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Ossetic *fydaz* and OPrs. *dušiyāra-*

It was E. Benveniste who for the first time pointed out the full identity of Oss. *fydaz/fudanz* ‘bad harvest’ and Old Persian *dušyiāra-* ‘evil year, bad harvest’, ‘famine’ in semantics and word formation. Both of them are derived from the base of the stem meaning ‘year’ (Oss. *az/anz*, OPrs. *yāra-*) with the help of the prefix meaning ‘bad’ (Oss. *fyd-/fud-*, OPrs. *duš-*). So both composites originally have meant ‘bad year’.

The fact that composites with one and the same direct and figurative meaning, on the one hand, and with one and the same semantical and morphological structure, on the other, are attested in two kindred languages led E. Benveniste to the conclusion that these composites had been inherited from the Common Iranian language. The Avestan *dužyāirya-* also shows that OPrs. *dušiyāra-* goes back to the Common Iranian.

There were a lot of composites in Proto-Iranian language with the prefix *duš-* inherited by various Iranian languages but it is only in modern Ossetic that *duš-* is replaced by the prefix *fyd-/fud-* in corresponding composites. It means that Old Ossetic replaced the OI prefix by new prefix **pūta-* (from OI verb **pū-* ‘to rot’)¹.

I fully agree with these conclusions but it is necessary some more parallels of a cultural and historical character to add to them. The fact is that Oss. *fydaz* as well as OPrs. *dušiyāra-* are used only in sacral contexts so that the related religious beliefs also must have originated from the Common Iranian level.

In one of his inscriptions [DPd, 15-21] Darius I, prays to Auramazda to protect him, his family and his country from three afflictions: from a hostile army (*hainā-*), from bad harvest (“poor year”) (*dušiyāra-*) and from

¹ Benveniste E. Études sur la langue ossète. Paris, 1959. P. 9.

Lie (*drauga-*). It is well known that Darius (as well as other Persian kings) almost in every his inscription asks Auramazda to protect him, his family (royal house) and the country but the inscription under discussion is the single one where the king specifies from whom or from what he must be protected. There are not such details in other inscriptions² though in one of them Darius used the term *gasta-* [DNa, 51-53] which means 'repugnant, evil', 'harm'³. This term must be considered as a substitute for other three terms mentioned above. Therefore *gasta-* can well be a common name of these three afflictions. If this is true then we can suppose that even in the cases when Darius as well as the other Persian kings ask for the protection of Auramazda but do not specify from whom or from what the protection is to come, they, without fail, meant the above mentioned three afflictions.

As it was established by mythologists, the afflictions mentioned by Darius have a threefunctional (tripartite) structure peculiar to the social organization and ideology of the Old Indo-Europeans: *drauga-* 'lie', 'revolt against the supreme ruler' corresponds to the first, i.e. spiritual function of the traditional IE ideology; *hainā-* '(hostile) army' – to the second one, i.e. military function, and *dušiyāra-* 'bad harvest' – to the third, i.e. agricultural function⁴.

"The same type of afflictions are grouped in RV 8.18.10⁵ as *ámivām, srídham, durmatīm* 'disease, ritual failure, enmity'"⁶. Similar IE structures are found in Rome, "among the Celts, and in Scandinavia, where, conversely, a Norse king had to be both *sigrsäll* and *ārsäll*, blessed with victory

² Cf. in other inscriptions: *mām Auramazdā pātuv utāmayi viθam* "Me may Ahuramazda protect, and my [royal] house" [DPh, 9-10]; *mām AM pātuv hadā bagaibiš utamay viθam utā tyamay nipištam* "Me may Ahuramazda together with the [other] gods protect, and my [royal] house, and what has been inscribed by me" [DSe, 50-52] etc.

³ Kent R. Old Persian. New Haven, Connecticut, 1953. P. 183; Абаев В.И. Избранные труды. Владикавказ, 1995. Т. II. С. 599.

⁴ Dumézil G. Les trois fonctions dans le Rgveda et les dieux indiens de Mitani // Bulletin de l' Academie Royale de Belgique, 1961. P. 291 ff.; Panaino A. Hainā-, dušiyāra-, drauga-: un confronto antico-persiano avestico // Atti del Sodalizio Glottologico Milanese, 27, 1987. P. 95-102; Puhvel J. Comparative Mythology. Baltimore, London, 1987. P. 106; Gnoli G. The Idea of Iran. An Essay on its Origin // Serie Orientale Roma, LXII. Roma, 1989. P. 86, 87; Абаев В.И. Избранные труды. Владикавказ, 1990. Т. I. С. 427.

