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REAL AND IMAGINED FEUDALISM IN HIGHLAND GEORGIA*

I. INTRODUCTION. During the 8th-9th centuries, a system of land tenure and political organization that has been described as “feudal” arose in the Transcaucasus. As in Western Europe, Georgian feudalism was characterized by (1) the hierarchical and personal relation between vassal and lord (Geo. p’at’ronq’moba), with the former rendering homage (shec’q’aleba) to the latter; (2) the conditional ownership of land in the form of fiefs (Geo. mamuli, sak’argavi) [Charachidzé 1971: 16-21]. On the periphery of the medieval Georgian feudal states, centered in the more heavily-populated lowlands, are the mountain provinces of Pxovi (Pshav-Xevsureti) and Svaneti [see map]. Indeed, it has been said that Pxovi and the “free” or “lordless” communes of Upper Svaneti remained completely outside of the feudal system. I will argue that none of these regions was untouched by feudalism, although the effects were very different in the eastern (Pxovi) and western (Svanetian) highlands. The communes of Pxovi, although never integrated into the lowland feudal regime, acquired a sufficient familiarity with its principles — which built upon notions of land “ownership” and incorporative kinship similar to those already characteristic of their social ideology — to exploit them in their cosmological representations. Human communities, although fairly egalitarian on the ground, were imagined as serfs subordinated to a complex hierarchy of divine beings. (And indeed, much of Pxovian theological terminology derives from the language of Georgian feudalism). In Svaneti, by contrast, where feudal land-ownership was implanted, the appropriation of public spaces and the construction of Georgian Orthodox churches by the local nobility had a profound impact on the indigenous religious system, leading to, among other changes, a displacing of rituals to either the domestic interior or to sites outside the village. It is my hope that this study will contribute

*. ქართველთა ჟურნალში ქართველთათვის ჟურნალის ამ-მ ნაწილზედგენს დატვირთვას

to research on Central Caucasian history and comparative religion, as well as to investigations of the impact of large-scale social, political and economic transformations on peripheral communities. For the sake of ease and compactness of presentation, I will adopt here the time-honored expository method of historical linguistics, which follows the time-line rather than the process of induction. I will begin with a schematic and partial view of the reconstructed ancestral system, followed by the historical and ethnographic data on the basis of which it was postulated.

II. A PARTIAL GRAMMAR OF ANCIENT GEORGIAN RELIGION. The following four aspects of the ancient (Bronze Age?) Georgian religious system are pertinent to the analysis to follow:

(1) The contrast, or opposition, of male-linked/divine “purity” (Geo. sic’minde) and female-linked/corporeal “impurity” (Geo. uc’mindureba), the latter derived from an ancient representation of women as *sacra* (in the old Latin sense of the word [Benveniste 1969: 188]), i.e. inherently powerful, but threatening to male/divine “purity”. Associated with this notion of opposed principles is the seeming paradox that the survival of the community requires contact and cooperation between them.

(2) A gradient hierarchy of beings according to their degree of participation in the divine principle, a factor which is susceptible to increase or decrease. Contrasted to the dangerous, “polluting” blood of women shed during menstruation and childbirth is the purifying blood of sacrificed animals, of which the most valued is the bull. In addition to purification by blood, which can in principle be undergone by any person, animal, space or object, selected individuals are marked as nac’iliani, “having a [special] portion” of divine essence, expressed through unusual strength, beauty, bravery, etc. Other individuals are called or ‘captured’ (dach’erili, damizezebuli) by a deity into its service as priests, oracles or shrine assistants. Those who acquitted themselves with special distinction may become themselves the objects of a posthumous cult.

(3) Since ancient times, the Caucasus, including its remote highland regions, has been characterized by a high degree of diversity

(especially linguistic), yet at the same time a similarly high degree of interconnectedness, permitting the exchange of people, goods and ideas with the cultural centers to the south and the steppe populations to the north. At a local level, network-building is fostered by exogamically-oriented marital preferences (throughout the Caucasus, with the notable, and puzzling, exception of Daghestan), fictive kinship (sworn siblinghood, adoption, fosterage) crossing class and ethnic lines, and perhaps something akin to the “believer-unbeliever” shrines at the Pxovi-Weinax frontier [see below].

