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**THE MYTHOEPIC ASPECTS OF THE DISMEMBERMENT OF THE HUMAN BODY IN
ANCIENT GREEK AND GEORGIAN LITERATURE (AESCHYLUS, SOPHOCLES,
VAZHA-PHAVELA)**

One of the forms of the dismemberment of the human body is cutting off limbs. This tradition is reflected in Greek and Georgian literary sources in an interesting way. Our article deals with the analysis of this question. To begin with, I find it necessary to emphasize one circumstance: the authors whose works we are going to discuss – Aeschylus, Sophocles (5th c. B. C.) and Vazha Pshavela (19th c. A. D.) are very far from one another in time and space, but the analysis of the material showed us once more that a certain nucleus of similar beliefs and images is singled out in the world heathen religions, myths and rites. The unique feature of these similar beliefs is that they “work” without time and space, they do not know language, racial, territorial barriers. They are firmly fixed in man's subconsciousness and sometimes, quite unexpectedly, will come to the surface in the form of a rudiment even in an extremely refined and well developed society.¹ The heathen points of view about the parts of the human body, the dismemberment of the human body, ritual killing, about killing in general belong to the group of these beliefs. The problem is vast, that is why I will touch only upon concrete questions in this paper.

Now I will present the material to be analyzed. The myth concerned with the murder of Agamemnon after his return home is dealt with in Aeschylus' “Libation Bearers” and Sophocles' “Electra”.

In Aeschylus' “Libation Bearers” the chorus sings:

„ <u>ἐμασχαλίσθη</u> δέ γ' ὥς τοδ' εἰδήης,	439
ἔπρασε δ' ἄπέρ νιν ὧδε θάπτει,	
μόρον κτίσαι μωμένα	
ἄφερτον αἰῶνι σῶ.	
κλύεις πατρώους δῦας ἀτίμους.	443

In Sophocles' “Electra” Electra says:

... „Ἀρχὴν δ' ἄν, εἰ μὴ τλημονεστάτη γυνή	439
πασῶν ἐβλαστε, τάσδε δυσμενεῖς χοάς	
οὐκ ἄν ποθ', ὄν γ' ἔκτεινε, τῶδ' ἐπέστεφε.	
Σκέψαι γὰρ εἴ σοι προσφιλῶς αὐτῇ δοκεῖ	
γέρα τάδ' οὖν τάφοισι δέξεσθαι νέκυς,	
ὕφ' ἧς θανῶν ἄτιμος ὥστε δυσμενῆς	
<u>ἐμασχαλίσθη</u> , κάπῃ λουτροῖσιν κάρῃ	
κηλίδας ἐξέμαξεν· ἄρα μὴ δοκεῖς	
λυτήρι' αὐτῇ ταῦτα τοῦ φόνου φέρειν;	
Οὐκ ἔστιν· ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν μέθεες. σύ δέ,	
τεμοῦσα κρατὸς βοστρύχων ἄκρας φόβας	
κάμοῦ ταλαίνης, σμικρὰ μὲν τάδ' ἄλλ' ὄμως	
ἄχω, δὸς αὐτῶ τήνδε λιπαρῇ τρίχα	
καὶ ζῶμα τοῦμόν οὐ χλιδαῖς ἠσκημένον. ²	452

¹ We quite agree with the opinion of C. Levi-Strauss that both rites and myths do not have an end. Myth is based on the codes of the second row (The codes of the first row make up a language). Beyond the originality of myths which can be noticed at a first glance very deep laws generally act. Scholars must study the way the myth “thinks” in a man without his volition. K. Леви-Стросс, *Μυθολογικὴ, Σύρον καὶ πρὶν ἐτοιμασμένον*, Μ., Σ.-Πετ. 2000. σ. 15-21.

² Αἰσχυλός, *Χορηφοὶ, Κακτός*, 1992; Σοφοκλῆς, *Ἠλεκτρα, Κακτός*, 1992.

