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„Onomastica Nartica: Soslan – Sozyryqo“

von Sonja Fritz und Jost Gippert (2004).

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Onomastica Nartica: Soslan – Sozyryqo

Sonja Fritz – Jost Gippert

Among the Iranian speaking peoples of today, the Ossetes, descendants of the medieval Alans, who have been the subject of so many an investigation by Fridrik Thordarson, are peculiar in many ways. As a matter of fact, both their language and their culture seem to have much more in common with their North Caucasian neighbours than with the rest of the Iranian world. The most striking evidence of this may be found in the so-called epic of the Narts which is popular among West Caucasian peoples (Abkhazians, Abazinians, Ubykhs, and Circassians, i.e. Adygheians and Kabardians) and Turks (Qarachay and Balqar peoples) as well as East Caucasian peoples (Chechens, Ingushetians) and which has even spread to the mountaineers of the South Caucasus (Svans and Georgians). That this means not merely a common genre of oral literature but a fund of common traditions which must have gradually developed into a set of saga cycles, is evidenced by the Nartic heroes themselves, i.e. the leading personages occurring in them, whose characteristics and even names are identical, or at least similar, throughout the language-specific versions.

In a recent article,¹ we have tried to show that two of the major personages, viz. *Satana*, the most important heroine of the epic, and *Batradz*, the warrior who, according to the legends, entered a fortress riding on a canon ball,² can be identified with historical figures of the first half of the first millenium A.D. mentioned in Armenian sources, viz. *Sat'enik*, the Alan wife of the Armenian king *Artasēs*, and *Bakat'ra*, an Alan general of the Persian army who converted to Christianity and became a martyr later. Together with these identifications, an Alan, i.e., Iranian etymology of the names imposed itself, in its turn providing one more good argument for the “Iranian origin” of the epic which Fridrik Thordarson styled “unquestionable”.³ In the present study, we intend to reconsider another saliant hero of the epic, who is called *Soslan* or *Sozyryqo* by the Ossetes.

The Nartic *Soslan* is indeed a striking figure whose deeds and skills have attracted the attention of scholars for a long time. One of the most famous and wide-spread episodes is the one concerning his birth which may be outlined as follows:

¹ Fritz/Gippert (2003).

² First mentioned in Klaproth (1812: 443).

³ Thordarson (1983: 445).

While Satana is washing her laundry on a riverbank,⁴ a young shepherd⁵ watches her from the other riverside and immediately falls in love with her. He cannot retain his sperm, which hits a stone.⁶ Satana makes a mental note of the stone and starts counting the days.⁷ The stone starts growing,⁸ and after nine months it gives birth to a boy.⁹ The Narts' blacksmith¹⁰ is the only person whom Satana tells about the insemination;¹¹ she asks him to split the stone.¹² When the boy comes out of the stone, he is so hot that Satana cannot hold him.¹³ But before he falls to the ground, the blacksmith grasps him with his tongs and puts him in water in order to cool him down. Seven times he puts

⁴ According to an Ubykh version, *Satanaya* undresses herself and slips into the water; cf. Colarusso 2002: 387. In a "Tatar" version, the river is *Edil'*, i.e., the Volga (Dumézil 1930: 76, text variant a).

⁵ The name of the shepherd (or cowherd) is *Sosna* in the Ubykh, *Sosa* in an Abaza (Colarusso 2002: 387 / 185), and *Sodžuk* in a "Tatar" version (Dumézil 1930: 76, text variant a); the Circassian versions have the name forms *Sajəmučwo Zartyž*, *Težidada* (Colarusso 2002: 52), *Čemyho* (Dumézil 1930: 76, text variant c: Adyghe), and *Tsekim* (Kabardians: ib., text variant b).

⁶ In a Chechen version, this is a blue stone (Dalgat 1901: 41 = 1972: 287; Dumézil 1930: 77, text variant e). Another Ossetic variant tells that one day, when *Satana* washed her trousers and put them on a stone in the sun, *Wastyrdžy*, i.e., St. George came and put his sperm on them. At this moment, a soul entered the belly of the stone (Miller 1881: 28-30; Dumézil 1930: 76 f.).

⁷ Sikoev (1985: 70); Libedinskij (1978: 117). In Circassian (Colarusso 2002: 52 f.) and Abaza (Colarusso 2002: 185 f.) versions, the stone is on Satana's riverside; she takes it, carries it to her house and places it in the stove (Circassian) or puts it under the bed (Abaza). In the Ubykh version, the cowherd seizes *Satanaya* herself and deflourishes her.

⁸ Thus according to the Ossetic, Circassian and Abaza versions; in the latter versions, the stone grows not only big but also very hot.

⁹ In the Ubykh version, *Lepš* advises *Satanaya* to take a large shirt to cover her belly. He promises to return after nine months.

¹⁰ Ossetic *Kwyrdałægon*, Circassian *Lepš*, Abaza *Lepšw*.

¹¹ Thus in the Ossetic and Abaza versions.

¹² In the Ubykh version, the blacksmith cuts through one of the rocks on which *Satanaya* used to sit, two months before the child is expected to be born. He hollows enough space out of it to hold a baby. After *Satanaya* has given birth to her son, she brings him to the river and sets him inside the rock. In a "Tatar" version, *Satanoj*, after determining the day when the baby would break loose of the rock, orders sixty hammers from *Deuet*, the celestial blacksmith. The day before the child's birth is expected, she provides herself with a good collection of drinks, invites sixty young men and leads them to the stone. They start splitting the stone very carefully. When only a membrane is left, *Satanoj* stops the workers and makes them drunken (Dumézil 1930: 76, text variant a). In a Chechen version, it is the *Holy Lady Seli-Sata* herself who comes and frees the boy, *Soska-Solsa*, from the stone (Dalgat 1901: 41 = 1972: 287; Dumézil 1930: 77, text variant e); in an Ossetic variant, too, the stone is split by *Satana* herself so that *Sozryko* comes out and starts playing (Miller 1881: 28-30; Dumézil 1930: 76 f.).

