

H.W. Bailey

Sir Harold W. BAILEY

OSSETIC (NARTÆ)*

Nartæ tales of the Caucasus relate feats of heroes and hence may be called 'epic'. Here the following synthesis is based almost entirely on the Nartæ texts recorded from oral recitation in the North Iranian Saka dialects of Ossetia. The Ossetes live on both sides of the main Caucasian mountain chain with two capital cities *Dzæuædžy qæu* (russ. *Vladikavkaz*) and *Tskhinval*.

The word Saka is here used in the widest Achaemenian sense, as it is used in the Old Persian inscriptions. There they call Saka all the nomad tribes to their north extending from the Ister river (the Danube) to the Iaxartes (the Syr-Daryā). In this sense, the names in Greek and Latin, the dialects of ancient Tumshuq, Khotan and Kanchak with the loan-words in Old Indian inscriptions, the modern Iranian dialects of the Pamirs, especially the Wakhī of Wakhān, and the two dialects Digoron and Iron of the Ossetic amalgam of Sarm, Alan and Arsi peoples of Iriston form part of the otherwise lost northern Iranian Saka language.

A striking example of early Saka is the Khotan Saka *nāma-tsuta*- 'come to a name' in the sense of 'famous' to which Ossetic Digoron *nom-dzud*, *non-dzud*, and Iron *nom-dzyd* 'famous' exactly correspond both in origin and meaning, and which has not yet been found elsewhere.

Since the Nartæ tales retain features of archaic language which cannot be explained from modern Ossetic, which is attested, apart from the brief quotation of Ioannes Tzetzes (c. 1110 – c. 1180) and the twelfth-century inscription of Zelenčuk, only at the end of the eighteenth century, it is important to know the older Saka words before attempting explanation by what may be superficial similarities in indigenous Caucasian languages which are in contact with the Ossetes, or more remotely in Arabic or Turkish or Mongol. In reverse it is desirable to remember that North Iranian words occur in Georgian and Mingrelian, and especially in Chechen and Ingush, and in Armenian.

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Tales of the Nartæ are recorded also in the north-western Caucasian languages Qabard, Adyge, Ubykh, Abkhaz, Abaza, and less precisely in the central-northern Chechen and Ingush, and still less precisely in the north-eastern Avar of Daghestan; there are also tales in the Turkish of the Caucasus.

The Nartæ name itself, an archaic word (here called 'dialectal epic') with *-rt-* retained, is an excellent illustration of the importance of this wider Saka knowledge. The Digoron forms *Nartæ*, *Nart*, oblique *Nartæmæ* and *Nartmæ*, superessive *Nartbæl* exclude the plural suffix *-tæ*. The word is then from **nṛtāh* 'hero'. The same word is in the older Khotan Saka *naḍaun-* from **nṛtāvan-* 'possessor of force, hero', with nominative singular *naḍe* from **nṛtā(vā)h*, nominative plural *naḍaunä* from **nṛtāvānah*, and genitive singular *naḍaunä* from **nṛtāunah*, derived from the *nṛta-* of the verbal base *nar-* 'to be skilful, active, virile'.

Before one can date the origins of these modern Ossetic Nartæ oral tales there are a few facts to cite.

1. The name Soslan of one of the chief heroes is found as the name of David Soslan, consort of Queen Tamar of Georgia who died in A.D. 1212, before the Mongol devastation. Politically the Alans, one of the ancestral peoples of the Ossetes, were powerful to the north of the Caucasus till the eleventh century. They had intermarried with the Arab Muslim state of Al-Sarīr 'the Master of the Throne', the region of the Avar Qoi-su. This name Soslan is a dialectal epic form with *-ān*, distinct from Digoron and Iron. In the same way Digoron *uezdōn*, *jezdōn*, Iron *uæzdan* 'noble' has also this dialectal *-ān* in Iron.

2. The name of the Alan princess (*tikin Sat'inik* in the History of the Armenian historian Movsēs Xorenac'i) is in some way related to that of the chief female Nartæ, lady *Satana*.

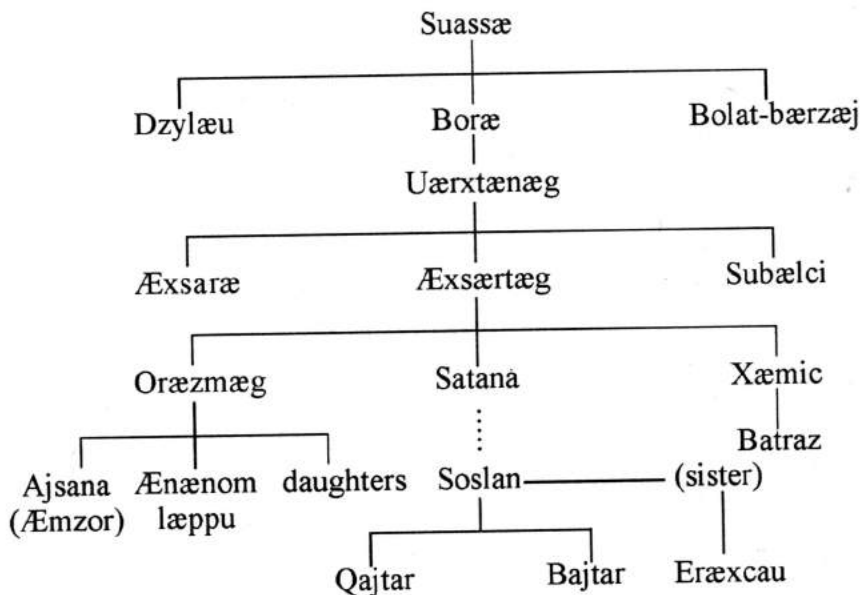
3. *doγ*, Iron *duγ* 'horse-racing, especially at funerals (*xisti doγ*)' is from North Iranian **dauga-* 'running', from either **dau-ga-* or **daug-a-*, whence it passed to Turkish, attested in A.D. 598 in Menandros Protektor (fragment 42), as δόχια among the Tourkoi (the true Turks). It is represented in later Turkish by *yoy*.

4. The Chechen *elta* 'patron of hunting' preserves part of the Ossetic name *Eltayan* used of a giant in the Nartæ tales. In the same way a part of the Ossetic name of the ruler of the Underworld *Barastur* is preserved in the Inguš and Chechen *Ėšter*, *Eštur*, *Eštr*, and *Eter*, the name of the 'lord of the dead'. The name *Eltayan* is dialectal epic with initial *e-* (not *je-*) and final *-an*, from older **vṛθragna-* 'the slayer of the strong man' in a dialectal form distinct from both Digoron and Iron. Armenian *Vahagn* is also from North Iranian. It has been an error to look for Turkish here.

5. The Nartæ name *Ūærxætænæg*, later *Ūæxtætænæg*, and with substitute suffix *-aka-* for the second part also *Ūærxæg* and *Ūælxæg*, is the older form of the Iranian name attested as early as the fifth century as *Vaxt'ank*, *Vaxt'ank* in the History of Łazar P'arpec'i, and in Georgian legends of the early sixth-century hero *Vaxt'ang Gorgasal*.

6. The title *πακαθαρ pakat'ar* occurs in the twelfth-century inscription of the Zelenčuk valley in the Kuban region. It corresponds to the Alan title in Al-Mas'ūdī (ob. A.D. 956) *by'yr* for **bayātar*, and in the Georgian Chronicle *baqat'ar* in the name *Os-baqat'ar* 'the Ossetic hero'. It is to be interpreted from **baka-* 'true, sure' (cognate with Ossetic *bægu*, *bægudær* 'sure, heroic', Turfan Persian *bg* 'sure', Parthian 'bg' 'insecure') and **aθrā-* 'violent, hero' from *aθ-* 'to be violent', attested in the loan-word Kuchi *etre* and Agni *atra-* 'hero'. The word came into Turkish as Orkhon Turkish *byatur* (with *-ur* from Iranian *-r*, older *-ra-*, as in Turkish *Babur* from Iranian *baβra-*, later *Babr* 'tiger'). It was brought back from Turkish to Persian as *bahādur*, and even late Sanskrit as *bahādura-*. From this secondary Turkish, Ossetic then has taken Digoron *bæyatær*, Iron *bæyatyr*, and metathetic *qæbatyr*. The title was widely known in Byzantine Greek *βαγατουρ*, *βογοτουρ*, Old Slavonic *bogatyri*, Hungarian *bátor*, and Mongol *bayatar*, later *bātar*.

The Ossetic Nartæ tales are centred upon five main families, the Nartæ giving their name to the whole tradition. Their genealogical table can be set out in seven generations as follows:



The mother of Oræzmæg and Xæmic is called both Dzerassæ and Sasana. Two daughters of Oræzmæg are named, one Agunda and the other Mæsty-ælyyst ('angry curse'). Three wives of Soslan are cited Beduxa, Agundæ, and Acyruxs.

The basis of the Nartæ system is the *Ustur Xædzaræ* 'the Great House', and the names of the Nartæ are all epithets of their functions in the House. A selection of the names in the Nartæ tales is set out first with their likely meanings. The names are not common nouns in the Ossetic dialects, and fairly certainly belong to an earlier tradition.

1. *Oræzmæg* is modified to *Uoræzmæg*, *Uoruzmæg*, *Uruzmæg* and Iron *Ūryzmæg*. This *Oræzmæg* is plain older **ava-razmaka-* 'director', which is assured by Oræzmæg's position as director and chief of the Nartæ family of his generation. He is the 'chief', a 'handsome man' in build and appearance unequalled, surpassing others in ability and intelligence. From him his dependants are called *Uoræzmægetæ*, Iron *Ūryzmægtæ* 'men of Orazmag'. He is old with a white beard. With his half-sister and wife *Satana* he is Master of the Great House. He is 'our chief *Uruzmæg*'. He has a folklore quarrel with *Satana* for her 'senseless words'. Together they own storehouses from which they on occasion feed the hungry Nartæ men.

2. *Satana*, half-sister and wife of Oræzmæg, is the 'lady' with the archaic title *æxsijnæ*, *æfsijnæ* (rather two dialect forms of one older word than two words with different preverbs). She is the 'Lady of the House' in this precise phrase *xædzary 'fsin Satana*. Her title is rendered into Qabard by *g^oaš'e* 'mistress of house, princess'. The word *Nartæ* is placed before her title. She is 'our darling lady'. The name is the feminine of the masculine title, older *sātar-*, 'ruler', of which her title *æxsijnæ* is a translation. A similar derivative gave the name *Sat'inik* to the Alan princess (*tikin*) in the History of Movsēs Xorenac'i (-*ik* is a common Armenian borrowed suffix to names).

Here too fits the name *Sasana*, mother of Oræzmæg and Xæmic, hence an earlier Lady of the House. The base *sās-* has given the Persian name *Sāsān*, the Pontic Saka name *Σασαs*, the name *Sasa-* on the Indo-Parthian coin, Nisa Parthian *ssn*, *ssnk*, *ssn-bwxt* and the name *Sāsān* among Šahrō's children in the *Vēs u Rāmēn* poem. The Abkhaz word *š'aš'a* 'lady' is thence a Caucasian loan-word. The high position of the Lady of the House is shown also by the Avestan *nmānō.paθnī-*, West Iranian *bān-bišn*, Armenian loan-word *bam-bišn* 'queen', Zoroastrian Pahlavī *katak-bānūk*, Pašto *mērmana*.

