized as the hyena ('Aptari'). The hyena, known as 'aftar,' held significance as a totemic animal among pre-Kartvelian tribes<sup>19</sup>.

Based on evidence of phonetic correspondences confirmed among the Georgian languages, the Georgian term '[Aphtar / Avtar]' likely evolved into 'Apshdar' in Svanetian, where 'shd' replaced 'sht,' and 'apsaasd' derived from '\*apsdas.' It's not surprising that a word denoting an animal was eventually attributed divine status, especially given the ancient belief that the hyena possessed the ability to mimic voices and deceive its prey. Ancient people believed the hyena to be bisexual, capable of assuming both female and male forms.

In Georgian, there's no proven evidence that '[Aftar]' held the meaning of 'God.' This is evident in the Megrelian term '[Antar],' which is a phonetic variant of the Georgian '[Aftar].' When assimilated by the Megrelians, the Georgian '[Aftar]' likely already bore the meaning of the god of the hunt, a significance it retained.

The actual equivalent of the common Georgian Aptar-nadir god is preserved, as Ivane Javakhishvili rightly assumed, in the Khevsuri Anator deity; But Anator- ← \*Antor<sup>20</sup>. "Zena (heavenly, upper) Cross", i.e. Anatori Cross, is: "In Khevsureti, the "Gudani icon" is considered to be a powerful deity of hunting and warfare, and it is also called "divine". People believe, that it is the "commander" of every campaign and "in the past, when Khevsureti marched against the enemy, the flag of Gudani, led the army". Epythet of Gudani's icon - "Molashkre" (Fighter, defender), like a strong and worshipful one, has its own large grazing place – Andak<sup>21</sup>. Below the "hunter icon", but still close, was the "pirates and robbers icon", which in Khevsureti is also called the "white Saneba of Tsrolis-gori Icon."<sup>22</sup> According to the people's belief, the "God on duty" himself "struck a bloody sword" with his own hand, he is a pirate and a hunter: if he wants, he will "tie the enemy" and "break the rifle". That is why "hunters bring gifts to this icon, and pirates used to sacrifice a part of their prey.

### c. Dual face of the hero – Feminine (beautiful) and Masculine (ugly).

Pirqushi's appearance holds particular significance, as it deviates from traditional masculine attributes and exhibits qualities often associated with femininity, such as beauty akin to that of a woman. This unique portrayal aligns with ancient Greek pagan deities, which often displayed dual male-female attributes. However, unlike Greek heroes who were described as "beautiful as women," Pirqushi possesses qualities that make him resemble the moon, emphasizing a celestial and ethereal aspect rather than conventional physical beauty."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> W. Burkert (1979), brings the Caucasian myth into connection with the Hurrian–Hittite myth of Ullikummi, the stone colossus who was toppled by sawing through his ankles pp. 259-262; See also - (Gambashidze Maya, Gambashidze Nino, June 2023).

<sup>19</sup> Merab Chukhua, (2003) p. 52

<sup>20</sup> Merab Chukhua (2003), pp. 52-54.

<sup>21</sup> Urbneli, N. (1887). Ethnographical Letters. Iveria, p. N 158.

<sup>22</sup> Gambashidze, (2023/12) Saneba of Tsroli – Cycle of Tsroli Mountain and Holy Trinity Shrine. pp. 542-571

<sup>23</sup> M. West, (2007), p. 97.

Pirqushi's feminine nature is illuminated in a myth where 23 women profess their love for him, captivated by his beauty. Overwhelmed by their fervent attention, Pirqushi beseeches the gods to make him unattractive, a wish that is granted. Consequently, 20 of the women depart, but three remain, with Helen among them. The identities of the other two women remain a mystery. It is conjectured that these three women might be the "Kajetian Women" whom St. George rescued and relocated to Khevsureti. The significance of the number 23 and the parallels between Helen of Kvareli (Pirqushi's mistress) and Helen of Troy suggest deeper connections to pre-Christian religions in Asia Minor, hinting at origins that transcend Pirqushi's mythological cycle.<sup>24</sup> Linking the 3 women, who remained faithful to Pirqushi, and those, who were molding the hey in the chiracassian fields, is also the credible argument.

#### d. Pirqushi the healer: Smallpox, Leprosis, Syphilis

The myth reveals the history of the village Batsaligo – how the previous clan was eliminated and new clan of Arabuli fought the right to reside. Arabuli family came to Batsaligo with “Fireflame” God Pirqushi, who was recognized as a healer and, the same time, the punisher those, who lived immoral lives. Pirqushi burdened his servants with jarj-Girkali (Wooden rod).

Batsaligo is a village located in Georgia, within the Dusheti municipality and Khevsureti community. Positioned on the north-western slope of the watershed of Khevsureti Aragvi and its left tributary, the Gudanishchali river, it rests above Khevsureti Aragvi, on the left bank, at an elevation of 2160 meters above sea level. From this myth, we can discern the significance of this village, particularly Tinibeka's tower, as a mythological representation of the 'Physical world,' where the underworld, with its messenger – the serpent, and heaven, with its messenger the raven, converge:

'At the upper Batsaligo snow is falling,  
At the lower Batsaligo snow melts.  
Of the Tinibekaurt tower's basement stone,  
The right angle is broken.  
A black raven sits on top,  
In the basement stone the serpent is hiding.  
Inside the tower lies Tinibekai,  
He is dying unwillingly  
His beautiful wife sits next to him,  
Melting like a candle.' (The folk song)

Evidently, the Batsaligo shrine and tower held greater importance in pre-Pirqushian religion. It may be suggested that prior to Tinibekauris or Tinibeka's descendants, inhabitants resided in Batsaligo. However, with the arrival of the Arabuli clan to this village, they introduced their deity – 'Pirqushi Fireflame.' This shift in political and religious narrative is reflected in the folk poem of Batsaligoan Cosmogony, reminiscent of the myth of Prometheus (and his Georgian alternative, Amirani), who is chained to the Caucasus mountain, awaiting the Lord's mercy. Meanwhile, the black raven and the black dog serve as his guardians.

The epythet 'Fireflame' in Georgian 'tsetskhlisaliani' can be contributed to Pirqushi's ability of fighting with enemies, as well as his profession of being a blacksmith. But further we read about the

<sup>24</sup> For “Kajetian Women” see Nino Gambashidze, (2024), *Corpus of Mythology of Georgian People*. pp. 167-209.

diseases he is associated with – those, who disobey him, are burned from inside and aparted. Considering the fact that Pirqushi, being a man, was damaged and became ugly because of Smallpox, which, could be misled with “Greatpox”, i.e. Syphillis. In Georgian Syphilis is called “Atashangi”, recalling the Zoroastrian God of flame Atar/Atash, thus emphasizing the non-reception, or rejecting the Zoroastrianism, On the other hand the nature of the disease itself made the infected person to feel like “burning from inside”.

The history of syphilis has been extensively studied, yet the exact origin of the disease remains elusive. There are two primary hypotheses: one suggests that syphilis was brought to Europe from the Americas by the crew(s) of Christopher Columbus during the Columbian exchange, while the other proposes that syphilis previously existed in Europe but went unrecognized. Recent skeletal discoveries in the Yucatan Peninsula dating over 9,900 years ago have revealed evidence of *Treponema peritonitis*, a disease related to syphilis. There is also evidence suggesting a possible treponemal bacterial disease that caused severe alterations to the posterior parietal and occipital bones of the cranium.

Syphilis was the first "new" disease to be discovered after the invention of printing. News of it spread quickly and widely, and documentation is abundant. It became widely known among the literate population, marking it as "front page news" for its time. Additionally, it was the first disease to be widely recognized as a sexually transmitted disease, and it was interpreted as indicative of the moral state (sexual behavior) of the peoples in which it was found. Its geographic origin and moral significance sparked debates among European countries, with blame being placed on each other. Later, as the significance of the Western Hemisphere was realized, syphilis was used in both pro- and anti-colonial discourse.

Debate over the European origins of syphilis has persisted over time. The deadliest form of treponematoses, syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease of adults, distinct from bejel, yaws, and pinta, which are endemic childhood diseases usually not fatal. Throughout history, there has been confusion regarding the presence of syphilis in various populations worldwide. It was often mistaken for other treponematoses and diseases that produced similar symptoms, such as leprosy, elephantiasis, and scabies, earning it the moniker "the great imitator."

In the Old World, the origins of syphilis have been debated extensively. While evidence from bones and teeth in the Americas points to the existence of treponematoses long before contact with Europe and Afro-Eurasia, the situation in the Old World has been less clear. However, recent discoveries in paleopathology have provided evidence of treponemal disease in Europe prior to the voyages of Columbus. At least fifteen cases of acquired treponematoses based on evidence from bones, and six examples of congenital treponematoses based on evidence from teeth, are now widely accepted as ancient or medieval. These findings challenge previous hypotheses and shed new light on the origins of syphilis (Kent ME, Romanelli F., February 2008), (Baker, B. J.; Crane-Kramer, G.; Dee, M. W.; Gregoricka, L. A.; Henneberg, M.; Lee, C.; Lukehart, S. A.; Mabey, D. C.; Roberts, C. A.; Stodder, A. L. W.; Stone, A. C.; Winingear, S., 2020); (Henneberg, M., & Henneberg, R. J., 1994); (Erdal, 2006); (Walker, D., Powers, N., Connell, B., & Redfern, R., 2015); (Gaul, J. S., Grossschmidt, K., Gusenbauer, C., Kanz, F., 2015); (Harper, K. N., Zuckerman, M. K., Harper, M. L., Kingston, J. D., Armelagos, G. J., 2011)

Thus, it can be inferred that the cult of Pirqushi was established in Batsaligo, following the departure of its previous inhabitants, the Tinibekauris clan, who were decimated by a pandemic, possibly smallpox, syphilis, or another disease. Dating these events precisely is challenging, but Pircushi's epithet "Fireflame" suggests a timeframe between the 5th century BC and the first half of the

7th century AD. During this period in Georgia, Zoroastrianism was widespread in the Middle East and had been forcibly introduced in Georgia. The fact that the divine "healer" of the pandemic, who compelled his congregation to adhere to moral rules, wore a wooden arc, presumably made of oak tree wood, suggests that this practice was introduced to prevent males of the congregation from interacting with women.

