



BATRADZ

BATRADZ (BATRAZ, BATİRADZ), name of the one of the main characters of the Nart epics (see [NARTI KADDŽITÄ](#)); the son of a famous hero Xämïc (q.v.).

Batradz's mother belongs to a dwarf family whose members lived underground. Offended by Xämïc, she returns to her family. Being already pregnant she blows the embryo between her husband's shoulder blades where an abscess forms and serves as birthplace of Batradz. His body is made of steel. After he is tempered in the heavenly forge, he becomes invulnerable except for his intestines. Eventually, it is this vulnerability which accounts for his death in a climactic challenge with heavenly forces.

Linguists interpret the name as an epic version of the title of Alanian medieval kings (see [ALANS](#)). These kings were called As/Os-Bakatar, being an inversion of a Mongol-Turkish composite, *bağad/tyr Ass*, i.e. "Alanian hero" (Abaev, 1990, p. 217; Abaev, 1958, pp. 240-41). The last residence of this Alanian dynasty is purported to be the modern North-Ossetian village of Nužal, where the Narts' dynasty ended in the events of the late 13th and early 14th centuries CE (Kuznetsov, pp. 91, 94-100, 131-38). In this case, the epic hero should be interpreted as the collective embodiment of medieval Alan kings during the period in which they were losing their kingdom. These kings were attempting to preserve their kingdom at all costs. Therefore, Batradz appears as a noble knight, beyond reproach. At the same time, he cruelly takes revenge for his father's death; shows no pity either for his foes or his own Nart people, and he subjects them to humiliation and suffering.



Though the name of Batradz is medieval, the character he is associated with has many archaic traits of a mythological nature. He was convincingly identified as the central figure of a thunderstorm myth and in this respect treated as a cognate of the Vedic Indra (q.v.; Dumézil, 1977, pp. 13, 58-62). On the other hand, he possesses the features of an eschatological myth, as he is involved – both in the mythological and the historical sense – in the social catastrophe that put an end to the epic and to the historical development. This “historical retreat” that took place in the Late Middle Ages is associated by scholars with the loss of state institutions and ended in a forced return to the surviving archaic forms of socio-economic and political organization. From the era of feudal fragmentation with mature systems of class differentiation and state power, it led to a patriarchal neighborhood community and an egalitarian civil society, governed by the people’s assembly (Vaneev, p. 207; Tmenov, pp. 128-29).

One of the most prominent attributes of Batradz is his sword, which embodies him personally. This fact makes it possible to link him with the well-known Scythian cult of the sword described by Herodotus (4.62). In this respect, he is comparable to the Scythian Ares (Dumézil, 1990, pp. 62-64). Additionally, he is also compared to the legendary King Arthur, as the best-known common motif of both traditions is the hero’s action of throwing the sword into a lake or sea (Littleton & Malcor, pp. 6, 43, 103-5).

Batradz is still very popular among the Ossetians, and his name is quite often given to new-born boys as hope of a brave and noble future awaiting them. Ossetian painters are fond of depicting him in their illustrations to the Narts epics, the best of which were done by such famous artists as Makharbek Tuganov and Azanbek Džanayev.

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