(4) Evidence from Pxovian, Svan, also Abxaz oral literature permits the reconstruction — albeit still tentative and lacking in detail — of what I will call trajectories associated with female and male divine beings, and by extension their human counterparts [Tuite 1998; see Diagram #1]. The deities are represented as a couple, of which the female circulates between the hearth (the interior of domestic space, the “interior of the interior”) and the remote, uninhabited, unreachable outside (“exterior of the exterior”). Her male counterpart, usually named after St. George (Geo. Givargi, Svan Jgëræg, Abxaz Aerg), circulates between the public spaces of the community (the “exterior of the interior”) and those outside spaces exploited for the profit of the community (the “interior of the exterior”). For this reason, the various St. Georges are invoked as patrons of hunters, woodsmen, travellers, warriors, even livestock-thieves. There is evidence, principally from Pshav-Xevsurian ethnography, that these imagined trajectories include interfacial zones in both interior and exterior spaces, at which the two deities come into contact. The concept of the two interfaces contributes, I believe, to representations of two social institutions reconstructable, on linguistic and semantic grounds, to ancient Georgian society: marriage, and a relation Charachidzé (1968: 101) called “anti-marriage” (Geo. c’ac’loba, Svan ch’æ:ch’i:lær). The latter contrasts with the former on a number of parameters: it involves a temporary, premarital relationship between a woman and man from the same community, which must under no circumstances terminate in marriage or childbirth (Tuite 2000).

III. NORTHEAST GEORGIA. In the highlands along the upper reaches of the Aragvi, and in three alpine valleys just north of the main crest of the Caucasus chain, are the provinces of Pshavi and Xevsureti, known to medieval writers under the joint designation “Pxovi”. The population of this region “n’a jamais été intégrée au système féodale” (Charachidzé 1971: 45), despite the sporadic incursions of royal troops bent on bringing them to submission. Pshavi, closer to lowland Georgia and relatively more accessible, has been, at least for the past three centuries or so, divided into 11 or 12 “clans” (temi), each occupying a group of adjacent villages, and having essentially equal status. The social organization of Xevsureti is rather more complex, since groups claiming common descent often inhabit non-adjacent villages, scattered among representatives of other clans, and since three clans are more prominent, both in numbers and in prestige, than the others. Whereas each village of the Georgian heartland, as well as those situated in the highland regions of Svaneti, Xevi, Mtiuleti and Rach’a, has at least one church dating from the 5th-18th cc., Pxovi appears as a vast blank on the Georgian architectural map. The pre-Soviet religious system, of which many aspects are still to be observed today, is particularly close to the reconstructed ancestral system, although it appears to have undergone a thorough-going elaboration and systematization in subsequent periods (Bardavelidze 1957; Charachidzé 1968; K’ik’nadze 1996; Tuite 1996; Tuite ms.). The concepts of lowland feudalism, probably introduced through contact with the neighboring Georgians of Tusheti, Mtiuleti and K’axeti, were readily assimilated to the inherited system, and indeed are likely to have contributed to the rigorous structural consistency that has impressed generations of ethnographers.

(1). Purity and impurity. The contrast between the principles designated above as male-linked/divine “purity” and female-linked/corporeal “impurity” finds expression in numerous taboos and practices of purification, and in particular through the spatial organization of the Pxovian community. Although devoid of Georgian Orthodox churches, Pxovi abounds in sacred sites, of which the most important are called xat’i in Pshavi, jvari in Xevsureti