3. *Ajsana*, *Ajsæna*, *Asæna*, a dialectal epic word with its three long *ā*-sounds, as in *Satana*, is the name of Oræzmæg's son, who is called also

Æmzor, the Iron equivalent of Digoron *Aznaur-*. This *aznaur-* is Georgian *aznaur* 'well-born' from *Zor*. Pahl. *āznāvar* 'noble'. *Ajsana* is the *jenceg* 'fosterling' of the smith *Kurdalæg*on. Assuming two dialect changes, plausible here in a proper name, *Ajsana* may be older **arzānaka-* 'growing child, boy', the Khotan Saka *alysānaa-* 'boy' and 'king's son', from *arz-*, *raz-* 'to grow'. Variation of *-z-* and *-s-* is known. As son of *Oræzmæg* he is 'son of the House', both as **arzānaka-* and as *āznāvar* 'born into the high family of the Great House'. There is also a man's name *Azn*.

4. *Xæmic*, Iron *Xæmyc*, Inguš gen. sing. *Xamči*, is the 'lover of women' (*us ūarzag*), possessing a magic tooth, the sight of which no woman can resist. He marries a woman of the *Becentæ* 'dwarfs', for which he suffers much badinage. His epithet would fittingly be 'the seducer', which would lead straight to **ham-iči-* with Digoron *xicaē* 'amorous seduction', Iron in *æm-xīc*. Such a word is known in the Old Indian Rigvedic *vīcyā* 'having seduced' (10.10.6) in the story of *Yama* and his sister *Yamī*, from *vī* and *ic-ya*.

5. *Ūærxtænæg*, *Ūæxtænæg*, *Ūærxæg*, *Ūælxæg*, is the name of *Subælici's* father and elsewhere the ancestor of the *Nartæ*, the grandfather of *Batraz*. The head of the Great House is the 'commander' or 'solemn speaker'. The base is *vark-* or *varg-* familiar in the Avestan *varaxādra-* 'solemn ritual utterance' of the priests hostile to the Zoroastrians.

6. *Soslan*, called also Digoron *Sozuruqo*, *Sozruqo*, Iron *Sozyryqo*, Chechen *Soska Solsa*, is the name of one of the two chief heroes of the generation next to *Oræzmæg*. His character is very fully sketched in the tales. A prominent feature of his is expressed in the epithet *næræmon* 'violently virile-minded' from **nara-māna-*, like **narya-manah-*, Avestan *naire.manah-* modern *Nareman* 'manly-minded'. His father is called *Sosæg ældar* 'chief *Sosæg*' from the same base *sos-* (or *soz-*) for which a meaning 'high-spirited' may be claimed. *Soslan* has a folklore birth story, but as a hero of the Great House his name should be heroic.

7. *Batraz*, *Batæraz*, Iron *Batyraž*, and variants *Batradz*, *Batyradz*, Inguš *Patriž*, and *Totraz*, *Totyraž* and variant *Totradz*, *Totyradz*, Qabard *Totreš*, *Totyreš*, are the two names of the young fighting heroes of the *Nartæ*. *Batraz* is son of *Xæmic* and *Totraz* is son of *Albeg* of the *Albegatæ* family. Both names show a second component *-rāz*, comparable to the Khotan Saka *-rāysa-* (= *rāza-*) 'directing, showing'. The first components are then *bāta-* 'feats of valour' and *tota-* 'feats of strength'.

8. *Sirdon*, Iron *Syrdon*, Inguš *Širtta* and Turkish *Širdan* (retaining the earlier *-āna-*) is given as father both *Bætæg* and *Gætæg*, and a second name

Natar-Uatar and Uætær-Nætær, the variation of these names probably indicating dialectal epic words. The name *Bætæg / Gætæg* may show the two treatments of initial *ǔ-* as *b-* or *g-*, hence the name is from **vata-*, an older Iranian word signifying both 'small' as in Khotan-Saka *bata-* 'small' and Zor. Pahl. *vaččak* 'child' from **vatačaka-*, and 'bad' as in Zor. Pahl. *vata-* 'bad', Persian *bad*. Sirdon is the bane, but also the butt of the Nartæ heroes, a trickster of the Great House. His name is likely therefore to express this activity. In *sird-* one may see a denominative base *ser-*: *sir-* from *sai-* 'to cheat', a common development, connected with *sāi-*, Digoron *sajun* 'to cheat', possibly influenced also by the Saka verb *ǰēr-* found in Khotan Saka *jsīr-*: *jsīda-* 'to cheat', whence the loanword *tser-* in Tokhar of Kuci. The Ossetic *dzer-* is cited below in the sense of 'to seize' and might be this same word without pejorative meaning.

9. *Boræ* is the name of an unimportant actor in a few tales, and it occurs in a list, but is mainly the name of the family *Borætæ*, *Boriatæ*, *Boiratæ*, *Burtæ*, with an adjective *buron* 'rich', and the feminine name *Boræγentæ*, daughter of *Buræfærnyg*. The *-bor-* is also in the name *Narty Aborquayijy Buræfærnyg*. The *Borætæ* are the rich Nartæ family, the *qæzdyg nærtton myk-kag*. *Boræfærnyg* is the rich man par excellence. In a Russian text occurs the dyadic name *Buron-bogač* 'Buron the rich' where *buron* is glossed by Russian *bogač*. This *bōr* 'riches' has various cognates from *bau-* 'to abound, be rich'. It is not to be confused with *bōr* 'yellow' (older **balva*) or *bōr* 'food' (older **barva-*).

10. *Xuareldar*, *Xualerdar*, *Xuarildar*, Iron *Xorældar*, *Xory 'ldar*, is the patron of corn and fruitfulness, named from Digoron *xuar*, Iron *xor* 'corn' from the base *hvar-* of 'eating', with the second component *ældar* 'lord, owner'. His son is called *Bor-xuar ali*, Iron *Bur-xor ali* (inflected *aliji*, *alijy*). Digoron *xvar*, Iron *jæu* is 'millet'. The same *bōr* 'food' occurs in Zor. Pahl. *bōr*, *bōrak* as in the phrase *pit ut bōr* corresponding to Avestan *baourva-* and *pitu-* (Yašt 17.1). The base *barva-* is in Old Indian *bharvati* 'to chew'. In the son's name, *ali* is rather a word for 'prince' than the Muslim name 'Ali, hence a cognate of the *æl-* of *ældar* and the *āla-* of the family name *Alægatæ*. The son *Bor-xuar ali* was slain by *Batraz* who boasted of the deed before the *Ūacamongæ Bowl*, whereupon in folklore fashion *Xuareldar* blighted the crops.

11. *Acæ* of the *Acætæ* family is the father of *Acæmæz* who plays the magical flute. The father's name has many variants. We find *Aci furt*, *Ūazi furt*, *Ūazi furt*, *Uaziji furt*, *Uazimi furt*, *Uaci furt*, Iron *Acæjy saq* ('brave') *fyrt*, in Russian script *Acamaz syn slavnogo Uaza*, Qabard *Aša*, Karačai Turkish *Ači-mez* son of *Ači*, and *Ecemej* son of *Ecej*. The name of the son is *Acæti Acæmæz*, Qabard *Ašamez*, *Ašemez*, Adyge *aš'mez*, Abadzekh *ašmez*. A longer phrase oc-

curs in Abkhaz Bzyb dialect *aç'an r-ah* 'the prince of the *Aç'an* family', translated into Russian by *vladetel'Acanov*.

In the Qabard tales the father has the dyadic epithet Russian *Aša naibolee nogučij* 'Aša the exceedingly strong'. This same Russian *mogučij* helps to render also Ossetic Digoron *ūac-axæssæn congebæl* 'on his powerful-carrying arms'. The family are then named the 'strong ones'.

This same *ūac, ac* 'strong' is also the first component of the name of *Acæmæz* with the familiar *maz-* 'great', hence a compound with sequent adjective meaning 'great in strength', formed like such a name as *Ἀριαμάζης* in Strabo, and like a later name *Mihr-mas* with the other word *mas-* 'great'. Note how *ūac* and *ac* alternate in the name of the Bowl *Uacamongæ* and *Acamongæ*, and in the feminine name *Ūaciroxs* and Iron *Acyruxs*. A similar *maz-* can be detected also in the name in Čerkes *Batmæzə* 'great in feats of heroism'. The heroine *Ūadz-æftauæ* consented to wed the son of *Acæmæz*.

12. *K'armægon* is the name of a witch to whom in gratitude *Oræzmæg* distributed some of the booty. (The ejective *k'*- and the aspirated *k'*- are both used to replace the older Iranian *k-*, but at times the ejective *k'*- may replace the older *sk-*, as in *k'abaz, k'abozæ*, Iron *k'abaz* 'branch', cognate with Greek *σκᾶπος*, Latin *scopa* 'small branch'). The witch is the 'performer of magic' expressed by *kar-* 'to do magic' as in Ossetic *kælæn*, and Old Indian *kṛtyā-*, Lithuanian *kẽras*, Old Russian *čary* 'magic'. The name is thus **karmaka-* with the feminine suffix of names *-on* from *-ānā-*.

13. *Beduxa, Beduḡa, Qabard Bidox, Badax, Bædex*, is the name of one of the beautiful heroines (*ræsuydʒ*), wife of *Soslan*. On *Soslan*'s visit to the *Dæl-zænxæ* 'Underworld' it was *Beduxa* who explained to him the surprising sights he had met. She gave him also the healing leaves of the *Aza*-tree which he had gone there to seek.

Derived from the base in Digoron *bedun, bedujun*, participle *bett, bitt* 'appear, have influence' the name *bedux-* would mean 'illustrious, wonderful', or possibly 'influential', the former more suiting a lady, *Soslan*'s wife. The final *-a* occurs in other women's names as in *Agunda, Akula, Elda, Satana, Sasana, Xorčeska*, as well as in the men's names *Ajsana* and *Bayodza*. This may be preferred to the derivation from **baga-duxtā* 'daughter of the distributary deity', which gave Persian *bē-duxt* and *bē-luft* for the planet Venus. From a similar verb *sah-* 'to appear' the Zor. Pahlavī has *sahīk* 'wonderful' and Persian has *sahī* used of majestic women and of lofty trees.

14. *Becentæ* is the name of the family of dwarfs. There are variant forms of the name: Iron *Bycentæ, Byšentæ, Byšenontæ, Bdzentæ*, in Russian *Bcen,*

Bicenataē, and most modified *Pseltaē*. From this *becen-* came the feminine with suffix *-on* *Becenon*, *Bycenon*, *Byšenon* and *Bycenton*. A dwarf gives his sister to Xæmic as wife. The dwarf is called Digoron *Ulink'æ* 'cubit-high', and he has also the Čerkes name (in Russian script) *Aceko*, that is, in Čerkes *a* 'the' with *c'æk'u* 'small'. The syllable *bec-*, *byc-* is then clearly a dialectal epic word meaning 'small', and connected with Digoron *bitzeu*, *biddzeu*, *bicceu* 'child' (not found in Iron), and further from the *vata-* 'small' in Khotan Saka *bata-* 'small'. The *ulin-* of the name *Ulink'æ* is the dialectal epic word beside Digoron *ærinæ*, Iron *ærin* 'elbow'.

