

## The Versions of Opposite Mythologems

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### Abstract

Mythological thinking does not have any ethnic and religious frames; it encompasses the whole universe (to the scale that every specific society with mythos thinking has) and by its logic attempts to explain the consequences of reasons in it. That's why despite diversity of mythology, we often encounter universals there generated from homogenous perceptions, more specifically, they represent more or less different versions of development of one mythologem.

One of such images is an enchained character who has a rather long mythological biography full of metamorphoses. It was formed from the most dramatic story of mythology of old peoples. This is a myth related to cosmogony process about struggle of opposite forces where two origins fight each other. Punishment for the defeated character is homogenous: he is located in confined space and thus his destructive force is suppressed in order to save the world from destruction. All forms of punishment are meant for isolation of the negative character. These perceptions may have generated the means of punishment of criminals in real life (confinement, keeping in jail...).

The myth of struggle of the opposites gave rise to the folkloric motive of Struggling with God. It was widely spread in folklore of peoples of the world and created a gallery of punished-chained heroes. These are gods, zoomorphic or monstrous creatures, goliaths, heroes, even people. This kind of realization underwent multiple transformation in various epochs, various cultural traditions. Its biography starts with the character of god of the old generation being in confrontation with the new generation which later transformed into an evil spirit or a monster. The life of this character has become so diverse in folklore that it became an unfairly punished kind of a hero whose release was related to protection of people's wellbeing and national dignity.

**Keywords:** Mythology, opposite deities, sentenced hero, transformation

### Introduction

Mythology is one of the first fruits of conceptual-artistic ways of thinking which reflected the conceptions of an old human society. Despite of diversity of mythology there can be found universal principles that originate from the same conceptions in general. They represent more or less different versions or plots of one common mythologem. In this context the battle of opposites is the most dynamic mythologem which has created the whole plethora of plots and mythological characters.

One of such characters is a chained / locked up hero which has quite a long mythological biography full of various metamorphosis. That type of a character has originated within the most dramatic mythological narratives of ancient human societies. Those are myths related to Cosmogenic process in which attention is totally directed towards the general principles of structuring of the universe. A pathos of transcending a primordial chaos is dedicated to this type of structuring in the form of a struggle against the supernatural forces which are equated with the older generation of Gods.

### Basic Arguments

As an example of the deities' confrontation we can bring a Greek myth of castration of Uranus by Kronos as well as Mesopotamian myths of assassination of Abzu by Ea and Tiamat by Marduk. The contradiction continues within the following generations until new gods eventually get an absolute power however, there is still a danger of destruction of a cosmic order as chaos is perpetually trying to invade cosmos in one way or another and thus, a disobedient creature emerges on a scene which Gods are obliged to fight against. This is the reason why there are plenty of characters in mythology that are punished by the gods. On this level the struggle is especially of a fiercemanner as it concerns preservation of a cosmic order and its participants are polarized by the signs of Good and Evil. They represent the two principles – the light and the darkness. The later is not a God anymore (presumably, emergence and development of Epos played its role in this type of transformation), however, it still preserves its divine essence. It/He is punished by be-

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ing chained, locked or incarceration. As we can see, at this particular level the motive of chaining of a divine character/hero is being originated.

A mythologem, spread on the level of a plot operates by motives, i.e. smaller elements some of which are dynamic and travel from one plot to another. It is known, that a semantic innovation of narration is reflected in a new order of the motive line. However, there are situational motives related to one common circumstance that are detected only in certain types of plots.

Such is, for example the motive of chaining, which is a secondary product and is situationally linked to the plots that were developed based on the mythologem of the struggle between opposites. Not all myths of struggle of opposites end with chaining (disobedient ones are punished in different manners), however, the motive of chaining does not exist outside the plot of struggle between opposites.

Punishment for a defeated character is a common one: He is placed in a closed space and by this his destructive force is being put into chains and therefore, the world is saved. In a Greek mythology new generation gods under the leadership of Zeus have defeated Titans and Cyclops who rebelled against them drawing them to the abyss. Tantalus is also locked up in the abyss. All forms of punishment – chaining, drawing to abyss, chaining to a mountain, placing into a circle – all of these are basically variations of the same kind and implies an isolation of a negative character.

From these conceptions must the means of punishment of real life criminals/disobedient ones come from. As O. Freudenberg thought, “incarceration” is an equivalent to “death” and imprisonment of an offender originates from an archaic metaphorism. In ancient human societies criminals were thrown into dark and deep pits that had a meaning of abyss/hell. Shackles, prison dungeons with narrow and latticed windows originate from totemic-mythological traditions (Freudenberg, 1978. p. 157).

