

A Reflection of tradition of scorproba in Grigol Robakidze's "Engad" and Mikheil Javakhishvili's "White Collar"

Introduction

A strange tradition, spread in one part of eastern mountainous region of Georgia, known as “cacloba” in Pshavi, and “scorproba” in Khevsureti, has attracted great attention. Many research works have been written. Unfortunately, the majority of scientific works are descriptive in nature and cannot answer questions concerning the origin of the mentioned tradition, its true essence, real aim of its formation and allowance in harsh environment of Pshavi and Khevsureti. There are also studies to search for the true inwardness of the matter, but pitifully very superficial conclusions are made. The main problem of most of the works, according to Z. Kiknadze, is a superficial study of the issue by the authors. The simple reason of it is that they contemplate the issue as outsiders not locals of these areas. Only a small number of researchers were able to reveal the true kernel of the tradition and deliver it correctly to the readers.

The topic was also spread in the fiction and from there it became known to the wider masses (correctness of interpretations is discussed below). We imply Mikheil Javakhishvili's novel "White Collar" and Grigol Robakidze's short novel "Engadi". In both works, the mentioned tradition occupies a central place, and the writers' thoughts are concentrated on the search of the main essence of the tradition. However, they stand on radically different positions. If for one, scorproba is a sign of backwardness, the other sees love in it.

Literature review

As we mentioned above, the tradition of cacloba -scorproba has earned special attention of researchers and people interested in ethnographic issues and has become a subject of their thinking.

Vazha-Pshavela devoted one chapter to the issue of cacloba, in *Ethnographic letters* published in 1937 and with the short informative text gave a certain idea about the tradition to the interested people. Since then, all the works referring to the issue applied Vazha's letter for verification.

In 1984-85, Sergi Makalatia's "Khevsureti" and "Pshavi" were released. The researcher, among other issues, draws attention to the tradition of cacloba-scorproba and considers it a harmful custom.

The research of the issue of "scorproba in Khevsureti" was taken to a new stage after publishing a book by N. Baliauri, the woman from Khevsureti. in 1991. The work is very noteworthy, because it belongs to the small circle of studies, the authors of which were aware of those relationships and definitely understood the inward nature of the issue. Natela Baliauri herself was a witness to the events she describes in the book. She narrates plainly and assuredly, and she entrusts the readers to make the conclusions.

In 1992, the journal "Iveria" of the Georgian-European Institute published Z. Kiknadze's letter "scorproba". According to the writer, after reading N. Baliauri's new book and receiving the impressions in private conversations, he was inspired to write his scientific work. Speaking about "scorproba", the scientist refers to both works interesting for us: Grigol Robakidze's "Engad" and Mikheil Javakhishvili's "White Collar".

In 2008, Khatuna Ioseliani's letter "About one aspect of scorproba" was published in the 10th volume of *Historical-ethnological Researches*, where the researcher returned to Z. Kiknadze's opinion that the main essence of scorproba is a dialogue between two young people.

In 2010, R. Topchishvili's book "Ethnography/Ethnology of Georgia" was published, in which an extensive chapter is devoted to discussion of the tradition of Khevsur scorproba and the Pshav cacloba. The researcher mainly focuses on the genesis of the tradition.

Scorproba God's creation

This is the title of the first chapter of Natela Baliauri's book "Scorproba in Khevsureti". The work is distinguished as the most prominent among the

scientific literature, devoted to the mentioned tradition. Therefore, when explaining the essence of scorproba the material obtained from it will be applied for verification. because we think that ethnological research in such volume and internal vision has not been created on this topic, regardless the great interest of scientific circles or other people.

As we have already mentioned, the tradition of scorproba was highlighted in ethnographic studies and fiction and was given a bad connotation. The locals refused to say a word on the issue to the members of the Khevsureti expedition in the 80s of the last century. As the scholars recollect, the locals found their relationship shameful and started covering up the information and then they completely shut down and didn't even talk to them about other topics anymore. Thus, the scholars were forced to take a break regardless great interest in the issue. The wrong, arbitrary understanding of the tradition and exposing it to the world, led to the painful result. We sincerely understand that owing to a human nature, a man tries to reduce what he cannot apprehend to an understandable level, but we think that a scientist and a writer have to be more careful and responsible too.

Scorproba is common only in one specific part of the eastern mountainous Georgia - Khevsureti. The analogue to it is "cacloba" in Pshav. Despite the similarities, the mixing of these two traditions annoys the locals.