We come across the verb *μασχαλιζω* in both extracts. It denotes tying (or putting under) the arms and legs cut off from the killed enemy's body to the armpit of the killed man.³ This verb is found only in the works of these two authors and only in these extracts. We come across the fact of cutting off the limbs from a killed man's body in Homer's works (3 or 4 times). I cannot say that this form of encroachment upon man's body is frequently found in Antique literature and that it leaps to the eye. The situation is different in Vazha-Pshavela's poems where we come across the custom of cutting off the right hand of the killed enemy very often and in different contexts. I will quote several extracts from different works.⁴

“Aluda Ketelauri”

Aluda	“has hacked off many Chechens' hands With his sharp-edged sabre”.
Aluda	“wouldn't hack off Mutsal's hand, he said it was a sin”.
Aluda	“has hung the hand of Mutsal's brother on his saddle – bow”.
Aluda says,	“I couldn't cut Mutsal's right hand off, I could not bear it”.
The Khevsuri youths say to Aluda,	“You killed him, and didn't cut off his hand. What was the purpose of pursuing him then?”
Mindia says to the villagers,	“If you doubt it, here is the Chechen's cut off hand”.
Mindia	“gave the hand to Aluda: take and fix it to the wall”.
Aluda says to Mindia,	“If I had wanted to cut it off, Wouldn't I have done it myself?”
Aluda says,	“It is not right to kill the foe, Unless you cut off his hand with a knife”.
Aluda is told	“An enormous number of hands Is hanging on your wall; They are like a bridge, those Right hands of Lezhgi and Chechens”.
The Khevsuri	“throw Mutsal's hand that Came from his arm, to a dog to eat”.
In Khevsureti	“the Chechen's right hand was dragged by the children along the ground, fixed to a hook”.

³ Greek-English Lexicon, H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, Oxf. 1887-1937. Suida. Дворецкий И. X. Древнегреческо-русский словарь, М. 1958.

⁴ Vazha-Pshavela, works, Tb., 1960.

“Bakhtrioni”

Lela has a dream

“A man, dark like pitch,
comes, dragging men's heads along;
approaches me and puts
my brother's bleeding arms in front of me”.

“Guiglia”

A woman wishes
the following to
Guiglia going to
the war,

“May you come victorious,
with enemies' hands hanging
over your shoulders”.

“Host and Guest”

Zviadauri

“had cut off many Chechens' right hands,
and sent them to their
graves before their time”.

The killed
Zviadauri's
mother demands

“Show me the arms of my
son, bring them and give them to me!
Throw the earth of the grave
upon my heart with his right hand”.

Revenge (A Story from Circassians' Life)

Demur has killed
his enemy,

“he hung the hand,
obtained last night on
the saddle-bow of his horse”.

Demur

“must present Aslan
with Kichir's hand;
the still hot hand
of the hero hung on his
saddle – bow”.

Demur is glad

“that he is carrying
Kichir's hand which
is of great value”.

Demur says to his
wife,

“I have cut his right hand off,
I have got it with me.
It is the proof of what I have said.
And showed her the right
hand covered with blood,
with a laughing face”.

Demur about Kichir:

“Hasn't Kichir killed many,
hasn't he cut off many hands?”

Demur's wife says
to him, "I don't want to see Kichir's hand, it frightens me.
It suits a man to hold
the hand of a killed enemy".

Demur "takes the right hand home,
hangs it beside his coat of mail,
where his shield and sword, his
pistol hang side by side".

Demur's wife "lit a wick – lamp, wanting to
see the cut off right hand of the hero".

The wife
curses Kichir: "May your ugly hand be
stuck to the wall by your enemy".

"The Snake-Eater"

"Everybody dreams of killing
the leader, of hacking off
his head and right hand,
and of going home crowned with glory".

"Ivane Kotorashvili's Story"

Ivane "It was not his habit
to cut off the enemy's hand,
besides, where he could put it,
what was his share?"

Ivane's mother
feared "Lest he should be killed,
his hand should be cut off".

As we see, the tradition of cutting off the killed enemy's right hand (or arm) is found in Vazha-Pshavela's works many times. We can also see that this tradition was widely spread not only among the Georgians, but among the population of North Caucasus as well (the poem "Revenge"). We can present a more or less full picture of the above – mentioned tradition by means of the material provided by Vazha's works.

An arm is cut off from the killed enemy, i. e. the cutting off is preceded by killing. The killed enemy is disarmed, and then his right hand is cut off with a knife – sometimes the hand and the arm. The cut off hand (or arm) is taken home and fixed to the gate in the wall. It is a token of this person's bravery. The parents of killed heroes take care that their sons' right arms should not fall into the enemy's hands. If the arm of the enemy is not cut off, it is considered to be the breach of the tradition.

We will return to separate details of the picture presented above, again. And now I will try to present a thorough analysis of the question.