¹³ In the Ubykh version, *Lepšw* collects the Narts whom he has told before that he has heard a voice coming from inside the stone. He splits the rock and they find the boy, lit on fire so that he is aflame. In the "Tatar" version, he has a mop of hair and his legs are thin like a needle (Dumézil 1930: 76, text variant a).

him in water and fire,¹⁴ so that the skin of the baby becomes like metal;¹⁵ but the parts of the legs where the blacksmith holds him¹⁶ remain soft and vulnerable.¹⁷

It is not only episodes of this kind that have been adapted by nearly all the peoples in question¹⁸ but also the general picture of the hero, his skills and qualities. Thus, the sagas agree that *Soslan* was incredibly strong, intelligent and a brilliant warrior. According to an Abaza legend,¹⁹ he managed to push a heavy anvil, which grown-ups could not even lift, deep into the earth as a two year-old boy. As a reward, the Narts' blacksmith (*Łepšw*) made a special sword for him from a scythe which could mow faster than any other scythe etc.

In contrast to this, the name of the hero is by far less consistent throughout the variants of the epic we know of, and it is just the Ossetic versions where the most divergent forms occur. Here we have at least two different prototypes, viz. *Soslan*, which is the usual form in Digoron texts,²⁰ and *Sozyryqo* (and similar variants) mostly occurring in the Iron layer.²¹ It is clear off-hand that the latter variants are identical with the name forms we find in the West

¹⁴ In the Ubykh version, *Łepš* grasps the boy with his iron tongs and dunks him in and out of the passing water three times. Then he asks *Satanaya* to adopt the baby as her own son. *Łepšw* names him *Sawsyryqo*.

¹⁵ In the Ossetic version, it is the boy himself who orders to be hardened by the blacksmith, and he also prescribes the liquid for this procedure: One hundred (goat) skin bags filled with the milk of she-wolves. A bitch organises the meeting with the she-wolves, and Wryzmäg milks them.

¹⁶ The thighs in a Circassian version, the knees in Abaza versions.

¹⁷ In a "Tatar" version, *Satanoj* renders the boy to the jinns who harden his whole body except for the two knees. *Sosruko* is grown up by the jinns. Every night they bring the boy to *Satanoj* to let her see him (Dumézil 1930: 76, text variant *a*). In the Ossetic version, the blacksmith prepares a wooden cradle in which to lay down *Soslan* after the hardening procedure. But while he is building the cradle, *Syrdon*, *Soslan*'s archenemy, comes and disturbs him so that the cradle gets a little bit too short. When *Soslan* lies in it, he cannot stretch his legs. This is the reason why his knees remain soft and vulnerable.

¹⁸ An exception as to this is the episode depicting *Soslan*'s ride into the underworld, which seems not to be attested outside of the Ossetic realm. The episode is reminiscent of both antique myths (the saga of Orpheus and Eurydike, cf. Thordarson 1992: 347) and later traditions, linking the Zoroastrian (Middle Persian) *Ardā Virāz Nāmag*, the Islamic *Mi'rāğ* stories, and the Christian content elaborated in Dante's *Divina commedia*. The background of this episode requires further investigation.

¹⁹ Cf. Colarusso (2002: 192 ff.).

²⁰ The Digoron texts compiled (from earlier editions) in Narty (1990) have *Сослан* = *Soslan* throughout.

²¹ The Iron edition Tuğanty/Qanyqwaty (1975) has *Сослан* = *Soslan* throughout. Abaev (1939: 28 ff.) notes *Sozyryqo* in Iron texts, while the South Ossetic texts published in Cxinvali (in Tybylty 1929 and 1930) have *Sozyryqo* alongside *Soslan*. Narty (1990) mostly has *Созырыхъо* = *Sozyryqo* in the Iron texts, only text III/11 (101 f.) which is reproduced from Tybylty 1929: 12 ff. has *Soslan*. The Digoron variant of *Sozyryqo*, *Sozuruqo*, occurs in the poetic text printed in Abaev (1939: 58, l. 159).

Caucasian languages, viz. Abkhaz and Abaza *Sasryqwa*,²² Adyghe *Sawsyryqo*, Kabardian *Sosryqwa*,²³ and the same name is likely to be represented in Turkic forms such as *Sosuruq* or *Sosurqa*²⁴ and in the Svan variant *Sosruq̄w*.²⁵ The Digoron *soslan*, on the other hand, seems to find its closest counterpart in the *Soska-Solsa* of the Chechens,²⁶ and is possibly also connected with the name of the shepherd (or cowherd) by whom the hero was begot, appearing as *Sosæg(-ældar)* in Ossetic²⁷ and *Sos*, *Sosna* and the like in some West Caucasian sources.²⁸

Astonishingly enough, it is mostly the variant *soslan* from which Iranianists have started so far when dealing with the etymology of the Nartic names, albeit this form can hardly be explained on an Iranian basis as it is. This is why in his 1935 article, V.I. Abaev proposed to identify *soslan* with a “Turko-Mongolian” verb (!) *suslan-* meaning “to have a cruel look”,²⁹ thus yielding an epithet which would well meet the hero’s qualities.³⁰ Connecting *Soslan*’s name with that of his father, *Sosæg ældar*, H.W. Bailey arrived at a “base *sos* (or *soz*)” for which he claimed “a meaning ‘high-spirited’”;³¹ he gave no further information as to this “root” though. A different approach, which is not compatible with Abaev’s nor Bailey’s, is implied by Fridrik Thordarson’s more recent statement according to which “the name *Soslan* ... is apparently a patronymic in *-ān*”; as Thordarson had to admit himself, the problem remains with this analysis that “for the rest the name is enigmatic”.³² It therefore seems worth while reinvestigating the etymology of *Soslan*’s name again.