15. *Čelaxsardton*, *Čelaxsærtan*, *Čelæxsærtan*, *Čelæxsærton*, *Čilæxsært-ton*, *Čelæxsar*, *Čelæsxan*, *Čelæxsærtæg*, *Jelæxsærdton*, *Gelæxsærton*, Qabard *Džilaxstan*, *Džəlaqsten*, *Gylaxstan*, Karačaj Turkish *Giljaxsyrtan*, has the usual marks of the dialectal epic name. He is one of the warlike heroes. The second component *æxsært* is normal replacement of older *xšaθra-* 'dominion, warriorship', which is known also in the family name *Æxsærtægkataē*. The first component with its dilectal *č-*, *ǰ-* is the older word *čarya-* 'warlike' in Avestan *čiryā-* glossed by Zor. Pahl. *kārēčārīk* and maintained in the Turkish loan-word *čārik*, *čāri* 'troop of warriors'.

16. *Maryuz*, Iron *Mæryūdz* is the name of the rich man with vast herds of horses and cattle on the plains and in the meadows. With the suffix *-uz*, *-ūdz* the word is from older *marga-* 'meadow, wood', as in Avestan *marəya-*, Sogd.Manichæan *mry* 'meadow, wood' and Sogd. Buddhist *mry* 'plain', *mryyh* 'forest', Persian *mary*. The name *Bayodza* is formed by similar suffix from *bāga-* 'plot of land, garden' suiting his possession of an enclosure called *keyog* (*kēy-* < **kāyya-*) with a folklore apple-tree.

17. *Sqæl-becæn*, *Sqæl-beson* is a hero possessing a magic cuirass, but his wife in folklore fashion was seduced into cutting off some of the knobs, whereby it ceased to make the wearer invulnerable. The name therefore clearly contains a dialectal epic word *sqæl*, like the Digoron *æsqær*, Iron *zyær* 'armour', both also abnormal forms, and a second component *bec-*, *bes-* with adjectival suffixes **-æn* and *-on*. This is the word found in Khotan Saka *ḥesa-* 'shield', from older **belsa-* (**vṛtsa-*) of the base *var-* used widely of defensive armour. The hero's name is then a description from his special dress.

18. *Qæncærgæs*, *Qændzærgæs* is the name of a winged seven-headed giant. He captured the Nartæ Alæg and made him into a herdsman. The same story is told of Uon. The second component is well known: *cærgæs* 'eagle', Sogd. *črks*, Avestan with unpalatalized initial *kahrkāsa-*, Zor. Pahl. *karkās*, Persian *kargas*, named from the base *kark-* 'to strike' with the suffix of animals

-āsa- (as in Digoron *robās* ‘fox’). The first component can then be recognized as from *gan-* ‘to seize’ used of the raptor bird called in Khotan Saka *uysgana-* ‘vulture’, Persian *zayan*.

19. *Xorčeska* is called in Digoron *xori kizgæ Xorčeska* ‘Xorčeska daughter of the (lady) Sun’. The second component *-česka-* is dialectal epic and to be compared with Khotan Saka *jīškā-* ‘girl’.

20. *Subælci*, Iron *Sybaelcy*, *Cybaelc*, Qabard *Sybyl’ši*, Turkish *Sibil’ci*, is a young rider, the son in old age of Uærxtænæg. The second component contains *bælci* by suffix *-i* from **balci-* ‘riding’, Digoron, Iron *balc*, with an adjectival first component in which may be concealed **sui-* beside *sūra-* ‘strong’, Khotan Saka *sūra-*, as also in Avestan *sūra-*.

21. *Selæn*, Šela, Iron *Silæm*, *Silam* is the name of the ancestral dog, called in Digoron *kujti sær Sela* ‘Sela chief of dogs’. This name **sēlama-* from older **sāramya-* belongs with Old Indian Rigvedic *sarāmā-* ancestress of dogs, where the Indian tradition has *s-* in place of older *-ś-*, as found also in the Atharva-veda word *śkatā-* ‘sand’, Digoron *sigit*, Khotan Saka *siyatā-*, Old Persian *θikā-*. The Old Indian adjective *sārameya-* was used for ‘dog’.

22. *Kæntæ* belongs in a somewhat confused tradition of a ruler called in Digoron *Kænti sær Xuændonæ*, *Kænti Xujændag*, Iron *Kancy sær Xūændon* beside the fuller *Kænty sær Xujændon ældar*, which is found also with the titles *maligk* and *maligk paddzax* ‘king emperor’ in place of *ældar*.

The word *Kæntæ* is ambiguous, being either singular as in the Iron gen. sing. *Kancy*, or plural in *-tæ*. As indicated by the Russian translation gen. plur. *Kantov*, the word *kæntæ* may also be collective singular for plural. In the name, the word *sær* ‘chief’ may be absent.

There is an Ossetic word *kænt* ‘building’, cognate with the various words Khotan Saka *kanthā-*, Sogd. *knḏh* ‘city’, and a loan-word from the north-west of India in Pāṇini’s *kanthā*. In the name here, *Kæntæ* may be the same word, so that in *Kænti sær* ‘the chief of the *Kæntæ*’ would resemble the old Greek title *πολιάρχος*.

A quite different word is introduced in the Iron phrase *Kæfty sær Xūjændon*. This same *Kaftisar* occurs in the Russian book *NEON*, where the name is placed on the *Aq dengiz* with the city *Taman*, hence on the Azov Sea. In one story *Kæfty sær Xūjændon* comes from the Underworld to visit the dying *Soslan*.

With the change from *Kænti*, *Kancy* to *Kæfty* a new interpretation has been introduced. The name has been taken as the genitive plural of *kæf* ‘fish’. In the story there is then reference to the smell of fish (*kæfty smag*). The lord

has *kæfdzautæ* 'fishermen'. The Glossary of NK 1946, 581 explains *kæfty*, *kæsægty barduag* 'the ruling genius of fishes', hence the proposal to translate *kæfty sær* (which is not attested in Digoron) by 'ruler of fishes'. But this is the modernized replacement of a difficult older phrase.

In *Xuændonæ* I see the personal name of the ruler of the *Kæntæ*. The forms vary with *Xuændonæ* and *Xujændag*. Here the two different suffixes *-on*, *-onæ* and *-ag* are the usual adjectival suffixes as in Digoron *xuænxon*, and *xuænxag* 'mountainous'. The form in *-ag* excludes the word *don* 'water'. In *xuænd-*, *xujænd-* one would expect to see a participle in *-ant-* to a base *hau-*: *hu-*. For a ruler's name this points at once to the words Avestan *hvōišta-* 'most excellent', Khotan Saka *hvāṣṭa-* 'chief', Tumšūq Saka *hveṣta-*, Sogd. *xwyštr* 'superior', *γwyštḱ* 'revered', Munjānī *xuṣci*, *xuṣkye*, Ossetic Digoron *xestær* 'superior', *xestag* 'the portion of a superior', Iron *xistær*. To this will belong the Kušān Saka name *Huviṣka-*.

23. *Zevæg*, *Zivæg* is the seventh son of a Nartæ who in folklore fashion either sits at all times in the ashes or is a boy without legs. He gains all his wishes by direct prayer to the Autocrat of Autocrats. He marries a daughter of Boræfærnuḡ the rich man. The name is identical with the Iron *zivæg*, to which Digoron responds with *zinadæ* 'indolent', cognate with Khotan Saka *ysīta-* 'indolent'.

24. *Sæuuaj*, *Sæuaj*, Iron *Sæua*, in Russian *Suaj*, Qabard *Šæuej* is the heroic boy. His father's name is in the phrase *K'antdzi furt Sæuuaj*, *K'anci furt Sæuaj*, Qabard *Šæuej* son of *Kanz*, but also (from Ossetic) *Dčenz*, beside Bžedux *Džandeko Sevaj*. He is for his persistence permitted to join a Nartæ expedition. He is called Digoron *mink'ij*, Iron *čysyl*, *gycyl* 'small one', but also Iron *qæbatyr* 'hero', Qabard translated in Russian as *doblestnyj* 'splendid'. No Nartæ is more 'virile' than he. His impetuosity is demonstrated. He fails to win Ūadz-æftauæ as his bride since she prefers the son of Acæ, Acæti Acæmæz, but he weds the daughter Agunda of Oræzmæg and so ends the vendetta between them. The horse of Sæuuaj is called in Turkish *Gemuda* and in Qabard *Džamidež*, glossed by 'trusty bay', which I have not seen in Ossetic. The variation in dialectal epic names (as above under Čelæxsærdton) indicates that the horse is named the 'swift runner' from the base *čam-* 'to move fast', from which Khotan Saka has its word *tcamū* for 'locust', the swift leaping insect.

For *Sæuuaj* a connexion with Khotan Saka *ṣau-*: *ṣu-* 'to cause to move (fast)' hence 'to throw, place' of any violent motion from older 'to move fast' would suit his character within the Great House. Then the two explanations by 'violent young man' and 'ugly one' from Qabard are secondary.

25. *Sopia*, *Sofia* is the name of a tomb. The fuller phrase is *sopiajy zæbpadz*, *sofiajy zæbpadz*, and *sofja-zæbpadz* 'the tomb of Sopia' to which the dying Batraz is invited. *Metri causa* there occurs also *sofijy*. A place near the village of Kazbek on the Georgian Military Road has been proposed as its site.

Sofja is a variant to the name *Safa* the 'genius of the hearth' who has a house (*xædzar*) in the sky. Since both the hearth in the floor and the tomb can be thought of as an enclosed space or box, the word *sopia*, *sofia*, *sofja*, *safa* recalls at once the base of the widespread Iranian *sapatā-* 'box' in Persian *sabad*, the Armenian loan-word *sapata-*, Syriac *spt'*-, Khotan Saka *savā-*, loc. sing. *savaya* 'box', Yidgha *savdō* Kalaša loan-word *savēd-*, East Turkish *savdyč*, Russian loan-word *sapētkā* 'basket'.

At a later stage of the Nartæ tradition it was thought that the Byzantine church of *Hagia Sophia* was alluded to, through a superficial similarity of sound. The *sopia* was even placed in Arabia in the phrase *Mediny sofia* 'the tomb in Medinah'.

26. *Dzerassæ*, daughter of Donbetyr, one of the great lovers, was wooed by *Gætæg dony xicau* 'possessor of the water' at the river, and gave birth to Satana. But *Dzerassæ* is the lover of *Æxsærtæg*, at whose death she utters a lament called *γarængæ*, Iron *qaræg*, a technical term. In the folklore form of a dove she seizes and carries off the apple of the Nartæ.

Her name recalls the word *dzera* 'raptor' bird of prey. Both as impetuous lover and as folklore plunderer she may be the *dzerassæ* 'raptrix' with a name assimilated to the bird names formed by the suffix *-āsa-*. Another name in *-assa* is that of the first ancestor of the Nartæ *Suassa* which I have found only in a Russian text. It could be interpreted similarly as **s(a)uāsa-* from the *sau-*: *su-* in Khotan Saka *sūra-* 'strong'.

27. The names *Agunda* and *Akula* vary for the same person, so that one would like to find a single origin for both. There are several heroines so named and they have regularly the epithet *ræsuγd* 'beautiful'. If this is, as likely, a dyadic phrase the two names will derive from *ā-kau-* 'to be beautiful' with the participial suffix *-ant-* and the suffix *-la-* with the *-a* common in feminine names. This *(s)kau-* has given West Iranian *škōh* 'beauty', and more remotely Gothic *skauini-* 'beautiful'. As bringing these names within the tradition of the Great House this seems more satisfactory than isolating *Agunda* from *Akula* by calling in Greek *ὀάκτιθος*, Zor. Pahl. *yākand*.