The myth of opposites, by its side has created a folklore motive of fighting against the gods. It has widely spread across folklores and literatures of various nations which has produced the whole variety of punished-locked up heroes that are considered to be parallel characters. Plots of chained heroes are given in different manners in the myths and eposes of different nations. As for the motive we are interested in – confronting the gods and getting punishment for that is being repeated in all of them. We put those types of characters under the same category and analyze them as being similar to each other.

Putting them together under the synchronic and diachronic dimension reveals not only their common structure, but their gradual evolution.

The first level within the whole picture is an antagonism between the gods and soon after monstrous signs are revealed in the face of defeated god and therefore, on the next level it takes a form of a monster or of a giant snake. In Iranian mythology the highest god of evil is Ahriman which sometimes is being transformed into Aji-dakhak and Angro-Mainu. He was enslaved by the divine Word uttered by Ahuramazda. This very theme was taken to the Iranian epos of Zohak.

In the literary work of LeontiMroveli a chained creature is depicted in the form of a serpent as well: “And there was one man named Afridon from the Nebroti family who tied up Bevrasi with a chain – the king of serpents and nailed it to a mountain unreachable by the mankind” (KartlisTskhovreba, 1955, p.13). In the mythology of peoples of the Asia Minor a monster called Abirgan was locked up under the mountain (Potanin, 1899). In the Greek mythology the king of monsters – Typhon was chained up in the abyss (according to some stories that happened in Caucasus). In the Egyptian myths serpent Apep is an embodiment of darkness, evil and fights the God of Sun – Ra. As it seems, this mythological plot has generated a motive of struggle against the serpent deities that is widespread in the genre of a tale epos.

In the Christian tradition a serpent is equated with a Devil, Satan (Lucifer, Samuel) in which the root of all evil was seen. He is also punished, locked up in hell. In Germany there was a belief that Lucifer was chained up and smiths were hitting hammers to those chains in order to fix it thoroughly. In Albanian mythos an attribute of a serpent is assigned to the Devil. He is chained to a mountain and by continuous rubbing is trying to thin a chain but on every Easter a Messiah comes and locks the Devil with a new chain (similar motive is found in other stories, including the Legend of Amiran).

Scandinavian mythological creature Loki is a transitional type between a serpent and an anthropomorphic creature. He is from a race of Aesirs but is an evil spirit and confronts Aesirs. His offspring Fenrisvolv is a sworn enemy of mankind and gods who was locked up by the later. Jormungand is also an offspring of Loki – a primal serpent which entwines the world and threatens it with swallowing. Disloyal Loki was captured by gods and tied up with the guts of his own son –Nari.

A transitional type of character between zoomorphic and anthropomorphic forms is an above mentioned character Zaak or Zohak. A legend of Zohak is told in Shanname. Despite the fact that the character is presented in an anthropomorphic form, its zoomorphic essence is revealed in its name Aji-Dahaka (dragon) as well as in its external characteristics – serpents grow out from its shoulders that are feeding on human brains and brought a kingdom to its destruction. People rebelled under the leadership of a smith named Kave. Later rebels were guided by Feridun (according to Avest it was Traetona). He tied up Zohak and hung him up in the cave of a Damavendi mountain (Kobidze, 1975). The story was told within other peoples as well. The same story was introduced into the Georgian Folklore.

On the following level a punished character/hero is presented in an anthropomorphic form. It should be mentioned, that on this level a confrontation between the character and the god is revealed in different forms however, all kinds of sacrilege (physical confrontation, pride, breaking the promise or disobedience) is equal to rebellion and results in necessary punishment.

In Armenia, stories of Artavazd-Shidar was widespread. Its characters were tied to the Mount of Masis because of their disloyalty and sins. Similar folk motive is introduced to the Armenian heroic epos of “David of Sassoun” – adven-

tures of an elder Mher. He wanted to challenge gods and because of that desire he got chained up to a mountain.

In the folklore of Asia Minor peoples there are many characters/heroes who were punished for different reasons. These are dragons/monsters, as well as anthropomorphic creatures like giants and human beings. In this very context it is of an interest to consider the legend on the origin of a mole. According to a story, one archer used to boast in front of a god that he could shoot down the sun and other stars however, he missed his shot. An ashamed archer man went into an underground, turned into a mole and never come out from there (Potanin, 1899). In the same manner, characters of a Russian Bilin Epos were punished for their over confidence and boasting. They used to boast that they could turn the whole world upside down however, could not pass the test of a god: they failed to lift a bag that was as heavy as the world and fell under the soil. The same happened with an Ossetian epos character called Batraz.