⁵ See also [RV 8.60.20].

⁶ Puhvel J. Op. cit. P. 106.

and (good harvest) year (*ār*) on top of having runic wisdom”⁷. But the most exact parallel is found in the Avesta. The ‘Lie’ (*druj-//draōga-*) and ‘truth’ (*aša-*) dualizm in Avesta is well known. The first term of this pair has an etymological relationship with OPrs. *drauga-*. Moreover there are other two terms in Avesta etymologically related to the names of afflictions in OPrs.: Av. *haēnā-* (cf. OPrs. *hainā-*) and Av. *dužyāiryā-* (see above)⁸.

Though the Avestan triad *druj-*, *haēnā-*, *dužyāiryā-* is not united by one context the latter term is used in a context that is very close to the quoted OPrs. text: the personified star *Tištrya* was created by Ahuramazda to overcome enmity and bad harvest (*dužyāiryā-*) [*Yašt.8.51*], but if the star had not been created the demon of drought would have destroyed the carnal world [*Yašt.8.54*]. That is the reason why the mortal beings (animals and people), especially the wise rulers, look at the *Tištrya* trying to learn what kind of harvest there will be in the Aryan countries [*Yašt.8.56*]⁹.

The OI three-structured blights related to the three IE social functions can be found in Ossetic tradition too. One of them has the above mentioned name *fydaz*. The analysis of the contexts with this word shows that the related beliefs go back to the same OI tradition but at the same time the Ossetic mythology gives us also a description of the consequences of the situation when the prayer of a good harvest is not accepted by gods.

The Ossetic *fydaz* is found in the Nartæ tale about the nameless son of Uruzmag, the mythological background of which was reconstructed by me as follows¹⁰.

Uruzmag, the master of the Nartæ people grew very old and could no longer perform his duties of the ruler. Uruzmag’s break down led to the weakning of all nature and as a result bad harvest (*fydaz*)¹¹ and famine

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Panaino A.* Op. cit.; *Gnoli G.* Op. cit. P. 87.

⁹ The personified star *Bonværnnon* that has a control over the wather is familiar to Ossetic mythology as well.

¹⁰ See my article: *Дзиццойты Ю.А. Нарт Урузмаг и его сыновья // Осетинская филология. Вып. 3. Владикавказ, 1999. С. 318-330.*

¹¹ There is *fydaz* in the main part of the Nartæ texts [*Нарты. Осетинский героический эпос.* М., 1990. Книга I. С. 115, 116, 117; *Архив Юго-Осетинского Научно-исследовательского института.* Цхинвал. Фонд 4, оп. 1, л. 209], but in a few of them is the synonimous *stong anz* [*Нарты. ОГЭ, I, С. 128; Ирон адамы сфæлдыстад. Дзæуджыхъæу, 1961. Т. I. Ф. 40*] that literally means “the hungry year”. We have exactly the same picture in the folk parable adapted by the Ossetian poet *Gædiaty Sek’a* (1855-1915)

came to the Nartæ country. The people and cattle were perishing while Syrdon, the age-long enemy of the Nartæ people and a demon of evil, became very active and at one moment he even replaced Uruzmag on the throne. Uruzmag had to sacrifice his son and only after this action order and prosperity return to the Nartæ country.

As it was shown by Sir J.Frazer in "The golden Bough" the idea of a magic connection between the productive and fertile powers of a social ruler, on the one hand, and analogous powers of the plants and animals, on the other, was familiar to every archaic society. So this idea originates in Proto-IE culture and it is quite clear that it was familiar to Old Iranians as well. Note in this connection that it were the wise rulers in Avesta who tried to learn what sort of harvest will there be in their country (see above). Therefore we can assume that when Darius asked Ahuramazda to protect Persia from bad harvest and other disasters he could subconsciously expect that he himself could bring them about in case his powers failed. That may be the reason why in one of his inscriptions Darius says that he has a strong body [DNb, 33-34].

Then we can suggest that God protected Darius and Uruzmag so long as they had strong bodies but the situation changed for Uruzmag when he became weak, and Darius, in case of his own weakness, was to face exactly the same. So the quoted Nartæ tale is a kind of supplement to the Darius' text though in the Nartæ tale only one affliction is described. However in the Narta tale about the war between the main Nartæ clans *Æxsærtæggatæ* and *Borætæ* two other afflictions are described.

