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SOME REMARKS ON THE GENESIS OF GREEK AND GEORGIAN NON-RITUAL SONGS

The search for the common cultural and linguistic roots of various peoples is impossible without examining folklore. Georgian verse, with its vocabulary and symbolic images, sometimes accompanied by visual and emotive forms of expression (tune, dance, games, ritual), best of all conveys not only civil consciousness, moral norms and national identity, but also intercultural logic and even the encounter of civilizations and cultural migrations and integrations.

In this article, I will dwell on the folk lyrics, which now have lost their ritual significance, but may presumably have stemmed originated from a ritual. As time passed, along with the abandonment of customs, they broke off from their roots and were modified following the development of artistic vision. As the question is very subtle and cannot be covered in one article, I will only confine myself to several observations and hypotheses. The most expected theme to open the discussions obviously is immurement lyrics, so widespread among many peoples. However, I will not dwell on it as the topic has been covered in my earlier article *Folk Fancy or Reminiscences Shaped as a Legend?*, published in one of the issues of *Phasis*.¹

In my opinion, a number of Greek songs known as allegorical songs² must be associated with the archaic age. This assumption is prompted by their content, vocabulary and the conversational genre. I believe the allegories and metaphors found in the lyrics stem from old beliefs, pagan cults and animal or bird totems. The most recurrent bird image found in

¹ Phasis. Greek and Roman Studies, 9, Tbilisi 2006, 7-13.

² Πετρόπουλος Δ., Ελληνικά Δημοτικά Τραγούδια 1959, 83-101.

the texts is partridge, while among the images of plants prevail role, dandelion, cypress, apple tree, bay tree and lemon bush, which can be found in allegorical, as well as in love, wedding, mourning and didactic songs.

I will dwell on the tree cult, as the respective examples are more vivid and illustrative.

A number of non-ritual Greek songs are devoted to a tree which is believed to be absolutely special:

*Δέντρο έιχα στην αυλή μου,
τι κλαράκι δεν το ξέρω,*

I had a tree in my yards,
So thickly branched I never knew
(can hardly be imagined)

*πράσινα, ξανθά'ν'τα φύλλα
κι ασημένια τα κλωνάρια.³
Και δεν ξέρω τι δέντρο ' να
πόχ' ολόχρυσα τα φύλλα...
και στη ρίζα κρύα βρύση...⁴*

Green, fair leaves
And silver limbs.
And I do not know what tree it is,
Whose leaves are gilt (golden) all over ...,
And there is a cold spring at its foot ...

In one of the songs, the tree is decorated with a gold cross, which is worshipped:

*Στη Ρουμέλη ένα δέντρο
πλατύφυλλο και δροσερό
έχει στη ρίζα κρύο νερό
και στην κορφή χρυσό σταυρό,
που πάνε οι ναύτες για νερό
κι ορκίζοντ' όλοι στο σταυρό.⁶*

In Rumelia⁵, one tree,
broadleaved and young,
Has a cold spring at its foot
And a gold cross on its top
Where sailors go for water
And all swear an oath on before cross.

Some lyrics specify the species of the tree and even present a dialogue with it:

*Μωρή κοντούλα λεμονιά με τα πολλά λεμόνια,
low lemon tree bearing many lemons,
πότ' άυξησες και πλατύνες και απόλυσες κλωνάρια
When did you bloom and became large and grew branches
κι όλο τον κόσμο σέπασες και όλην την οικουμένη...⁷
And covered the whole land and the whole world...*

³ Ibid; 93, 112.

⁴ Ibid; 112

⁵ Continental Greece.

⁶ Πετρόπουλος Δ., 94, 113/1-6.

⁷ Ibid; 97, 122.

The tree of the Greek songs is distinguished not only by its appearance and by being an object of human respect⁸, but also because it can impose prohibitions to men. For example, in one of the lyrics, an apple tree would not give out its fruits to men: (*Μηλιά δεν αφήνει να πάρω μήλο*).⁹

Another detail of no less significance is a tree standing in a yard or near a gate, which serves as a presentiment of the death of a close person:

Δέντρο είχαμε στην πόρτα μας και πύργο στην αυλή μας

We had a tree by our door and a tower in the yard

*και ξεριζώθη το δένδρο και πλάκωσε τον πύργο...*¹⁰

And the tree withered and the tower collapsed ...

Είχα μηλιά στην πόρτα μας και κλήμα στην αυλή μας...