Following the 7th century AD, Zoroastrian influence was supplanted by Islam, brought by Arabian invaders to Georgia and other regions. This transition is reflected in the Andrezi tales of the Pirqushi mythological cycle, as evidenced by the changing of the clan's family name to Arabuli.

### e. Pirqushi's Treasury

Silver bowls are must equipment for all Khevsuretian shrines. In ancient times, silver held significant importance primarily as a form of currency. Its popularity stemmed from several key attributes: a relatively low melting point, captivating luster, antibacterial properties, and resistance to corrosion or rust even with daily use. Additionally, the scarcity of pure silver made it a symbol of luxury and wealth. Its enchanting appearance, mysterious allure, likening to the moon, and role as a store of value made it an ideal material for crafting luxury goods. V. Bardavidze<sup>25</sup> confirmed Tsroli towers in Lower Khevsureti (on Barisakho, Buchukurti, Ukenakho and Oherkhevi mountains), the construction of which is connected with the transfer of "whitery" (meaning silver cup-treasure) from Tsroli. Tsroli is a source of strength and power for them, as it can be seen from the following song, where the servant of Khadu Trinity is praised:

You, Meshvela Milkaurisdze, (The imaginary treasure (from kajaveti) is not distinguished by the variety of objects. Obviously, they are not of equal importance either— the things themselves, among which the cup holds the highest place. That's how they praise the servant of the Saneba – the hero Meshvela, who kidnapped the cup (named "Sirma") and he returns to his place with it, thus he seems to be the breaker of Kajaveti<sup>26</sup>.

The breeze blown from Gergeti,  
Who has destroyed the hall in Kivkavi;  
Who, brought Sirma to us. (Sirma - gold or silver thread)  
Who has ravenged twelve times  
And brought the slaves with him.<sup>27</sup>

The imaginary treasure (from kajaveti) is not distinguished by the variety of objects. Obviously, they are not of equal importance either— the things themselves, among which the cup holds the highest place. That's how they praise the servant of the Saneba – the hero Meshvela, who kidnapped the cup (named "Sirma") and he returns to his place with it, thus he seems to be the breaker of Kajaveti.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Bardavidze V., (1982) *aRmosavleT saqarTvelos mTianetis sazogadoebrivi da sakulto Zeglebi* [Community and Cult Monuments of Mountainous Regions of Eastern Georgia, vol II.

<sup>26</sup> Kiknadze Z. (1996), *Georgian Mythology I - Cross and its People*. p. 66.

<sup>27</sup> Archives of Folklore Cathedra of Ivane Javakhishvili State University, No. 25441.

<sup>28</sup> Kiknadze Z. (1996), *Georgian Mythology I - Cross and its People*. p. 66.

People of Pshavi and Khevsureti envision the Mother of the Place as a beautiful woman adorned with silver jewelry. She is believed to oversee and safeguard the peaceful existence of the village, extending her protection to foreigners within her territory.<sup>29</sup>

Lake Ortskali - Lake Ortskali is located in Tusheti protected areas at the elevation of the 2840 meters above sea level. The lake is the source of the river Ortskali.

#### f. Pirqushi and Percunas:

While the parallel between Lithuanian and Georgian deities of blacksmithery is notable, justifying the comparison and accepting it as the result of research is premature. Essentially, this observation is so broad that it raises more questions about the universality of religious phenomena as well as the specifics of these gods in different cultures. "Perh2-121," from which the theonyms of the Storm gods are derived, encompasses Slavic Perun(a), Lithuanian Perkūnas (\*per-g-), Vedic Parjanya (\*per-kw-), as well as the Hittite mountain god Pirwa/Peruwa. '\*Kerh2-' was utilized to form the name of Zeus' thunderbolt, 'κεραυνός,' or the Hittite 'karawar,' meaning 'horn,' the tool used by animals to strike." As a parallel, in Georgian 'Kurati' refers to an uncastrated bull aged 3-5 years, and 'Kerati' to an uncastrated male pig. The cult of 'Kerati' is documented in the areas of Kvareli, where Helen's echoes with her jewelry resonate with Pirqushi's striking of the anvil. Thus, resembling a system of a Caucasian version of Zeus/Perkinas/Pirwa's cult of metallurgy and weather, and consequently, the cult of agriculture.

Perku- 'nas is the Lithuanian form of the name; the Latvian is Pe- rkons, and an Old Prussian percunis, meaning thunder, is recorded in the Elbing glossary, which dates from around 1300<sup>30</sup>.

From the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC onwards, numerous records document the worship of a god of thunder and storm among the Prussians, Lithuanians, and Letts. This deity is referred to by various names such as Percunus, Percunos, Pirchunos, Perkuns, Parcuns, or Pargnus (for -uns). Historical accounts mention offerings made to him for rain, as well as the maintenance of a perpetual sacred fire dedicated to him in forests or on hilltops. He also appears as a mythical figure in Lithuanian and Latvian folk songs, and in common imprecations such as 'God grant that Perkunas strike you' or 'God grant that Perkunas lift you up and dash you ten fathoms deep into the earth'<sup>31</sup>. Countrymen prayed to him to pass by without harming their house and crops, or on the other hand to bring rain in time of drought<sup>32</sup>. In modern Lithuanian perku- 'nas and in Latvian pe- rkons are the ordinary words for 'thunder'.

Perkunas appears as a bellowing bull in Lithuanian riddles, but is otherwise pictured in human form. Simon Grunau in his Prussian Chronicle (c.1520) says **he was depicted as an angry-looking, middle-aged man with a fiery face and a dark crinkly beard. He spits fire, and hurls an axe or (less often) a hammer, which returns to his hand. He kills devils, or the Devil, or the goblin or**

<sup>29</sup> Kiknadze Z. (2004) mitologiuri entsik'lop'edia akhlagzrdebistvis. t' III, kartuli mitologia [Mythological Encyclopedia for Youth. vol III, Georgian Mythology].

<sup>30</sup> M.L. West, (2007), Indo-European Poetry and Myth. pp. 241-243

<sup>31</sup> August Shleicher, (1857), Litauische Märchen, Sprichworte, Rätsel und Lieder, p. 9. cf. Marie Gimbutas, (1973), The Slavs, p. 474.

<sup>32</sup> Herman Usener, (1896) Götternamen: Versuch einer Lehre von der religiösen Begriffsbildung, p. 97. (Usener, 1896)

**dragon Aitvaras**<sup>33</sup>. Peṛrkons too fights devils; his weapon is variously given as a mace (milna), a spear, a sword, an iron rod, arrows, or stone bullets.

Georgian Pirkushi has the same appearance – angry and ugly. He fights Devils – Devis, who are in Georgian mythology big creatures, who love drinking barley beer and are fighting with stone balls which they throw to humans, and if not the protection of Pirkushi and his comrades – Kopala, St. George and others, he would not be able to fight them back.

Perkunas' car is sometimes said to be drawn by a he-goat (ozʹys) or goats<sup>34</sup>. This is connected with a belief that a coming storm is presaged by the flight of the snipe, a bird whose tail-feathers produce a goat-like bleating noise as it dives through the air. In Georgian, Erkemali – the male goat is also connected with Pirkushi. S.-Georgian \*Verk-em-(al-) `Erkema, goat' → Kart. Verk-am-el-i | Verk-em-al-i | Erk-em-al-i : Swan. FOK-E | Fuk-E | ← Fik-E (←\*Burke-E)<sup>35</sup>.

Perkunas/Peṛrkons has a special association with the oak tree. This is the tree that he typically strikes with lightning, and because of this it has fire stored up inside it which men can use. There were oaks sacred to him and containing his idol: Perkuṛno a ḡzʹuolas, Peṛrkoṛna oṛzoṛls, 'P.'s oak'<sup>36 and 37</sup>.

This is pertinent to the etymology of his name. It contains the '-no-' suffix, which we've observed as a common element in Indo-European divine nomenclature, often interpreted as 'master of'. Preceding the suffix, 'Perku-', bears a precise counterpart in Latin 'quercus', meaning 'oak'. While a Roman deity \*Quercuṛnus is not attested, its existence would not have been unexpected. The underlying form is \*perkwu-; in Italic languages, \*p—kw- underwent retroactive assimilation to \*kw—kw-, as seen in 'quinque' meaning 'five' from \*penk e. Related forms for 'oak' are sporadically preserved in Germanic languages, with the regular change of [p] to [f]<sup>38</sup>.

### g. Influences of Christianity and Pagan Cult:

Christianity has exerted influence on mountainous religions over centuries. The persistence of pagan realms may reflect unconscious recollection of ancestors' rituals and habits. Furthermore, this phenomenon can be interpreted as a 'simple' reaction of an unknowledgeable mind attempting to find reason in teachings that are unknown and therefore appear strange to them. How old are these myths? How deeply rooted is the pagan understanding of the Universe? What sources nourished the religious cosmogony of the Khevsurian people?

In various cultures of the ancient world, including smallpox, various pandemics were considered as rigorous retribution from the gods. Typically, humans were believed to suffer from diseases due to disobedience to the supreme forces or angering a particular god. In this case, we observe a reverse action, where a human requests a change in appearance for his advantage, seeking to become good-looking. I believe we observe the influence of Christianity on the mythological structure of the

<sup>33</sup> August Shleicher, (1857), *Litauische Märchen, Sprichworte, Rätsel und Lieder*, p. 9. cf. Marie Gimbutas, (1973), *The Slavs*, pp. 150, 182.