The very fact that the war came to the Nartæ country connects this tale with the affliction of the second IE function. But the most interesting is that the war came together with the sins associated in the mind of Old Iranians with the blight of the first function namely with 'Lie': in order to draw the *Æxsærtæggatæ* into the war the members of the *Borætæ* clan decided to kill the son of Uruzmag. Here we have firstly a 'revolt against the supreme ruler', because Uruzmag was a member of the *Æxsærtæggatæ* clan and at the same time he was a master of the Nartæ society. Secondly *Borætæ* bribed the deity to whom the son of Uruzmag was entrusted for up bringing.

where bad harvest (*stong az*) came to the world of animals [Гæдиаты С. Уацмыстæ. Дзæуджыхъæу, 1991. Ф. 66-67]. There is *tyng ævzær az* "the very bad year" in a corresponding parable adapted by an other Ossetic poet *Xetæggaty K'osta* (1859-1906) [*Xetæggaty Kъ. Уацмысты æххæст æмбырдгонд. Дзæуджыхъæу, 1999. Т. I. Ф. 290*]. Cf. the anthonymic *xorz az* 'good harvest' ("good year") and *qal anz* 'good harvest' ("fine year").

Thirdly they killed the innocent boy and fourthly for some time they lied to the *Æxsærtæggatæ* that they didn't know anything about the missing boy when the *Æxsærtæggatæ* started up a search for their kinsman. In the end the *Borætæ* proved to be cynical enough to invite the mourning *Æxsærtæggatæ* to a feast.

When *Æxsærtæggatæ* found out that the boy is dead they decided to revenge on the *Borætæ*. But they were a small clan and did not dare to start up war with a big clan of the *Borætæ*, so the *Æxsærtæggatæ* decided to ask *Hujændon-ældar* to help them with an army. *Hujændon* willingly came to the *Æxsærtæggatæ*'s help and soon a huge army led by Uruzmag rushed into the *Nartæ* village and crushed the *Borætæ* clan.

The *Hujændon*'s army is just the same *hainā*- against whom Darius asked for protection from Auramazda. So in the two different *Nartæ* tales all the three afflictions mentioned in Darius's inscription are described. But this is not the end of the story.

When the *Æxsærtæggatæ* were on the way to *Hujændon-ældar* they met a woman of their clan that was married to a member of the *Borætæ* clan (in another variant it was the daughter of Uruzmag) who attempted to disturb *Æxsærtæggatæ*. But the *Æxsærtæggatæ* would not listen to her and the angry woman cursed them. The damnation too had a threefunctional structure because the woman doomed *Æxsærtæggatæ* to infamy (*бесславие*) – the 1st function, to disability (*бессилуе*) – the 2nd function and to poverty (*нищета*) – the 3rd function. And the *Æxsærtæggatæ* immediately lost heart and became “poor and weak”. And only seven years later their fame, strength and prosperity were back to them¹².

The main value of this text is in the fact that the three afflictions are united here by one context. Exactly the same picture is found in the modern Ossetian prayer to the gods where the worshipper asks to bestow on the people of Ossetia various favours among which God is asked to protect the Ossets from poverty and infamy (*Хwысaw, тæгwыр, æгадæj нæ багаqqæн*), while St. George (*Wastyrdži*) is asked to protect the young war-

¹²*Нарты. Осетинский героический эпос.* М., 1989. Т. I. С. 367. Unfortunately the original Ossetian text is lost and we have only a Russian translation. In other variants of this tale only two first afflictions are mentioned [*Памятники народного творчества осетин.* Владикавказ, 1927. Вып. II. С. 43-44; *Ирон адамы сфæлдыстад.* Т. I. Ф. 308; *Нарты. ОГЭ.* Т. I. С. 340]. But the names of afflictions have a descriptive character here.

riors from the enemy's hands and enemy's power (*fydk'ux, fydyxæj sæ baqaqqæn!*)¹³.

Thus in the last two texts we observe an exact correspondence to the Darius' text. It means that the Ossetic tradition has a clear expression of a social and mythological tripartition and that the corresponding Nartæ tales and the modern Ossetian prayer have a core that goes back to the Common Iranian level.

¹³ Брытѣаты Е. Уацмыстæ. Дзæуджыхъæу, 1981. Т. I. Ф. 99.