Due to different scholars, the emergence of scorproba is assumed to different times. For example, according to N. Baliauri, there is a legend in Khevsureti, saying, that scorproba emerged in the result of Lekianoba, (sporadic forays by Leks) and retained in the region. For fear of the enemy, young people were flocked together into one house and put to sleep as accessible to all. The old people stayed at home because they were not taken captive (Baliauri, 1991). According to Pshavs legend, Lasha-Giorgi appointed cacloba. They say: Lashar's cross allows us, because he is a lover of women (Vazha-Pshavela, 1937). R. Topchishvili considers that tradition of cacloba -scorproba was emerged lately and connects it to the demographic problems of the mountain: "It is known that the mountain, depending on the geographical conditions, could feed only a certain number of the population. ...so the mountaineers regulated the demographic situation. The demographic situation was regulated by later marriages. [Topchishvili 353: 2010] He verifies two scholars: M. Kandelaki, who considered scorproba to be a kind of "brake" of marriage; and N. Mindadze, who considered that scorproba disturbed reproduction in Khevsureti and regulated demographic problems (Topchishvili 2010). Thus, "sexual games," known in the two historical-ethnographic regions of mountainous part

of Eastern Georgia - Khevsureti and Pshavi as “scorproba” and “cacloba,” were not primordial events, but were originated in a certain period of history. The main reason of tradition’s formation was the natural-geographic environment of the mountain and the lack of integration with the plain at the moment of its genesis. Under the limited farming conditions, the mountaineer tried to control fertility. It was possible to limit childbearing by delaying marriage (as mentioned above, in the early years they refrained from having children even after marriage in Khevsureti.) Owing to late marriages, young people were allowed to have limited erotic relationships." [Topchishvili 354: 2010] Z. Kiknadze considered every attempt of searching for the genesis of scorproba to be doomed from the start, and he did not see much need for it: “Scorproba is born from God” - these words imply not only that scorproba has some sign of sacredness, because it is from God, but also that its origin is mysterious, because what is from God, it is inaccessible to men." [Kiknadze 60:1992]

N. Baliauri enumerates seven types of scorproba, namely: **true scorproba** - lying with a sworn brother; **zalqmreuloba** – daughter in law with groom's relatives; **sidze-colisdoba** - lying with in-laws, the bridegroom with the bride’s relatives, bearing the same family name; **Dedida mamidashviloba** - lying with cousins from maternal and fraternal sides’; **Discul-dedidzmo** - nephews with mother's relatives; **Kal-mamisaxloba** - woman with her relatives bearing the same family name and fellow villagers; **scorproba with strangers** -lying with unknown Khevsurians, met at good or bad times. Among them, only the first and the last bear an erotic touch, and the rest are brotherly relationships between the young girls and boys. It can be corroborated by the example from N.Baliauri’s book: The woman's kin sworn brother /scorperi interferes in the case of sworn sister's marriage. If the woman's parents and brothers are against the woman's bridegroom, the sworn brother can “hold the sign”. “When I say he is a brave man why don’t you believe me? I’m not a bastard, am I?” Let him marry your daughter” [Baliauri, 1991:78] The woman's family could no longer oppose and gave proof.

But at present, we are interested in an initial and true form of scorproba, because it has become the subject of inappropriate judgments. What does true scorproba mean? Is it depravity or love from God?

Scorproba has strictly determined rules, the violation of which is considered the greatest shame. For example: “A woman has the right to touch a man’s throat, chest, but she is not allowed to put her hand into his collar, or touch his armpit or even deeper his waist. Kissing every moment is not good either.

A man also has no right to touch a woman's throat. He can't touch her breast, under the armpit. Touching the collar is considered a big affair, touching the button is too much. Also, the man's feet should be away from the woman's feet. It is impossible for a man to bring his knee closer to a woman." [Baliauri 1991:16]

The young, after getting used to each other, were allowed to hug and kiss, but that's it. That's why the Khevsurs were considered debauched.

The attitude of the Dobili –dzmobili (sworn sister-sworn brother), in true scorproba, reminds us of the relationship of lovers, obsessed with great and self-sacrificing love, and thus, fascinating us from books. According to N. Baliauri, a woman can betray her father and brother, but never her scorperi- equal. There was a case when a woman stood by her sworn brother's side at tense relationship, and lost her father's hearth forever and ended up homeless, lonesome until the end of her life. There were frequent cases of suicide committed by Dobili /sworn sister after the death of sworn brother in Khevsureti.

After getting married, a woman is restricted from all kinds of freedom, including relationships with her sworn brother.

"I will often remember you the bright sun of May!

You, a sworn sister of a brave sworn brother, are standing by an unsuitable husband"

"The woman and the man both keep their rings. Some people wear rings gifted by sworn brother or sister even in their old age, saying as though it was given by some deceased relative; men kept also embroideries, especially gloves, tobacco purses, garters. They keep it to be buried with in grave." [Baliauri 1991:67]

Some scientists, fortunately not all, perceived all these as "sexual games", while others as bad habits, and attributed them to sacred debauchery".