<sup>34</sup> Lithuanian folk-tale tells of a strong smith whose hammer fells trees. He teams up with an even stronger hero, Martin, who carries an iron club and kills three-, six-, and nine-headed dragons: Schleicher (1857), 128

<sup>35</sup> Merab Chukhua (2003), p.239.

<sup>36</sup> Wilhelm Mannhardt (1875), 'Die lettischen Sonnenmythen', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* VII, 73–104, 209–44, 281–330.

<sup>37</sup> Peṛrkons strikes an oak in many of the Latvian songs: LD 34127, 34047, 33802, 33713, 33715 f. = Jonval nos. 7, 128, 359, 438, 444 f. It is a fact that oaks are struck by lightning disproportionately often.

<sup>38</sup> M. West, (2007), *Indo-European Poetry and Myth*, pp 242.

tale. In Christianity, humans often subject themselves to suffering in order to deserve the Lord's mercy. Many saints in Christianity have acted in this manner – enduring various tortures to overcome the fear of death and thus earning the right to become a saint. As an example, in the 5th-century hagiographical story by Jakob of Tsuravi, 'Martyrdom of St. Shushanik, the Queen of Hereti,' Queen Shushanik was beaten to death by her husband Varsken Pitiakhsh for not obeying him and refusing to accept the Zoroastrian religion. Later, the queen's spiritual father, the author of the story, Jakob of Tsuravi, visits her and is deeply upset by the queen's poor health and wounds. However, the queen responds: '*Do not cry for me, holy father, do not attempt to heal my wounds, because they will help me to deserve to get to Heaven*'.<sup>39</sup>'

Another association with Christian teachings can be traced in the betrayal of women who loved Pirqushi before he had a good appearance and was thus seen as human. After his appearance changed, only three out of the twenty women maintained their previous affection towards him. One of these women is Helen of Kvareli, who evidently retained her emotions towards him and even visited him occasionally. This story bears resemblance to the analogy of the Holy Myrrhbearers, women who continued to love Christ despite his wounds and rejection.

Representation of the union of three personifications of St. George– as fraternal brothers, who fight for one mission of defending people from Devis – seems to be a Christianized understanding of pagan multy-god pantheon. The relation of the Holy Trinity brought to the earthly relations makes easier understanding the concept of Trinity. In "The Knight in the Panter's Skin", Rustaveli presents this idea in Neoplatonic vision of three-dimensional Universe – everything that exists, has three dimensions, as the God has three exhibitions (verse 6):

- a. To create perfect, I need: tongue, heart and mastery.
- b. O, Lord, grant me power (to act), divine reason to give my mind [to my creation];
- c. Thus we [you, me and those who will percieve the result of my act] will serve Tariel, who needs to be properly exhibited;
- d. The three bodies are enslaved to each-other and thus unseparable."

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<sup>39</sup> Donald Reyfield (2013), *The Literature of Georgia – A History*, pp. 42-44.



## TEXTS:

1. Pirqushi's Origins<sup>40</sup>

1. He is called Pirqushi because, he has ugly appearance<sup>41and42</sup> .
2. Previously, he was a very handsome man, and there were twenty-three women in love with him<sup>43</sup>.
3. He got annoyed and asked God, "Too many love me, please make it so that these women don't love me anymore."<sup>44</sup>
4. The Morige God<sup>45</sup> listened to him and sent smallpox (Variola Major) upon him. The smallpox damaged his face so deeply that nobody would come close to him<sup>46</sup>.
5. He was left alone by everyone, except for three women<sup>47</sup>.
6. A woman named Elene loved Pirqushi deeply and never left his side<sup>48</sup>.
7. Pirqushi used to say: "When Elene started her journey towards me from Kvareli<sup>49</sup>, sounds of her jewelry was heard in my blacksmithery."<sup>50</sup>
8. Earlier Pirqushi used to be a man – a blacksmith by profession.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>40</sup> R. Cholokashvili, Z. Kiknadze, I. Ratiani, O. Oniani, A. Papirze, N Gambashidze (Editor), 2024. pp. 41-43; Gambashidze, Corpus of Mythology of Georgian People, 2024, pp. 105-108.

<sup>41</sup> In this assertion, the narrator conflates the concepts of 'being ugly' and 'being angry,' suggesting a potential misunderstanding of the cult's purpose and portraying Pirqushi as a mere mortal. However, the narrator still acknowledges the tradition of worshiping him as a deity.

<sup>42</sup> **Georgian text:** *p'irkushi imit khkvian, ro isi shakhedulad tsudis sakhisai as.*

<sup>43</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ts'inav dzalian k'ais sakhisa q'opila d' otsdasam kal q'opila, visats is khq'varebiv.*

<sup>44</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *utkoma d' shautkhovav khtisad, ro dzalian bevrs uq'vararao d', ghmerto, iset ra mikeniv, ro am kalebs aghar uq'vardav.*

<sup>45</sup> **Morige God** – [The God on Duty] In the religious mythology of the Pshav-Khevsurs, the name of God the Father embodies the divine orderer of the world, bestowing order upon every occurrence. Central to their belief system is the concept of God on duty, presiding from a celestial throne at his designated door, whence he governs the cosmos. At intervals, emissaries of the divine offspring approach this sacred threshold, bearing the prayers and entreaties of humanity. Upon their return, they convey the directives of God on duty, decreeing mercy for some and retribution for others. (Kiknadze Z. , mitologiuri entsik'lop'edia akh'algazrdebistvis. t' III, kartuli mitologia [Mythological Encyclopedia for Youth. vol III, Georgian Mythology], 2004).

<sup>46</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *morigem ghmertm gaugona d' gaachin q'vaili. q'vailm isr mautokhn p'irsakhei d' gaajughur, ro agharavin akhlos ar ek'arebod.*

<sup>47</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *skhvam q'velam tav daaneba d' samm kalm ar daaneb tavi.*

<sup>48</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ert kali elene q'opil, romensats p'irkushi uq'varda d' imas maints tav ar daunebebav.*

<sup>49</sup> **Kvareli** (Georgian: ყვარელი, pronounced [q'ʷareli]) is a town in northeastern in Kakheti Province, Georgia. Located in the Alazani Valley, near the foothills of the Greater Caucasus Mountains. The area is in the center of the Kakheti wine-producing region, and the town itself is known for its Kindzmarauli wine, a semisweet red variety. (Wikipedia, Kvareli, 2024)

<sup>50</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *p'irkushm tkvisav: „rakhan elene q'varelshiit chemk'e ts'amavidisav, imis samk'aulis zhizhiniv samch'edloshi mamdiadisav“.*

<sup>51</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *p'irkushi ts'int's'in k'ats q'opil, mch'edeli.*

9. His father was Mgela<sup>52</sup>, and his name was David<sup>53</sup>.
10. This man was Nats'ili<sup>54</sup> and <sup>55</sup>.
11. When he was asleep, light would emanate from his back, between his shoulders, and illuminate everything<sup>56</sup>.
12. At other times, he had a small round white sign between his shoulders on his back, like a coin or a small cookie. It had a texture that would shine like the sun<sup>57</sup>.
13. Once, Pirqushi said, "I went to Akhmeta<sup>58</sup> to look after my vineyard. When I arrived there, I saw an anvil with an inscription: 'Mgeliashvili<sup>59</sup> Davit will die on a certain date. "<sup>60</sup>
14. "I tried very hard," said Pirqushi. "I threw the anvil into the fire several times, but the inscription did not disappear.<sup>61</sup>
15. I wanted the inscription to disappear, but it did not. When a man has appointed his time, exactly at that moment his soul will depart from his body."<sup>62</sup>
16. He was so pure, that after his death he became god-like<sup>63</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> **Mgela** – a homonym, derived from the word **Mgeli** – meaning a Wolf. The narrator endeavors to create an impression of Pirqushi as an ordinary human by mentioning his father. **Mgeli/Mgela**, along with **Gela** as an alternative form, is a commonly recognized homonym in Georgia up to the present time. The speculation regarding the combination of the archaic Caucasian homonym, as an ancestor with the name **David**, is not coincidental. King David of Israel is believed to be an ancestor of the **Royal House of Bagrationi**. The King of Kartli, **Vakhtang I** was named by Persians as "Gorgasali" – the wolf-head.

<sup>53</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *is q'opil mgelais shvili, daviti.*

<sup>54</sup> Some individuals are more fortunate than others—they are born with a distinctive 'mark' upon their bodies. This mark is referred to as '**Natsiliani**' in the Khevsuretian dialect. '**Natsili**' in Georgian denotes 'a part' or 'a share,' thus '**Natsiliani**' can be interpreted as 'one who possesses a share.' A share in what, precisely? From the context, it becomes apparent that such individuals have a 'share' in the divine, being born with a special purpose in the world. They have the opportunity to emerge as leaders among mortals, illuminating for them that physical existence is not the sole form of reality. Gambashidze, 2024, pp. 189-190

<sup>55</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *nats'ilian q'opilas.*

<sup>56</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *rakhan daidzinisav, mkhart shuashiit shuk amavardisao d' gaanatisav ikaobaiv.*

<sup>57</sup> The golden and bronze discs with schematic representations of sun and moon are common in Georgian and Caucasian archaeological findings. They are known as decorations of the noblemen's cloth, representing insignia of the power.

<sup>58</sup> Akhmeta (Georgian: ახმეტა) is a town in Kakheti (Georgia) and is the administrative centre of Akhmeta Municipality. It's situated on the left side of Alazani, close to the Pankisi Gorge. (Wikipedia, Akhmeta, 2024)

<sup>59</sup> **Shvili** – a child of both genders. In East Georgian homonyms, the ending "shvili" is the most frequent in family names, whereas in West Georgia, its alternative **Dze** – Son is the common ending.