1. Two forms of cutting off a hand are known:

a). The cutting off a hand (or a hand with an arm) from a living man is proved to have existed in many oriental countries. It could happen with the purpose of punishment (e. g. for stealing). The cases of punishing a craftsman for bad work, or on the contrary, in order that he should not create the same kind of thing any more. (The reminiscences of this tradition are found in Georgian literature: "The Hand of the Great Master" by Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, "The Unconquered" by Niko Lortkipanidze).

b). The cutting off of a killed enemy's hand. This is the form we are going to discuss. To make the analysis thorough, I find it necessary to speak about the mytho-ritual, functional and symbolic meaning of the hand first.

How can the symbolism of the hand be explained? According to the dictionaries and encyclopaedias of symbols⁵ the hand and arm can be divided into three parts: from fingers to the wrist, from the hand to the elbow, from the elbow to the shoulder. Each part has its explanation and concrete meaning.

On the whole, the hand denotes physical strength, power, might, action, supremacy. In Old Hebrew the hand and power were expressed by the same word. The power of the hand is often mentioned in Hittite documents, besides, from the time immemorial it was considered that the hand could impart spiritual and physical energy. It became quite a strong symbol from the very beginning. Pictures of hands with widespread fingers can be found on the walls of caves and rocks in the Paleolithic era.⁶

The function of the hand is presented in a very interesting way in mythical beliefs of different peoples. Multihanded gods and goddesses are known to exist in the Hindu tradition. These hands meant their (the gods') omnipotence. Each hand had its function. In the Hindu and Buddhistic tradition there is a whole language of symbols showing over 2000 symbolic gestures of the hand and its fingers. Asian ritual dances are based on the meanings of these very mudras (various positions of the hand and fingers). I. e. the hand is the "cleverest" organ which "speaks" in the language of symbols. If we develop this point of view, it will be quite obvious that speaking with the help of hands is the most universal way, gestures need no explanation. Ennumerable gestures have reached our days, and this phenomenon speaks of their being universal.

In Egypt Atute's hand was considered to be the emblem of fertility. It was Atute's hand that helped men and women come out of the body of the creator god. The goddess Isis is referred to as the "divine hand".

There was a tower in Babylon on which the hand dedicated to Anou was erected. It was called Zida's Tower or "the tower of the right hand".

According to the ideas of different peoples the hand had a function of a charm, a protector.⁷

The picture of the hand with widespread fingers is found on the ritual clothes of the natives of some Indian tribes. The pictures of hands and feet are found in the Eskimo culture as well. Pictures analogous to those on the clothes of Eskimo shamans are found in Mexican tribes and in Aztecs too.

In all peoples, with the exception of the Chinese and Japanese, the priority is given to the right hand. The right hand presents the active initial source, future, sincerity, logic in the language of symbols; the acquired knowledge, experience are accumulated in it. The left hand represents the past, passive initial source, temporary power, duplicity. People were blessed with the right hand and cursed with the left. The right hand is found in the Christian Trinity as well, where the right hand denotes the essence of contagious magic. Shaking hands, patting a shoulder, putting a hand on the head, raising a hand, etc. are ritual as well.⁸

The hand also represents fate, destiny (chiromancy, palmistry). In Mexico, for instance, they thought that the hand was connected with the beyond world, that is why the hand with wide stretched fingers was perceived as a symbol of death.

From the time immemorial a belief existed that the hands of prominent people (kings, leaders, chiefs, religious leaders) had a power of working miracles (healing). The hand had a function of a weapon as well.

We find some allusions to a special function of man's limbs in Greek myths and rituals:

⁵ Энциклопедия символов, знаков, эмблем, М. 1999. Ганс Бидерманн, Энциклопедия символов, М. 1996. Джек Тресиддер, Словарь символов, М., 1999. Надя Жюльен, Словарь символов, Чел. 1999.

⁶ Pictures of hands are found in France (Garga), in the Algerian Sahara (Jabarene), in Argentina, Northern Australia; on Easter Island an ancient bas-relief was found with a picture of a hand with widespread fingers. Mirimanov does not analyze the presented material, he presents them as the first works of early art. Виль Мириманов, Искусство и миф. Центральный образ картины мира, М., 1997. The hand is found in the pictographic written language, and the letter "K" is supposed to have developed from this symbol. See the Encyclopaedia of the Bible transl. from English, Tb., 1997. p. 26. Another version says that "Δ" was developed from the criptogram of the hand (arm).