²² Cf. Salakaja (1966: 79) for a discussion of the name.

²³ Of the variant forms contained in the editions of Circassian Nartic texts (Narty 1974: 41 ff. and Nartxer 1969), we note *Сосрыкъуэ* = *Sosryqwa* and *Сосырыкъуэ* = *Sosyryqwa* for standard Kabardian, *Соусырыкъуэ* = *Sowsyryqwa* for Besleney, and *Саусырыкъо* = *Sawsyryqo* for Bzhedugh and Abadzekh, *Саосырыкъо* = *Saosyryqo* for Hakucha, and *Саусэрыкъо* = *Sawsəryqo* for Shapsugh as Adyghe variants. *Sawsəraq̄a* = *Sawsyryqwa* is also the Ubykh name form (Dumézil 1931: 139).

²⁴ The former is the usual Balqar form in the texts compiled in Narty (1994), the latter appears in the Qarachay text no. 42 (ib.: 128 f.).

²⁵ Thus occurring in an Upper Bal text in Šaniže/Topuria (1939: 394 f.; text from Lenžer).

²⁶ Cf. Dalgat (1972: 26) according to whom the Ingush variant is *Seska Solsa*. — *Soslan* is also attested in Svan, cf. the Lower Bal text no. 81 in Davitiani/Topuria/Kaldani (1957: 166 ff.; text from Ecer).

²⁷ Dzagurov (1927: 9 f.) = Narty (1990: 144) (Digor text). The name seems not to be provided in Iron texts.

²⁸ *Coc* = *Sos* occurs in the Kabardian texts in Narty (1974: 45 f.) and Nartxer (1969: 36, no. 92), *Caуcнэ* = *Sawsnə* in the Adyghe translation of an Ubykh text in Nartxer (1969: 43, no. 104).

²⁹ Cf. Abaev (1990: 250 f. and 1979: 139); this etymology has with no further comment been taken over by Alemany (2000: 323).

³⁰ In *sozyryqo* etc. Abaev proposed to see an Adyghe (Circassian) adaptation (1979: 139) or deformation of the “Ossetic name *Soslan*” (1979: 140).

³¹ Bailey (1980: 240).

³² Thordarson (1989: 478).

Any investigation into the name of the Nartic hero must take into account a historical figure bearing this name in the 12th-13th century, viz. *Davit Soslan*, who, as the second husband of the famous queen Tamar, became king of Georgia in what is today regarded as the most brilliant time of Georgian history.³³ According to the autochthonous sources available for this period, three texts pertaining to the so-called Georgian chronicle *Kartlis cxovreba*, Davit was a king of the Ossetes, a Bagratid³⁴ of “Ephraimian” descent.³⁵ Raised by Rusudan,³⁶ an aunt of Tamar’s,³⁷ he grew up to be a very imposing person³⁸; as Tamar’s husband and general, he was victorious in many battles against Turks, Arabs and Persians in the Caucasus and adjacent areas.³⁹

It is important in this connection to consider the additional information about Davit Soslan’s provenance provided by the Georgian prince Vaxuṣṭi Baṭonišvili who compiled a detailed account of the Georgian history and geography in the first half of the 18th century. According to this author, Davit Soslan was a descendant of the Georgian Bagratid king Demetre (Dimitri) whose son Davit was his great-grandfather; his grandfather was named Aton, and his father, Žadaron or Žadron. The source Vaxuṣṭi used was inscriptions attached to the paintings of the persons in question in a church located in *Ḳasris* or *Ḳarsnis qevi*.⁴⁰ S. Qauxčičšvili was certainly right in his edition (1973)

³³ Cf. Andronikašvili (1966: 136) who simply states that *soslani* “represents the name of one of the Nartic heroes” (after Abaev 1949: 92 who correctly compares Ingush *solsa*, not *sosla*).

³⁴ Thus according to the (anonymous) chronicle of the time of Laša Giorgi, Tamar’s and Davit’s son; cf. Qauxčičšvili (1955: 369, l. 8): *tamaris kmari davit iḡo ovst mepe, ṭomi bagraṭoanta...* Cf. Dondua/Berznišvili (1985: 55) according to whom the Ossetian Bagratids descended from one Dimitri, step-brother of the (11th century) Georgian king Bagrat IV. Cf. below for additional information as to Davit Soslan’s ancestors.

³⁵ Thus according to the “Histories and eulogies of the crowned”, cf. Qauxčičšvili (1959: 46, l.5): *moḡme epremis zetagani, romel arian ovsn* (“a young man from the sons of Ephraim, that is, the Ossetes”), and 65, l.3 (*epremianisa* – “of the Ephraimid”). Cf. Keḡeliḡe (1942/1956: 312 ff.) for a detailed study on the “Ephraimids” in Georgian sources.

³⁶ Qauxčičšvili (1959: 46, l. 8 and 57, l. 10).

³⁷ Cf. Qauxčičšvili (1955, 366 sch. 3) (scholion of the mss. reflecting king Vaxṭang’s redaction, according to which Rusudan was a daughter of Demetre, Tamar’s grandfather); as to the contradicting information contained in the same chronicle (369 l. 15) according to which Rusudan was an *asuli mamis misisa*, i.e. a “daughter of her (Tamar’s) father”, cf. Keḡeliḡe (1941/1986: 122 ff.).

³⁸ *čabuḡi da lomi da misatxrobeli, amat ḡovelta ganmarḡuebata da nakmarta tanadamxudari da twtmkoneli, ṣemmartebeli, molaṣkre mḡwrcxli* (“a young man and a lion, worthy of being told of, participating in all those victories and deeds, independent, bold, a valiant fighter”; Qauxčičšvili 1955, 369, l. 8 f.); *moḡme iḡo per-nakutad ḡargi, beḡ-brṭḡeli, ṗirad ṭurpa da ṭanad zomieri* (“he was a young man, with a good, clear-cut face, broad shoulders, a nice face and a well-measured body”; Qauxčičšvili 1959, 46, l. 9 f.).

