

**One Motif from *The Man in the Panther's Skin* in the Poem  
*Several Pictures or Episodes from the Life of a Robber***

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**Abstract**

The article discusses the reception of Shota Rustaveli's *The Man in the Panther's Skin* in Ilia Chavchavadze's poem *Several Pictures or Episodes from the Life of a Robber* (*Kako the Robber*). The main objective of the article is to highlight the textual and conceptual parallels that connect the scene of *Kako* and *Zakara's* meeting with the episodes of the befriending of Rustaveli's heroes.

Based on textual parallels, it is substantiated that, regarding the characters' relationship, Ilia Chavchavadze relies on the motif of "liking" found in *The Man in the Panther's Skin*, according to which the basis of friendship is an external impression and an immediate sensation of social or spiritual kinship. The paper demonstrates that the trust existing between Ilia's heroes (considered psychologically unconvincing by some researchers) must be dictated by the Rustavelian tradition.

Based on lexical analysis, it is concluded that the meeting between *Kako* and *Zakara* represents an artistic analogue to the befriending scenes of *Tariel* and *Pridon*, and *Avtandil* and *Pridon*.

**Keywords:**

*Kako the Robber, The Man in the Panther's Skin, concept of friendship, reception, liking.*

The role of *The Man in the Panther's Skin* in Ilia Chavchavadze's creative work is immeasurably great. The writer calls Rustaveli's poem a "sea of thought and feeling" and frequently refers to it in his artistic works or publicist letters. Not infrequently, he names the source of a viewpoint or motif derived from *The Man in the Panther's Skin*, but sometimes special observation is required to recognize the Rustavelian element. This letter will discuss one such instance.

In Ilia Chavchavadze's poem *Several Pictures or Episodes from the Life of a Robber*, the scene of the meeting between Zakara and Kako draws attention. Bghachiashvili [Kako], sleeping under a tree, is awakened by the approach of a horseman and meets the potential danger with his gun ready. "Why have you come – as a friend or as a foe?" (Chavchavadze, 1987, p. 117). The rider's answer to this question (that he has come as a friend) completely satisfies Kako. At first glance, this episode lacks psychological plausibility, which has even been noted in the scholarship studying Ilia:

"The reader reads this part of the poem with such fascination that they likely do not even doubt how quickly all this happens, and how Kako (characterized by the author himself as so cautious, prudent, suspicious, and hot-tempered; note, he even has a wary horse) so quickly, almost without suspicion, trusts and immediately accepts a complete stranger, Zakro, as a friend. We might have made a remark to the young author here that his hero's psychological nature (caution, suspicion) is no longer visible here, at the most decisive moment; it has vanished. Kako is satisfied with a single word, "I am a friend", and bids the stranger welcome, saying 'may our acquaintance be good,' something a robber of such an extremely cautious nature would not have allowed so suddenly. But the reader does not feel this certain psychological inconsistency, because the poem, specifically this part of the work, develops with extraordinary expressiveness, the situation is tense, the adventurous story is very interesting, and they

no longer pay attention to this 'detail'" (Jibladze, 1983, pp. 408-409). This viewpoint of the researcher is noteworthy. By the aesthetics of the 19th century, the psychological plausibility of this passage is indeed difficult to explain.

After clarifying Bghachiashvili's identity, the rider explains the reason for his arrival; he wishes to join Kako: "Life with you, death with you, / Being with you and remaining with you" (Chavchavadze, 1987, p. 118). Bghachiashvili seems pleased with this answer: "- I like that word... I liked you too / And for this, I trust you" (Chavchavadze, 1987, p. 118).

As we learn from Kako's response, the reason for the trust was "liking". The robber liked the newcomer and trusted him for that reason. That this is not an accidental motif is clearly visible in the subsequent episode as well: "Then that guest came, / He stood silent directly before Kako. / They measured each other with their eyes, / And the two liked each other" (Chavchavadze, 1987, p. 119).

From the cited examples, we have seen that the trust and befriending of the poem's characters are conditioned by "liking". To be more precise, Kako the Robber trusts Zakara because he takes a liking to him, whereas the rider has a preconceived opinion regarding Bghachiashvili, and for him, the issue of trust does not arise. However, in both cases, "liking" plays the main role in benevolence and befriending, which the author emphasizes. "Liking" here is not merely an aesthetic category, but an immediate perception of spiritual kinship.