<sup>60</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *p'irkushs utkom, ro: „akhmet'as ts'avediv venakhis mosavleladao d'ro mavediv, grdemze ets'erav, ro mgelaishvil davitiv ama da am dghes unda mak'vdasav.*

<sup>61</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *„vits'valev“,- utkom p'irkushs, „ramtvenjeramav grdemiv tsetskhlshi chavagdio d' maits ar ts'aishalav.*

<sup>62</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *me mindodav, ro is dats'erili ts'ashliliq'vavo, d' magram maints ar iknav. rosats dalishnul iq'avav droiv, sts'ored im dros amamividav suliv“.*

<sup>63</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *iset ts'mida k'ats q'opil ro, ro momk'vdar, khtisnasakhad gadaktseul.*

17. Afterwards he transgressed into “Holy Ghost<sup>64</sup>”, went to Akhadi<sup>65</sup> and established<sup>66</sup> there<sup>67</sup>.  
 18. During that period, people from Batsaligo also resided there, and they lived amicably with the inhabitants of Akhadi<sup>68</sup>.

## 2. Pirqushi – Gaining the Power<sup>69</sup>

1. When Pirqushi settled there, he instructed, through the words of a fortune-teller<sup>70</sup>, to assign servants<sup>71</sup> to him<sup>72</sup>.
2. Both the people of Batsaligo and Akhadi were aware that Pirqushi had previously been a man and a blacksmith, and as a result, they refused to become his servants. Consequently, they did not serve him, leading to Pirqushi becoming very angry<sup>73</sup>.
3. To some of them, He sent fire, while to others, He sent diseases and made them so deeply scared that the servants of Pirqushi started going with jarj-girkal<sup>74and 75</sup>.
4. The Akhadians built a tower-shrine in honor of Pirqushi, along with a hall and beer-brewing facilities<sup>76</sup>. This marked the beginning of their beer-brewing activities and prayers dedicated to Pirqushi<sup>77</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> The term '**the Holy Ghost**' should not be confused with the Christian understanding of one of the members of the Holy Trinity. In this context, it rather represents the pagan understanding of ghosts – humans who, after death, are separated from the flesh and some may 'deserve the right' to become patrons of their community to which they once belonged.

<sup>65</sup> **Akhadi** – a village in Mtskheta-Mtianeti region of East Georgia.

<sup>66</sup> The establishment of shrines dedicated to saints is personified – the saint, or 'God's Child,' will choose where to be established, and living people will fulfill his will, which is revealed to them by the mediator – the priest.

<sup>67</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *memr ro sulits'midad gadaktseul, akhads masulasa d' ik daarsebul.*

<sup>68</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *mashin batsaligvelnits ik mdgarana d' dzmoba khkoniv akhadeltan.*

<sup>69</sup> Nino Gambashidze, (2024), *Corpus of Mythology of Georgian People*, pp. 109-111.

<sup>70</sup> In Khevsuretian Andrezis, it is common the saint to communicate with congregation through the fortune-tellers, or priests, who are distinguished among others with their purity and their pursuit to serve the saint.

<sup>71</sup> **Assigned Servants** – periodically the congregation would appoint those who would fulfil the obligations of priest, of Morige and other duties while the holidays and festival celebrations. These appointed people were mostly men, but some women had duty of serving the shrines as well. (Bardavelidze, 1982)

<sup>72</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *'Pirkush ro daarsebul akhad, mk'itkhav gaukadagebava d' mautkhovian q'mani.*

<sup>73</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *batsaligvel-akhadelt stsodniv, ro p'irkushiv k'atsi iq'vav mch'edelio d' imas rakhel daveq'mnatav, utkom, ar dakhq'mobiona d' gamts'q'ral dzalian p'irkushi.*

<sup>74</sup> **Jarji** is a twisted rod used for tying something or for towing livestock. **Girkali** - is a wooden arc with which cattle are tied. "**Jarj-girkliani**" refers to the one who possesses the rod and wooden arc, and it serves as one of the epithets of Pirqushi. This term emphasizes his supremacy over his devoted people, who are often referred to as his "servants." (Gambashidze, 2024, p. 109)

<sup>75</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *zogisad tsetskhl gauchenav, zog aod gaukhdava d' isr shaushinebian, ro, bolos, p'irkushis q'mat jarj girk'lianebs udenav.*

<sup>76</sup> **Beer-brewing** facilities are essential for the shrines in the Eastern Georgian mountainous regions. Beer is brewed there a few times a year for important festivals. The fields around the shrines are considered 'pure,' and the entire village is obligated to harvest grains for the shrine festivals. Thus, the description of rituals and the system of religious worship reveal that the cult of worship extends far into the agricultural era.

<sup>77</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *gauk'etebav akhad p'irkushis k'oshk'i, darbasi d' sakvabei, da dauts'q'av ludis dughili d' lotsva p'irkushisa.*

5. The servants of Pirqushi were so scared and devoted to him that, as Pirqushi's festival approached, all the males had already prepared the Jarj-girkali<sup>78</sup>.
6. In the shrine they would go only with Jarj-girkali<sup>79</sup>.
7. During the overnight liturgy, they would go to sleep and wake up with Jarj-girkali<sup>80</sup>.
8. If anybody were to get rid of Jarj-girkali, someone from his family would soon fall ill, and it was believed to happen by Pirqushi's reason<sup>81</sup>.
9. Finally, the ordinary man became a powerful deity to whom people would pray, they used to say<sup>82</sup>.
10. When the servants of Pirqushi would gather in His shrine and sit down, the Jarj-girkali would sound like metal armour, people used to say<sup>83</sup>.
11. Pirqushi's servants, when the Jarj-girkali was placed on them, would throw away their weapons<sup>84</sup>.
12. Pirqushi ordered his servants to wear Jarj-girkali as a consequence of their disobedience in the beginning<sup>85</sup>.
13. Some have been preserving the Jarj-girkali made during those times up to the present day<sup>86</sup>.
14. Finally, He brought his Jarj-girkali to the shrine, and it (the rule of wearing?) has been lost since then<sup>87</sup>.
15. When He abolished the rule of wearing Jarj-girkali, since then, the fortune-teller (or oracle) receives the Jvari (deity) on his shoulder, and he serves an overnight service in His honor<sup>88</sup>.
16. "I was empowered, when my servants would wear Jarj-girkali<sup>89</sup>.
17. But now you have raised your arm against my arm, and your neck against my neck, yet I remain the same Pirqushi<sup>90</sup>.
18. If I reclaim my nine-rooted whip, I will eradicate those who do not believe in me. Then, my servants, you will know that Pirqushi has reclaimed his power and possession<sup>91</sup>.
19. Previously, Pirqushi used to reside in the Iori valley. Later, He moved to Akhadi, and his previous followers would go there for prayers. His shrine also existed in that location<sup>92</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> Georgian transcribed text: *p'irkushs q'man isit dat'ekhilni khq'vanion, ro dgheoba ro mavidisav, q'velas khkondisav jarj girk'aliv damzadbuliv k'atsebsav.*

<sup>79</sup> Georgian transcribed text: *jvarchiats jarj girk'alianeb dadiodianav.*

<sup>80</sup> Georgian transcribed text: *ghamitats jarjgirk'alianeb idzinebdianav dgheobashiav.*

<sup>81</sup> Georgian transcribed text: *tu vin jarj-girk'als maishorebd, mashiv aod ukhdava d' umizezebev jvars, p'irkushs.*

<sup>82</sup> Georgian transcribed text: *bolos, sru salotsav dzriel jvarad gadaiktsav ubralo k'atsiv, itsodian [tkma].*

<sup>83</sup> Georgian transcribed text: *jvarchi rakhan jarze daskhdianav p'irkushis q'maniv, jarj-girk'alsav jghara-jghur gakhkondisav, itsodian.*

<sup>84</sup> Georgian transcribed text: *rodesats jarj-girk'als chaishkhemdesav, mashinav iaraghits sru daq'arianav p'irkushis q'matav.*

<sup>85</sup> Georgian transcribed text: *jarj-girk'aliv p'irkushmav imit gauts'esav, ro ts'in-ts'in ro ar daghmorchildesav.*

<sup>86</sup> Georgian transcribed text: *mashindel jarj-girk'ali ekhlandelobamdin khkoniv shanakhuli khalkhs.*

<sup>87</sup> Georgian transcribed text: *bolos jvarshi miut'anava d'ikit as dak'arguli.*

<sup>88</sup> Georgian transcribed text: *jarj-girk'ali ro maushlav, mas ikitav mauvidisav kadagsav jvario d' at'anebdiebdisav:*

<sup>89</sup> Georgian transcribed text: *„me mashin mkondav dzalio d' shadzlebaiv, rosats q'maniv jarj-girk'liann damidiodesav.*

<sup>90</sup> Georgian transcribed text: *aekhladav mk'laviv mk'lavs gamists'oretav d' k'iseriv k'isersav, magram aisiv p'irkush k'i orav.*

<sup>91</sup> Georgian transcribed text: *tu chem tskhrapesvian matrakh davibrunevo d' chem uts'amebiv mits'astan gavasts'oreb, mashin gaigebenav chemn q'maniv, ro p'irkushsav aisiv dzali-shadzlebai khkonivav“.*

<sup>92</sup> Georgian transcribed text: *p'irkushi ts'int's'in iorze mdgari akhads ikit masula d' ikats udenav dzvelebs salotsavad, ikats q'opil imis nishi.*

20. Later, when the people settled in Batsaligo, Pirqushi followed them. The remaining and new shrines were all considered equal<sup>93</sup>.
21. But earlier Pirqushi's shrine in Batsaligo was more powerful, since it was the first<sup>94</sup>.