³⁹ Qauxčičšvili (1959, 55 ff. and 130 ff.).

⁴⁰ Qauxčičšvili (1973: 176 f. n. 1) (... *moḡame ars mcire eḡlesia ḡasris / ḡarsnis xevsa ṣina, sadaca daxaṭul arian da daḡerilni zed dimiṭri da ze misi davit; ze davitisa aton, ze atonisa*

to take the former of the two variants to represent the intended reading of the place name. Given that *Ḳarsnis qevi* is nearby Mcxeta (and Tbilisi), it will have been well-known to the literates in the capital at Vaxuṣṭi's time and its name thus represents a *lectio facilior*. *Ḳasris qevi*, on the other hand, is situated in the high mountain region formerly known as Dvaleti, where present-day Georgia borders with the Digor region of North-Ossetia.⁴¹ According to Vaxuṣṭi's own geographical record, the *qevi* was mostly inhabited by Ossetes as were other parts of Dvaleti in his time. Neither Vaxuṣṭi in his geography nor any other source of his time mentions the existence of a church in *Ḳasris qevi*, however.⁴² The closest-by churches that Vaxuṣṭi knows of were in Zaxa and Truso, two villages located in the southern part of the Dvaleti region.⁴³ We can therefore but suspect that the monument in question is the 13th century church of Nuzal⁴⁴ which has recently been dealt with in an archeological study by V.A. Kuznecov.⁴⁵ The only reliable information available as to the inscriptions of this church, however, is V. Pfaff's account of a journey to the mountainous regions of Ossetia of 1871; in this author's drawings (table between pp. 136

žadaron, ze žadaronisa soslan davit ... “the witness is her [Tamar's] little church in Ḳ.q. where [we find] depicted and [furnished] with an inscription above: Demetre and his son Davit; Davit's son Aton; Aton's son Žadaron; Žadaron's son Soslan Davit ...”). The text concerned is not part of Vaxuṣṭi's historical account proper but a note added later by the author himself; for the name of Žadaron, the editor gives the variants *Žadaroni* (i.e. a form extended with the Georgian nominative ending) and *Žadron*.

⁴¹ According to the available maps, *Ḳasri* was situated in the upper part of the valley of the river Ardon, between present-day Sadon and Nar; cf. Sakartvelos Sabčota Socialiṣṭuri Respublikis Aṭlasi, Tbilisi (1964: 253-254) (historical map of Georgia of the first half of the 16th century) and Atlas Severo-Osetinskoi ASSR, Moskva (1967: 29), where the Кассарское ущелье is marked (near Nuzal) with no. 11; cf. also the map pertaining to Žanašvili (1897) (between pp. 88 and 89).

⁴² Another account of 18th century Ossetia, by the Georgian historian Niḱo Dadiani, simply states that Ossetia has “many buildings, fortresses and churches” (*amat ṣina ars mravalni ṣenebulebani, cixeni da eḱlesiani*), but the author refuses to list and describe them as he “does not know the names of their builders” (*ara uḱḱi saxelni aḱmṣenebeltani da amistvis arca isini aḱvṣceret adgilobit*; Buržanaḱe 1962: 143 f.). In Gŭldenstädt's detailed account of Ossetia (1787: 469 ff. = 1834: 138 ff.), churches and other buildings are not thematised for the four districts in question (“Saka” = *Zaqa*, “Nar”, “Sannach” or “Sarimach” = *Zramaga* [below Nar] and “Walagir” = *Alagir*, 471 f. / 141 f.); the same holds true for Axvlediani's analysis of the historical Dvaleti (1960: 65 ff.). Klaproth (1814: 378) mentions *K'aḱbris-k'ari* but no church nearby.

⁴³ Cf. Cagaeva (1975: 280), according to whom the present name of Захъа (i.e. *Zaqa*) is Хъесатыхъæу (*Qesatyḱæw*). Different from *Zaqa*, Truso is located south of the Caucasian main range (in the headwater region of the river Terek, in present-day South Ossetia).

⁴⁴ Cf. the Atlas Severo-Osetinskoi ASSR (1967: 30) according to which Nuzal has a clock tower of the 12th century; in the archeological map (ib., 26), a “medieval church” is indicated near Nuzal.

⁴⁵ Cf. Abaev (1990: 457-464); the study itself (“Rekom, Nuzal i Carazonta”) has not been available to us so far.

and 137), here reproduced in figs. 1-3,⁴⁶ we can attempt to regard *ton:* as a remnant of the name *Aton* in the first line, and to read *soslan* in the second line of the transcripts. Unfortunately, it seems that there are no further traces of these inscriptions today; this is all the more regrettable since Soslan's immediate ancestors, *Žad(a)ron* and *Aton*, seem not to have been mentioned anywhere else.⁴⁷

In Georgian sources, we meet another historical figure though whose name may be relevant in this context. The anonymous “Centennial chronicle”, a part of *Kartlis Cxovreba* which covers the time of the Mongol invasions,⁴⁸ mentions a certain *Sosan*⁴⁹ (with spelling variants such as *Sosna*, *Sosman*)⁵⁰ who nourished Davit son of Laša Giorgi, the later king Davit Ulu (lit. “David the tall”) when he was captured and held as a captive in an earth cave by the Turkish Sultan Qiyās-ud-din, who had married his aunt, Rusudan. While Vaxuṣṭi Baṭonišvili styles this “*Sosana*” a mere “servant” (*mona*) of Davit's,⁵¹ he was a relative of the later king according to the anonymous chronicler (“*Žamtaḡmçereli*”) who

⁴⁶ A photograph of the church will be found in Kaloiev (1971, 285).