The meeting and befriending of the characters in Ilia Chavchavadze's poem remind us of the scenes of the heroes befriending one another in *The Man in the Panther's Skin*. For example, I will cite the episode of the meeting between Tariel and Pridon. Specifically, Tariel, whose attendants had scattered while searching for Nestan, approached a city and "dismounted to rest," at which time he became the witness to a strange picture:

"I heard a shout. I looked round, a knight? cried out haughtily, he was galloping along the seashore, he was hurt by a wound, his sword was broken and soiled, blood flowed down; he threatened his foes, was wrathful, cursed, complained" (Rustaveli, 1912, p. 91).

Tariel is distressed by the sight of the insulted knight and becomes interested in his fate; he desires to meet Pridon and sends a servant: "I bade him say: 'Stand! declare unto me who angers thee, O lion!'" (Rustaveli, 1912, p. 91). In this stanza, it is evident that Tariel is not driven by simple curiosity. His mood is poisoned because the search for Nestan has yielded no results, and he does not wish to see anyone, which is noted in this very stanza: "The sight of men gave me no pleasure; brands were imprinted on my heart." (Rustaveli, 1912, p. 91). The reason for his interest is that Tariel liked the unknown knight; he was disposed toward him with sympathy, which the metaphor used in the aforementioned stanza confirms ("who angers thee, O lion!") . If the cited example and arguments lack some conviction regarding the kinship with Kako the Robber (for instance, one might attribute this parallel to a general knightly ethos), the following episode of *The Man in the Panther's Skin* presents the relation to Ilia Chavchavadze's poem more visibly and makes the textual connection undoubtable. Pridon pays no attention to the slave who came to ask about the news, and Tariel himself has to approach the wounded youth:

"He spoke not to the slave, nor did he hear a word. Hastily I mounted, I went along to meet him; I overtook him, I came before him, I said: 'Stay, hearken to me! I too wish to know thine affair. He looked at me, I pleased him, he checked his course" (Rustaveli, 1912, p. 92) .

Pridon liked Tariel, the knight interested in his fate; moreover, he is delighted: "He looked me over, and said to God: 'How hast Thou made such a tree!'" (Rustaveli, 1912, p. 92). I believe this section of Rustaveli's poem must be the inspiration for the episode of Ilia Chavchavadze's work discussed above. Just as in *The Man in the*

Panther's Skin, "liking" becomes the basis for the befriending of the characters in *Kako the Robber*, and in both cases, all this is expressed through lexical emphasis. That the scene of the meeting of Ilia's poem's heroes represents a reception of Rustaveli's poem is also indicated by the fact that after "the two liked each other," the author says: "They went quietly and sat down under the tree" (Chavchavadze, 1987, p. 119). In *The Man in the Panther's Skin*, too, after Pridon's exclamation of admiration, Tariel says: "I said: 'Stand, be calm, let us dismount at the foot of the trees!'" (Rustaveli, 1912, p. 92). and "I led him with me; we went away fonder than father and son" (Rustaveli, 1912, p. 92). This parallel might appear forced in another case, because in both poems, the function of these words is quite prosaic considering the characters' field of action, but, in my opinion, through the context, this parallel acquires the force of an argument (the root word "quiet" [tsqnar] is also noteworthy, the use of which, unlike sitting under a tree, was not at all expected in Ilia's poem). We must also not forget that *Kako the Robber* has lines from Rustaveli prefixed as an epigraph.

In *The Man in the Panther's Skin*, besides the case cited above, there are numerous other episodes where the befriending of heroes is preceded by mutual liking and an emphasis thereon. As a sample, we can name the episode of the meeting between Avtandil and Pridon, which phraseologically reminds us of *Kako the Robber*.

Rustaveli conveys the meeting of people completely strange to one another with the following words: "They embraced; they were not shy for being strangers. The knight seems peerless to P'hridon, and P'hridon pleases the knight" (Rustaveli, 1912, p. 92).