I had an apple tree by the door and grapes in the yard,

*τώρα μηλιά μαράθηκε το κλήμαν εξεράθη...*¹¹

Now the apple tree and the grapes have withered ...

*Καήκανε τα δύο δένδρα που ήσαν αδελφωμένα*¹²

Two trees have burnt down, which had grown together

στη μέση του περιβολιού μας κάη το κυπαρίσσι,

In the middle of our yard, cypress is burning,

*Που'χε στη ρύζα κρύο νερό και κρυσταλλένια βρύση...*¹³

This had cold waters at its foot and a pure spring...

In the Georgian folklore, the death of a close person is likewise associated with a damaged tree:

ქალმა სთქვა: ვნახე სიზმარი ღამღეგს ენკენისთვისახა,

A woman said: I have dreamt a dream as September was coming in;

ცა წითლად-ყვითლად ელაგდა, სეგყვას ისვრიდა ქვისახა,

The sky was glowing red and yellow, it was hailing stones;

ძიღში მიმგვრევედა ხეხილსა, დარგულსა აღვის ხიხასა...

I dreamt it was smashing down a tree in my yard, the poplar tree ...

⁸ According to Greek songs, man has a special attitude to partridge, which, like the above-mentioned tree, is covered with gold. The hunter does not kill it, but feed it with sugar, showing particular respect. In some songs, it is referred to as “mother” (Πετρόπουλος Δ., 107, 114, 132). A similar image is dandelion, which is presented exactly like the tree in the above-mentioned songs (wide-leaved, sprouting, covering the whole area). The songs also contain a call for treating a dandelion in a special way, while its stealth or disappearance from the yard causes sorrow (Ibid., 116, 117, 118).

⁹ Ibid., 99, 129.

¹⁰ Ibid., 243.

¹¹ Ibid., 245.

¹² Ibid., 65.

¹³ Ibid., 64.

*ვნახე და კიდევ შევესწარ სიკვდილსა თავის ქმრისასა.*¹⁴

Having had such a dream, I indeed witnessed the death of my husband.

According to Georgian scholars, the poplar tree of the Georgian folklore is a cypress. It obviously was a cult tree in Pre-Christian Georgia and was later quite naturally adopted in Christianity.¹⁵

The following Greek song, which Greek scholars assign to the mourning cycle, seems especially interesting and relevant in this regard:

Κυπρισσάκι μ'όμορφο, που θές να σε φυτέψω ...

My beautiful cypress, where do you want me to plant you?¹⁶

Θε να σε βάλω φύτεμα μεσ' στο νεκροταφείο,

I will plant you in the grave yard,

να απλώσεις κλώνους και κλώνια, κλώνους και περικλώνια,

So that you could grow boughs, branches, limbs and twigs,

και στα περικλωνάρια σου καντήλια θα κρεμάσω,

And I will hang an icon lamp on your branches,

და შენს განშტოებებზე კანდელებს ჩამოვკიდებ,

για να'ρχεται η μανσοლა σου, δάκρυα να τα γιομίζη,

So that you mother could come and fill it with tears,

რათა მოვიდეს დედაშენი და აავსოს ცრემლებით,

*να'ρχοντα και τ'αδέρφια σου, για να το απογιομιζου.*¹⁷

And your brothers and sisters could come and fill it up to the rim.

The special attitude to a tree expressed in the beginning of the quoted song evidently reflects the ancient custom of worshiping a tree, which is characteristic of many peoples of the world. In the following lines, this repercussion of the pagan cult acquires Christian tints as they mention an icon lamp, an important church attribute. The text also conveys an ancient tradition of planting a tree on the burial ground, while at the end, the tree is identified with the deceased. This could be interpreted as an unambiguous expression of totemism on the one hand and as the starting stage of the metaphorization of flora on the other – i. e. the tree totem is the grounds that fostered the poetic symbolism of plants. An analogical example can also be found in Greek love songs, full of metaphors and similes. No one argues that in love songs a metaphor is the way of

¹⁴ Kotetishvili V., Folk Poetry, 2nd ed., Tbilisi 1961, 70 (*in Georgian*).

¹⁵ Georgian Folklore, vol. 3, ed. By M. Chikovani, Tbilisi 1964, 158-176 (*in Georgian*).

¹⁶ Some versions of this song continue with reasoning on why the teller cannot plant the cypress in the yard, at the sea-side or in the river.