(Bardavelidze 1974, 1982). In standard Georgian usage these terms refer to icons and crosses respectively, but in Pxovi they are distinctly polysemic, denoting the two types of sacred images just mentioned, the sanctuaries in which they are housed, and the deity said to preside over the sanctuary (not necessarily the one depicted in the icon). Each Pshav and Xevsurian clan has its xat'i or jvari, the seat of the clan's patron xvtishvili "child of God", many of which bear the names of Christian saints. The sanctuaries are complexes of stone buildings, usually surrounded by a low wall. Local tradition, transmitted through texts known as andrezebi, maintains that the Pxovian shrines were founded on the spot where the xvtishvili manifested itself, typically in the form of a shining dove, and declared its appropriation of the location. Legends recount how recalcitrant villagers were annihilated by mysterious ailments for refusing to vacate the mountain chosen by the xvtishvili for its new residence (K'ik'nadze 1996, Andrezebi ms.).

The supreme God (ghmert), and the various xvtishvilni "children of God" are incorporeal in their normal state; God is never seen, and the xvtishvilni only appear to selected individuals on special occasions. As a corollary, they avoid contact with sources of impurity (or pronounced "corporeality"), especially women and certain domestic animals (pigs and poultry). Some shrine-foundation myths (andrezebi) attribute the arrival of the xat'i in the highlands to its desire to flee the proximity of pigs or other impure beings at lower altitudes in favor of a mountain-top location at some distance from the nearest village. Pxovian oral tradition includes numerous accounts of severe punishments being meted out by shrine deities for infringements, even if committed unknowingly, of the restrictions on impurity. Of lower rank, and hence more approachable, are the "sworn sisters" (dobilni) of the xvtishvilni, such as the "Mother of God" and "Place-Mother", who are imagined as female in gender, and generally beneficent, although they can be used by their superior xvtishvili to punish infractions (Ochiauri 1991: 83, 116). In many shrine complexes the spot where the deity touched the earth is marked by a solid stone tower called a k'vrivi, the most sacred structure of the complex, and the one to which access is the most

restricted. Radiating outward, and normally downward, from this point are spaces of decreasing sacredness and easier access:

(a) those structures accessible to the “priests” (Pshav qevisberi, Xevsur xucesi) and their assistants, who have been selected by the shrine deity and have undergone purification with the blood of sacrificed animals: bell-tower (sazare), pyramid-shaped granary for storing the harvest from the shrine’s fields (begheli), smaller constructions with niches for candles and sometimes a table for offerings (sasantle), and cabins for the shrine personnel and the objects used in the ceremonies (sadast’uro, darbazi).

(b) the public areas around the shrine, accessible to men only, where animals are sacrificed (sasak’lao) and the men of the community drink wine or beer (saq’eino).

(c) the village itself and its surroundings, open to all. Close to the village, or even within it, is often found a small shrine to the “Mother of God” (ghvtismshobeli) or “Place-Mother” (adgilis deda), at which people, usually women, pray for prosperity and fertility of livestock and humans alike.

(d) Until the 1940’s and 50’s, Pxovian women left their household during menstruation, and spent several days in a menstruation hut (samrelo) on the edge of the village. Men did not approach this location.

(e) Further from the village, often a kilometer or more distant, was the k’oxi or sachexi, a rude hut where women were secluded during childbirth. Except in cases of evident difficulty, Pxovian women gave birth alone. Several days after the birth, the mother washed herself and her newborn as an initial purification, then moved into the menstruation hut for a further 3 or 4 weeks. At the end of this time, the woman and child went through a second purification, and returned home.

Beginning with the rituals performed at the sachexi and samrelo, a Pxovian boy passes through a series of purificatory rituals, which permit him access to spaces of greater and greater purity: presentation at the shrine at the age of about one year, and — if called into service as a member of the shrine personnel — special rituals and sacrifices admitting him to spaces off-limits to other men.

Women's access is far more limited, although post-menstrual women may perform particular functions within the shrine complex.