The name *Agunda* itself has several variants, Digoron *Agundæ*, Iron *Agündæ*, Čerkes *Akuenda*, Qabard *Aximuda*, and an uncertain Abadzex *Aguard*, Ubyx *G°enda pš'əza* 'the beautiful'.

These names have been treated at some length to show that the Iranian earchic system offers a consistent interpretation in all these cases.

The heroes of the Nartæ tales are characterized by many epithets. Within their social system of the Great House, the *Ustur Xædzaræ*, they are the Iron *uæzdan*, Digoron *uezdon*, *jezdon* 'nobles', against the *sau læg* 'black man', their inferiors, and the *xumætæg* 'common man'. They have a pride of birth, they are *næرتون igurd* 'of Nartæ birth'. They recognize each other as friends and kinsmen.

The following epithets distinguish the Nartæ heroes. They are accordingly distinguished, select, intelligent heroes, most sure (*bægudærtæ*), marked out, beloved chiefs, good chiefs, the one honoured chief, excellent, handsome, strong, most able, beautiful, sound, powerful, protective, goodly, optimates, old (as meaning valiant), and the best heroes.

The family names in the Nartæ tradition also fit into the Great House. Five are worthy of special notice. The first family is that of the *Æxsærtægkatæ*, of which the meaning has never been obscured. It is reported that the *Æxsærtægkatæ* family was few in men, but mighty in *æxsaræ* 'prowess'. The two words *æxsærtæg* and *æxsaræ* belong by different development to the one older word *xšaθra-*. The brother of *Æxsærtæg* was called *Æxsaræ*, Iron *Æxsar*, *Æxsal*, *Æxsæltær*, and *Yxsart*. In various forms this family name occurs in other Caucasian sources as Chechen and Inguš *ärxstua*, *erstxo* and Turkish *šurtuk*, a case important as showing the secondary origin in Chechen and Inguš.

The second family has an ancestor *Boræ* and the family name *Boriatæ*, *Borætæ*, beside also Iron *Burtæ* in a double phrase *Burtæ æmæ Borætæ*. It is the rich family possessing *bor* 'wealth'.

The third family name is *Alægatæ* with the personal name *Alæg*. From this the Georgian folk tales took *Alg-* in the geographical name *Alget'-i* 'the land of the *Alg* people', as they had made *Alanet'-i* 'land of the *Alans*'. *Alæg* is not important in the Nartæ epic. He is carried off by the giant *Qæn-cærgæs* to be a herdsman, and rescued by *Batraz*, who in this story is his grandson though elsewhere *Batraz* is son of *Xæmic* son of *Æxsærtæg*. The *Alægatæ* family is said to be rich and prosperous, possessing a Great House. The basic *āla-* is likely to be a later form of **arya-* 'wealth', Zor. Pahl. *ēr*.

Just as in heroic times, according to Hesiod (Merkelbach-West (1967), fragment 203), three ancient Greek families were by simpliste technique said to be distinctively marked, the *Aiakids* by *ἀλκή* 'force', the *Amuthaonids* by *νοῦς* 'intelligence' and the *Atreids* by *πλοῦτος* 'wealth', so a tradition of uncertain date claimed heroic ability for the *Æxsærtægkatæ*, intelligence for the *Alægatæ* and riches for the *Boriatæ*.

The fourth family *Acætæ* is that of *Acæ* father of *Acæmæz*, the cultured hero, player of the magic flute.

The fifth family is the *Astæ* in one tale in Digoron. Here one may wish to see the *As-* derived from older *Arsi-*, and retained elsewhere in Digoron *Asi*, Iron *Asy*, with adjective *asiag*, whence the Georgians made *Os*, and *Ovs* (the source of the name *Ossetia*).

The sense of power or force was recognized in the Greek phrase ἀλκίηεντες 'Αλανοί 'powerful Alans' (Dionysios Periegetes 305), which could serve as gloss both to *Acæ-tæ* and *As-tæ*.

There are in the basic sources some doublets, though they are eliminated from the edited sequences. Thus both *Ūærxtænæg* and *Ūærxæg* are the father of *Subælci*, being two forms of the same name, but they are also called twin brothers. *Soslan* is the son of *Sosæg*, Chechen *Soska Solsa*, Inguš *Sioska Solsa*. This hero is also called *Sozuruqo* (probably through *Čerkes* with *qo* 'son'). The names were then made into two brothers. *Xæmic* is father of *Batraz*, but *Batraz* is also called the grandson of *Alæg* and *Uon*. The story of the death of *Totraz* is told also of *Totraz's* son *Alimbeg*. Of heroines of the two names *Akula* and *Agunda* similar tales are told.

II

The *Nartæ* tales have been handed down in a form of composition called in Digoron *kadængæ*, Iron *kadæg* glossed by 'a song with musical accompaniment' by Vsevolod Miller in his dictionary and in the Ossetic-Russian dictionary. The word *kadængæ* is known also in the Georgian loan-word *k'adagi* 'herald' and *k'adageba* 'announcement'.

For my Digoron informant the title of the performer was *kadængæ-zaræg* 'singer of the work' rather than the colourless *kadængæ-gænæg* 'maker of the work'.

The *kadængæ* are usually in prose in their published form, but some are in verse as in the *Narti Acæmæzi zar* 'the song of the *Nartæ Acæmæz*'. One text has a page of prose introduction to six following pages of verse (*IAS*, 5, 87-93). A song to *Satana* is placed within the story of *Acæmæz's* wedding.

The *kadængæ* is accompanied by the two-stringed fiddle *fændur*, Iron *fændyr*, played with a bow. The strings are of the hairs of a horse's tail. There existed also the *duuadæs-tænon fændyr* 'the twelve-stringed harp'. The name *fændur* is first found in Greek πάνδουρος, φάνδουρος (with other variants), and occurs in other Caucasian languages. Pictures can be seen in B. A. Galaev, *Osetinskie narodnye pesni* (Moscow, 1964), and in V. Abaev, *Iz osetinskogo eposa*, 1939.

Two professional *kadængæ*-singers are described, one Kertibi in the *Pamyatniki osetinskogo tvorchestva*, 2 (1927), preface ix-xiii, and the other Ilik'o in V. Abaev, *Iz osetinskogo eposa*, 5.

The first is as follows. The singer Kertibi, son of Kelemet of the Kertibitæ family, 1834-1914, was born in Uæqæc in Digoria and lived there till his death. He is described as taking an active part in the life of Digoria, familiar with agriculture and horse-breeding, and greatly sought after as an adviser. Then of the singer Kertibi, Dzagurti Gubadi wrote: Popular tales he knew in very great quantity; he had got them partly from his mother, partly from the old men. Most he got to know in childhood and youth. In his own narratives Kertibi gave much of the earlier history of the Ossetes, but especially of the rule of the Qabards in the North Caucasus. He usually recited his tales in winter, accompanied by his playing on the *fændur*. His tales, since he was a master of the Ossetic Digoron language, were always rich in content, the style was exceptionally light. When Kertibi recited, the whole village of Uæqæc gathered into the village meeting-place, not only the older men, but also women and children. These were particularly numerous when he played the *fændur*. So fascinatingly did Kertibi recite that the people never tired for whole days, but regretted when weariness induced him to shorten the recital. Kertibi especially loved to celebrate the Nartæ heroes Soslan, Xæmic, Batraz, Oræzmæg, Marguz and Sirdon. When Dzagurti Gubadi wished in 1910 to complete the collection of Kertibi's repertoire he found him too old; he had, he said, forgotten them.

Of Mæryity Eprejy fyrty Ilik'o, Professor Abaev reported the following. Iliko Margiev, forty-eight years old (in 1939), enjoys the reputation of being one of the best narrators of Southern Ossetia. His repertoire is extensive and varied. His speech flows smoothly, freely and unforced. Picturesqueness and vivacity appear characteristic traits of his narrative. One feels that at the time of narration he himself experiences, together with his heroes, all the misadventures, their grief and joy. Within the story he changes suddenly from past time to the historic present and always very successfully and to the point, so that the exposition of events is animated and his hearers' attention excited. Nartæ tales he cannot only narrate but also sing, accompanied by playing on the *fændyr*. The tales and the stories he heard from his father Epre and his grandfather Qandua.

Ossetic singers of *kadængæ* still live on in Ossetia.

III

The world of the Nartæ epic embraces the whole life of the heroic families. But there is a twofold background. There is on the one hand the concept of wide horizons and vast-extending journeys, beside on the other hand the lim-

ited mentality of the village. There is the raiding of large herds of cattle, horses and bovine cattle, in hostile lands and the search for pasture land among enemies, while the aged ancestor Alæg has only one cow. The dwellings are those of a Caucasian village even to the existence of the seven-storeyed tower. The Lady of the House discovers the making of beer from observation of plant and bird in true village folklore fashion. But Oræzmæg and Satana own store-houses which can alleviate a famine among the Nartæ.

To understand the tales a knowledge of Nartæ social structure is necessary, ranging from the distribution of booty from raids to the small village plots of land. There is too a religious cult in Nartæ life. The heroic and the anti-heroic, the tragic and the grimly humorous alternate. The main heroes stand out with marked individuality, but the lower characters, servants, fishermen and youths, often have no names, like the protagonists in folk tales.

The Nartæ have the concept of the Great Village and of the Great House. This is the type of rule that the Greeks saw as peculiarly Persian and called *oikarkhia*. The Great House has the Director and the House-Mistress with the sons or dependants as functionaries. These sons have in Ossetic the dialectal epic name of *guppur*, Iron *güppyr*, the *vīsō.puθra-* of the *Avesta*. Only Ajsana however is a genetic son of Oræzmæg the Director of the House. The later generation is called the 'after generation'.

Kinship terms are extensive and include *nostæ* 'daughter-in-law', *fajnostæ* 'brother's wife' and *æmigir* 'fellow-wife'. Xæmic has two wives, but brings home third wife the *Auari ræsuŷd* 'the beauty of Avaria' whom his former wives slay. Fosterage is frequent, but is expressed by Turkish terms (*jenceq*, Iron *æmcek*, and *qan*). The Georgian Geographer Vakhusht, writing in 1745, reported that the nobles (*gvarian-*) of Ossetia were *qmian-* 'possessed of *qma*-servants'. There was friction between the old (*zæronð*) and the younger generation (*fæšē-væd*).

Social classes seem to be rigid. The Nartæ of the three families *Boriatæ*, *Æxsærtægkatæ* and *Alægatæ* with the families of the *Acætæ* and *Astæ* reveal the Nartæ as *űezdon*, *jezdon*, Iron *űæzdan* originally a pastoralist term 'fattener of cattle', but through 'promoter, protector' has become simply 'lord or noble'. They are contrasted with the *sau læg* 'black man' in the sense of inferior. Sirdon whose father was no Nartæ is a *sau læg*. Soslan's intimate friend *Saulægi furt Mæræzduxt*, that is, Mæræzduxt son of Saulæg, has a name meaning 'wage-paid' connected with Sogdian *mr'z*, Turkish loan-word *maraz* 'wages'. The 'noseless Saulæg' is a type of deep misfortune. The *kævdæs-ard* son 'born in a manger' implies low birth. The ordinary man is the *xumætæg*.