⁴⁷ Abaev (1990: 464) speaks of frescoes, inscriptions and epitaphs that have been mentioned by several authors before Kuznecov (“исключительное значение Нузальской церкви, ее фресок, ее надписи-эпитафии отмечалось некоторыми авторами и до В.А. Кузнецов”), and he even discusses one of the inscriptions, viz. the one concerning ‘the nine Carazon brothers’ (“надпись о «девяти братьях Царазоновых»”; 462), which has not been preserved (“до нас не дошла”). There seems to be some confusion about this latter inscription, however. It is true that its text was first published, in a Russian translation, by M. Žanašvili (1897: 43), and the same author had printed its Georgian original shortly before (1895: 39). According to Žanašvili, his edition was based on a certain manuscript of Vaxuṣṭi's History, which he named “T. Vasil Maḡašvili's (Iḡalto's) manuscript” (ხელნაწერი თ. ვასილ მაყაშვილის (იგალოს); 1895: 39 n. *). There is no trace of the text in the academic edition of Vaxuṣṭi's work (Qauxčišvili 1973), however, the only matching inscriptions mentioned there being those concerning Davit Soslan's ancestors. As Žanašvili's text contains a *Žadaros*, too, his text may well be based on a secondary, poetical summary of the lapidary inscriptions of Nuzal noted down in one of Vaxuṣṭi's manuscripts (note that the text is a 12-verse poem with end-rhymes). As a matter of fact, the name of one *Pidaros* (recte: *Pidaron*?) mentioned along with *Žadaros* (*Žadaron*?) in this text may well be read in the third line of Pfaff's drawing. It must be added in this respect that Žanašvili did know the “genealogy” of Davit Soslan as provided by Vaxuṣṭi, too (1895: 39 n. * / 1897: 33). This complex of questions deserves further investigation.

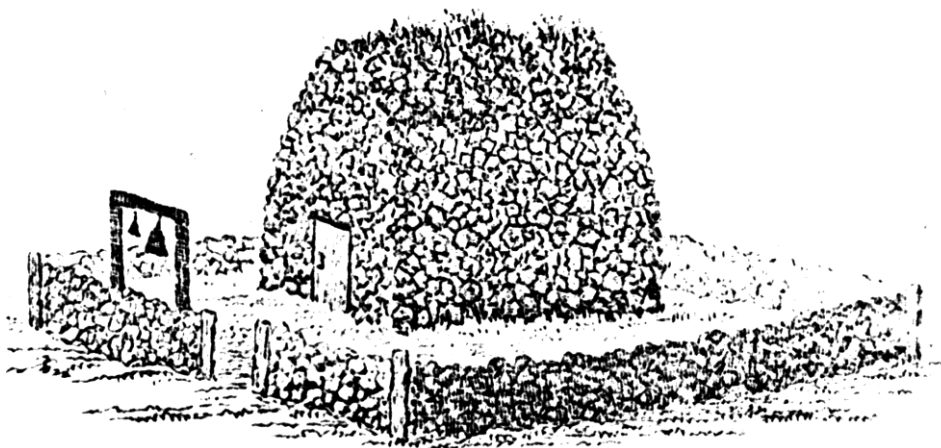
⁴⁸ Qauxčišvili (1959: 151-325).

⁴⁹ Qauxčišvili (1959: 203, ll. 3, 6, 7; 219, l. 4).

⁵⁰ Qauxčišvili (1959) provides the variants *sason*, *s~son*, *sosna* (203, n. 3); *sosman* (203, n. 6); *sosna* (210, n. 4-5); *Ḳiḡnaḡe* (1987: 100 n. 28) further adduces the readings *s~sna-* and *sa~sn-*. According to the latter edition (86 n. 24 and 28), the 17th century Georgian historiographer Parsadan Gorgiḡaniḡe (“gorg.”) denotes this person as *sasna*.

⁵¹ Qauxčišvili (1973: 210, l. 28).

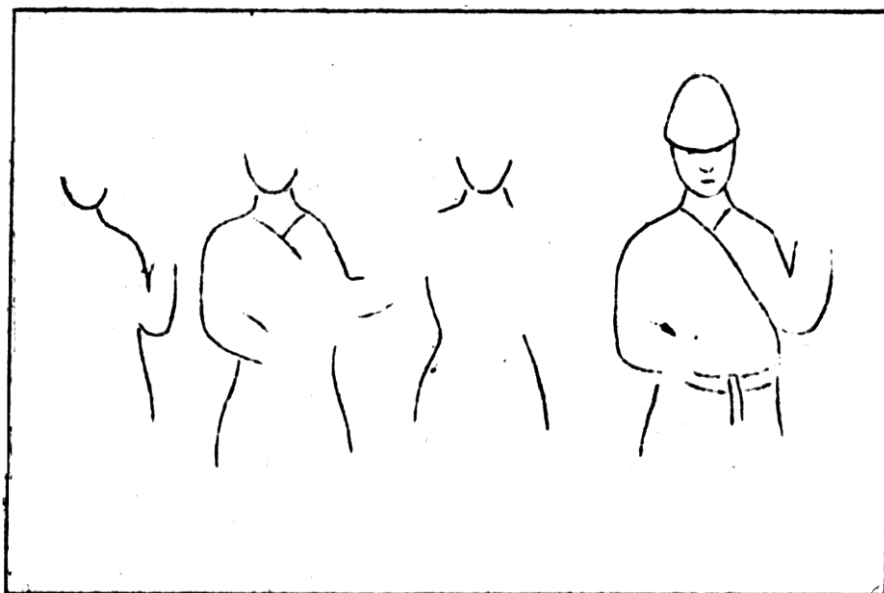
I.



Церковь въ Нюзалѣ.