"Scorproba is a break forth in kinship in favor of a person. It is an oasis, which was allowed by society with a silent confirmation that a person, as a unique, inimitable creature, to have a breathing space, not to be dragged into the equalizing flow. [Kiknadze 63:1992]

"White Collar" by Mikheil Javakhishvili

In the notes and comments attached to the second volume of Mikheil Javakhishvili's seven-volume "Writings", we read that the writer specially

studied Khevsurs customs. Several traditions are described in his "White collar". However, the subject of our current study specifically is the depiction of scorproba in the novel.

The main character of the novel appears in Khevsureti, in the family of his old sworn brother - Jurkha Tsiklauri, where he meets Khatuta, a Khevsuri woman. Jurkha sends the woman to lie with his sworn brother. The tsatsals /equals fall in love with each other. A child is born, but Vazhika cannot stay there, he takes his wife and child and slips off to the town.

The aim of the novel is highlighted in the title itself: the white collar will force the enamored hero towards civilization. Civilization must defeat primitive, traditional society. However, this cannot happen at the expense of distorting customs and traditions and adapting them to one's own goals.

To begin with, the writer uses the wrong term to describe tradition. Tsatsloba is a widespread custom in Pshavi, and its Khevsuri analogue is called scorproba.

Secondly: A Khevsuri man will never let a close woman lay down with a non-Khevsuri guest. But here we assume that the work did not leave another way, it was necessary for the main character to test this custom on himself and the writer decided to change the reality. Grigol Robakidze does the same in his "Engad". Since the tradition is so intimate, and happens only between the two people, no one could have retold us about it, and therefore, the approach of both writers is understandable: they chose the townspeople, who came to Khevsureti, made them Khevsuris' sworn brothers and involved them to participate in scorproba tradition.

Third: According to Javakhishvili's description, Khatuta is naked in bed. We have already described the strictly defined rules of scorproba, the violation of which was considered a great shame in Khesureti. Not only would a woman lie naked with a man, but if she had a button tied around her throat, she would not even allow the man to touch it. "The Khevsuri woman will grow old and die so that she will never allow a man touch neither her breast nor the eyes, except for her nursing baby. A Khevsuri woman breastfeeds her child so that the child is covered with a part of the dress called a farag. They behaved so to avoid shame, that nobody could see the woman while breastfeeding" [Ochiauri 1928:203]

Fourth: According to the "white collar", the Tsiklauris change the tradition and allow the equals to marry in exchange for twenty cows. In Khevsureti, really several cases are revealed when equals fell in love with each other and dared to start a family, but they were either stoned to death or cut off from the

community forever. Very rarely, after many years, the village would reconcile a runaway, but only after deep regret. First of all, the families of the equals were angry and felt ashamed. Leaving Vajika and Khatutha in the same house, where they behaved sinfully and strived for marriage, is a strange decision of the author, having deep knowledge of the tradition.

Fifth: after Khatuta's removal to the town her relatives bring cows in the form of the so-called ransom for bride. According to A. Ochiauri, the analogous tradition is not known in Khevsureti. It is confirmed in Kisteteti that a man gives a woman's father ransom for the bride and not vice versa.

In addition, Mikheil Javakhishvili seems to be trying to cause disgust in the reader: with louse, dirt and unbearable smell.

The reader regarded negatively the Khevsuri's attitude towards death, described by the writer. He made Vajika kill his rival: "When I have killed him, only then I became the real man in the eyes of the Khevsuri." Jurkha broke my ribs, Iamze and Mzekala kissed the new knight, and Khatuta served as a sworn sister so, that my legs bent the next day." [Javakhishvili 2004:619]

As if killing a man was decisive factor when discussing humanity by the Khevsuris.

And Grigol Robakidze writes: "When you see Khevsurs with cuts on their faces and bodies, always armed and ready to attack, you think they are only thirsty for blood." But this is not so. No one is afraid of shedding blood as much as they are, not a single people, not a single tribe. The murderer is marked under the name of a "coward" in Khevsureti. For them, a man who dangerously injures his rival is not a hero. A wound should only be a scratch on the skin, even in a brutal fight - this is a remarkable feature of a real brave man for Khevsuris." [Robakidze 2012:156]

In Khevsureti people say about a man who thrust a severe wound, that a frightened person cannot realize how to run a sword. For them, it is not a bravery but the expression of fear, an inability to measure own strength. This is another proof of M.Javakhishvili's superficial, arbitrary perception of Khevsuris traditional existence and worldview.

In the end, it should be mentioned that we have no claims against the artistic value of the work; we do not complain against the writer in general. We are unpleasantly surprised at the negative connotations of Mikheil Javakhishvili, willing to deride the inhabitants of one corner of his country and publicly establish the name of lewd for them. We don't want to believe that he deliberately distorted the life of the mountain. We also don't believe that he

could not realize that his work could do a bad service to the reputation of the mountaineers.