⁷ E. g. The Jews had a charm – a bronze hand expressing the concentration of spiritual fluids. The hand has a special meaning in Islamic countries. Alongside with the above-mentioned features, it is also considered to be the organ of passing knowledge on.

The sculpture or a picture of the hand painted black or red was placed inside or outside the house in Mohameddan countries. The hand of Mohamed's daughter, Fatima, was considered to be the strongest charm among Mohameddians. The wearing of the hand as a charm was especially popular with the thieves' world. A hanged man's cut off dried hand was carried to achieve success.

⁸ A great many figurative expressions have survived in the speech of different peoples, where the ritual function of the hand is emphasized: "to lend a hand," "to ask for sb's hand," "to be hand in glove with sb.," etc. Here we must mention that there are names in Georgian connected with the word hand – "kheli" in Georgian: Khelaya, Shavkhelishvili, Khelashvili.

Foot (leg): everyone has heard about Achilles' heel. In his youth Odysseus, while hunting, came across a boar which injured his leg and left him a scar which became a sign by which he was recognized afterwards. While studying the structure of myths, K. Levi-Strauss devoted a special attention to the parameters of the physical features of personages. On the basis of the analysis of the etymology of names the scholar comes to the conclusion that Laius is left-handed, Oedipus has swollen feet, Labdacus is lame, i. e. every generation of this family, alongside with a renovated sin, has a common problem connected with their limbs (hands, arms, feet, legs).⁹

Hand (arm): Orestes, tortured by the Erinyes' pursuit, bites off his finger with his own teeth to appease these goddesses, and after this several Erinyes changed their colour (they became white); as to Orestes, he calmed down. A small stone mound is erected in the place where Orestes bit off his finger, and a finger made of stone is placed on it. This mound is called "a grave of a finger" (Paus, VIII. 34, 1-2).

The Nemean Lion bit off one of the fingers of Hercules during a single combat.¹⁰ It is noteworthy that the most mysterious gods of Samothrace are called fingers – dactyls.

The scholars studying the anthropomorphous god and, respectively, the parts of the body of the first man, consider them to be the prototype of sacral things, the so called primary things. Toporov shares Heidegger's opinion concerning the conception of "turning into things". From this point of view the interrelation of the micro and macro cosmos, i. e. the interrelationship between man and universe is realized through these primary things. Against this background man's limbs – hands, arms, feet and legs, like eyes, ears, mouth, head, heart and other parts of the body, obtain the status of "strong primary things".¹¹

From this point of view I find a passage from Vazha-Pshavela's poem interesting. Here the character speaks of the cut off hand as a thing. Aluda looks at the hacked off right hand of his killed enemy and says:

"What do I need it for, it won't serve me as a sword,
It can't be used as a shield,
If I take it to the mountains, it won't mow,
And won't come in useful as a hook to hold hay".

Aluda compares the cut off right hand to weapons and tools: a sword, a shield, a scythe, a hook. Here the function of the hand as a primary thing is perceived subconsciously.

I consider it necessary to pay a special attention to a certain paradigm for the further analysis of the question under study. I base the discussion of this paradigm on R. Onians' work "On the Knees of Gods".¹² R. B. Onians, on the basis of a large number of literary and other materials concludes that Greeks (and not only Greeks) think that *θυμός* is spread in the lungs and chest; *ψυχή* – in the head (in the brain), in the spine (marrow), genitals (genital liquid) and knees (membrane liquid). The vertical position of these organs and their close interrelationship, which in our opinion is substantially proved in Onians' work, creates a united diachronous axis. If we take this thesis as a point of departure, then the function of the head in different peoples' myths and rituals, becomes quite clear – the head is life, or the thing where life "is placed".¹³

⁹ К. Леви-Строс, Структурная антропология, М., 1985. с. 189-192.

¹⁰ Грейвс Р., Мифы древней Греции, М., 1992, с. 350.

¹¹ Топоров В. Н. Миф. Ритуал. Символ. Образ; Исследования в области мифопоэтического, М., 1995, с. 11-22.

¹² Онианс Р., На коленях богов, М., 1999.

¹³ Onians explains the custom existing in different peoples' beliefs of cutting off the killed enemy's head and keeping it, by this special function of the head. They kept the cut off heads of their ancestors. They worshipped and hung them on the walls of their abodes to guarantee the protection from spirits. Frazer G. G. *The Golden Bough*, London 1923 262-269) has also noticed the variety of this belief spread among different peoples. This belief and action can be explained by the idea that man's soul remains in his head. And *Ψυχή* is what continues to live after the death of the body (the custom of cutting off the head and preserving it existed in Germanic, Celtic, Hittite, Semitic and other peoples). We come across cut off heads in "big" myths of Greek sources, e. g. Medusa and Orpheus' heads. Both of them "continue" acting independently of the body. As to Medusa's head, it is a well-known charm and is firmly fixed on Athena's ritual clothes and shield.