### 3. Pirqushi fights Devis – Fight of Religions

1. Pirqushi used to fight against devis<sup>95</sup> and killed many of them<sup>96</sup>.
2. Later, when He became supreme, He went to Batsaligo and Akhadi and stayed there, losing his power in this place<sup>97</sup>.
3. For this reason Devis started fighting and oppressed people<sup>98</sup>.
4. When the fortune-teller was assigned, he brought information about a threat from Pirqushi to Devis<sup>99</sup>:
5. "You, whose mouth stinks of carcass<sup>100</sup>, if I don't have enough power to defeat you, I will inform my brother Pirqushi of Lekurta in Batsaligo and will burn you down at once."<sup>101</sup>
6. Earlier Pirqushi came to Iori and wanted to settle there, where there were Devis<sup>102</sup>.
7. The God's Children said, "Pirqushi is as beautiful as a woman and cannot confront Devis. He cannot unarmor them, cannot say anything to them; he will be scared."<sup>103</sup>
8. But Kopala and His fraternized St Giorgi of Tskarostavi helped him<sup>104</sup>.

<sup>93</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *memr ro batsaligvelni batsaligos ts'amasulan, p'irkushits gamakhaq'oliv, raits damrchali d' q'vela ertnair salotsavi.*

<sup>94</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *kholot dzala k'i upro batsaligos p'irkushs khkonivas ts'inav, rak'i is tav iq'v.*

<sup>95</sup> **Devi**, akin to the Titans in Greek mythology, is characterized as a malevolent spirit with a formidable presence. These entities share similarities with the Titans in being large, sluggish, and susceptible to defeat by a heroic figure. Despite their seemingly straightforward nature, Devis pose a significant threat to humanity. They wield their destructive powers by manipulating waters, weather, and hurling massive stones, thereby causing considerable harm to the people they encounter

<sup>96</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *p'irkush q'opilas devebstan mebrdzoli d' ukhotsav devebi.*

<sup>97</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *memr ro mtavar raits iq'v, is batsaligos ts'asulasa d' akhads imaze ghamit damrchala d' imtven shadzleba aghar khkoniv.*

<sup>98</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *emisad devebs dauts'q'av brdzolai d' chagvrai.*

<sup>99</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *kadag rakhan dasvianav, mashin maat'anebisav akhadis p'irkushmav devebis mukaraiv:*

<sup>100</sup> **Carcass-mouth** - is a regular epithet in Khevsuretian mythology, indicating impurity. In one of the Andrezi myths, the story of Gakhua Megrelauri, the hero is honored to follow the "God's Children" but must observe fasting by eating only bread and salt. However, Gakhua becomes very hungry and eats a little cheese as well. For this transgression, the "God's Children" label him "p'irmzoriani" (carcass-mouth).

<sup>101</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *„tkvenav, p'irmzorianno, me tu dzalio d' shadzleba ar makvav imtveniv, ro tkven gagamt'venata, me gavagebiebav batsaligos lek'urtashi mdgars chems modzmes p'irkushsao d' tsetskhilit dagts'avtav ertianadav“.*

<sup>102</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *p'irkushi ts'in-ts'in iorze ro misulas, ik zdozniv dadgoma-daarseba, sadats devebi mdgaran.*

<sup>103</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *khtishvilt utkom: „p'irkushiv kalisp'irai asav, egiv devebs veras et'q'visav, ikit ver akhq'risav, veras et'q'visav, eshinianav“.*

<sup>104</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *magram k'op'alai d' tavis dzmobili ts'q'arostav ts'mida giorgi dashvelebion.*

9. He extinguished Devis with their help and established himself in their previous locations<sup>105</sup>.
10. Later, the God's Children learned that Pirqushi was a fraternal friend of Kopala and St. George, and when needed, these figures would help Pirqushi overcome troubles<sup>106</sup>.
11. After learning this, Pirqushi became more respected by the God's Children, as well as his servants. To him were sent more prayers and more offerings were brought to him<sup>107</sup>.
12. They created and rose up the flag of Pirqushi<sup>108</sup>.
13. Previously Pirqushi used to be a blacksmith and made the arrows and bow for St. George of Tskarostavi, since Tskarostavian<sup>109</sup> was a fighter with arrows and bows<sup>110</sup>.
14. Given that Kopala and St. George of Tskarostavi were Pirqushi's fraternal friends and fought together against Devis, the latter were afraid of all of them. Devis tried to avoid accidentally crossing paths with Kopala and St. George due to the fear instilled by their combined presence<sup>111</sup>.
15. Pirqushi did not possess enough power to confront Devis and Idols on his own. Consequently, Devis attempted to capture him when Pirqushi was alone<sup>112</sup>.
16. Once, Pirqushi met many Devis in the source of Jijeti<sup>113</sup>, near the Queen's Source<sup>114</sup>.
17. "Help me, Kopala and St. George of Tskarostavi," called Pirqushi to his fraternal friends<sup>115</sup>.
18. Immediately Kopala and George came for help with their fire ropes and burned down the all Devis who were there, tore away Pirqushi from Devis and took him with them<sup>116</sup>.

<sup>105</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *imat dakhmarebit deveb amauts'q'vet'iana d' taod daarsebul p'irkushi imat namq'oplavshi.*

<sup>106</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *memr k'i gaugav khtishvilt, rom k'op'alai d' ts'mida giorgi p'irkushs dzmobilebi khq'vandesav, gach'irvebashi isen ushveldes tavis dzmobilis.*

<sup>107</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *amis gagebaze p'irkushs upro p'at'iv dazdves khtishviltatsa d' tavis q'matats. upro met'ad ilotsevdesa d' sts'irevdes shasats'iravsats, zghvensats.*

<sup>108</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *gaachinesa d' aabes p'irkushis droshaits.*

<sup>109</sup> **Tskarostavian (from Tskarosavi)** – This epithet ties St. George to a particular geographic location and highlights his importance in the local religious and cultural context, like St. George of Alaverdi, etc. Iconography of St. George of Tskarostavi, has an attribute of arrows and bow – thus making similarity to Artemis/Diana. Thus, the roots of this cosmogonical myth can be traced back to ancient times, when Apollo's cult was spread in Black Sea areal, encompassing mountainous regions of East Georgia. Including the local human – Pirqushi – in divine triade may be a result of tendency of “taming” the foreign religion that has already vanished and lost its meaning.

<sup>110</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *p'irkushi mch'edeli iq'va d' ts'q'arostauls ts'mida giorgis is uk'etebd mshvild-isars, rak'i ts'q'arostaulits mshvild-isrit meomari d' mebrdzol q'opil.*

<sup>111</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *rak'i k'op'alai d' ts'q'arostav ts'mida giorgi dzmobilebi khq'vandesav d' devebs anadgurebdes, imaze devebs samtaiv javri shch'irda d' tsdilobdes, ro evn sait imeebisad.*

<sup>112</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *p'irkushs imtven dzal ver khkoniv dev-k'erp'tan sabrdzolad, rogorts skhvebsa d' imit imas upro idzevdes, tu mart'os sad maimts'q'vdevdes.*

<sup>113</sup> Jijeti - formerly known as Javakheti, is a village in eastern Georgia situated in the Tianeti municipality of the Mtskheta-Mtianeti region, specifically within the Zaridze community. Positioned on the eastern slope of the Kartli ridge, it is situated on the right side of the Kusno river (Ivri system), at an elevation of 1320 meters above sea level. (Elerdashvili, 2006)

<sup>114</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ertkhan jijetis q'elchi deduplis ts'q'altan shakhvd bevras devebsa d' daich'ires p'irkushi.*

<sup>115</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *„mishveletav, k'op'alao d' ts'q'arostav ts'midao giorgio“, shamazdzakhn tavis dzmobilebs p'irkushm.*

<sup>116</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *imav ts'ams tsetskhilis girk'lebitiv gachindes p'irkushstan giorgio d' k'op'alai d' sru tsetskhilshi chats'ves, raits ik devebi iq'v, gamaghglijes p'irkush khelchiita d' ts'amaiq'vanes.*

19. Since Pirqushi had once called for help, people are now calling him in this way: "Help me, you, great Pirqushi, you, who kick around with fire-flame in the valley of Lekurta."<sup>117</sup>
20. Since Kopala and St. George of Tskarostavi became Pirqushi's friends, they became enemies of Devis and were defending their servants<sup>118</sup>.
21. Once, there was a man from Pshavi named Migriauli, and he had sheep flocks<sup>119</sup>.
22. This man from Pshavi was once going to Shiraki Valley<sup>120</sup> and pasturing his sheep. On his way, Tatarian<sup>121</sup> robbers assaulted him<sup>122</sup>.
23. The man from Pshavi called upon Pirqushi, saying: "You, blessed Pirqushi, do not let the enemy defeat me. Help me, and I will bring a goat to your sanctuary on Rose Holiday<sup>123</sup> and sacrifice it to you."<sup>124</sup>
24. Pirqushi heard calling and rushed for help immediately<sup>125</sup>.
25. Tataris were surprisingly watching their guns, since none of them could shoot the man from Pshavi<sup>126</sup>.
26. However, the man's gun was firing, and he managed to kill some Tatars, while others escaped by running away<sup>127</sup>.
27. Later, during the Atengenoba festival, the man from Pshavi fulfilled his promise and brought the promised goat from his flock, sacrificing it to Pirqushi<sup>128</sup>.
28. There was a man from Batsaligo, his name was George. He accidentally met a Devi in Guro River<sup>129</sup>.

<sup>117</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *p'irkushs rakhan shamazdakhnan gach'irvebashi, mashin it'q'vian: „mishvele, dido p'irkusho, tsetskhlisaliano, lek'urtis vak'es meburvalo“.*

<sup>118</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *k'op'alai d' ts'q'arostaul giorgi ro dzmoblebi khq'vanion, imat gamauchvevav p'irkushi d' dzalian dauts'q'av devebisadats brdzolai, mt'erstanats shvela tavis q'matad.*

<sup>119</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ert migriaul mshavel q'opilasa d' tskhvar khq'oniv.*

<sup>120</sup> **Shiraki Valley** - is the largest flat accumulation plain of the Ivri Plateau, situated in the Alazan-Iori sub-stream within the Dedoplistskaro municipality. It spans a length of 35 kilometers and a width of 15 kilometers, with an absolute height ranging between 500-700 meters. This plain is a synclinal concavity of Neogene formations filled with Quaternary layers, containing abundant artesian waters. The climate in Shirakis Vake is moderately continental, with an average annual temperature of 10°C. In January, the temperature averages -3.8°C, while in July, it reaches -22.8°C. The absolute maximum temperature is 38°C, and the absolute minimum is -32°C. Annual rainfall is 490 mm, with the maximum occurring in spring and early summer. Black soil and chestnut soils are common in the area. The natural vegetation on the Shiraki plain is steppe (grassy), although currently, it has been completely converted to arable land, primarily for grain crops. Shiraki plain is considered the breadbasket of Georgia. (Georgian Soviet Enciclopedy, 1978, p. 7).