We have the same situation during the meeting of Tariel and Avtandil. Generally, it has been noted in Rustvelology that the author of *The Man in the Panther's Skin* "always pays attention to their beauty and charm when describing the first meeting of heroes. Moreover, the author underlines in all cases that the heroes made a

great impression on one another, that they liked one another" (Khintibidze, 2009, p. 573).

Consequently, "liking" lies at the foundation of the poem's heroes befriending one another. If in Ilia Chavchavadze's poem the main function of this episode is to show us the motivation for Kako's trust, to show us that like recognizes like, in *The Man in the Panther's Skin*, the scenes of befriending have a conceptual load. The friendship in *The Man in the Panther's Skin*, along with other factors, is inspired by the antique tradition. E. Khintibidze, in the work *For the Interpretation of the Concept of Friendship in The Man in the Panther's Skin*, identifies several pillars upon which Rustaveli's concept of friendship is based. One of these pillars is the Aristotelian philosophy of friendship: "Just as Tariel was charmed by the sight of Nestan, so did the knights of *The Man in the Panther's Skin* like one another immediately upon their first meeting. This liking has its own artistic basis. It is not merely the liking of visible beauty; primarily, it is the vision of the sublime. Rustaveli's 'liking' has another philosophical load as well. It points to the philosophical source of the poet's concept of friendship, which leads us to antique philosophy, specifically to Aristotle's concept of friendship, according to which it is precisely 'liking' that is considered the primary impulse of that great emotional experience which grows into love" (Khintibidze, 2018, p. 163). V. Nozadze calls this phenomenon *Thvalakhma* [Eye-catching /visual appeal], which, according to S.S. Orbeliani, means liking by eye. Besides *Thvalakhma*, the *Rustvelologist* sees the rapid closeness of the characters in their social status: "They recognized one another as persons of the same circle; they understood well that they were representatives of the same social stratum" (Nozadze, 2021, p. 300). That status is determinative is also evident in E. Khintibidze's concept of friendship. He, as in the case of liking, points to Aristotle's philosophy, specifically the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

What is the situation in this regard in Ilia Chavchavadze's poem? The characters of Kako the Robber are also from the same social circle. Specifically, both Kako and Zakara belong to a low social class. Moreover, they are representatives of the same subculture. I mean that Kako is a so-called "noble robber," and Zakara has embarked on this same path; he kills the lord and has firmly decided to join Kako: "Life with you, death with you, / Being with you and remaining with you" (Chavchavadze, 1987, p. 118). The heroes of these two poems resemble each other in other ways as well, which is also determinative when the characters become friends. Specifically, the heroes of Rustaveli and Ilia are physically strong and young (the latter, by the way, is also very important; Aristotle also emphasizes this circumstance.) As stated in the specialized literature, Rustaveli's heroes are drawn to each other by their youthful age as well (Khintibidze, 2009, p. 569). In this respect, too, Ilia's heroes are kin to Rustaveli's characters. Zakara is a physically strong young man of 20 years, while we learn of Kako's data from the guardian's conversation:

"As I see, you too have an arm [strength],  
You will not fall short of many boys your age,  
But still, if you have pity on yourself –  
Do not show yourself to Bghachiashvili,  
Nor show him your bay horse,  
Otherwise, that boy will make you regret much!" (Chavchavadze,  
1987, p. 116)

As we have seen, in addition to social status and common fate, Kako and Zakara resemble each other in age and physical data, and all this becomes the basis for benevolence and befriending. Despite the fact that the motif "like recognizes like" or "heart recognizes heart" is not exclusively Rustaveli's, I believe that considering the fact that the mutual liking of Ilia Chavchavadze's characters is sharply accented, while the poem is preceded by Rustaveli's words as an epigraph, and simultaneously, other components of Several Pictures or Episodes

from the Life of a Robber resemble The Man in the Panther's Skin, it creates the basis for us to speak of the reception of Rustaveli's creative work in Ilia Chavchavadze's poem. If the presented viewpoint is credible, we can say that the psychological inconsistency noted by G. Jibladze had a deep foundation, and it is precisely by virtue of this that the reader easily believes the story of the characters' befriending.

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