The sacral nature of the head is corroborated by its presence in the formulae of oaths and entreaties. This belief is also connected with the prohibition of eating the brains of the animal (which was also considered to have *ψυχή*). It is also supposed that gilding of the horns and preserving the horns of sacrificial animals are based on this belief. The acknowledgement of the sacral function of hair (moustache) is connected with this phenomenon as well. I. e. anything that is connected with the head is naturally perceived to be the continuation of *ψυχή*. To be more precise, there is part of *ψυχή* in them too. That is why sacrificing cut off hair, a lock of hair to the deceased, shaving one's head, putting ashes (grains) on one's head was perceived as

As I have mentioned above, Onians gives a convincing proof of his point of view – the life-giving “liquid” circulates on a diachronous plane. The scholar does not take an interest in other parts of the body, though he gives several examples of encroaching upon some parts of the body of the killed enemy.¹⁴ As for the hands, their function, and the custom of cutting them off, the scholar does not speak about them. There is the following remark in one place: the gesture of nodding one's head (denoting the affirmation of something) and raising a hand mean the same thing. He writes: “In my opinion, the belief in the sacredness of the right hand is explained in the same way, for it confirms the promise.”¹⁵

Relying on Onians' point of view, I will try to expand my discussion of the point at issue and connect hands with the above presented scheme – head-spine-genitals-knees. I take the thesis that the model of the perfect cosmos (macro and micro cosmos) is created when diachronous and synchronous (horizontal and perpendicular) planes cross each other, as my starting point. + this intersection is the model of man's structure as well. If ψυχή, in Onians' opinion “circulates from the head to the knees and vice versa, another organ is also necessary to make ψυχή “work”. This organ is arms.

Arms make a horizontal plane. Hands and arms are the performers of the head (brain); the head issues orders, the hand performs them, which, essentially, in the language of deciphering symbols, have an equal meaning.

For a more thorough analysis, we find it necessary to discuss another point of view. I mean the conclusions of the dismemberment of suffering (torn) gods.¹⁶

Ivanov thinks that the rite of sacrifice did not spring up together with any religion. It is older than religion and expresses people's psychological attitude, orgiastic ecstasy, the wish of expressing positive and negative emotions, liberating oneself from stress.

Thus, sacrifice, the dismemberment of the victim (cannibalism-at the early stage) is the oldest code implanted in the man's subconscious.

We can follow the modification of the forms of this tradition in the course of centuries, but their essence is unchanged.

The myths which Greek tragedy writers use as plots for their dramas, tell us about the actions of suffering Dionysus at some stage or other (the creation of Greek drama is directly connected with Dionysus' cult), the characters, at a profane level, repeat the actions suitable to men's relations where harm (πάθη) is concerned. The idea of the servants of Dionysus being ready for sacrifice is always felt in the actions of these characters done when they are enraged.¹⁷

While Aeschylus and Sophocles are contemporaries of the “Dionysian” myth and ritual, live in those surroundings, in the period when these rituals are “in force,” or, at any rate, the memory about them is still fresh, Vazha-Pshavela is very far from those days. But the universal meaning of the great myth and ritual is that no space and time exist for it.¹⁸

a substitute of a mourner's head (soul), or a symbolic offering. The ritual of cutting off hair is widely presented both in Antiquity (Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, etc.) and Georgian literature (in this case we mainly mean the material presented in Vazha-Pshavela's works).

There is another custom which is also connected with this belief. We will specially dwell on this subject. We mean a passage from Sophocles' “Electra” when Clytemnestra, after killing Agamemnon, cleans the bloody sacrificial knife on Agamemnon's hair – κάρη κηλίδας | ἐξέμαξεν (El. 445).

The verb δειροτομεῖν is used to denote the ritual cutting off the head which is corroborated in the following sources (II, XIII 202 and then XVII, 126 and then XXI 89, 555; Od. XXII, 328 and then 349, X, 438 and then Hes. Theog. 280).

Finally we will remark that besides the fact that the head is the place where ψυχή exists, it is also the organ “having” its dignity.