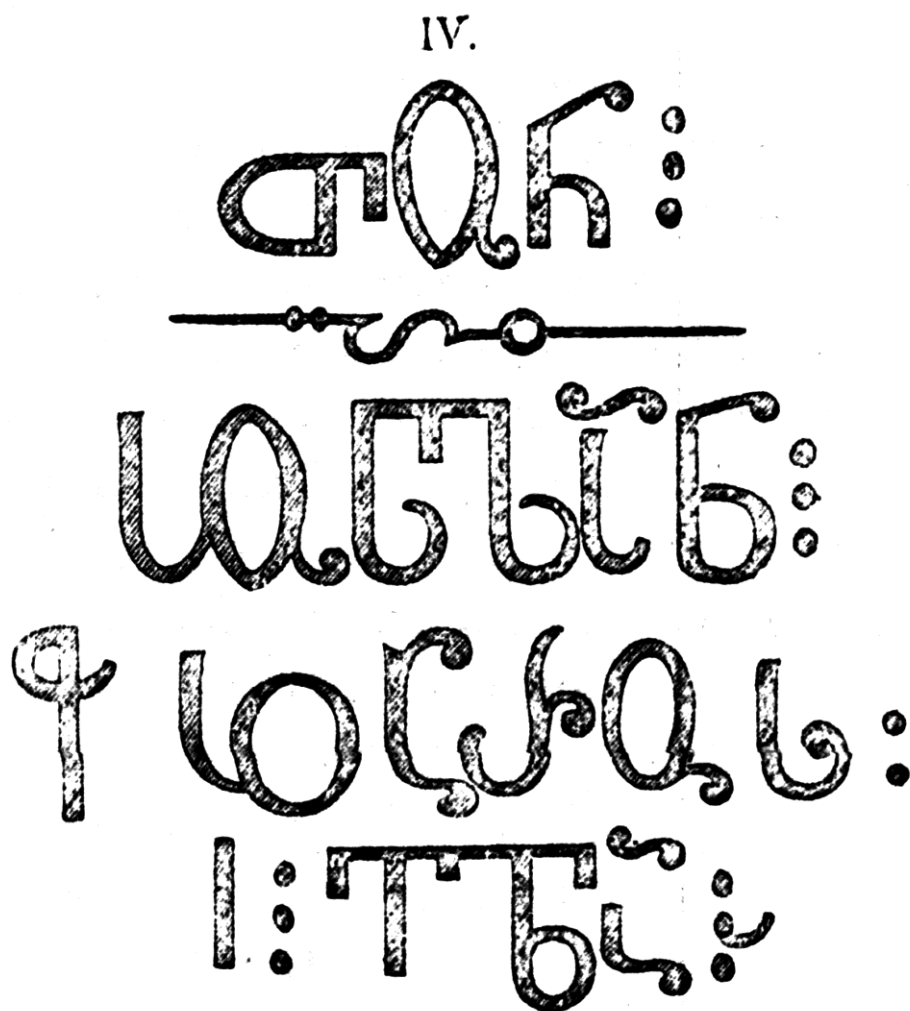
Fig. 1: The church of Nuzal

II.



Контуръ рисунковъ въ Нюзальской церкви.

Fig. 2: Paintings in the church



Надписи въ Нузальской церкви.

Fig. 3: Remnants of inscriptions

states that he was a(nother) child of his father, Laša Giorgi.⁵² As Laša (and his sister Rusudan) were the children of Davit Soslan (and Tamar), Davit received his name according to the tradition of naming grandchildren after their

⁵² *mieca mamasa missa lašas* (lit. “was given to his father Laša”; Qauxčišvili 1959: 203, l. 3).

grandparents; the same holds true for Rusudan's son who was also named Davit (the later king Davit Narin, lit. "David the small"). If it is true then that the *Sosan* who saved Davit (Ulu) in the cave was a step-brother of his, he might as well bear a name reminiscent of his grandfather, (Davit) *Soslan*.

In this case it remains astonishing a bit that no spelling variant containing the *l* seems to be attested for his name. We have to consider, however, that in the case of Davit Soslan himself, too, it is but a minor part of the available sources that do mention his surname.⁵³ Instead, the king is mostly named Davit alone,⁵⁴ and in some cases, he is styled "Davit the Ossete".⁵⁵ Even the two 13th century odes that are allegedly dedicated to Tamar and her husband, viz. the so-called Tamariani and Abdulmesiani, do not mention the surname at all.⁵⁶ This may speak in favour of the view that the surname Davit bore tended to be avoided, as a foreign element, by Georgians. Interestingly enough, the 13th century Armenian author Kirakos Ganjakec'i mentions the surname, spelt *Sōsłan*, alone when referring to Tamar's husband in his "Patmowt'iwn hayoc'".⁵⁷ The same holds true for another Armenian chronicler of the 13th century, viz. Step'anos Orbelian, whose "History of the Orbelians", the 65th chapter of his "History of the House of Sisakan", seems to be the only authentic source indicating the name, *Gēorgi*, of the Russian prince who became Tamar's first husband;⁵⁸ here, Davit's surname is written *Sawslan*

⁵³ This fact was already taken notice of by Brosset (1851: 292) who notes that "on remarquera que même le surnom du second mari de la reine géorgienne, Soslan-David, ne paraît pas dès l'abord dans les Annales".

⁵⁴ Within Kartlis Cxovreba, the surname appears but three times in the "Histories and eulogies of the crowned" (Qauxčišvili 1959: 95, l. 1; 97, l. 8; 100, l. 4), always in the combination *soslan davit*; the two occurrences in the second text relating to the period in question, the "Life of the queen of queens, Tamar" ascribed to one Basili the majordomo (Basili ezosmozguari: Qauxčišvili 1959: 134, l. 12; 138, l. 1), are mere quotations from the former chronicle.

⁵⁵ Thus, e.g., in the so-called "Abkhaz chronicle" (Tbilisi ms. A 1110), in a gloss relating to the year 1189 which states: "Here, Davit the Ossete was enthroned as king" (*aka meped dažda david ovsi*; Žordania 1893: 275 / Odišeli 1968: 25).