To be born into the Great House meant high rank. For this high birth the word *ā-zan-* was used in various Iranian languages. The Zor. Pahl. *āznāvar* 'noble' used of warriors passed to Georgian as *aznaur-i* beside the negative *u-azn-o*, whence, in Ossetic, Digoron has *aznaurtæ* and Iron *Æmzorataæ* of the family and *Æmzor* as a personal name, a name of Oræzmæg's son Ajsana. The name *Azn* of the Nartæ is the word *āzna-* preserved in Avestan *āsna-* and Turfan Iranian plural *āznān*, glossed by Sogdian *āzāt*, and Armenian loan-word *azniu* 'noble'. The family is called *mugkag* 'the seeded' from *mugæ* 'seed', as elsewhere in Iranian **marta-tauxma-* 'mortal seed' means 'mankind', in Turfan Parthian *mrdwhm* **mardōhm*, Persian *mardum*, older in Sogdian *mrtxm*'k.

The *guppur* 'sons of the House' from older **visas-puθra-*, Turfan Parthian *vis-puhr*, *Ṣiṇā* loan-word *guš-pūr*, is used in the word with suffix *-gin*: *guppurgintæ*, *gubburgintæ*, and in the compound *guppursartæ*, Iron *gūppyr-sartæ* to express the group.

Another term for the group of younger men is Digoron *iuonæx-særtæ* 'the youths' equivalent to Iron *qal fæsiwæd* 'bold descendants'. The *iuonæx-* is a derivative of the older *yuvan-* 'young'. The 'lord' or 'master' is called *ældar*, and the heroines tend to be daughters of *ældar*. It is part of the name of the Nartæ *Sajnæg ældar*. The term 'village lord' (*yæu-ældar*) occurs, containing the older territorial name *gava-* of the *Avesta*.

The other end of the social scale is the slave. For this status the word used is *ūacar*, a loan-word connected with West Iranian *vāčār* 'market'. A folklore tale of Batraz tells of him selling himself during a famine to an *ældar* 'lord', but his indignant departure when the *ældar* calls him *ælxyd* 'purchased'. The tales report the carrying off of boys and girls from the Chechen and Nogai tribes. Satana has in her house a *ūacar gumiry* 'giant slave' whom she sends to repel an unwelcome guest.

Birth in a Nartæ family is all-important, but to have a name is a religious necessity since otherwise the unnamed one can have no funeral cult (*xist*). Oræzmæg's unnamed son (*ænænom læppu*), killed by accident on Oræzmæg's dagger among his kin the Donbettærtæ, returned from the Underworld by permission of Barastær lord of the dead to seek his father Oræzmæg and beseech him for a portion of the funeral cult.

Of the lower classes there are only a few names. The two heralds (*fedeuæg*) are Sibeka of the Lower Ward (*sinx*) and Tærazon (or Cærazon) of the Upper Ward. Two doorkeepers Tula and Tulabeg appear. There are Mæcyqo and Tepsyqo, two servants of Safa. But in the background are unnamed servants, fishermen, herdsmen, messengers, general servants. At a feast Sirdon acts as cupbearer. The wretched plight of Batraz's grandfather Bolat as herdsman of the

giant's horses and of Alæg as shepherd of Qæn-cærgæs is strongly expressed. Equally bad is the fate of Ūærxæg labouring in the mine for the people of the Underworld. Twelve hired men serve the giant Mukara; at his mother's funeral rite Sirdon has hired servants, bakers of bread and brewers of beer.

The public life of the Nartæ is conceived on the village model. They assemble for public business as a group of old men (*zæronð*, cognate of Greek γέροντες, hence a gerousia), at the *nixæs*, Iron *nyxas*, the ground set apart for discussion, where they sit in a circle on stone seats. The K'art'vel language of Rač'a has made *sanaxšo* from the Ossetic word, for the same concept, and other words in various Caucasian languages attest the practice.

After a raiding expedition, called a *balc*, at times lasting several years during which time the raiders were not in touch with their homes, the cattle called *fonsikond* were driven to the place called Iron *ūaræn fæz* 'the plain of distribution', an act of great significance in heroic times.

Public too was the sport and dancing. The 'play' (*γazun*) on horseback was the act of the rider called *jigit* in Turkish. For dancing Ossetic had the three words *semun*, *serun*, and *kafun*. The dance on their fellows' shoulders is mentioned, a feat still performed in Ossetia. Feastings are evidently a cause of much rejoicing. The feast (*mijnasæ*) may last a week, as at the wedding of Acæmæz. The *fezonæg* (meat on the spit) and *bægæni* (beer) are favoured food, but the Nartæ had also the drink called *rong*, a name surviving in Swanetian *rang* for a honey drink. They knew also *æluton* 'boiled ale' and *sænæ* 'wine'.

The Nartæ are settled in three separate wards (*sinx*, Iron *syx*, possibly the old word *šayana-*, Armenian loan-word *šēn*) called Upper, Middle and Lower. A place near their settlement is called *Fæs-nart Xuzæ-dzægat*, Iron *Fæs-nart Xus-dzægat*, similar to the name *Xuzmæ-dzægat* in a story of the Turk-Tork. Within their region they have the usual houses, towers with courtyard and cultivated fields. The *kesenæ* towers occur in other Caucasian languages, and *buru*, *bru*, Iron *byru* 'enclosure' gave the Inguš *buru* and the Avar *burav* as the name of Dzæuædžy qæu (Vladikavkaz); it recalls the Khotan Saka *prūva-* 'fortress', Kroraina *pirova*.

Five public halls of the Nartæ are listed: Ancient Hall, Great Hall of the Alægatæ, Oath-taking Hall of the Borætæ, the Communal Hall and the Assembly Hall.

Two displays of riches appear. The *Dzyly mælikk* 'the king of Dzyl' at sacrifices and funeral feasts is seated on a chair of honour with the skin of a white bear beneath his feet, one young Nartæ behind him and two at his side keeping off the flies. The rich Maryuz has vast fields and lavish establishments.

IV The World of the Nartæ

The Nartæ are greatly occupied with the world around them, which they reduced to an intelligible whole. The tales assume this background.

1. Magic plays a large part in the tales. The general term was *kælæn*, derivative of the base *kar-*. *Æfsati*, patron of the wild animals, gave a magic flute to his friend *Acæ* of the *Acætæ* family who in turn gave it to his son *Acæmæz*. *Cerek* has a magic breastplate, *Bidas* a magic helmet. *Xæmic* has a magic tooth irresistible to women. The *Borætæ* have a magic ass which springs upon a woman whom a hero has cursed.

The most dangerous magic is in the wheel called *Digoron iuojnoni*, *uojnoni*, *ojnoni calx* and *Marsug*, *Iron Marsæg*, *Malsæg*, *Barsæg*, *Balcæg*. The full phrase is *Barsædžy calx* meaning either 'wheel of *Barsæg*' or the 'wheel which is *Barsæg*'. Two glosses are offered: 'animate wheel' and a 'powerful man'. He is called the chief *Barsæg*. The insulted daughter of the (lady) *Sun* persuades the wheel to attack *Soslan*.

The other Caucasian languages render this name by *Qabard žan-šerx*, *Čerkes džan-čarəx*, *Šapsug ccijān-kušārəx* (*ku* 'cart') where the first component means 'sharp'. This is like a gloss to *Digoron iuojnon* indicating the older form **vi-vāyana-* with adjectival *-on* from *vai-* 'to cut'. The name *barsæg* is then likely to have been **baršaka-* 'cutting, sharp'. The replacement of this epithet by *Digoron uæl-arvon Marsug* 'the celestial *Marsug*' and by a Byzantine-induced *fid iuane*, *Iron fyd juane* 'father John' is the same treatment of an unknown early word which was noticed with *sopia* above. One will think of the Turkish *Su-day* 'water mountain' for the old city name *Sogdaia*.

The most important magical possession of the Nartæ however is the Bowl which reveals the hero. This cup or bowl was called *iron amongæ nuazæn* 'the *Aryāna-* cup of demonstration' in a tale of how *Sæua* took the cup from the *Terk* and *Turk*, and gave it to the Nartæ. Thereafter it was called *Narty amongæ nuazæn*. The glossator called the cup *qalac* 'large cup' and *des-sag k'os* 'marvellous vessel', where the *k'os* is in *Khotan Saka kūsa-*.

The bowl is called in *Digoron ūacamongæ*, *ūaci amongæ* and *ūacia-mongæ*, *Iron ūacamongæ* and *acamongæ*. Its peculiar property was that a man spoke truth about his many feats and the liquor rose untouched to the speaker's mouth, but otherwise remained unmoved or rose partially. *Batraz's* feats convinced the Bowl. The Bowl was called also *nart-amongæ* and *narti uacia-mongæ*.

The contents were beer (*bægæni*). The *Čerkes* tales however used their word *sane* of the liquor in the Bowl, which is glossed by both 'mead' and 'wine'.

The meaning of the epithet *nart-amongæ* is clearly 'revealing the hero', and in *ũacamongæ* the same meaning of the verb *amonun* 'to show' indicates the meaning 'revealing the force' of the hero, with *ũac*, like *ũacæ* 'strong, strength'.

Other ancestral treasures (called by the name *xæznatæ* from Arabic *khaznah*) are three pieces of cloth intended as prizes for the young men, the *fæsivæd*. They were all claimed successfully by Xæmic for his son Batraz who proved himself the boldest, the most modest at table and the most moral in family life.

With magic the witches also appear, both friendly and hostile. They are called 'sitters in the inner chamber'. A second witch can reverse the magic of the first. The witches possess a magic whip, a stroke of which can transform into animal shape. Other shape-shifting occurs when Sirdon changes into an old man and then into an old woman; Soslan becomes a whirlwind; Xuareldar becomes a bubble in a vessel of beer; Satana becomes a mist.

The magic which occurs in ancient epic of talking animals is found here also in the Nartæ tales. Batraz, Soslan, Oræzmæg, Æmzor, Acæmæz and Sæua all talk to their horses. Soslan dying calls upon birds and beasts, and knows the language of them all.

Lots are used by the Nartæ which they trust, but Sirdon is able to falsify them when the Nartæ in bad times seek a leader to take them and their famished herds to an enemy's grounds.

2. The Nartæ view of the world influences their tales greatly. They had a threefold division into 'the sky above', the 'earth's face' and the 'part below the earth'. The beings of the sky above are called *Ūælimontæ* and those below the earth *Dælimontæ* (*mon* 'dwelling'). These three regions are contiguous. Batraz can move into the sky and dwell with the celestial smith Kurd-alægon. The genii called *izæd*, *idauæg*, and *xucau* can descend to earth, as when they visit the birthplace of Soslan and come to the assistance of Acæmæz. Mountain tops are the favoured dwellings of the genii. Æfsati for example dwells on Mount Adaj.

These genii are departmental. *Fælværa* is protector of domestic cattle, *Æfsati* patron of the wild beasts, *Safa* patron of the hearth-chain. Byzantine names, Georgios as *Uas-kergi*, Theodoros as *Totur*, and Elias as *Elia* have been associated with the more archaic *izæd*. The genii in the tales mingle among the Nartæ, they share their tables and their food and drink.