In the folklore of North Caucasian peoples there are giants who are tied up to the mounts of Caucasus. They got punished by the gods because they confronted them or tried to penetrate the sacred realms (Gadagatl, 1967). Chechens and Ingush have a story of a mother of storms – Dardza-Ni-nilg, who was incarcerated eternally in the mount of Kazbeg because of her disobedience. She is put into a circle which she cannot escape from (Dalgat, 1972).

This type of conception went through various transformations within different cultural traditions in different time periods. It basically starts with a character of an old generation god in confrontation with newer generation deities and who turns into an evil spirit or a monster. In a folklore tradition this type of narrative became so diverse that it turned into a plot of an unjustly punished positive character/hero whose liberation was associated with well-being and preservation of dignity of people.

The later phase of this type of transformation is turning of a character into a cultural hero that was the result of development of a heroic epos. Struggle of a hero against the gods acquires the meaning of a humanistic act and prophetic ideas are linked to the liberation of a hero. German stories of the old kings – Karl the Great and Barbarossa – are the ones from the same genre. "Those great kings are sleeping eternally within the mountain and they will rise again at a concrete moment to restore justice in the world" (Brothers Grimm, 1986, pp. 48-50). In this context, the most prominent character is Prometheus whose struggle against the gods is especially deep for the story is based on the pathos of protection of humankind. However, we have to mention the fact, that we do not know the mythological and especially, the folklore prototype of Prometheus. Just like the majority of ancient myths and characters, the myth of Prometheus has also went through various literary modifications. Observing those sources bring us to a conclusion that there occurred gradual transformations in the character of Prometheus. Presumably, justly punished Prometheus later turned into a cultural and a good hero and literature also played its role in all this transformation. As it seems, rebellion against the gods was perceived differently in different time periods. An interesting fact is that Prometheus

is not mentioned by Homer at all. Hesiod's and Aeschylus's attitudes towards Prometheus also differ from each other. For Hesiod, Zeus is the creator of Cosmos or the universal order so therefore, going against his will is an act of disobedience. In Hesiod, Prometheus brings the fire to the people and for the people however, an author negatively evaluates the behavior of a hero as it resulted in many tragedies and human degeneration. The author portrays the following human history in the form of regress – from the golden age to the iron one. Aeschylus, on the other side, emphasizes the love of humankind and heroic devotion of Prometheus. Classical character of Prometheus was created based on Aeschylus's interpretation, however, peoples' attitudes also played a big role in this process.

In the Georgian folklore, a prominent character who is fighting against God and is chained to the mountain for his disobedience is Amiran. The main structure of a story is built on a universal model of the struggle between the opposites, however, as the main character is humanized enough, his struggle against the God has no cosmological meaning any more. Amiran's divine features are preserved in those variations, where his mother is goddess Dali. In all other variations, Amiran is an ordinary human being but different from other human being in that he is baptized by the God and that is the reason he is so powerful. However, this very feature of him turned out to be fatal as well. Amiran could not use his great powers in a proper way and finally, he challenged God. This very act of pride and sacrilege was the reason for his punishment and eternal condemnation. In an ordinary circumstance, the action of Amiran was to cause condemnation on behalf of ordinary people, however, the opposite is true as people recite Amiran's story with excitement and approval without any negativity towards the main character.

An impulse that came from ordinary people was even strengthened as Amiran, as a character was equated with Prometheus. On the other hand, the reason for this were literary processes that took place as a result of socio-political situation in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the thoughts and imaginations of adepts of a national-independence movement Amiran was portrayed as a tormented hero. They presented chained Amiran as a symbol of conquered Georgia. This very conception has spread through ordinary Georgians as well.

Liberation of a hero was linked to idea of restoration of social justice and thus, struggle against the god/s was imagined as a fight for justice. Presumably, the phrase: "He fought God because not everything is justly arranged in this world" has originated during the above mentioned time period. As we can see, the process of turning Amiran from a negative character into a positive one took place, however, this process has stopped and did not find its continuation as the potential of folk literature has decreased in that time period and traditional epic genres of storytelling lost their vital forces.

## Conclusion

In the given work we endeavored to present a folkloric biography of a chained character/hero, varieties that it has undergone during its long existence. This type of observation clearly shows that folklore heroes were not created as static and unchangeable characters. They changed according to time periods, historic circumstances and development of human consciousness. This once more proves that folklore creativity was a dynamic process during the centuries.

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