

**Kartvelian Folktales in German**

Hinter neun Bergen. Märchen der Kartwelier. Übersetzt und  
herausgegeben von Heinz Fähnrich. Buchverlag König,  
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**Abstract:** In 2011 Buchverlag König published Kartvelian Folktales translated by the well-known Kartvelologist Heinz Fähnrich. The book comprises Georgian, Mingrelian, Svan and Laz folktales with indexes and a review of Kartvelian languages, Georgian literary and folklore traditions.

**Key words:** *Heinz Fähnrich, folktales, Georgia, Caucasus*

The well-known German Kartvelologist Heinz Fähnrich has regularly edited Georgian folklore in the form of numerous books: Epic of Amirani (1978), Georgian folktales (1963, 1980, 1995), Georgian tales (1984), Georgian tales and legends (1998), Svan folktales (1992), Laz folktales (1995), Mingrelian tales (1997), lexicon of Georgian Mythology (1999) etc. "Behind Nine Mountains. Folktales of Georgians" constitutes one more corpus of Georgian folktales in German [1]. More than 170 Georgian folktales from Georgian, Mingrelian, Laz and Svan folklore are collected in the book: magic, novelistic and animal tales with epilogue, lexicon and bibliography. Folklore and literary sources are given in the appendix as well (pp. 636-645). Specific Georgian words which are used in the German text without translation are also explained at the end of the book, for example, the names of musical instruments, money, traditional food, ethnographic things, nicknames, toponymy etc.

"Folktales of Kartvelians" by Heinz Fähnrich is a very important edition not only for Kartvelian Studies but for folkloristic and cultural sciences in general. In this sense several aspects should be

noted: with the help of folktales, the reader becomes acquainted with Georgian history, culture, everyday life, customs, religious beliefs, skills and folklore.

In the appendix (pp. 627-635), the editor gives a short and clear overview of linguistic and ethnic variety of the Caucasus, Kartvelian languages, main chronological facts from the history of Georgia, Georgian literary and oral traditions.

Georgian folktales describe history and pre-history in extraordinarily adapted form. They represent images of daily life, social connections and beliefs of different epochs. H. Fähnrich accents the magic number nine which has a special function in Georgian folktales. The translator highlights the symbolism of colors - black, red and white - as most important colors of mountains, cliffs and horses in Georgian folktales.

For the German reader, the names of the characters in Georgian folktales are defined by the translator as well: Irmisa (a child adopted by a deer), Mzekala (a sun-girl), Varskvlava (a starboy), Ochokochi (a goat-man), Sizmara (a dreamer).

Some differences between the Kartvelian folktales and other folktales appear not only in plot but also in prologue and epilogue formulas. Heinz Fähnrich presents many illustrations of these formulas with German transcription and translation (pp. 631-634).

The problem of dating the folktales is discussed in the appendix. Kartvelian folktales come from different epochs. Moreover, Georgian folktales have come under some influence of folktales and cultures of other peoples. The diversity of Kartvelian folktales has several reasons: various types of narration, transformation of ancient folktales into Christian form that appeared in the names of the heroes. The folktales demonstrate also some processes of ideological and social developments. Hainz Fähnrich informs the reader about the diffusion of Christianity in mountain regions of Georgia. Pre-Christian deities in the mountains have preserved their own images despite their new Christian names. Main divinities retained the old names: Iakhsari, Pirkushi, Dali, Pirtsetskhli etc.

Next to Georgian folktales, the editor also discusses the cultural characteristics of Svan and Laz folktales. During the last 500 years, Islamic traditions influenced Laz folklore. The names of the folktale characters transformed into Islamic names too. Conversely Svan

folktales are influenced by Byzantine traditions. The ruler in Laz folktales is named padishah, but in Svan folktales he is caesar. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Georgian, Mingrelian, Laz and Svan folktales have one origin on the whole, - Heinz Fähnrich accents this as a very remarkable fact. He gives some examples of common Kartvelian agricultural and hunting traditions, demonstrated in folktales too.

This book presents not only the translation of Kartvelian folktales but the unity of all-Kartvelian folklore. The editor collected an equal number of Georgian, Mingrelian, Laz and Svan folktales. Hainz Fähnrich notes that general features of all-Kartvelian folktales reveal even very small details such as "except bird's milk on the table".

One of the assets of this book is the special attitude of the author to folktales. It is very difficult to produce an academic edition of folktales. It is more difficult to edit a book of folktales in both, scholarly and popular style. Such book needs not only professionalism of philologist and folklorist but also great love of the language, culture and folktales of the Kartvelian people. Karvelian folktales, edited by Heinz Fähnrich is a significant book for the popularization of folktales in general. "Behind nine mountains. Folktales of Georgians" has a great significance for the study of folklore and for anthropological sciences.

#### References:

1. Hinter neun Bergen. Märchen der Kartwelier. Übersetzt und herausgegeben von Heinz Fähnrich. Buchverlag König, Greiz/Thür, 2011