3. The religious beliefs of the Nartæ are prominent. Just as the monster bird Iranian *paškuč* has through Georgian become the Ossetic *p'ak'undzæ*, so the Iranian original of the Digoron *dziuaræ*, Iron *dzūar*, has been influenced by

the Georgian *ǰvar-i*, Čerkes *dzuör*, Chechen *ž'ara*. The Georgian *ǰvar-* resembles Georgian *gvar-* 'family' with *gvarian-* 'noble', from Iranian *gōhr*, so that behind Georgian *ǰvar-* we may see Iranian **ǰavaθra-* with the meaning of Ossetic Digoron *dziuaræ* 'thick, firm, broad' in the compounds *dziuar-væsqaæ* 'broad-shoulder' and *dziuar-sar lædzæg* 'broad-headed staff' (base *gau-* 'to increase in size'). The word is used for the Greek *σταυρός* 'thick thing, trunk' used for the Christian cross. The Persians in their Christian texts used simply *dār* 'wood'. The concept has been dechristianized in Ossetic.

In the Nartæ tales the *dzuar* is a shrine and the supernatural being who inhabits it. It is then little more than a sacred object. When Batraz's wife is denounced by the *dzuar* in a shrine, Batraz undertakes to punish the *dzuar* who flees from his shrine to the supernatural beings called *Ūacillatæ*, thence to the *Safatæ*, until the *Tutyrtæ* effect a reconciliation. There are references to the *xucauy dzuar* 'the Autocrat's holy being', the *Narty styr dzuar* 'the Nartæ's great holy being', and it occurs in the plural *dzuærttæ*.

The heroic world cannot exist without its smith. In Ossetic the name of the smith (*kurd*) is handed down in a variety of forms. The basic form will be *Kurd-alægon*, but there are also *Kurd-alæg*, *Kurd-alæurgon*, *Kurd-alauærgon*, Turkish *Alaugan*. The smith is the worker with fire, hence in the Great House system the epithet is likely to suit. Evidently a word *āla-* or *āra-* from older *āθra-* 'fire' suits as part of his name. Then *alæg* is here from **āθraka-*, and *alægon* is from **āθrakāna-*. The *-urgon* may contain a word for working. The personal name of *Alæg* of the *Alægataæ* family and Old Indian *ulkā* 'torch' hardly belong here.

The genii receive the epithet *ūac*, with variants *ūas*, *uaš*, Čerkes loanword *aussi*, Inguš has a forgotten god *vac*. The non-religious meaning 'strong' is primary. The Digoron *uacæ* occurs in reference to a powerful light. As a personal name *Uacæ* alternates with *acæ* in the name *Acætæ* 'the strong family'. Infected by the Byzantine word *hagios*, the word *ūacæ* may have been modified in sense. Note the doubling of the epithet in *Ūacæ Ūas-kerǰi* 'the strong genius Georgios'.

A group of genii who live in the waters is called Digoron *Donbettæ*, *Donbettir*, Iron *Donbettyr*. The first component is plain *don* 'water'. The second component originally will have been Iranian, later forgotten. If it is from older **badra-* as in Avestan *hubadra-* 'lucky' the *bettæ* are the lucky ones, that is the rich ones or the lords of the waters. They are kinsmen of Satana and hence belong to the older stratum. The Byzantine connexion with Georgian P'et're, Greek Πέτρος cannot be original.

The highest being in the Nartæ religion is called Digoron *xucau*, Iron *xūcau* from an older Saka **hvaθyāva-* modified from **hvatāvyā-* by shifted um-

laut, which in turn gave Sogd. *xwt'w* **xvatāv*, Zor. Pahl. *xvatāv*, equivalent to Greek αὐτοκράτωρ. It gave the Persian *xudā* used in Muslim times to render *Allāh*.

The Nartæ lord is called *xucauti xucau* 'autocrat of autocrats', a kind of superlative. He is the 'autocrat of the blue sky'. The Nartæ call upon him and the *xucau* fulfils all their prayers. At Batraz's burial the *xucau* comes and sheds three tears, which become three famous shrines.

The technical word for offering is Digoron *kovun*, *kuvd*, *kuftitæ*, Iron *ku-vyn*, *kūvd*, with the victim called *kosart*, Iron *kusart* (*kauš-* 'to slaughter'). For sacrifice there are also the two words Digoron *fæqqau* and *nivond*. Supplication is made on the *kuvæn k'upp* 'the hill of offering'.

The oath is an important sanction, called in Digoron *ard*, *ūasxæ* and *somi*.

The word *farnæ*, *farn*, Iron *farn*, adjective *færnuḡ*, Iron *færnyḡ* expresses all welfare and prosperity. A hero prays to *Farnæ* for a good Nartæ wife. Ūærxæg hopes to secure *farn* for his sons by performing a *kūvd* offering; they are *farny gūrdtæ* 'born out of the *farn*'. Digoron has also two other words for 'fortune' *fes* and *amond*.

Blessing and cursing have their place in the Nartæ tales. The horse is devoted to his dead owner by a ceremony *bæx-fældist* for which ritual texts are preserved. The same *fældesun* is used of devoting a person to an evil fate. Thus Sirdon is devoted to be in the Underworld the servant of Soslan by the youths of the Borætæ family. Similarly Soslan's sister's son devoted Barsæg to be the body-servant of Soslan in the Underworld, a reflection of a custom attested in Ossetia as when Mitdziev was sentenced in this life to attendance upon Kelemet of the Tugan family.

4. Death, suicide and burial form part of the tales. Death is called a law (*fætk*). There is a macabre scene at the death of Soslan slain by the Barsæg wheel. Batraz refused to enter the tomb till the *xucau* attended the burial. The world of the dead is a *zindonæ* 'guard-house, prison' (**zaina-dāna-*, as in Persian *zēn-dān*, with *zēn* 'watching', not *zēn* 'weapon' or *zīn* 'life') ruled by Barastur with a porter Aminon. The name Digoron *Barastur*, *Barastær*, *Barasdur*, *Baruastur*, *Baruastær*, Iron *Barastyr* will express his function as lord of the world of the dead. This was *var-* in the Avestan in a phrase *ayrāi var*, in Turfan Parthian *'hrywr* **ahrē-var*, and Zor. Pahl. *anrāk var*. Ossetic *bara-* may stand for this *var-* and the second component *stur* will be 'the strong one, master' (comparable to the second component *stura-* in proper names in the *Avesta*). The second component *-stur*, *-stær* has been taken into Chechen and Inguš as *ěšter*, *eštur*, *eštr* and *eter* 'lord of the dead'. The fuller phrase is Inguš *dela-eštr* 'the god Eštr'.

Suicide is several times reported. Sozyryko was saved by Čilæxsærdton, Æxsærtæg destroys himself. Batyradz in one story falls on his own sword. Beduya, the first wife of Soslan, slays herself with her scissors, but is resuscitated by Soslan. Elda the younger wife of Oræzmæg dies through drinking an overdose of a sour drink.

Burial was in an *ingæn*, an archaic word which is *hankana-* in the *Avesta*. The *zæbpadz* 'earth dwelling' is surmounted by a monument (*cirt*, Iron *cyrt*, Inguš *čurt*). In the story of Uas-tyrdži burying the two brothers Æxsar and Æxsærtæg the *cyrt* was built of lime and stone with a handsome tower (*galuan*) all around. Sirdon prophesied that they would bury him in the Assembly place (*nyxas*). In the Underworld tales the hero is conceived as alive in his tomb. Thus Soslan destroyed Sirdon from his tomb. Soslan's avenger Eræxcäu calls to Soslan in his tomb that he has slain the Balsæg wheel. Barastur's consent is necessary to leave the Underworld, and return before midnight is compulsory, a common folklore feature.

5. Customs of social intercourse include the courteous greetings according to an *æydau* 'practice' which is not to be infringed. The vendetta is a powerful sanction. It is called simply blood (*tog*) and the avenger is 'the man of blood' (*toggin*). The son of Totraz feels compelled to avenge his father on Soslan. The vendetta of Oræzmæg and K'andz is adjusted by the marriage of Oræzmæg's daughter to Sæuuaj son of K'andz.

Punishments include the threat of enslavement. The guilty wives of Xæmic who caused the death of his third wife are bound to the tails of wild horses and broken up, then are burned.

On the other hand the infringements of ethics in Soslan's Underworld visions are trivial village faults.

Raiding and hunting form a large part of the life of the Nartæ heroes, the normal life of epic heroes. The expedition could last several years. These expeditions start at the Assembly ground of the Nartæ. The younger men serve the elder as their attendants. The unnamed son of Oræzmæg challenges Oræzmæg to an expedition which leads to a great cattle raid.

6. The world had had earlier inhabitants than the Nartæ, who form the fifth generation. They conceived a series of 'earth-beings' listed as creations of the *xucau*. A dwarf of the Kæmbædatæ family instructed Xæmic in the knowledge of earlier generations. He knew five stages, the *gumiritæ*, the *ũadmiratæ*, the *eliatæ* (replaced in a Glossary by *ũæjyg*), the *kæmbædatæ* and the fifth the Nartæ men. All these four names are likely to have Saka origins but with later contamination. The first name is Digoron *gumeri*, *gumeritæ*, *gumiritæ*, *gæmeri*, *gumeræ*, *gumerag læg*, Iron *gũmir*, *gũmiry*, *gũmirytæ*, to which Georgian

gmir-i 'hero' is related. The word *gumiry* is glossed by *tyx-gænæg* 'acting with force'. Elsewhere it will be proposed that the Saka base is **vi-mīra-* 'huge' rather than a Biblical connexion with Armenian *gamir-k'* 'Cappadocians' and related names.

The second name Digoron *ūadmeritæ*, Iron *ūadmiritæ* is likely to have a first component *vāta-* 'strong'. The third name *eliatæ* will originally have meant 'lord' with the Chechen loan-word *ela*, *eli*, Batsbi *ala*, *al*, Inguš *āla* 'prince'. This is the *ali* in the name *Bor-xuar-ali*, not here affected by the Byzantine *Elias*, Digoron *Uacella*, Iron *Uacilla*.

The fourth name *Kæmbædataæ* and *Kambadataæ* is the dwarf family evidently expressing the small size by the word *kamba-* 'little'.

The Digoron word *ūæjug*, *ūæjgutæ*, Iron *ūæjig*, *ūæjyg*, *ūæjgūtæ* refers to the giants, deadly enemies of the Nartæ. Horror stories depict them eating Nartæ captives. They are so huge that the Nartæ take refuge in a giant's skull. Oræzmæg escapes from a giant's cave in a sheep's skin Polyphemos-style. The son of a giant, Alæf, joins in a Nartæ dance and is mutilated by Batraz. The giants live in the land beyond the mountains, the *fæs-xonx*. To reach them it is necessary to pass the clashing mountains, a folklore touch. The giants have captive Nartæ as herdsmen and captive women who assist the hero. The hugeness, violence and savagery of the *ūæjug* is the chief characteristic. One giant is called *Tuxi furt* 'son of force'. The name is therefore clearly another derivative of the base which gave Avestan *vīra-* in *hvīra-*, Old Indian *vayas-*, Latin *uīrēs* 'force'. The phrase Iron *ūæjgūtæ æmæ ūængūtæ* combines the 'violent and the young' (*ūængūtæ* from older *yuvan-*) like the men in Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.771 *qui iuuenes quantas ostentant aspice uires*. The Tokhara A used *wir*, plural *wire*, for 'youthful'. Comparisons with Armenian *Hayk*, *Hayastan*, older Iranian *vayu-* 'wind', and Sogd. *w'ywk* 'hunter' (for which the giants are not known) are out of place.