<sup>121</sup> In this context Azerbaijani.

<sup>122</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *mimaval mshaveli tskhvarshi shirakisk'esa d' gzashi tattris q'achagheb dastsemian.*

<sup>123</sup> **Rose Holiday** – i.e. Atengenoba

<sup>124</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *shamaudzakhnebav mshavels p'irkushisad: „dalotsvilo p'irkusho, nu mamrevav mt'ersav, shen mishveleo d' erts ch'edilas maviq'onav shen k'arzedao d' vardis dgheobas shamagts'iravav“.*

<sup>125</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *p'irkushs shamadzakhneba gaugava d' im ts'ams chashvelebiv.*

<sup>126</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *tatrebiv topebs uq'urebdianav, mshavelsaod arts erts ar gauvardav.*

<sup>127</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *mshavlis top gadiodisao d'zog daukhotsav tatrebi d' zogeb gaktseulan.*

<sup>128</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *memr ro atengena masul, mauq'vanav mshavels erti ch'edila tavis tskhvrish parashi archeuli d' dauk'lav p'irkushisad.*

<sup>129</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ert batsaligvel k'atsi iq'v giorgii d' guros orts'q'alshi dev shamakhq'riv.*

29. The man called upon Pirqushi, and since he himself could not fight Devis independently, he brought Kopala with him<sup>130 and 131</sup>.
30. George (the man) said once: “They came together – Kopala and Pirqushi.<sup>132</sup>
31. Pirqushi was fighting Devis with his fire whip, but the Devi was not afraid of him<sup>133</sup>.
32. Kopala shot his mace and fire flamed, and the Devis got burned<sup>134</sup>.
33. When Kopala beat Devis with his mace, there was deafening racket of thunder and Devi’s voice, everything around was shaking – mountains and lowlands<sup>135</sup>.
34. I fell unconscious, and when I woke-up, there were nobody alive – neither Devis, nor the divine creatures<sup>136</sup>.
35. I got up and went back<sup>137</sup>.
36. I could not recognise where I was going, so much shocked I was<sup>138</sup>.
37. After this incident, George was very sick for the entire year. He then made many sacrifices to the shrines, and eventually, he was cured<sup>139</sup>.

#### 4. Treasuries of Pirkushi<sup>140</sup>

1. Only Arabuli family live in Batsaligo<sup>141 and 142</sup>.

<sup>130</sup> A very rare case of changing subject of the sentence – the sentence starts with mentioning the man from Batsaligo, but immediately changes subject to Pirqushi – who is superior to him. Thus the man from Batsaligo, acts just as a part of predicat – as an adverb of place.

<sup>131</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *shamaudzakhnebav p’irkushisada d’, rak’i is ver ebrdzod devebs dzalian, imav ts’ams gauq’olebav k’op’alai.*

<sup>132</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *„ertad mavidesav“, uubnav giorgis: „k’op’alaio d’ p’irkushiv.*

<sup>133</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *p’irkushiv tsetskhlis matrakhit shamaet’ivav devsaod’ deviv imas ar sheep’ovav.*

<sup>134</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *k’op’alam esrivav lakht’io d’ tsetskhl gashchindao d’ daits’vav deviv“.*

<sup>135</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *devs ro k’op’alam lakht’ dakhk’rav, iset ch’eka-kukhilio d’ devis ghrial dadgav, ro mta-bar sru daidzrav.*

<sup>136</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ugont gavsuliq’avio d’, ro gont mavediv, ik aghara ibadebodav, agharts devio d’ agharts khtis nasakhniv.*

<sup>137</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *avdegio d’ ts’amavediv.*

<sup>138</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *sad davdiodiv, is k’i ar vitsodiv, isr viq’aviv gazhezhliv.*

<sup>139</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *erts ts’els giorgi imis shemdeg sru aod q’opil, memr jvartad miumadlebav bevri d’ mamrchal.*

<sup>140</sup> Gambashidze (2024) Corpus of Mythology of Georgian People - East Georgia, pp. 118-121

<sup>141</sup> Evidently, the Batsaligo shrine and tower held greater importance in pre-Pirqushian religion. It may be suggested that prior to Tinibekauris or Tinibeka’s descendants, inhabitants resided in Batsaligo. However, with the arrival of the Arabuli clan to this village, they introduced their deity – 'Pirqushi Fireflame.' This shift in political and religious narrative is reflected in the folk poem of Batsaligoan Cosmogony, reminiscent of the myth of Prometheus (and his Georgian alternative, Amirani), who is chained to the Caucasus mountain, awaiting the Lord’s mercy. Meanwhile, the black raven and the black dog serve as his guardians.

<sup>142</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *tavad batsaligoshi tskhovroben mart’o arabulebi.*



2. There is one village, one family and they have one shrine. The fortune-tellers, priests and Khelosani<sup>143</sup> are called as: "Pirqushi Fireflame"<sup>144</sup>.
3. He is called "Fireflame"<sup>145</sup> because, according to Khevsurians' belief, He is capable of burning people who anger Him or provoke Him. Pirqushi will retaliate severely, and the person will be burned internally. Although the individual may not see the flames, they will become ulcerated, as if burned, and eventually, their body will fall apart<sup>146 and 147</sup>.
4. Pirqushi the Fireflame is also the fighter against devils and other of enemies of Batsaligo<sup>148</sup>.
5. Khevsurians say that Pirqushi is also profound in blacksmithery<sup>149</sup>.
6. Once, somebody named P.R. stole Pirqushi's treasury with the help of his friends<sup>150</sup>.
7. He stole silver bowls and hid them in the Ortskali grove<sup>151</sup>, while some items he took home<sup>152</sup>.
8. They hid the stolen in Ortskali because they thought: if Pirqushi gets angry, or if He appears in their dreams, or if a fortune-teller says something indicating not serious consequences, then they would go and find the treasures<sup>153</sup>.
9. Later, Pavle saw the dream and told it to his friends<sup>154</sup>:
10. "One white man came to me and kissed in my right eye<sup>155</sup>.
11. This means, there's nothing to be scared of and we can take the treasury."<sup>156</sup>

<sup>143</sup> **Khelosani** - were the appointed servants of the shrine, serving as leaders of the congregation and holding the highest hierarchy in priesthood. They were the only ones permitted to possess a special piece of cloth, colored white, red, or golden, which they would lay upon their shoulders. In this manner, they awaited the sacred dove – representing the Holy Ghost or the saint in physical form – to perch upon their shoulder and impart to them the will or guidance of the supreme God.

<sup>144</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *sopelits ertia, gvarits, salotsavits erti q'avs da am salotsavs mk'itkhavibi da khutses-khelosnebi „p'irkushi tsetskhლისალიანი“ ikhsenieben.*

<sup>145</sup> The epythet '**Fireflame**' in Georgian 'tsetskhლისალიანი' can be contributed to Pirqushi's ability of fighting with enemies, as well as his profession of being a blacksmith. But further we read about the diseases he is associated with – those, who disobey him, are burned from inside and aparted. Considering the fact that Pirqushi, being a man, was damaged and became ugly because of Smallpox, which, could be misled with "Greatpox", i.e. Syphilis. In Georgian Syphilis is called "Atashangi", recalling the Zoroastrian God of flame Atar/Atash.

<sup>146</sup> This sentence made us to think of describing forms of some epidemic, something like Smallpox, but rather dangerous, which has deadly consequences and do not only damage the appearance.

<sup>147</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *tsetskhლის ალიანსი ეძახიან იმიტომ, რომ კეხვურების რტსმენი ის ხალხსა სტს'ვავს, ვინატს გაავრებს, განარისკებს მას, პ'ირკუშის სასტიკად მოეკიდება - პარლად ტსეცხლის ტს'აუკ'იდებს, რომ კ'ატი ტსეცხლის კ'ი ვერ დაინახავს, მხოლოდ დატს'კ'რულდება, როგორც დამტს'ვარი და ბოლოს შლას დატს'კ'ებდა მისი გვამი.*

<sup>148</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *p'irkushi tsetskhლისალიანი აგრეტვე არის მებრძოლი ეშმაკ'ებთან და ბატსალიგოს მტ'რების ლაშკართან.*

<sup>149</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *khevsurebi amboben, რომ პ'ირკუშმა მჩ'ედლობს იტსისო.*

<sup>150</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ertkhel p'irkushis gandzi moip'ara p'. r.-m. skhva amkhanagebtan ertad.*

<sup>151</sup> Lake Ortskali - Lake Ortskali is located in Tusheti protected areas at the elevation of the 2840 meters above sea level. The lake is the source of the river Ortskali.

