

DISCOVER ABKHAZIA

How Lhepsch Sought the Edge of the World

(Translated from a Kabardian text. Third cycle, tale no. 53, p. 217 in *The Narts: Circassian Epos. Vol. 1. Asker Hedeghalh'e. Maikop: The Circassian Research and Science Institute, 1968*)

"I shall find the edge of the world. I will see it with my own eyes." Said Nart Lhepsch.

He fashioned a pair of iron boots and formed a walking stick to roam the World.

He travelled here, he travelled there, he travelled everywhere. He saw a few, he saw a lot, there was nothing under the skies that he did not see.

His boots wore out and fell round his ankles. His staff shortened to lesser than a span.

He roamed and roved. His quest took him to all corners of the World, but he never arrived at the place where Heaven meets Earth.

To this day Circassian elders have a saying about this vain endeavour: Lhepsch did not reach the edge of the world.

The Story of Lhepsch's Iron Tongs

(The original is in Kabardian. First cycle, tale no. 51, pp. 216-7 in *The Narts: Circassian Epos. Vol. 1. Asker Hedeghalh'e. Maikop: The Circassian Research and Science Institute, 1968*)

In the beginning **Lhepsch** was not a blacksmith to use iron tongs yet. He used his bare hands to manipulate the red-hot iron. One morning while his wife was driving the herd of cattle, she found a dead snake lying on the road, its two ends crossing one another.

The wife came back and told **Lhepsch**:

- I came across a dead snake with its head and tail crossing each other. If you could make a pair of tongs in that shape to hold the iron, you will be able to work it without singeing your hands.

Lhepsch went out and had a look. He came back and fashioned pincers in that form. Thenceforward, he began to utilize them in his work. This was how tongs were invented. Afterwards they started to be manufactured.

Lhepsch was not the sort of blacksmith to let anyone look up his sleeve (he was loath to let people in on his tricks). He guarded his secrets well. He always kept his smithy locked while he worked inside. However, after they looked inside his shrine, he gave up his craft, as the magic was gone

Why does the sun slow down towards the end of the day?

(Translated from an Abzakh original. First cycle, tale no. 10, pp. 108-9 in *The Narts: Circassian Epos. Vol. 1. Asker Hedeghalh'e. Maikop: The Circassian Research and Science Institute, 1968*)

Have you ever wondered why the sun stops for a while at some time towards the evening? ...

This started to happen after the following incident:

One day Satanay and a young Nart got into an argument and then challenged one another as to who was more adept at his art.

One said, "I can weave a Circassian coat in one day."

It is said that Satanay was the only person capable of performing such a feat.

The other, "I can make a saddle in one day."

All day (of the appointed date) each was busy making the object of the challenge.

The young Nart artisan sat hard at his work.

As the sun was about to go down, seeing that she still needed some time before her work was finished:

- "Oh sun, if only you come to a standstill for a while!" said Satanay.

At that time it was usual for the Nart wishes to come true. The sun stopped for some time, giving Satanay a chance to finish weaving.

Since she had been working all day long, Satanay must have become very exhausted. She stood up and stretched her body. She put on the new coat to show it to the young Nart.

- "You are exactly as they say! You have done a great job!" said the young Nart.

Translations by Amjad Jaimoukha