¹⁴ Agamemnon kills Antimachus, cuts off his head and hands (II..XI, 146-7). Achylles passes a rope through the killed Hector's ankle, ties it to a carriage, and drags him along (II..XXII,395). Priam fears that Achylles will dismember Hector's body (II..XXIV, 408...).

Telemachus, ordered by Odysseus, tortures the traitor Melantheus, then cuts off his nostrils, ears, genitals, breaks his arms and legs (Od. XXXIII 474).

¹⁵ Онианс Р. above-mentioned work p. 130. Quotes Homer to corroborate his point of view (II.II,341,IV 159,X 542;Cic. De-iot.III 8).

¹⁶ Иванов В., Эллинская религия страдающего бога, In the book Эсхил, Трагедии, М., 1989. the same work Дионис и прадиионисийство. Зелинский Ф. Ф. Античный мир, т. I. ч. I. Мт. 1922.

Burkert W. Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche, Stuttgart, Berlin,Köln, Mainz, 1977. His Ancient Mystery cults,1987.

¹⁷ Иванов В., the above-mentioned work (Э. Р. С. Б) p.331 K.Levi-Strauss also considers the dismemberment of man's body to be one of the archaic mythologemas.

¹⁸ One cannot help raising a question here: Aeschylus and Sophocles' works are tragedies. Scholars consider drama to be the best literary means to express the essence of a myth, and Vazha's works are poems. We have no possibility to thoroughly discuss the form of Vazha's works in this paper, but the inner composition of these works – with (2-3) characters and “cho-

In our opinion, the theories of the ritual dismemberment of the body supplement each other and make up one whole system. Against this background the essence of actions of Clytemnesra and the characters of Vazha-Pshavela's poems becomes clearer – the cutting off the hands of killed enemies. The idea of the ritual dismemberment of the sacrificial being to the supreme god should be implied in the basis of these characters' actions. We suppose that hands, like the head, were considered to be parts for sacrifice.¹⁹ This idea is "overlapped" by the wish of finally rendering the enemy harmless i.e. the wish of finding eternal calm in the beyond world. The enemy whose head and limbs were cut off will not be able to do any harm to his adversary in the next world.

2. The preservation of the cut off hand.

We have spoken about the tradition of cutting off a hand (limbs) and a head above, it must have developed from the same beliefs and images. A tradition of preserving cut off heads is found among Greeks, Romans and other peoples' heathen beliefs. As to the preservation of a cut off hand, Greek sources do not say anything about it. We do not know what Clytemnestra did to Agamemnon's limbs. It can be supposed that they were "buried" with his body. In Vazha's poems it is stressed that the enemy's cut off right hand is preserved, and not only preserved, it is hung up in a conspicuous place, on the gate of the wall surrounding the house. These hands hang there heaped upon one another "to dry".²⁰

Onians has an interesting point of view concerning the "dried up" parts of the body, and, generally, about cremation (which is equivalent of drying up).

Drying up is equivalent of exhausting, dying of life-giving strength, for liquid is a carrier of strength;²¹ white liquids: those that circulate in the brain and bone-marrow, genitals, knees and elbows; sweat, tears²² and the red liquid – blood. White liquids are related to ψυχή, blood – to Θυμός. The drying up of both causes physiological death.

The cremation of the deceased hastened the process of "drying up," the evaporation of life-giving moisture. That is why the timely cremation accompanied by performing respective rituals was necessary to "settle" the soul properly in the next world. Homer expresses this custom of cremation with the verb ταρχύειν, which is a variant of ταριχεύειν, and in Onions' opinion, denotes "drying- up". The

rus" (community, fellow – warriors who express the opinion of the society), visions, dreams (actions done in real and beyond world), the dialogue form-make us think that Vazha's poems, in their essence, are dramatic works.

An interesting analysis of Vazha – Pshavela's works and noteworthy correlations with Greek playwrights are presented in T.Chkhenkeli's "Beautiful Winner" Tb, 1989.

