

The Circle of Eternal Life

(Georgian Warrior Tradition)

In the birthplace of grape and wine, Georgia, the warriors since ancient times had a beautiful martial tradition, which represents the unbreakable soul and the spirituality of Georgian culture.

It is known, that Georgians often had to, and still have to, protect their country, traditions, faith and ways in uneven and heroic wars. Since the ancient times, Georgian warriors, when heading to another self-sacrificing, defensive war, would carry in their back-sacks grapevines. The warriors believed that if they fell in a battle unburied by their brothers, then their bodies would reintegrate with the Motherland, and the mother soil, fertilized by them, would give birth to a beautiful vineyard, thanks to the grapevines carried into the battle on their backs.

Thus the Georgian warriors believed, that when the enemy, who survived their wrath, not due to their superior courage, but due to their sheer quantity, would abandon the horrific battlefield, it could never guess that behind its back it was leaving not a mere valley of death, but rather a beautiful vineyard, which in three years would give the signⁱ to the widows and orphans, whispering to them in warriors' voices "we are still here, we have not gone anywhere, we are coming back to you." And that in one more year the vineyard would give a full harvest to the widows and orphans.

In that harvest, a grown-up boy, when working, would remember the arm of his fallen father, which he had stared at in a vineyard when little. The boy would begin to sing like his father, and would gratefully say to his mother:

"You are a vineyard newly blossomed.
Young, beautiful, growing in Eden,
A fragrant poplar sapling in Paradise,
May God adorn you. No one is more worthy of praise,
You are the sun, enlightened by yourself brilliantly."ⁱⁱ

And the vineyard would kindly and gratefully listen to this song by its son. And the vineyard would grant the calm to the boy, the same calm, with which it had accompanied his father into the battle, for it knew, that the back of the lion-heart warrior would remain unseen by the enemy and by the wounds and that if the warrior fell, the grapevine would return unharmed to the Motherland in order to revive the goodness of the warrior.

In 2011 in New Zealand Georgian National Rugby Team Lelos will wear for the official reception Georgian national warrior costumes, Chokhas. The backs of the Chokhas will be decorated by an engraved grapevine, a gorgeous symbol of the bravery, humanism, idealism and warrior spirit of this ancient culture.

Levan Vasadze, Veteran Georgian rugby player, 2011

ⁱ In Georgian "nishani", or sign, is the name of the first vineyard harvest, which comes in the third year after planting the grapevine

ⁱⁱ English Translation of "Thou Art a Vineyard" – an ancient church song written in 12th century by Georgian King to Virgin Mary