⁵⁶ Cf. the editions by Marr (1902) and Lolašvili (1957 and 1964). The assumption by Marr that the Davit alluded to in Ioane Šavteli's Abdulmesiani is not Tamar's husband but her great-grandfather, Davit Aḡmašenebeli ("the Constructor"), may be due to this fact. Cf. Lolašvili (1964: 79 ff.) for a detailed argumentation against this view. Note that the Tamariani mentions the Biblical name of Ephraim several times, obviously in accordance with the view prevailing in those days that the Ossetic Bagratids were descendants of this patriarch; cf. n. 34 above.

⁵⁷ Tēr-Gēworgian (1858: 108, l. 19); cp. Xanlarjan (1976: 129).

⁵⁸ Step.Orb. 65, 29.: *orowm acin ayr zordi aṛzac* (v.l. *aṛowsac*) *t'agaworin orowm anown ēr Gēorgi* (Ēmin 1861: 286, l. 27 f.; Cagareišvili 1978: 126, l. 24). Cf. Brosset (1855: 291 f.), according to whom this Giorgi was son of the "grand-prince André Bogolioubskoï". Brosset's view, which was based on Karamzin's, was taken over by most scholars ever since; cf., e.g., Dondua (1938: 34) (= Dondua/Berzinišvili 1985: 6).

according to at least one edition.⁵⁹ This latter spelling seems then to be reflected in one of the two Georgian translations of Step‘anos’ work, where the name is written not *soslan* but *savaslan*.⁶⁰ That this spelling is not a mere graphical error but must be taken seriously, is confirmed by the fact that it re-occurs at least once in the same text, in a passage relating to Davit, the son of (Giorgi) Laša, in an additional reference to his grandparents, Tamar and Davit Soslan, which is shared neither by the Armenian original nor by the second Georgian translation.⁶¹

The name variant *savaslan*, of whatever date it may be,⁶² can thus be taken to support the assumption that Davit Soslan’s surname was not familiar among Georgians (and maybe even forgotten in later times). At the same time, it might indicate a popular interpretation of the unfamiliar name on the basis of the Turkish word *a(r)slan* “lion”, which would well match with Davit Soslan’s traditional picture. That Turkish has played a sufficient rôle in Georgian onomastics since queen Tamar’s time, is neatly confirmed by the surnames of her two grandsons, Davit *Ulu* and Davit *Narin*, which represent Turk. *ulu* “tall, high” and *narin* “tender, slender, small”.⁶³

The question then is, whether the same popular etymology can be responsible for the emergence of the name variant *soslan* within Ossetic, as a

⁵⁹ Ėmin (1861: 287 l. 1); Cagareišvili (1978: 126 l. 26) has *Sōslan*.

⁶⁰ Cagareišvili (1968: 54 n. B 3) (spelling variant of text version B as contained in the Tbilisi ms. A 864 of A.D. 1801; text version A [ms. S 3428 of 1804] has *soslan*).

⁶¹ Cagareišvili (1968: 96 l. 15 ff. with n. B 1) (*mas žamsa šina epqra mepoba kartlisa dedakacsa ertisa, rusudan çodebulsa, da iqo davit qmobili ze erti lašasi, zisa soslanisa* [v.l. *savaslanisa*], *kmrisa tamarisa, asulisa mepisa giorgisa, mpqrobelsa sakartueloysa, romlisa çarçqmada mravlisa cđita eneba rusudansa mas ...* “at that time, a woman had taken over the reign of Kartli, named Rusudan, and with the name of Davit, there was a son of Laša, the son of Soslan, the husband of Tamar, the daughter of king Giorgi, the emperor of all Georgia, whom that Rusudan strived to extinguish with many a trial ...”); cp. version A (ib.): *ese iqo mepobasa kartlisasa dedakacisa ertisa rusudanisasa. romel esva ze erti lašas da eçoda saxelad davit, romel mravlita gonita zals-scemda rusudan çarçqmendad mas ...* “This was while Kartli was reigned by a woman (named) Rusudan, that to Laša a son was born (who) was given the name Davit, whom with many a trick Rusudan endeavoured to extinguish ...”. The latter version is much closer to the Armenian text (ib. 141, l. 33 ff. / Ėmin 1861: l. 12 ff.): *Ėr t‘agaworowt‘iwnn Vrac‘ aŕ knoĭ mi Ŗowsowdan anown, ew ėr ordi Lašayin Dawit‘ anown zor bazowm hnariwk‘ janayr Ŗowsowdann ayn korowsanel zna ...* “The kingship of the Georgians was with a woman named Ŗowsowdan, and (there) was a son of Laša by the name of Dawit‘, whom that Ŗowsowdan strived to get rid of with many tricks ...”

⁶² According to Cagareišvili (1978: 12), the ms. in question is of 1801. The author further quotes L. Melikset-Begi (1952), according to whom it was translated in 1797 by a certain Bebutov; the article in question was not accessible to us.

⁶³ That the meaning of these surnames must have been perceivable in the region, is proven by the list of the Kings of Kartli contained in the History of Armenia by Mxitar Ayrivanec‘i where their names are translated as *Dawit‘ mec* (“the tall”) and *Dawit‘ p‘ok‘r* (“the small”), resp.; cf. Abulaze (1953: 261).