¹⁹ Certain information found in Herodotus' work strengthens this hypothesis: Scythians performed their sacrifices to Ares in a different way. They represented him in the shape of an iron axe. They placed this axe on a stack composed of 150 cart-loads of brushwood. Cattle, horses and one of the hundred living captives were sacrificed to the axe (i.e.Ares). The sacrifice of the sacrificial man happened as follows: some wine was poured upon the captive's head first. Then he was killed in some vessel. After that that they would take the vessel full of blood to the heap of brushwood and pour it over the axe. and beneath it, they cut off the right hands and arms of sacrificed captives and threw them into the air. The hand and arm remained where they fell, and the body lay separately (Herod, V,62). Several parts of this excerpt are noteworthy: 1. It is obvious that the man, here, has the same ritual function as the sacrificial animals have; he is sacrificed to the supreme god. 2. The blood of the sacrificial man is poured over the axe - the fetish-symbol of Ares; the cut off arm with the hand is thrown up. The ritual dedication of this part of the body to the god is stressed by this gesture. The body and the cut off right arm and hand are lying separately.

Krupnov thinks that the tradition of cutting off the hand of a killed enemy came to the Northern Caucasus (where small plastic images of man's hands (arm) and feet(legs) were found in sufficient quantities) from Scythia. Крупнов Е. И. Древняя история северного кавказа, М. 1960. с. 367.

We will present a piece of information preserved in the works of Apollo of Rhodes: Jason, like a butcher, kills Apsyrtus, cuts off his limbs and performs the ritual of cleansing from sins(rinses his mouth with the killed man's blood three times, and spits it out three times).

„Ἡρως δ' Αἰσονίδης ἐξάρματα τάμνε θανόντος,
τρίς δ' ἀπέλειξε φόνου, τρίς δ' ἐξ ἄγος ἔπτυσ' ὀδόντων,
ἢ θέμις αὐθέντησι δολοκτασίας ἰλάεσθαι.“ [IV, 477-479].

ἐξάρματα which means sacrificial parts or limbs (see Apollo of Rhodes, Argonautics. Transl. by Ak. Urushadze, Tb. (1970. p. 354) is very noteworthy in this excerpt.

It is noteworthy, that the reminiscences about the ritual of the cutting off arms of the killed enemy occur in the works of the great Greek poet of the 20th century G.Seferis (see S. Shamanidi, Classical Tradition in New Greek literature and Giorgos Seferis, Tb. 1999, p.p. 138-139.

²⁰ "The burning rays of the sun

Melt the infidel's hands as well." (Vazha-Pshavela, "Aluda Ketelauri").

²¹ Onions P., the above-mentioned work.

²² We, unfortunately, do not have a possibility to discuss the ritual aspects of sweat and tears.

Both of them have a very interesting meaning, both in Greek and Georgian (e. g. Vazha's distinguished characters have "sweating faces", "perspiring faces"; a tear "is the juice of a melted heart", etc).

scholar associates this verb with the Indo-European root $\tau\alpha\rho\rho\varsigma^{23}/\tau\alpha\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ – “a basket for drying up”, $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\rho\sigma\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ – to dry.²⁴

I.e. the soul of the “dried up” cremated body is liberated sooner, although for further service it requires pouring out liquids (water, wine, honey, milk) on the grave from the living: this, by itself, is a very interesting question in heathen religions. We have no possibility to discuss this problem here.²⁵ The custom of cremation is not confirmed in Georgia. The dead were buried. The only different information has been preserved in the remark of the scholiast of Apollo of Rhodes: “The Colchis did not have a custom of burning or burying the bodies of men; men's bodies were wrapped in raw leather and hung on trees, as to women's bodies, they were interred” (Sch, 111, 202).

As we see the information preserved in Vazha-Pshavela's poems about hanging the right hand of the killed enemy on the gate of the wall surrounding the house (or in the house itself) unites several moments; first of all, the final “drying up” of the enemy's living energy was meant by it; these hands evidently had the function of a charm as well, and lastly, it was the sign of the winner's bravery.

The chord finale of our problem under analysis is to find out what the souls of the dead, mutilated in this world, look like in the beyond world. According to Aeschylus, Sophocles and Vazha-Pshavela, the souls retain their perfect configuration. They do not lack either limbs or head. They only express boundless sorrow by word and deed.²⁶

The soul may present itself in the form of a reptile. This belief is found in the works of Antique authors²⁷ and has been studied by scholars.²⁸ The final conclusion may be as follows-by ancient beliefs the snake is a personification of the dead man's spine, to be more precise, the personification of the spine marrow of the dead man. Thus, the snake is the dead man's soul ($\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$). We have paid special attention to this question, for the snake is presented as having the above-mentioned function in the works of the authors we have studied. I have Clytemnestra's dream in mind. Quite a long time had passed since Agamemnon was killed, and Clytemnestra had a dream – she gave birth to a snake and it was sucking her breast (Aesch. Choe. 527, 529, 531, 532). According to this dream, the snake is associated with Orestes. We think that this snake may be Agamemnon's soul too. The thing is that in the Greeks' opinion the son is the father's alter ego. Thus, Orestes who is Agamemnon's (// Apollo's) “punishing hand” can be considered to be Agamemnon as well. We allow ourselves to make this supposition because the snake is substituted by Agamemnon in Clytemnestra's prophetic dream in Sophocles' “Electra”. Agamemnon appears before his wife and sticks a sceptre in the hearth. A vine grows out of the sceptre and covers the whole Mycenae (Soph. El. 414-419).