<sup>152</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ts'aughia vertskhlis tasebi da orts'q'alshi t'q'eshi daumalavs, nats'ili k'i sakhlishi ts'aughia.*

<sup>153</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *orts'q'alshi imit'om damales, რომ თუ პ'ირკუში გატს'კ'რა ან სიზმარში ნახვდენენ ან მკ'იტხავი ეტ'კ'ოდა და თუ არ იკ'ო საშისი, მერე ტს'აიგებდნენ და გაკ'იდენ განძს.*

<sup>154</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *mere turme p'avlem nakha sizmari da amkhanagebsats uambo:*

<sup>155</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *„erti tetri k'atsi movida da marjvena tvalshi mak'otsao.*

<sup>156</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *es imas nishnavs, რომ საშისი არაპერია და ტს'ავიგოტ ეს განძიო“.*

12. On the third day, the friends went to find the treasury and take it, but suddenly, Pavle's eye started itching, and he was infected with the disease Anthax<sup>157</sup>. In Khevsurian, the disease is called "Bull's Flower," and he lost his eye<sup>158</sup>.
13. The thieves themselves and, later other Khevsurians explained this as the "Reason of Pirqushi"<sup>159</sup>.
14. Pavle and his associates got very scared and returned the treasury<sup>160</sup>.
15. Later Pavle used to say: "We could not get close to the treasury, until we did not sacrifice a cat<sup>161</sup> and sprey blood upon the place<sup>162</sup>.
16. After we did so, something has weeped for a long time<sup>163</sup>.
17. This weep was firstly heard from near, but weakened slowly, as if it was heard from far<sup>164</sup>.
18. And we were allowed to get close and take out the treasury<sup>165</sup>.
19. Before we did so, from the place where treasury was burried, the fire was coming out and the flame was about to burn us."<sup>166</sup>
20. Thus they have returned all treasuries without any lost<sup>167</sup>.
21. Just several bowls were squeeased and they returned them damaged<sup>168</sup>.
22. There was one blacksmith, Kviriauli Badzia, he used to do the silver bowls. The men brought the stolen bowls to him for smelting it and redoing the new bowls<sup>169</sup>.

<sup>157</sup> **Anthax** – one more infectious disease, conected with Pirqushi.

<sup>158</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *mesame dghes ts'asulan gandzis ts'asaghebad da gzaze p'avles tvali ast'k'ivda da tsimbiris ts'q'luli anu khevsurulad - „kharis q'avvili“ gamouvida da tvali gamoetkhara.*

<sup>159</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *es kurdebmats da shemdeg khevsurebmats miats'eres p'irkushis mizezs.*

<sup>160</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *p'avle sheshinda da misi amkhanagebits da daabrunes tas-gandzi.*

<sup>161</sup> **Cats** are considered as impure animals in all regions of Georgia. Killing a cat and spreading its blood over any sacred item, or burial, is considered as blasphemy. E.g, in Svanetian folklore we witness a habit: "At the time of Christ's exit from hell, among others, a mouse brought out a spike of the holy wheat. On its way, a cat caught the mouse and took away a quarter of the bread. The cat caught up a second time, tore off another quarter, and repeated this for the third and fourth times. When the cat was about to take the remaining portion, a dog caught the cat and snatched it away. If the cat had taken all the holy bread, humanity would always have holy bread. As a consequence of this crime, the cat refrains from consuming the holy bread, but the dog partakes in it. This habit is still exists in Svaneti" (Proze, k'artuli khalkhuri proza. t. III [Georgian Folk Proze. vol III], 2023, p. 209). In Samegrelo region, there is a superstition about witches: "Mazakval (the witch) woman turned into a black cat at night. It would sneak into the family of whom he wanted to count. It would cut pieces of clothes and bewitch them. There was a case when a black cat sneaked into the family was stabbed with a hot skewer. The next day they observed: - in whose family is the sick woman." Ibid. p. 235.

<sup>162</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *mere p'avle it'q'oda turme: „manamdin akhlos ver miudegit amosaghebad im tas-gandzs, manam k'at'a ar davk'alit da sikhli ar davaskhito.*

<sup>163</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ase rom moviketsit, raghatsam khangrdzlivad daats'ivla.*

<sup>164</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *es ts'ivili jer akhlo moisma da tandatan sust'deboda, titkos upro da upro shoridan ismiso.*

<sup>165</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *da chvents neba mogvetsa akhlo misvlisa da gandzis amoghebisao.*

<sup>166</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *manamdin k'i rom mivuakhlovdebodit, im tas-gandzidan tsetskhli amovardeboda da zed gadmogvepineboda alio da dats'vas dagvip'irebdao“.*

<sup>167</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ase uk'lebliv daabrunes is tas-gandzi.*

<sup>168</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *mkholod zogi tasebi dach'q'let'ili iq'o da isetebi daabrunes.*

<sup>169</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *erti dzedzeuruli mch'edeli iq'o, q'virilaurt badzia, romelits vertskhli tasebs ak'etebda da es tasebi mastan miit'anes gadasadnobad da khelmeored gasak'etebdad.*

23. Pirqushi has prohibited Badzia doing the ritual bowls for the liturgy during the daytime<sup>170</sup>.
24. As Pirqushi himself came at night to Badzia, he taught him how to craft the bowls because the liturgical bowl was huge and required a high level of skill, which Badzia lacked<sup>171</sup>.
25. Pirqushi came at night because he did not want people to see him while helping the blacksmith<sup>172</sup>.
26. Once, the army of Lekis attempted to capture the inhabitants of Batsaligo<sup>173</sup>.
27. Since they were unable to harm the villagers, finally they decided to get inside the Pirqushi's brewery and to cut into pieces the ritual brewing pot to take with them<sup>174</sup>.
28. When they struck it with the axe, a flame leaped out of the bowl and engulfed the entire army. The confusion among the soldiers was so intense that they promptly abandoned the village<sup>175</sup>.
29. When the Khevsurians witnessed this, they were encouraged and pursued the enemy<sup>176</sup>.
30. Now, people from other villages joined the Khevsurians, and together they pursued the enemy, causing significant harm to them<sup>177</sup>.
31. During this fight, the Leki soldiers witnessed a white man who, with fire emanating from his mouth, was using a whip to harm and kill people<sup>178</sup>.
32. But for the Khevsurians, this sight was veiled or obscured<sup>179</sup>.

## 5. Shishia and Pirqushi

1. In Batsaligo there was one man, whose name was Shishia. He was master of repairing the pots and bowls<sup>180</sup>.
2. The beer-brewing pot was damaged in Pirqushi's shrine and Shishia has repaired it<sup>181</sup>.
3. While repairing the pot, during this time, he went home and was intimate with a woman. Upon returning, he did not cleanse himself, nor did he armor his hands; nevertheless, he came to the shrine and repaired the pots<sup>182</sup>.

<sup>170</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *badzias turme p'irkushma sakhutso tasis gak'etebis neba dghisit ar mistsa.*

<sup>171</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *modioda turme ghamit p'irkushi da tviton asts'avlida, rogor gaek'etebina tasi, radgan sakhutso k'och'obi didi iq'o da mas sch'irdeboda upro k'argad gak'eteba da badzia amas ver akherkheba.*

<sup>172</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *amit'om, vitomts p'irkushi ghamit modioda, rom dghisit khalkhs ar enakha da mch'edels dakhmareboda tviton.*

<sup>173</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ertkhel batsaligos lek'is lashkari mosula, sopels dastsemia asak'lebad.*

<sup>174</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *sopels rom veraperi daak'les, bolos p'irkushis sakvabeshi shesulan da salude kvabis dach'ra da ts'agheba daup'irebiat.*

<sup>175</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *tsuli rom dauk'ravt, kvabidan ali amovardnila da mtel lashkars gadasdebia, lashkari dabneula da gasula soplidan.*

<sup>176</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *amis shemq'ure khevsurebs khalisi mistsemtat da dadevnebian lashkars.*

<sup>177</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *akhla skhva sopelebits daedevnen turme da didad azarales lek'is lashkari.*

<sup>178</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *am brdzolis drosats khedavdnen turme lek'ebi tetr k'atss, romelsats p'iridan tsetskhli amosdioda da matrakhit khotsda khalkhs.*

<sup>179</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *khevsurebisatvis k'i amas q'velapers saparveli edo.*

<sup>180</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ert batsaligvel q'opilas, tinibekt shishiai. imas kvabebis k'erva stsodniv.*

<sup>181</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *p'irkushshi salude kvab daghleviva d' shishias dauk'erav es kvabi.*

<sup>182</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *kvabs ro k'erevd, im dros shin diatstan q'opila d' gaubani khelebze auskhmeli misul jvarshia d' dauk'erav kvabi. es kvabits mashiv daleul ikav.*

4. For a certain period, people could not brew beer<sup>183</sup>.
5. After two or three days, Shishia became very sick<sup>184</sup>.
6. His face ulcerated<sup>185</sup>, and the same happened to his hands and legs. Eventually, all his muscles vanished<sup>186</sup>.
7. His family suffered similarly, and all of them became very sick<sup>187</sup>.
8. This occurred because of the Jvari (shrine)<sup>188</sup>.
9. People used to say, "He got rotten, and the decay came out."<sup>189</sup>
10. Later, the fortune-teller said, "For this sinful action, Pirqushi has punished you. He has poured the kerosene-water upon you and burned you."<sup>190</sup>
11. Shishia understood what the fortune-teller had said, began to feel remorse, devoted sacrificial animals, baptized the bull and goat, but nothing helped him<sup>191</sup>.
12. "I cannot forgive him and revoke my punishment; he has sinned and cannot redeem himself. He tries in vain."<sup>192</sup>
13. He spoke through the fortune-teller's mouth: "I am Pirqushi, and I cannot return what I have expelled. I have poured the kerosene-water upon the sinful, and I cannot undo it, I cannot restore the burned flesh."<sup>193</sup>
14. "Others will be more careful and will not come to my shrine impure or uncleansed because nowadays not everybody respects me," he added<sup>194</sup>.

## 6. Treasuries of Gveleti<sup>195</sup>

1. When we came here, the Gigauris lived here<sup>196</sup>.

<sup>183</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ertkhan ver udughebav ludi*.

<sup>184</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *shishiaits or-sami dghidges aod gakhdil*.