(2). Hierarchy of beings. God himself is invisible and remote, and no earthly shrine bears his name. He is the creator (dambadebeli) of all that exists, including humans and xvtishvilni. The latter were either created as deities, or were formerly humans whom God elevated to divine status, whereupon they became invisible. The medieval Georgian chronicles describe how the 8th-century King Archil divided the kingdom of Kartli (east-central Georgia) in seven principalities. Each prince in turn had his own vassals (q' [r] mani) subordinated to him by pledges of homage (Charachidzé 1971: 15). According to Pshav tradition, God, like a feudal monarch, divided the land among the xvtishvilni and set them in authority over the people dwelling on their territory (Ochiauri 1991: 49, 53-55, 95, 129). The xvtishvilni are addressed as bat'onni "lords", the members of the community refer to themselves as q'mani "vassals", a terminology identical to that of medieval Georgian feudalism in the lowlands, and believed by many Georgian historians to have been borrowed from that source (Melikishvili 1959: 411; cp. Bardavelidze 1960).

The shrine territory, and a sizeable portion of the community's farmland, pastures and forests is said to belong to the xat'i or jvari, being designated xat'is mamuli "shrine's [hereditary] land" or xodabuni (an expression of Persian origin, also borrowed from the lexicon of lowland feudalism, meaning "lord's land"). These lands were worked by the q'mani collectively or in rotation, with a sizeable portion of the harvest retained by the shrine. The grain, considered sacred, was stored by a shrine official in a special granary (begheli), and used to brew beer and bake bread for communal feastdays. Should a "vassal" die without leaving heirs, or emigrate from the community, the family lands reverted to the shrine by a sort of mainmorte, further increasing the shrine's holdings. Like medieval knights, the men of the highland communities were expected to go to battle when the clan deity, speaking through the mouth of its oracle (kadagi, mk'adre), called upon them to steal livestock from a neighboring group, revenge a similar raid committed against them in the past, etc. The texts from Pshavi collected by Ochiauri (1991:

39-40, 271-272) include accounts of a human overlord from the lowlands transferring possession of an escaped serf to a divine overlord in the mountains (the serf and his descendents thereby becoming the priests at their new lord's shrine), and of two adjacent xat'i quarreling over possession of land and the peasants living on it.

(3). Inside-outside relations. A significant component of Pxovian myth and social practice functioned to overcome the paradox of relations with outsiders, who were conceived as both potential sources of danger and pollution, yet absolutely essential for the survival of the community (Tuite and Bukhrashvili 1999). In addition to exogamic marital restrictions, and the institution of sworn-siblinghood, the Pxovians permitted the integration of outsiders. Georgians from other provinces, as well as Chechens, Ingush and Daghestanians from the North Caucasus, who sought refuge from blood feuds or other difficulties back home, could petition for admission to the community. If the members of the shrine community were in agreement, the newcomers sacrificed a bull as a pledge of faithfulness, and were granted a parcel of land from the shrine's own holdings, and eventually accepted as "vassals" of the clan's patron deity (examples from Mtiuleti in Xaradze & Robakidze 1965: 48-61).

A particularly striking reflection of attitudes toward outsiders is the existence in Xevsureti of several so-called "believer-unbeliever sanctuaries", rjulian-urjulo salocavebi, of which the most prestigious is the powerful shrine complex at Xaxmat'i. Another such shrine, now in ruins, was situated at Anat'ori, at the Georgian-Chechen frontier in the Argun valley. Nominally-Christian Georgians and nominally-Muslim Weinakhs (Chechens and Ingush) worshipped and sacrificed animals at these sites; the personnel officiating at Anat'ori was recruited from both communities (Goniashvili 1971; T. Ochiauri 1967: 68-70). Inter-ethnic links were projected onto the divine plane as well, as attested by myths of Georgian deities crossing over to Weinakh territory to pay a visit to a local god (Andrezebi 36, 40-41).

(4). Female and male trajectories. The mythical trajectories of "St. George" and his female consort (of which the most celebrated is the Xevsurian goddess Samdzimari) are an oft-used source of

motifs for poetry, especially the poems sung to accompany the dancing of the perquli, a round dance performed by men on solemn occasions (Tuite 1994 ##30, 57; Andrezebi). The institution of “anti-marriage” (Pshav c’ac’loba, Xevsur sc’orproba), was practiced in Pxovi up to the beginning of the Soviet period, but declined rapidly in subsequent years (Tuite 2000).