¹⁷ Πετρόπουλος Δ., 245.

rendering emotions. However, if folk festivities and ceremonies are assumed to be the best environment for expressing the feelings, the traces of rituals and archaic beliefs can be discerned even in love songs, which passed such a long way of evolution and modification that may appear somewhat detached when presented from this particular perspective. It can only be said that when looking for the genetic tie and the ritual import of love lyrics, one might find especially interesting the phrases inviting the listeners outdoors for some news (e. g. *Ευγάτ' αγόρια στο χορό, κοράσια, στα τραγούδια, να ιδήτε και να μάθετε, πως πιάνετ' η αγάπη*).¹⁸ Such phrases are obviously attuned to the content of Greek ritual lyrics, which must be indicative of the genetic ties between seasonal and love songs, with ritual serving as their common grounds.

Another genre of non-ritual folk lyrics is lullabies. As lulling children to sleep cannot be called a ritual, the accompanying songs cannot be considered ritual songs either. On the other hand, they undoubtedly contain the elements of blessing and magic. During child's ailment, the Greek lullaby could be performed for ritual purposes. This assumption is suggested by one of the versions of the song:

Κοιμήσου με την Παναγιά και με τον Άι-Γιάννη
Go to sleep (together) with Virgin Mary and John the Prophet
 και με τον Τιμιο Σταυρό και όπου πονεί να γιάνει...¹⁹
And the Holy Cross, and your pain will be relieved...

Words with nan stem, found in the lullabies of some nations (e. g. Georgian *ianvana vardovanana, ias gik'reb, vards gik'onav, nana, nana, nana, bat'ono, nanaia, nana-shvilo, nanas ch'irime, nana, nana, nanishana, ianvaninao, nana, nanas getqiana, nana nana mamasa, gazrda gakharebasa, etc.*)²⁰ are typical of the Greek lullaby as well:

<i>Νάνι του και νάνα του,</i>	Nani to him and nana to him,
<i>όσο νά'ρθ'η μάνα του...²¹</i>	Till his mother comes ...
<i>Νάνι το λέγ' αυγερινός,</i>	Nani is said by the morning star,
<i>νάνα το λέγ' η πούλια,</i>	Nani is said by a bird,
<i>νάνα το λέγ' η μάνα μου...²²</i>	Nani is said by my mother ...

¹⁸ Greek Love Folk Songs, Tbilisi 1999, 10-11.

¹⁹ Μαγκλη Μ., Καπελλά Θ., Λαογραφικά Καλύμνου, Αθήνα 1997, 123.

²⁰ Georgian Folk Treasury, vol. 1, Tbilisi 1991, 245-249.

²¹ Πετρόπουλος Δ., 1959, 147.

²² *Ibid.*, 150.

*Νάνι, που τό' σπερνε αϊτός...*²³

Nani to (him) who was con-
ceived by an eagle ...

*Νάνι, νάνι, το παιδάκι
που κοιμάται σαν τ' αρνάκι...*²⁴

Nani, nani to the child,
Who is sleeping like a lamb ...

According to the widely accepted theory, worlds with *nan*-stem must have denoted an ancient idol.²⁵ If we share this assumption, we could argue that lullabies must have once had an unambiguously ritual import.

Greek akritic lyrics, genetically related to mourning songs, may also have been associated with rituals. As links between laments and the heroic poetry are quite common in folk art, the idea expressed in the present article cannot be considered as a test for methodological novelty. Therefore, I will only confine myself to highlighting that the songs of the klefts and *armatoloi* do not show any affinity with lamentations although they are reckoned among the Greek heroic poetry along with akritic songs. I believe this has a simple explanation: akritic songs are much earlier than kleftic and therefore, clearly convey the traces of genetic links established upon their creation or at the early stage of development. These links are sometimes so vivid that whole formulae repeat unaltered in songs and mourning lyrics related to Digenes Akritas and other akritians.²⁶

Greek love songs have phrases that may suggest associations with the remote age of the sun cult:

Παρακαλώ σε ήλιε μου να γοργοβασιλέψεις...

Please, Sun, be late to set down ...

*να βρω ψωμί, να βρω κρασί και ρούχα για να βάλω...*²⁷

So that I could earn some bread and wine, and clad myself,

*Έογα ήλιε για να βγώ, να λάμψεις για να λάμψω...*²⁸

Come up, Sun, so that I could come out and light up so that I could light up ...

*Εγώ τον ήλιο αγαπώ, τον κουρνιαχτό ζυλεύω...*²⁹

I love the Sun and envy the cloud ...

²³ Σαρεγιάννη Φ., *Νανουρίσματα, ταχταρίσματα, παιχινιδάκια*, Αθήνα 1953, 92.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

²⁵ Georgian Folklore, 99.