<sup>185</sup> The narrative of Shishia falling ill and eventually succumbing to his sickness after interacting with a woman can be interpreted as further evidence of Pirqushi's mission to protect people from the consequences of infectious sexual relations. While the exact diagnosis is unclear from the provided information, the narrator emphasizes Pirqushi's role as both a healer and a punisher of those who engage in adultery. This portrayal underscores the importance of moral conduct and the consequences of straying from it in the mythological narrative.

<sup>186</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *dasts'q'rulebiv p'irsakhe, khel-pekhi da, bolos, sru mashorebiv khortsi dzvalzeit*.

<sup>187</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *imis jalaptats gadazdebivasa d' suq'velan aod dakhdilan*.

<sup>188</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *q'velas gadazdebiv es jvarisgan damts'vrobit*.

<sup>189</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *khalkh imas tu ambobdis: „dalp'esav, damp'loba gamaschindav“*.

<sup>190</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *memr mk'itkhavs utkom: „emad em shanatsodvarze gadmauskhamav p'irkushsav navtis ts'q'alivo d' dauts'vikhartav“*.

<sup>191</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ghlishnebniv mk'itkhavis natkvami shishias, bevr unanebav, samananelo zghvenits dauk'lav, kvab-k'uroits daunatlav k'uret'its, magram maints ver shveliv*.

<sup>192</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *“aghar avghlok'av, chaidinav tsud sakmei d' me amas ver vap'at'iebam, t'q'uilad ghondebianav“*.

<sup>193</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *maut'anebiebam mk'itkhavisad ro, „me p'irkushi orav, ertkhan gadmaduzhvnils me navtis ts'q'ali gadavashkio d' imas vegharas ushvelav, damts'vars khortstav me veghar gavamtelebam*.

<sup>194</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *k'idev skhveb gamtkhildebianao d' rioshianeab aghar mavlenav chems k'arzedav, ro adamanad vin magdebsav, k'lov damapasebenav“*.

<sup>195</sup> TSUFA 29981, Narrator Giorgi, son of Vano Arabuli, Recorder: T. Ochiauri, Gveleti, 1963, July 12

<sup>196</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *chven ro movsulvart, ak gigaurebs utskhovrav*.

2. First of us came here from Batsaligo<sup>197</sup>.
3. For this reason it is called “Gigauri’s Valley”<sup>198</sup>.
4. The Archangel and God’s Children were prayed here<sup>199</sup>.
5. When our people came here, the Gigauris no longer lived here<sup>200</sup>.
6. They went to Chartali<sup>201 and 202</sup>.
7. Later Gigauris tried to return here and tried to tax us<sup>203</sup>.
8. When our man came here, everything was wiped out<sup>204</sup>.
9. They paid 5 sheep per year<sup>205</sup>.
10. One was sacrificed here<sup>206</sup>.
11. Then they have come<sup>207</sup>.
12. They had Andrezi – to stand at a certain place and wait until the sun's ray hit the building. They were supposed to go there and find the treasury<sup>208</sup>.
13. They found the place, sat down and started waiting<sup>209</sup>.
14. The sun rose and they found the treasury<sup>210</sup>.
15. They claimed the treasury belonged to them and never returned again<sup>211</sup>.
16. We go to their shrine<sup>212</sup>.
17. But when we came here, we brought our shrine – Pirqushi<sup>213</sup>.
18. Here is the small niche<sup>214</sup>.
19. Across the river, there is also Pirqushi's shrine, just as in the Archangel's shrine. There is one shrine, but during the liturgy, both are mentioned—Pirqushi and the other one as well<sup>215</sup>.
20. Most of us are Pirqushi’s servants<sup>216</sup>.

<sup>197</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ak p’irvelad chven k’ats batsaligvit chamasul*

<sup>198</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *gigaurebis veli imit’om khkvian.*

<sup>199</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ak mtavarangelozhi da khtishobeli imat ulotsav.*

<sup>200</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *chven khalkh ro chamasulan, mashin gigaureb ak aghar q’opilan.*

<sup>201</sup> **Chartali** is a village in Dusheti municipality of Mtskheta-Mtianeti district in Georgia. It is located in the valley of Aragvi of Mtiuleti, 1200 m above sea level, 30 km from Dusheti.

<sup>202</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *iseeb gadasakhldes ch’artalshi.*

<sup>203</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *gigaurebi memre mamdinaran da begar ughav im adgilisao.*

<sup>204</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *chamasul chven k’atsi. es adgil gaokhrebul q’opil.*

<sup>205</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ts’elits’adshi khut tskhvar udzlevav.*

<sup>206</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ert ak dauk’lav.*

<sup>207</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *bolos isen mosulan.*

<sup>208</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *imat andrezad khkoniv damrchali, ro ik da akav daskhdebito da nagebobaso ro mzeio garmokhenesba, iset adgilzedav ro dadgebisav, imashi k’ldeiv, is motkharetav.*

<sup>209</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *daskhdesav, uq’ureben raghatsas.*

<sup>210</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *dadgav mzeio da amaughav is gandziv.*

<sup>211</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *is chveniao da imis shemdeg mgoniv agharts masulan.*

<sup>212</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *magat nalotsavs vlotsulobt.*

<sup>213</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *mkholod ro chamavsulvart, chven jvar chamagvit’anav, p’irkushi.*

<sup>214</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ak nishi as.*

<sup>215</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *gaghmats as k’oshk’i, nishi p’irkushisa, mtavarangelozshits ise as ro ertia, magram tasebs ro dadgamen, mashin akhseneben orive khat’s, p’irkushsats da imasats akhseneben.*

<sup>216</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *dziritadad q’mai p’irkushisai vart.*

21. When someone had three sons, one should go to Gudani and serve as Khelosani, another would go to Batsaligo, and the third one would serve here at Mtavarangelozi (Archangel)<sup>217</sup>.
22. If someone had one son, he would go firstly to Batsaligo, since we came from there<sup>218</sup>.
23. I serve as Khelosani at Batsaligo, my brother serves as a priest at Mtavarangelozi<sup>219</sup>.

## 7. Pirqushi and St. George Tskarostauli <sup>220</sup>

1. The shrines of Pirqushi are in Khevsureti, specifically in the village of Batsaligo, and in Pshavi, in the village of Akhadi<sup>221</sup>.
2. Since Akhadians and Batsaligoans belong to the same shrine, they are fraternised friends<sup>222</sup>.
3. Even now they referred to as ‘cousins.’<sup>223</sup>
4. In the beginning, Pirqushi was a man—a very famous blacksmith and a very sincere believer at the same time<sup>224</sup>.
5. Lord gas granted him the power to influence the Devis and idols<sup>225</sup>.
6. In Ukanapshavi, there lived a nobleman, and the Devis oppressed him greatly<sup>226</sup>.
7. They had their camp above the hill in the village, where Tskarostavi is located<sup>227</sup>.
8. Tskarostavi is a very comfortable place for a camp, and Tskarostauli (St. George of Tskarostavi) desired to settle there. However, the Devis fought him back and did not let him<sup>228</sup>.
9. At that time, Pirqushi was established in the Iori Valley<sup>229</sup>.
10. The nobleman had gone and asked Pirqushi to make a bow and arrows with metal arrowhead for him<sup>230</sup>.
11. Pirqushi did not let him to go alone and followed him<sup>231</sup>.
12. Where the Devi's camp was located, nearby there is a small hill called Mashagho-hill<sup>232</sup>.

<sup>217</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *sam shvil ro eknebod chven q'mas, ert gudanshi unda q'opiliq'v khelosani, ert - batsaligos, ert - ak matavarangelozshi.*

<sup>218</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ert vazh ro khq'vaniq'v, upro is modiod, ro – batsaligoshi, rak'igha ikit chamasulebi ort.*

<sup>219</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *me batsaligos khelosani or, chemi dzma - mtavarangelozis khutsesi.*

<sup>220</sup> Vazha-Pshavela (1964) Full collection of writings, p. 80

<sup>221</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *p'irkushi khevsuretsits aris sopel batsaligoshi da pshavshi sopel akhadshits.*

<sup>222</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *rak'i erti salotsavi hkviat, akhadlebs da batsaligvebs dzmobats hkoniat.*

<sup>223</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *jerats ertimeores bidzashvils edzakhian.*

<sup>224</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *p'irkushi p'irvelad iq'o k'atsi, sakhelgantkmuli mch'edeli da amastan khtis mlotsavi.*

<sup>225</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *khvtidan hkonia gavlena dev-k'erp'tazedats.*

<sup>226</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *uk'anapshavshi mdgara erti tavadi da devebi turme avits'roebdnen mas.*

<sup>227</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *isini mdgaran uk'anapshavis soplis sheghma khevze, ts'q'arostavs.*

<sup>228</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ts'q'arostavi mokherkhebuli adgilia saarsebod da ak dadgoma sdomebia ts'q'arostauls, magram devebs ar gaushviat.*

<sup>229</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *am dros p'irkushi iorze mdgara.*

<sup>230</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ts'asula es tavadi, p'irkushistvis mshvild-isari gauk'etebinebia da zroiani isrebi.*

<sup>231</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *p'irkushi tvitonats gamohq'olia.*

<sup>232</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *ik, sadats devebi mdgaran, akhlo erti p'at'ara goria, mashaghosgors edzakhian.*

13. Tskarostauli (St. George) and Pirqushi went around the hill, and from there, they started shooting arrows at the Devis<sup>233</sup>.
14. Since then, Tskarostauli settled at Tskarostavi and became the Gods Son<sup>234</sup>.
15. Now he is addressed as: "Noble of Tskarostavi, St. George, conqueror of Devis and old women (witches)".<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *mohp'arebian mashaghos goridan ts'q'arostauli da p'irkushi da isrebit es devebi sul amouts'q'vet'iat*.

<sup>234</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *mas shemdeg ts'q'arostauli ts'q'arostavs damdgara da khtishvilad gadaktseula*.

<sup>235</sup> **Georgian transcribed text:** *akhla ase akhseneben: „tavado ts'q'arostav ts'midao giorgio, devdedabert amomts'q'vet'o“*.

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