IV. SVANETI. Unlike Pxovi and its neighboring provinces of northeast Georgia, which seem to have been of minor concern to medieval Georgian authorities, the northwest highland province of Svaneti was a major cultural and artistic center in the Middle Ages, and several Svan princely families wielded significant power at the Georgian royal court. Frequent contacts between lowland centers and even the most remote valleys of Upper Svaneti go back much further in time, at least to the Bronze Age, when Svaneti was an important source of high-grade metals (especially arsenic-rich copper and gold), giving rise to local, Svanetian schools of metalworking and other arts. Around the time of Christ the Greek geographer Strabo (Geography XI.2.19ff) noted the presence of a powerful community of “Soánes” in the mountains behind Dioskuria (Sukhum), ruled by a basileus and a council of 300 men, and capable of fielding an army of 200,000. The Svan elite played a key role in the constitution of the kingdoms of Lazica (4th-5th cc. AD) and Abkhazia (8th-10th cc.), and in the subsequent Georgian kingdom united by Bagrat III and Davit IV (11th-12th cc.). One enduring sign of the implantation of the feudal regime in Svaneti is the large number of Georgian Orthodox churches — over a hundred in Upper Svaneti alone — constructed by the local nobility in the period from the 9th to the 13th centuries, the golden age of Georgian feudalism. During this time as well the aristocracy consolidated its land tenure and its hold on power through the accumulation of secular and religious privileges (e.g. access to the highest ranks of the local Orthodox clergy), and the imposition of payments and obligations on the peasantry. In subsequent centuries, with the fragmentation and decline of the lowland political order, powerful families in some Svan districts accumulated sufficient hegemony to rise to princely rank;

in the upper half of Upper Svaneti — the communes later to be known as “free” or “lordless” Svaneti — no one family rose to prominence, although the distinction between noble (warg, aznauri) and peasant retained considerable significance in social and economic life (on the social history of medieval Svaneti, see Gabliani 1927; Xaradze & Robakidze 1964; Gasviani 1980, 1991; Xosht’aria-Brose 1984). On the assumption that the ancestral religious system was similar to that proposed at the beginning of this paper, the effect of the installation of a feudal aristocracy with its family churches inside each Svan village was one of fragmentation and restructuring of the older system, although each fragment retains features of the whole. Confronted with the implantation of sacred sites within the inhabited space of the village, and the restriction of access to privileged positions in the church administration (clergy, church officials, councils known as saq’drishvilebi) to the members of noble families (Xosht’aria-Brose 1984: 68-85; Gasviani 1991: 109-123), the religious life of the Svan peasantry retreated from the public space of the village, now appropriated by the aristocracy. On the one hand, the home took on greater importance as a setting for rituals, far more than in Pxovi. On the other hand, sites in marginal locations external to the village continued to be used, by both men and women.

(1). Purity and impurity. The avoidance of sources of impurity, especially women’s blood flow, remained a matter of concern to Svan men, especially hunters (Gabliani 1925: 36, 140); the proximity of menstruating women or those who had given birth recently, or a recent death in the family, could pollute the grain used for baking ritual breads or cause the cancellation of ceremonies (Bardavelidze 1941: 44; Chartolani 1961: 188). At the same time, the implantation of churches within the villages completely disrupted the earlier principles of spatial organization, according to the distinction of zones of greater or lesser “purity” and accessibility. Instead of the sort of global arrangement found in Pxovi, the segmentation of women’s and men’s spaces is established on a local basis: bipartition of the domestic interior around the central hearth (Chartolani 1961), women’s and men’s ritual spaces within the home, and in the

uninhabited places outside the village (Bardavelidze 1941; Chartolani 1961: 188-192; Chartolani 1977; Mak'alatia 1977). A similarly local bifurcation is found in the sexual division of labor: as Charachidzé (1968: 39-51) observed, if in Pxovi and neighboring districts "la ligne de démarcation passe entre les activités économiques essentielles ... chez les Svanes, la ligne passe à l'intérieur de chaque activité" (i.e. the women and men of each household contribute to the care and exploitation of animals, preparation of food, work in the fields, etc., although each task is assigned to one or the other sex).