7. The career of the Nartæ Soslan has been selected here to illustrate the Nartæ hero. Space does not allow a life of more than one. Soslan is one of the most active and most abundantly described.

Soslan's birth is of folklore, though he is called also Sosæg's son, in Chechen Soska Solsa. His name is shown by the second syllable *-ān* to be dialectal epic. In Digoron this name is often replaced by *Sozuruqo*, *Sozruqo*, Iron *Sozyryko* (with probably Čerkes *-qo* 'son'). Satana causes excitement to a shepherd or a horse-herd, whereby Soslan is born out of a stone. He becomes Satana's 'son whom I have not born', nor is he a son of Oræzmæg, but in one variant tale Oræzmæg is the father. Here Oræzmæg visits a cave and is bewitched by a malevolent woman dwelling in the cave. Here too Soslan is born out of a rock.

The genii come to the birth of Soslan to bestow gifts. Soon grown up he seeks adventures to test his powers. He meets the *k'obor læg* 'strong man' of Güm, they fight, and at the end enter into a compact of sworn brotherhood. Soslan has also another intimate friend *Saulægi furt Mæræzduxt*.

Soslan shows his violence and force by compelling his enemies to yield up their beards to make him a fur coat, sewn for him by the women of his foes. He defeats the giant *Mukara* by cunning and strength. By causing the death of *Sirdon's* son he incurs *Sirdon's* undying enmity. *Beduxa*, his first wife, after death interprets the Underworld visions to Soslan when he descends to seek the plant *Aza*. By trickery, advised by *Satana*, whereby he covered his armour with bells and terrified *Totraz's* horse, he shot *Totraz* from behind. For a time *Totraz* was suspected of cowardice, but was cleared and honourably buried. *Satana*, when Soslan is absent, is attacked by foes and thrown into the Lake of the Underworld Prison. Drawn back by a message, Soslan follows her and delivers her from the Prison. In one tale *Satana* is to remain for ever in the Prison as punishment for her aid to Soslan in all his evil deeds. For his second wife he wedded *Agunda the Beautiful*. His death was brought about by the rejected daughter of the (lady) *Sun* through the *Barsæg* wheel. But Soslan's death is avenged by his sister's son *Eræxcäu* who captured the wheel. Meantime *Totradzi furt Alibeg* awaits Soslan in the Underworld to slay him to avenge his father.

Soslan the great *Nartæ* is therefore an ambivalent hero. He has many epithets. He is virile-minded (*næræmon*), famous, rover, the *Nartæ's* maintenance and support, most distinguished, heroic, light and bold man, mountain ruffian (in the opinion of *Akula the Beautiful*), intelligent, well-born (*xuærzigurd*). His wonderful feats are mentioned. He is skilled in playing the *fændyr* fiddle. The rainbow, a mythic or folklore touch, is called Soslan's bow. He is a friend (*limæn*) and sworn brother to the Strong man of Güm. In appearance he is broad-shouldered with a black mark between his shoulders, large-necked, fiery-eyed. But he has also defects, he has crooked knees, bent legs, eyes like a sieve, two pupils to the eye and a beard like the quill of a porcupine (these last features are the witness of *Totraz's* hostile mother). His enemies styled him forsworn and untrustworthy.

8. The whole life of a village community can be deduced from the tales. Here only a few details can find place. In village fashion the hero and heroine are seen at humble tasks. *Ûærææg* waters his horse, is assaulted by the sons of *Soppar*, his son *Subælci* is slain, but revived. *Satana* washes clothes, is seen by the herdsman and Soslan is born from the stone. *Axsæ-budæ's* lady wife sits carding wool and spinning. The despondent *Oræzmæg* falls upon his chair and smashes it. *Alæg* has one cow. *Oræzmæg* and *Satana* have storehouses suffi-

cient to save the starving Nartæ. The old men at the Assembly place make their decisions which are called *tærxon* given at the *tærxondonæ* 'place of the decision', interesting as the derivative of *tark-*, whence came also the title adopted by the Turks as *tarxan*, and known also as a royal title and name in Sogdian *tarxōn*. The Turkish title was written *ttarkana* in Khotan.

9. The feelings of the Nartæ heroes are abundantly shown in the tales. It will suffice to notice their fear of ridicule which is a powerful check upon the hero. Amorous seduction is also frequently introduced. Grief at the death of a relative is made vivid in the laments. Dzerassæ at the loss of her husband *Æxsærtæg* pulls out her hair, tears her cheeks and utters a *qaræg* 'lament' which the mountains echo. The mental qualities are constantly brought forward.

10. The dress and its materials, wool, silk, felt, and leather, are noted. The elegance of the sons of *Boræfærnyg* is shown by their Khorasan hats of lamb-skin, shirts of wool, leggings and boots of goat-skin. But as in all epic sources the hero's armour, both offensive and defensive, takes a large place. The various metals are worked, gold, silver, iron, steel, copper, lead, *æryau* (possibly tin) and, with these, crystal and ivory.

11. Geography has evident interest for the narrators. Many actual places are named, but there is also a list of archaic geographical names of which the precise meaning has been lost. These old names are important as indicating a possible date for the formation of the Nartæ epic and so claim elucidation here.

Iron *Agūr* has variants in Digoron *Argan-Aurgen*, *Agez-biaurgen*, *Auolyan æma Beuolyan*, *Ajgez æma Aguzni* (gen. sing.). This name may be the *Ogur*, the tribal group whence part of the Hungarians came. The Armenian historian *Movsēs Dasxuranc`i* mentioned the *Houn Honagour*, which is elsewhere *Honogur*. If the Digoron *Aguzni* (gen. sing. of *Aguznæ* or *Aguzn*) is old it would be the *Oyuz* Turks.

Four names are associated with artefacts. The first is *xaxiag xax idonæ*, Iron *xax xærx idon*, with a variant *xæx* for *xax*. That is the 'bridle of the *Xax* (*Xærx*, *Xæx*) land'. In the Geography ascribed to *Movsēs Xorenac`i* two names are handed down in *Garš-k` K`out`-k`*, interpreted as **karš-* and **gout`*. The first is likely to stand for the name found in Byzantine *Κασαχία*, replacing older *Κερκέται*, in Persian *Kaşak*, Old Russian *Kasogi*, Ossetic *Kæsæg*, adjective *kæsgon*, Swanetic *mə-kšag*, 'the *Čerkes*' or 'Circassians'. The second name is then one of the many forms of the name of the Goths, in the Parthian text of the inscription of *Shāhpur I*, line 3 *gwt*, in the Greek text *Γουθθων*. The Goths were in the Crimea till many centuries later when the last of the Gothic nobles entered the Russian nobility.

The second name is in the phrase *babiag avd æftaugi* 'the seven saddle-cloths of Bāb'. Here may be the adjective to the Arabic seventh-century *al-Bāb, Bāb al-abwāb, al-Bāb wa 'l-abwāb*, that is Darband (not *Bābilī* 'Babylon').

The third name is in the phrase *angusag ævdust sary* 'the ornamented saddle of Angus-'. This may be taken as a form of *Angust*-'i, modern *Onguštie*, later *Inguš*, who are called by the Georgians *γλιywi*, by the Ossetes *qulya*, by the Avars *γalyaj* living to the east of *Dzæuægi γæu*.

The fourth name is in the phrase *andiaq nimæt* 'the felt cloth of Andi', in which can be seen the present *Andi*, Avar 'andi- of the Andi Qoi-su, but if old could refer to the 'Ανται.

A name *xati*, adjective *xatiag*, adverb *xatiagau* 'in Xatiag language' is a folk-lore term used of a language which the young Nartæ do not know and which is known to only a few of the older Nartæ. It occurs as a magical language, as when *xatiag ævzagæj* is glossed by *kalmy ævzagæj* 'in serpent's language'. The noun occurs in the phrase *xati niči zyda* 'no one (of the young men) knew Xati', when they heard a talk between Oræzmæg and Sozyryqo *xatiagau* 'in Xatiag language'.

In the sixth century the *fortissima gens* (according to Jordanes) in the steppe land of Skuthia on the Pontic Sea was called by the Byzantine historian Ἀκάτιροι. These *Akatiroi* were later confused with the *Khazar* (*xazar, xazir*) of the north-eastern shore of the Pontic Sea as far as the Kuban region.

If the Zoroastrian *htwl* of the *Bahman Yašt* is read *Hatur* or *Xatur*, it has suffered the same confusion, since it is glossed by Pazand *Azar* and by Parsi Persian *Xāsār*. The Ravenna geographer has also identified *Agaziri* with the *Khazar*. A second case of *htwl* in the phrase *W htwl kwstk'n *ut Xatur kōstakān* is uncertain in meaning. An Iranian *hatura-* or *xatura-* would mean 'nomad' if connected with Ossetic Saka *xætun* 'to roam, range'; the Nartæ are called *xætæg læg* 'nomad men'. To compare *Akatiroi* would show the familiar prefix *a-* in ethnic names (as *Mardi, Amardi* and the rest). In Ossetic *xati, xatiag* the final *-r* would then have been dropped at an earlier stage, as a final *-š* is dropped in Ossetic *uari* 'falcon'. Neither the *Hatti* of Anatolia in the second millennium before our era nor the *Xatāy* of the Liao dynasty (from A.D. 907), the *Kitan*, are here in question.

The name *sxuali* occurs in a phrase *sxualijy mæligk* 'king of *Sxuali*'. The Nartæ propose to drive their cattle in time of drought to the lands of this *mælik*, although they fear his hostility. A comparison of Digoron, Iron *uari* 'falcon', Digoron *uare-cavd*, Iron *uari-cavd* 'struck by the falcon' with the Zor. Pahl. *variš*, Komi (Ziryen) *variš* establishes that Ossetic has dropped a final *-š*. This has occurred also in *sxuali*, in which one will see the equivalent of *xvalis-* in

the Russian name of the Caspian Sea *xvalisškoe more* (*xvalijskoe, xvalmskoe*). The Byzantine name was Χοαλίται, Χοάλιται, Χωλιᾶται. The Armenian loan-word *xołożmik* is nearer to the Old Persian *huvārazmiya*, Persian *xvārazm*, older Greek Χοράσμοι. If *sxuali* is thus 'Chorasmian', the Nartæ were ranging north of the Caspian Sea.

Two names wrongly assumed to be geographical are *zaliag, zariag* and Digoron *zauti*, Iron *zalty*. In these the *zar-, zal-* should be traced to **jaθra-* 'poisonous' and *zar-* 'age-old' used respectively of the snake and the snows.

The whole of nature surrounding the Nartæ, the animals, birds, beasts and fish, and the plants, is in the background of the tales. Of the animals the horse plays a great part. It is not originally an animal of the mountains; just as the 'cart' *uærdun*, Iron *uærdon*, as loan-word in Abkhaz *a-wardæn*, and Chechen *warda*, Inguš *wordä*, with Sogdian *wrtn*, Persian *gardūn*, belongs to the plains.

In colour the horses are grey, white, and black, and the Turkish *qulon* in Digoron, Iron *qulon* 'of varied colour' occurs as gloss to the Iranian *ærfæn* (Armenian loan-word *erp'n*). Breeds of horses are cited, one fine breed is called Digoron *æfsorq, æfsory*, Iron *æfsury, ævsury* (with abnormal dialect forms), and a second breed is *saulox*. The untamed horse is *emillæg*, Iron *jemlyk* derived like the Armenian loan-word *amehi* 'wild' from Iranian **amiθryaka-*.

