

Paata Chkheidze

Ilia State University

Tbilisi, Georgia

The Types of Heroes in the Medieval Anglo-Saxon Epic and Georgian Mythological Tales

The hero, as the main constituent of fiction, experienced a palpable, almost absolute devaluation from medieval literary texts before William Thackeray declared the arrival of a novel without a hero and since then, with varying degrees of success, writers have tried to bring back the hero in fiction but mostly in vain.

It should not be surprising that similar processes take place in the texts of geographically and culturally distant literatures. The current research is about the hero of Anglo-Saxon heroic epic “Beowulf” and the hero of the Georgian folk ballad Iakhsari.

A comparative analysis of these two heroes would have been artificially forced and would not have aroused any scientific or literary interest had it not been for one important detail which is common and strangely connects these two, as I already mentioned, geographically and culturally distant texts and heroes.

This important detail refers to the special location of the heroism committed by the characters. Both heroes fight the evil enemy of the people and both fight the monster or devil (giant) in the lake, particularly on the bottom of the lake.

This remarkable detail became one of the important reasons for the translation of the Anglo-Saxon epic “Beowulf” into Georgian (by Paata and Rostom Chkheidze) in 1989, from Barton Raffel’s Translation into new English; in the commentaries of the translation, the similarities between the deeds of the heroes (Beowulf and Iakhsari) were mentioned, which was stated earlier by the writer Otar Chkheidze in the biographical novel, “Novel and History’. Since then, no detailed comparative analysis of the heroes has been conducted.

Our goal is not to study the mythological archetype of heroism – diving in the lake, exploring the depth, the cycle of death and life - but to identify the heroes and phenomenon of heroism in the early Medieval (may be earlier) Anglo-Saxon and Georgian literary texts.