In the case of the Christian churches, disruptive as their location might have been, traces of the older principles of spatial organization can be detected. In the course of time, with the decline and subsequent abolition of feudal class distinctions, these buildings have become the sanctuaries of lineages or villages. Only men were permitted to enter them, although extensions were built on where women prepared bread for offerings. Prayers inside the churches were pronounced, in a mixture of Svan and liturgical Old Georgian, by heads of families (maxwshi) or quasi-professional "priests" (bap'ær), hired by local families to present their sacrifices of meat, bread and vodka in the church (Nizharadze 1962: 72-76). Most churchyards are surrounded by low stone walls, dividing the sacred space of the church's precincts from that outside (A medieval text from Upper Svaneti cited by Gasviani (1980: 34) specified an extremely heavy fine for crimes committed within church walls; a far lesser penalty if committed within the space where the churchbell can be heard; and only half of the latter fine if the offense took place in the more remote parts of the commune). Corresponding approximately to the Pxovian shrine to the "Mother of God" or "Place-Mother" is a type of simple shrine or niche, called witin, located in marginal or non-public spaces: the inside of the home, where women make secret offerings to an animal-shaped domestic spirit (mezir); outside of the village; or atop the churchyard wall (Mak'alatia 1977).

(2). Hierarchy of beings. The feudalized hierarchy of deities and their human vassals finds no echo in Svan religious thought. The worshippers in Svan churches are called "men of the sanctuary" (saq'dri/laqmi mâre), rather than serfs or vassals (Chartolani 1979).

There is little in Svan religion which can be compared to Pxovian beliefs that shrine officials, and especially the priests and oracles who come into the most intimate contact with divinity, are specifically recruited by the deities themselves. Svan bap'ær are ritual specialists trained by apprenticeship to a more experienced priest, as would be the case for specialists in folk medicine, blacksmithing, etc. A Svan “priest” could be dismissed from his function by the village council, which would be unthinkable in Pkhovi (Xaradze & Robakidze 1964: 86).

(3). Inside-outside relations. If Pxovian social groups are defined with regard to the larger groups of which they are part, Svan groups seem to be defined rather by who is excluded. This exclusionary perspective is reflected in the numerous feasts and rituals which are restricted to certain groups — women only, household members only, lask'ær (a group of neighboring households) only, and so forth. (In 1991, as I was preparing to leave Mest'ia to go upriver to the community of K'ala for their mid-summer festival of Lagurk'aoba — an affair attended by car- and bus-loads of Georgians arriving from all around — a youngish woman from Mest'ia told me that she was not going, since it did not feel right to her to intrude upon a feastday traditionally reserved for the people of K'ala alone.)

Network-building practices are by no means absent, but are not as often used to forge links outside of the local area. Svans must marry outside of their clan (samxub, literally “phratry”), but traditionally preferred to marry within their commune, or even neighborhood (lask'ær) (Xaradze 1939; 1963).

(4). Female and male trajectories. Rather than find expression in ritual poetry and “anti-marriage” as in Pxovi, the female and male trajectories shown in Diagram #1 are reflected spatially through religious practice: women’s prayers and offerings to “St. Mary” (Lamaria) and “St. Barbara” (Barbol), performed in the absence of men and children, take place either at the hearth (the “interior of the interior”) or in uninhabited ruins or empty spaces outside the village (“exterior of the exterior”); whereas men preside at the public rituals within the household, lask'ær, or commune (the “exterior of the interior”) and at the witin or churches dedicated to St George in the

hunting grounds or along mountain passes (the “interior of the exterior”). It would appear, then, that after the disruption of the Pxovian-style distribution of sites around the village by degree of purity, that the Svan cognate of the St. George & Samdzimari myth served as a template for the reorganization of ritual space.