by-form of the “Western” variant *Sozyryko* etc. Comparing these two name types, we are indeed forced to analyse *soslan* as Fridrik Thordarson proposed, with *-an* representing the Iranian patronymic suffix *-ān*; this would correspond well with the element *-qo* appearing in the second type, which can with no doubt be identified with the Circassian word meaning “son” (Adyghe *qo*, Kabardian *q̣wə*), occurring as the second member in very many name compounds.⁶⁴ This would leave *sosl-* and *sozyl-* etc. as the basic elements of the patronymics, which might well descend from a common source **sos(ə)r-*⁶⁵ if the *z* in the latter could be deduced from an older *s*, and the *l* of the former could represent an older *r*.⁶⁶ In the case of *soslan* (< **sos(ə)ran*), it is just this change that could easily have been introduced by popular association with the Turkish *aslan* (and the attestations of the surname of Davit Soslan in Georgian and Armenian sources would indicate a terminus ante quem for this process).⁶⁷ The name variant *sosuran-* which occurs in a Georgian dialectal text pertaining to the Nart cycle⁶⁸ may be taken to witness to the existence of the presumptive preform. In this context, we must further consider that the patronymic suffix itself has an unexpected form, the regular outcome of older (Alan) *-ān* in Ossetic being not *-an* but *-on* (which we do find in the names of Davit Soslan’s ancestors, *ǰad(a)ron* and *Aton*, if their attestation can be taken for granted); the “irregular” preservation of *-an* might thus support the view that the name had been “Turkicised”.⁶⁹ In the case of *Sozyryko* etc., the assumed older pronunciation with a medial voiceless *s* is immediately confirmed by the West Caucasian variants, which suggests that the sound change implied was an inner-Ossetic one. And indeed, there is a regular lenition process that might have occurred here, viz. the voicing of voiceless

⁶⁴ Cf. Fritz 1983 / forthcoming, no. 43 for a survey of Circassian names bearing this suffix which were borrowed into Ossetic.

⁶⁵ Cp. Abaev (1957: 35) for a similar conclusion which contradicts his “Turko-Mongolian” etymology.

⁶⁶ The etymology for the shepherd’s name *sosa* recently published by Colarusso (2002: 187), which is also based on an older **sosr-*, cannot be taken seriously. There is no Sanskrit term *sawāsa* corresponding to English *wheeze*, the term in question being *śvāsa* instead (a derivative of the verbal root *śvas* ‘to sigh’); its Iranian counterpart would not be **šwāsā(nam)* ‘(of the) breath(s)’ but **swāha*, with a gen.pl. **swāhānām*; and there is no Iranian compound type **šwas-āryānām* ‘breath-Aryans’ (gen pl)” yielding a notion “Breath of the Aryans”. What is more, the root in question seems not to be attested in Iranian at all, except for Y.Av. *suši* (nom.acc.du.) ‘lungs’.

⁶⁷ Cf. Fritz (1983 / forthcoming, no. 135) for a discussion of the many Turkic names containing *aslan* that have been borrowed into Ossetic in more recent times.

⁶⁸ ǰiguri (1971: 23 ff.); text from Rača.

⁶⁹ It is true that the name of *Soslan*’s “indirect” mother, *Satana*, implies the same irregularity if it contains the patronymic suffix; this requires a different explanation (cf. Fritz/Gippert 2003).

obstruents which is typical for the anlaut of second compound members.⁷⁰ This would imply that the preform **sos(ə)r-* was (or was interpretable as) a nominal compound, which would be hardly surprising if it was a personal name serving as the basis for a patronym in **-ān*. Both on the basis of these assumptions and on the basis of Iranian anthroponymy in general, this name would best be interpreted as the Alanic equivalent of an Old Iranian **šjāua-sara(h)-* meaning “black-head(ed)”, a prototypical *bahuvrīhi* compound.

It is true that the solution here proposed leaves us with some problems. One problem is that not all of the sound changes involved can be motivated. This is esp. true for the representation of **šjāua-* by *so-* as opposed to the simplex *saw* “black”;⁷¹ should the Georgian spelling variant *savaslan* indicate a popular tradition which preserved the former diphthong, possibly in a reduced form **sæw-?*⁷² After all, the assumption of a former diphthong is clearly supported by the West Caucasian name variants. Another problem is the question whether the historical (Davit) *Soslan* bore a surname that was *en vogue* among Alans as reminiscent of an older hero, or whether he himself was the hero whose name was integrated into the epic tradition of the Narts. As there seems to be no source concerning the historical *Sat'enik* available that would name a son of hers, we must leave this question open.⁷³

⁷⁰ Cf., e.g., Abaev (1962: 644) = Abaev (1964: 119 f.) and Axvlediani e.a. (1963: 123) with various examples.

⁷¹ For this cf. Abaev (1979: 42 f.).

⁷² For the reduction of vowels in first compound members, cf. Axvlediani (1963: 123); Abaev (1962: 643 f.) = Abaev (1964: 119). Scythian names like Σαυος, Σαυακος, Σεαυακος, Σαυσακ[ις] (Zgusta 1955, 144 f.) still seem to show the Old Iranian form of the adjective, though their internal vowel is not discernable; cp., however, Σωμαχος (ib. 146) which might be taken to indicate that the “reduction” here proposed was already “on its way” if it is based, as a compound, on **syāvamaka-*, not **syāmaka-*. The Scythian name Σωζιρσαυος (ib., 146) would in any case have to be separated from *sozyryqo* etc. (pace Abaev 1979: 43: “Созир смуглый”).

⁷³ The name of the shepherd who begat the epic *Soslan*, appearing as *Sos*, *Sosæg*, *Sosna*, *Sosan* and the like, might rather be due to a popular “de-composition” of **sos(ə)r-* etc. than represent an authentic form. This decomposition might well have occurred within Ossetic where we do have a common noun Ir. *sūs* / Digor. *sos* meaning “pumice (rock or stone)”, immediately reminding of the story of *Soslan*’s birth (cf. Abaev 1979: 173 f.), and the name variant *sosæg* may as well be motivated by popular etymology within Ossetic, on the basis of Dig. *sosæg* meaning “secret, hidden” (cf. Abaev 1979: 174); the Digoron text passage in Narty (1990: 144 l. 42) clearly alludes to this. The variants containing an *-n-* (to which the name of the step-brother of the Georgian king *Davit Ulu*, *Sosna*, might be added) might show a secondary influence of the name of the founder of the Sasanian dynasty of Persia, *sāsān*, who was a shepherd according to the Iranian tradition, as well. Note that in the case of *Satana* / *Sat'enik*, too, there is a clear connection with Sasanian Iran (cf. Fritz/Gippert 2003).

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