The snake is mentioned in Vazha-Pshavela's poems many times. But here we will dwell on a certain passage from “Bakhtrioni” which has something in common with Clytemnestra's dream. Sanata who has buried seven sons says,

“How long shall we wash
Our hands and faces with blood?”

²³ $\tau\alpha\rho\rho\varsigma$ – this form reminded us involuntarily of the god of Taros in the Georgian heathen religion. His functions were to regulate weather (drought and rain).

²⁴ Онианс Р. the above – mentioned work. p. 254.

²⁵ It is known from the scientific literature that it was the Neanderthal man who began to bury the dead and established a religious rite. It is known that in different epochs the dead body was treated in different ways in Greece and Anatolia. In pre-Homer period bodies were buried, then burnt, then they began to bury them again.

²⁶ According to the beliefs of Brazilian Indians, the Chinese, Australians and others, the soul of the mutilated dead body moves to the next world in the mutilated form. Australians cut the thumb of the right hand off the killed enemy. The purpose was to render the enemy harmless. According to the belief of the natives of the Indian Archipelago, the soul of a sacrificed man had a function of a servant. Э. Тэйлор, Первобытная культура, М., 1939, с. 276-7. 280-1. This belief is seen in Vazha-Pshavela's “Host and Guest”. In this poem the Chechens want to sacrifice Zviadauri to Darla and kill him on the grave of the latter in order that he should serve him in the next world.

²⁷ “Some think that when the spine gets decayed in the closed grave, man's tissues turn into a snake” (Ovid, Met.XV 389,etc.) “We have heard from many that from man's spine tissues a snake is born” (Plin. NH x 66, 188). The decaying marrow of the dead man's spine is said to turn into a snake and crawl out of the grave (Ael. NA I 51). The inhabitants of Alexandria thought that “when the liquids ($\iota\chi\theta\rho\epsilon\varsigma$) trickle round the brain and unite they coagulate and snakes emerge from men's dead bodies. That is why snakes are associated with dead heroes in ancient times (Plut. Ag.Cleom.39), see also Paus, VI 20, 4 etc. Paus, I 24,7.

²⁸ Онианс Р. the above-mentioned work, p 210 etc, Harrison J.E. Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion. ed. Cambridge,1922. p. p. 235-237; 235-337; 325-331. Nilson M. P. The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and Its Survival in Greek Religion//Skifter utgivna av Kungl. Humanistika Vetenskapssamfundet i Lund. Lund. 1927. Vol. 9, p. 337, 273 and so on.

How long should snakes suck our breasts?
 Instead of children (sons)?!²⁹

Finally I will say a few words about the conceptions of the authors under study. The mutilation of the dead man's soul was considered to be a barbarous deed, the expression of primeval uncurbed instincts in a more or less regulated society. Aeschylus and Sophocles unite this kind of actions into one thesis – “blood for blood,” and impose the responsibility of regulating this savage survival on divine will and state legislature (Areopagus). Vazha-Pshavela, unlike them, thinks that the wish of giving up this anti-humane custom should spring up in the consciousness of the individual, in his heart and mind. Such inner transfiguration is a much more valuable, though a longer and more painful process.

²⁹ The snake's (Mezir's) cult is confirmed in the Georgian heathen religion widely. The snake is the deity protecting family, and is connected with the cult of ancestors. It was fed with milk and served. see A. Melikishvili, *The Georgians, Questions of Their Origin*, "Essays on the History of Georgia," Tb., 1970, p 338 and so on. The snake's cult had also an interesting reflection in literature. see K. Gamsakhurdia's "The Abduction of the Moon". "There is the following legend in "The Unconquered" by N. Lortkipanidze: "Snakes, grew instead of arms and hands on the prince's body. They feed on babies' brains." (N. Lortkipanidze, a one volume edition of works, Tb., 1981. p.352).