V. CONCLUSION. What we have seen illustrated in the village layout and ethnographic record of two regions of highland Georgia are two radically different responses by the practitioners of indigenous religions to the introduction of the notions of feudalism. In the northeast provinces of Pxovi, where feudal concepts were probably acquired from mountaineers from neighboring provinces (which were nominally under the direct rule of the Georgian crown, but suffered relatively little intrusion of outsiders or implantation of aristocratic landowners), they were seamlessly adapted to existing systems of cosmology and social thought. Indeed, feudal principles of organization provided useful concepts and terminology for representing the hierarchy of divine beings, and the relationships between communities and their gods, their land, and each other.

In Svaneti, by sharp contrast, where feudalism was implanted and realized as a sociopolitical regime, accompanied by the construction of churches, appropriation of land tenure and privileges (in both secular and [Orthodox] religious spheres) by a nobility with one foot in the lowlands, the result was considerable fragmentation and restructuring of the inherited religion, a process doubtless still underway in the final years before the sovietization of Georgia. Feudalism may have left its mark on the Svan landscape, but the concepts on which it was based left no traces in Svan religious thought.

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This paper is dedicated to the memory of Mikheil Chartolani. This gentlemanly scholar was not only one of the finest ethnographers ever to have studied the complexities of highland Georgian culture, but he was also an esteemed member of his home community in Svanetia, and a kindly mentor to many young historians,

anthropologists and archaeologists. Those of us who had the privilege and the pleasure to make his acquaintance will always remember him fondly. Nateli iq'os misi xsovna!

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Pantheon of the Northeast Georgian highlands (Xevsureti, Pshavi)

Morige ghmerti [no shrines; distant from human affairs (almost Deus otiosus)]

K'viria ["Chief of the dry land", "Commander of the xvtishvilni"]*mentioned second in invocations of deities, after Morige ghmerti*protector of human society*instrument of divine justice*invoked for birth of sons to perpetuate patriline

Samdzimari (Tamar, dobilni as doublets)(1) DOMESTIC FUNCTIONS*dairy production*women's health, well-being, protection in childbirth; health, healing ["Tamar the Healer"] (2) RELATION TO MEN*"bead-wearing" seductress of oracles*assures success (or failure) of hunters*shape-changer (disguised as wives of oracles)(3) ORIGIN & TRAJECTORY*hypochthonian origins (Kajeti); potentially dangerous, but can be appeased*circulates between home & remote spaces (inaccessible forests, Kist'eti)

Giorgi (K'op'ala/Iaqsar as doublets)*culture hero — demon/ogre slayer*raid in Kajaveti, returns with women [Samdzimari and sisters], metallurgy, cultic utensils*attributes of nearby foreigners (Kist' dress, Somxoz Giorgi shrine at Ardot'i allegedly founded by Armenian)*patronage of men, esp. in exploitation of outside spaces [shepherds, travellers, raiders]

Svan pantheon.

Xosha gherbet [no shrines; distant from human affairs]

Targlezer, Taringzel ["Archangel", invoked second in toasts]*protector of human society*instrument of divine justice*invoked for birth of sons to perpetuate patriline

Barbol, Lamaria, Dæl(1) DOMESTIC FUNCTIONS Barbol, Lamæria (sometimes invoked as one deity): dairy production, women's health, well-being; heals eye pains Dæl: herds & milks ibex, deer, etc.(2) RELATION TO MENDDæl: seductress of hunters, gives bead as token; assures success (or failure) of hunters; shape-changer (game animals)(3) ORIGIN & TRAJECTORYDæl: foreign origin? (< Wainakh *da:li = "god"); circulates in inaccessible spaces (mountain peaks, caverns)Lamæria: hearth goddessBarbol: once circulated throughout Upper Svaneti

Jgëræg*patronage of men, esp. in exploitation of outside spaces*wolves as "George's dogs"; Jgëræg invoked to protect livestock from wolves.*exterior spaces (contrast with Xosha gherbet)