

THE ANCESTRY AND ETHNIC MILIEU OF THE CAUCASIAN MUSLIM *NOKHCHIS* (CHECHENS)

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1. Pre-Islamic ethnic genesis of Caucasia and Pontic Steppe.

The ancient Promethean myth discloses a common heritage of the Caucasian and Minoan cultures. This myth indicates that the Greek *phylae* emigrated to the Aegean Archipelago from the vast Steppe between the river of Danube and the Caucasian foothills.¹ They brought with them not only chariots, but also their religious

¹ Prometheus was a Greco-Caucasian mythical Titan, god of fire, supreme trickster and champion of mankind. His father was Titan Iapetos (Yaphetus) and mother Titaness Themis (in Achaean version; the sea nymph Clymene). Over-inquisitive Pandora (in Greek: 'All-Giving') was his sister-in-law, and the First Woman created by Hephaestus (Zeus's brother and divine patron of craftsmen). Prometheus had two brothers: Atlas and Epimetheus (Pandora's husband) both also punished by the Olympian gods for their transgressions and rebellious behavior. Atlas conspired against Zeus during the Second War of the titans vs gods (Titanomachia). According to the classic Hellenic mythographers (Herodotus, Hesiodus, Homer and Euhemerus) Prometheus (in Greek: 'Forethought') and his brother Epimetheus (in Greek: 'Afterthought') were ordered by Zeus to provide the created humans and animals with the abilities they would need to survive. Epimetheus equipped all animals with furs, feathers, sharp teeth and nails, hooves, fins, gills, spikes, etc. When it came time to bestow the humans, he found he had exhausted all qualities, and Prometheus took over the task of educating the first humanoids. He selected from them a noble race and taught them to walk upright. He also lit a beacon with fire stolen from the Sun (Helios). The gift of fire radically changed the miserable conditions of life of the first humans. For his theft of the Olympian light, Zeus had him chained to the rock in the Caucasus, where his liver was constantly ripped out by a vulture (or eagle). Being a semi-god or hero, Prometheus was immortal. After a long era or ordeal, Hercules, a hero also punished for his disobedience, liberated him and slew the vulture (or the eagle).

Euhemerus (d. circa 300 B.C.) was the first ancient sceptic revisionist historian who in his 'Sacred History' declared all Greek myths as distortion

thought and folk tales.² In the pre-Islamic North Caucasian folk tales, the supreme god of thunder and heavens called *Sewa* or *Dela* (in Ingushetian tradition *Tha*) severely punished *Phramat*, a heroic smith-savior of mankind, who had stolen fire and the secret of the production of iron (*chedva*) from the gods living in the paradise located on the highest mountain of Caucasus.

In the oldest Ciscaucasian legends, Pro-me-devs was a semigod and son of Yaphetus, Caucasian god of metalwork. The Indo-European races of Caucasia are often called Japhetites because the biblical Iapheth (Yepheth), Noah's son, was a progenitor of the Caucasian races (Greeks and Medes).³ Hesiod in his *Theogony* wrote that Medea, the murderous witch and jealous wife of Jason (the captain of Argonauts) was a daughter of Aeëtes, the king of Caucasian Colchis. After her tragic adventures in Corinth and Athens she fled to her homeland. *Medi* was a popular female name in ancient Caucasia. In the modern Chechen language 'Phramat' means 'the workshop of an iron smith'.⁴ The Chechen word *-mat* indicates a place of settlement, people and the chthonic language. The early medieval semi-

of real history of ancestors of the Greeks. According to him, the Greek gods were heroes and rulers of the earlier powerful states-cities venerated by the less advanced tribes. In the Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the Christianized Greeks and Romans turned their gods and heroes into saints and blessed martyrs of the new theologically correct Olympus ruled by the triune god of the Nicaean bishops.

² Vide; I. V. K. Tereskov, 'K voprosu proiskhizdeniya i istorii bytovanya obraza Prometeya' (On the question of origin and history of image of Prometheus), in: *Uchenye zapiski Karbadino-Balkarskogo NII (Karbadian-Balkar National Institute of History)*, vol. 18, Nalchik 1961, 11–16, also; V. F. O. Miller, O Prometeye na Kavkazye, Trudy archeologicheskogo syezda v Tiflisie, (Prometheus in the Caucasus, The works of Archeologist Seminar in Tiflis), Tiflis 1887, 1–13.

³ N. Y. Marr, Iz poyezdki k evropeiskimi yafetidam. (The journey to the European Japhetites), Moscow: Izdat Nauka 1925, vol. 3, 46.

⁴ K. Z. Chokaev, 'K voprosu bytovanya obraza Prometeya v folkorye chechentzev i ingushyei' (The Question of Prometheus's image in the Chechen and Ingushetian folklore), in: *Phramat*, Vol.1, no.1, (1992), Solzha-ghiala, 24–25.