²⁶ Saunier G., *Is There such a Thing as an Acritic Song? Problems in the Classification of Modern Greek Narrative Songs in New Approaches to Byzantine Heroic Poetry*, ed., by Beaton R., Ricks D., London 1993, 12-16.

²⁷ Πετρόπουλος Δ., 52.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

I believe these verses must be the vestiges of hymns to the Sun, which have nowadays lost the function of supplication. In this connection, it seems to be highly appropriate to remember the following Georgian folk verse:

*მზეო, ამოდი, ამოდი, ნუ ეფარები ვორასა,*³⁰
Sun, rise, rise, do not hide beyond the hill.

Or a Pre-Christian Georgian song, performed when child was going to sleep or had woken up:

მზე შინა და მზე გარეთა,
The Sun inside and the Sun outside,
მზევ, შინ შემოდიო!
Sun, come in!

... წითელ კაბას შევიკურავ,
I will sew for you a red dress,
მზევ, შინ შემოდიო!
Sun, come in!

სანაგრელსა, ფრიალასა,
A wonder dress, a wavy dress
*მზევ, შინ შემოდიო!*³¹
Sun, come in!

Here is another wonderful Georgian folk verse:

მზე ღელაა ჩემი,
The Sun is my mother,
მთვარე – მამა ჩემი,
The Moon is my father
მოციმციმე ვარსკვლავები
Twinkling stars are
*და და ძმას ჩემო*³²
my sisters and brothers

The following Greek love song also reflects the animistic world view:

Ἥλιε, γιατί'σαι κίτρινος, γιατί'σαι μαραμένος;
Sun, why are you yellow, why are you bleached?
Μάννα μ', μιὰ κόρη που είδα γώ στον αργαλειό και υφαίνει...
My mother, a girl I saw by a loom weaving ...
*εκείνη με βάλαντωσεν, εκείνη με μαραίνει.*³³

³⁰ Georgian Folk Treasury, 7.

³¹ Ibid., 10.

³² Ibid; 9.

³³ Πετρόπουλος, 37 α', β'.

She tires me, makes me feeble.

Celestial bodies figure in Georgian love songs as well:

ცაზე მზე დაბნელებულა,

The Sun has eclipsed in the sky

მთვარე აყრიდა შაქარსა,

The Moon was strewing sugar at her,

მთვარე, ნუ აყრი შაქარსა,

Moon, do not strew sugar,

არავინ მოგცემს მაგ ქალსა,³⁴

No one will give you he lady (in marriage).

When discussing the sun cult, one should not ignore an extract from a folk verse about the personified sun deity called Barbol, who is attended personally by the Holy Virgin:

ლამარია³⁵ სეფას ვიშლის,

Lamaria lays for you a table under the arbor branches

ლამარია სურნელს გიკმევს,

Lamaria burns incense for you,

შეგვეწიე ბარბოლ ღოღაშ,

Come to our help, Barbol Dolash,

რა გამოლევს, ვიდრე გვწყალობ,

Until your benevolence rests with us,

საღმრთო ქვევრში წმინდა ღვინოს,

We will not run out of the holy wine in the divine jar

სასხვერპლოზე – წმინდა მვარაკს³⁶

And the sacred offering on the sacrificial alter.

Here is another Svan prayer to the Sun, called Lile:

დიდება შენდა, დიღო ღმერთო,

Glory to you, great God,

დიდება შენდა, მეციერო!

Glory to you, the heavenly being.

ოქროსი ვიღვას სრა სასახლე,

You have a golden palace,

მღუღე გავლია ოქროვანი³⁷

With a gold wall around.

³⁴ Georgian Folk Treasury, 8.

³⁵ Virgin Mary.

³⁶ Georgian Folk Treasury, 11.

³⁷ Ibid., 10.

Though Greek and Georgian relations are attested at the latest from the age of colonization, I do not aim to assert that the cult texts found in folklore are the result of mutual influence. However, it should be noted that in the Greek mythological thought Colchian Medea is presented as the descendent of the Sun god, while etymological links between *Helios*, *Lile* and *lelo - lelo* being an ancient Georgian game related to the sun cult, the prototype of rugby - are beyond doubt.

I believe the cited texts provide enough grounds to assert that songs nowadays assigned to non-ritual corpora are rooted in ancient pagan beliefs and magic rituals. When the latter were forgotten, the songs, having lost their ritual function, reshaped the relics of the past and laid the foundation for new genres.