Grigol Robakidze's "Engadi"

Similar to Mikheil Javakhishvili, another great writer- Grigol Robakidze was also interested in the mysterious tradition of scorproba and made it the main driving force of his novel "Engadi".

The main character of the novel receives an offer from a Russian film society to follow an expedition to Khevsureti as a master of Georgian language. He happily agrees, because: "Khevsuri always seemed to me, from a distance, as a living remnant of one nameless, ancient, people who have passed through the ages." [Robakidze 2012:142] The author writes and from the beginning deferentially predisposes his readers toward the world he intends to travel with us. "Here live the descendants of Homer." [Robakidze 2012:145]

We have mentioned above that Khevsuri did not entrust his woman so easily, but the writer's decision is understandable: since the tradition requires only two people to participate, it was impossible to describe it with the naked eye. That's why the main character Giorgi Valuev was sworn to the Khevsuri Mgelika Aludauri, and thus, given him a chance to share the custom of scorproba.

There is a striking difference between attitudes:

"_ Don't touch me...I came for the sake of scorproba... I have come to Jurkha's sworn brother- Khatuta is imploring the main character of "White Collar".

..._ Who came up with it! Who made up a story! No time for the custom!" - she receives in response. [Javakhishvili 2004:580]

In "Engad", the writer sets his character thinking a lot. He cannot gain the insight of the essence, but he tries to reveal the kernel in different ways.

Sometimes he connects scorproba with the custom of offering a woman to a guest for one night, widespread among primitive peoples; Sometimes he invents a Babylonian tradition, according to which every Babylonian woman entered the temple of Aphrodite as a whore at least once, and gave herself to a foreign man; Sometimes he thought, the Khevsuris might have tested the chivalrous rule of love, which implied only love and not "debauch". Or at least Mgelika wanted to test him to see if his sworn brother could protect the permissible limit.

Due to Z. Kiknadze's vision a brave man's chivalry is measured by restrained behavior protecting the permissible limit. "Scorproba is a touchstone to test a brave man's firmness. Endurance is a total personal readiness for the dialogue with scorperi/equal. It is nothing but a test, a trial, where a person has to test himself in front of the opposite sex – how capable he is to abstain and raise the dialogue with a sworn sister at the established height" [Kiknadze 61:1992] L. Jinjikhadze also writes: "In a fight between the two, one cannot stab the opponent to death, i.e. the chivalrous qualities of a fighter must be shown, similarly in a scorproba one cannot cross the sacred line." [Jinjikhadze 2014:214]

But is this the goal?! Was this tradition created to strengthen the character of the man?!

According to Z. Kiknadze, Robakidze is the only one, among the Georgian writers (and researchers), who accurately revealed the essence of scorproba. So let's follow the novel and find out what it tells us in the end.

Giorgi Valuev, while talking to an old Khevsuri, finds the answer to his thoughts and judgments for so long: "Love is sacred; when tasting the flesh - you kill it; Just burn!" [Robakidze 2012:161-162]

In Khevsureti, sworn people are strictly forbidden to marry each other. Violators of the rule will be cut and stoned. but why? for what reason? "Perhaps it will be better if we search not the reason, but the purpose of prohibition?" The purpose may be covering and revealing the secret of scorproba." Robakidze found the answer: "Just be burning," It seems that the purpose of prohibition was to preserve love". [Kiknadze 63-64:1992]

Husband and wife are familiar to carnal love. If you ask a married woman or man if they are in love, they will answer it's no time for love. The family is a yoke, not a crown of love. Love, that remains untouched, untested in youth is a wonderful thing.

Conclusion

Among the Georgian mountaineers' traditions, scorproba attracted special attention of people interested in ethnographic issues. Many scientific studies and articles have been devoted to the issue. But it became known to the masses through fiction. Mikheil Javakhishvili's "White Collar" and Grigol Robakidze's "Engadi" are the two works in which this topic is most widely discussed, although the writers' positions completely differ from each other.

In "White Collar", Mikheil Javakhishvili tries intentionally to distort the tradition, because it is necessary for his novel: civilization has to outweigh the primitive, traditional society. But, we think, the end does not justify the means.

As for Grigol Robakidze's "Engad", the author tries to explain the tradition in different ways and comes to a rather interesting (and the most acceptable for us) conclusion: "Love is sacred. When tasting the flesh - you kill it; Just burn!"

Finally, it should be mentioned that the writer has a powerful weapon in his hands: he can influence large masses. This requires more providence. Especially when it comes to tradition. After all, tradition is the face of the society in which it was formed and functioned.

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