The favourite horses of the Nartæ have names. Oræzmæg's horse is called *Ærfæn* and *Mætran*. But the name *Ærfæn* is also the name of the horses of Sozuruqo, Soslan, and Xæmic. Xæmic has also a horse called *Durdura*. In the Turkish tale Alaugan's horse is called *Gemuda* given to Šauej, in Qabard Šauej's horse is called *Džamidež*. Another horse of Oræzmæg is called *Čerčena*. The genius Uas-tyrdži rides the horse *Dzindzalasa*. There is a Qabard horse called *tx°o-ž'ije, tx°o* 'bay colour').

The common word for horse in Ossetic is *bæx* in which is preserved a derivative of the base *vak-* 'to move swiftly' in the form **vaxa-* 'swift', as *tæx* 'stream' from *tak-* 'to flow'. It may be connected with Khotan Saka *baji* meaning probably 'horse' from **vači-* 'swift'. If the Chechen *beq'a*, plural *boq'ij* 'foal' is connected, it will derive from Iranian. The racehorse is *doyon*, Iron *duyon* 'ridden in the *doy*', Iron *duy* '(funeral) races'.

The birds enter at times into the tales in folklore fashion. Satána and Soslan speak to the birds.

The one plant of importance in the tales is the *Aza* for which Soslan visits the Underworld on a mission from the Seven Giants. It has the power of resuscitation. It is expected to grow in the Giants' fortress. The name *aza-bælasæ* 'the Aza tree' has probably a Saka name, possibly the adjectival *-a* suffix to the

verb *azun* 'to care for, treat'. Persian has an *āzā* 'mastic', perhaps in some uncertain way to be connected here.

V

The aesthetic quality of the Nartæ texts can only be rightly judged by the speakers of Ossetic. I have however had two emphatic expressions of critical value. My Digoron informant Bajtuyanti Barasbi and also Professor Vaso Abaev both approved highly of the narratives in *Pamyatniki osetinskogo tvorchestva*, II (Digoron). Professor Abaev wrote highly also of the Iron reciter Ilik'o. B. Barasbi found the texts in *Iron adæmon sfældystad*, V (1941), in poor style.

The modernized *Narty Kaddžytæ* (1946) in prose, and *Narty Kaddžytæ* (1949) in verse, are edited texts based upon earlier records from the narrators themselves. They give a cyclic story through the generations, contradictions are absent, and variants passed over.

The direct records from narrators are in both prose and verse. In length they differ greatly, some occupy several printed pages, others fill only a page or a little more. The song of Sozyryqo of the Borætæ family has one page of introduction, then continues in six pages of verse.

The long tale *Acæmæz æmæ Agundæ-ræsuŷd* 'Acamaz and Agunda the Beautiful' contains two songs. This is the song to the House:

O Good House, the House with eight angles and four nooks; such it is, securely based, the beams fetched from the Rich Valley, the rafters from the Valley of Fortune, its hearth-chain sent from heaven. The chief is Oræzmæg of the Nartæ and the House Lady is Satana. The attendant is truly Soslan, the younger sons are the Nartæ's later generation. Ah, my wish would be they should live long, may they have (strong) paws like the bears, may they have (strong) horns like the stag of the Black Wood, may they have young like the birds; and merrily may they live, these our beloved younger sons!

The following prose tale of Soslan from *Pamyatniki osetinskogo tvorchestva*, II, 16-18, will suffice to indicate the style:

Soslan and Alibeg son of Totradz.

Soslan was getting booty in cattle from the Upper Road and lucky herds on the Lower Road. Once Soslan went hunting, he ranged and nowhere found anything. One day where he was, he ascended the Five Peaks mountain and thence looked out to the plain of Qum. He was looking and there appeared a

black spot, behind it goes, as it were, a furrow of a plough making the black mark. Soslan looked at it long, saying 'What can it be?' Then he started towards it and came up with it, and the man was still travelling asleep upon his horse's back, and his lance drags in the ground, digging in it to the extent of a plough's furrow.

Soslan set upon him, saying 'The *xucau* (autocrat) has brought me booty in cattle'. He drew his *cerq*-sword, he struck him with all his force, and then fell backwards. Once more Soslan set upon him and he raised his bow to his forehead, loosed the arrow upon him, and he made one small wound on his forehead. The sleeping man, half-awake, rubbed himself, saying 'These midges will not let me sleep', and opened his eyes.

Soslan, on his part, was no longer bold, he was afraid. The man pulled up his horse and attacked Soslan's horse against its breast. Soslan fell backwards from his horse and drew back the length of a measure, making a line with his shoulder. After a long time he set himself to rights.

The horseman from his travelling strap loosed his lance, and he struck between Soslan's saddle and his saddle-cloth, and forced him behind the saddle, saying 'See, what kind of a mountain sparrow has the *xucau* given me?' Soslan drew out his snake's tongue, began to beseech him, and he sent him to the ground. They began to question each other, and began to know each other. To him Alibeg son of Totradz said 'So you are he whom I have long sought before? If you are Soslan, then you killed my six brothers and now there is no way but to kill you'.

Soslan began to beg 'Let me go home, there are still some affairs of mine, and those I will settle. I will intrust the women to someone. I will give the Nartæ oath that this day next week I will come to you at the mound of Xæran below Ūarpp'.

People of old were wont to be true to their word, and Alibeg son of Totradz trusted him, and he let him go and thereupon each went his way to his home. Soslan with shoulders high and head bent went in to the Lady of the House and told her that he had given the oath to Alibeg.

The Lady said to him, 'If it please the *xucau*, then he will do nothing to you. Go and get me enough wolf-skins to make a coat. Then what pleases the *xucau*, that will happen'. Soslan went out to the thorny brakes on the Terek river and there he killed many wolves; he brought them to the Lady. She made from them a coat by the day of the following week.

When the day of their meeting arrived, the Lady fastened upon his horse's neck a hundred large and a hundred small bells, put the wolf-skin on his shoulder and instructed him 'Go, be first at the Xæran mound and leave your horse, but listen for the coming of Alibeg. I will change myself into a cloudy

mass and will hide you. When Alibeg comes, he will shout to you "Soslan, where are you?" Three times say nothing to him. When he turns towards home, then get upon your horse, show your courage, and yourself, and do not spare'. Soslan hid as the Lady instructed him.

At that time Alibeg son of Totradz arrived and shouted 'Soslan, where are you? Fail not your promise'. When he answered nothing to him, he struck his horse. 'So you have broken your oath', he said. He turned his face towards home.

Soslan threw himself on his horse and said to him 'See, here I am. Break not your oath. Wait for me'. The smell of the wolf-skin reached the nose of Alibeg's horse, and he took hold of the reins (he fled). Moreover the hundreds of bells of every sound poured out their noise. The horse turned from side to side, it would come no nearer, and would not be stopped. Alibeg son of Totradz first pulled the bridle to the ears, and he tore off the mane, then when he did not stop, he broke his neck and the horse died under him.

Then Soslan shot him full of arrows in his back, and he died. He heaped the booty on his horse and so he came to the Great Road. There a man with twelve mules was bringing fuel to the son of Totradz. When Soslan knew that he was servant of Alibeg, he said to him 'Go to the Urunduq Lady and say to her "Your reward for good news is for me: your son has slain Soslan. Make ready to wear mourning at the funeral ceremony". These beasts leave with me'.

The man left the mules with Soslan, he began to run, he came to the Urunduq Lady and repeated his message. The Urunduq Lady asked him, 'Where are your beasts?'. (He replied) 'The horse of the man who was coming to you to get the reward for good news was worn out, and he drives them quietly here'. 'Like what was the man?' the Urunduq Lady asked him again. He said to her 'Shoulders high, head bent, bulging forehead, with penetrating eye, on one shoulder a written sign, on the other a cross; between the shoulders a dark star, a broad-eyed man, he sat upon a yellow *alasa*-horse'. 'So my fire has become cold. It is surely Soslan himself and again my only young son he has surely slain', she said, and uttered a lamentation. The man was no longer bold, and he turned back, on his own track he returned. He ran to the road, and where is the horseman and where are the mules? Soslan had driven them to his home.

The men wished to pursue him. The Urunduq Lady said to them 'Of my sons not one was wounded in the back, but it was not for this one to die from wounding in front. Look if he is wounded behind. Then he is a coward, and bury him. He is not worthy to be buried in the (Nartæ) Cemetery. Otherwise, if he is wounded in front, then he died in the *qazauat* (heroic fight); bring him to his brothers, and bury him among them'. They went in pursuit and saw the

body of the horse, then they knew that it was ill luck caused by the horse and they bore him to the (Nartæ) Cemetery. They buried him with honour.

The vocabulary of the Nartæ tales is archaic, requiring elaborate glossaries. The proper names also are from an older stratum than the modern Digoron and Iron. Etymologizings of the popular type naturally occur.

The themes recurring in the Nartæ tales are copiously varied. They cover both village life and the lives of the heroes. Thus the tales allude briefly to fighting, whether in duels or in groups, with giants or in Batraz's case with the genii, sieges, horse and cattle raiding, slaves, expeditions called *balc* of from one to seven years, hunting, horse-racing, captivity and escape, armies, field-camping, death in the waterless desert, underworld visit, underworld captivity and escape, visit to the sky, the visible appearance of the *xucau*, the domestic occasions of the hero's wife-seeking by himself or by proxies, marriage procession, feasting, gifts, friendship, death, suicide, funeral feast, demand of tax or tribute, servants, dependants, the Great House, visit to rich houses, castaway child in a box, Oræzmæg's sea journey in a box, barbarous customs, Xæmic's wives tied to the tails of horses, Čeregiqo and Buræfærnyg's daughter, Batraz and Boræfærnyg's woman, the indolence of Zevæg, the clashing mountains, a fur-coat of beards, Batraz's fall to earth, games with knuckle-bones, praise of old Nartæ customs, metallic limbs and unfinished tempering.

The Nartæ tales receive a slight poetic tinge in the many similes. These are usually short, no more than a comparison of two things. Here is a list of selected similes. The shout of a hero, the crack of a whip and the noise of a shot are like thunder. The birth of an exceptional child, the son of Oræzmæg, reaches Safa in the sky like thunder. A sword flashes like the sky's girdle, the rainbow. The blood of an enraged hero is like boiling milk. Poor racehorses are like draught oxen. The sea is like a seething cauldron. Batraz descends from the sky like an eagle of the mountains. The eagle seizes the small bird as Batraz seizes the giant's son. The giant's son shakes like a dry stalk. Arrows speed like flies. Arrows are like falling snow. The points of arrows are like porcupine's quills. The riders cross a river like an arrow. The giant rocks the cave like a cradle. The dwarf hunter turns over the carcase of the stag like a butterfly or a leaf. A horse is turned like a top. Two mountains on the way to the giants' land clash together like two rams. Agunda's stag-drawn silver coach moves like the wind. A roast on the spit cooks with a roar of a river. The falling of rocks is like a dish cooked with flour. Oræzmæg's unnamed son is bright like the *kærkusæg* flower (unknown). A face is all white like a piece of white cloth. A face is bright like the sun and shimmers like the morning mist.

Hair is like winter snow, the glance warmed the heart like the autumn sun, and the eyes were like jewels. A beard is like the porcupine's quill. Dust clouds are like the black mist of rain. The steam of hot food is like the grey morning mist. In matters of violence the giant is caught on the sword's point like a top. The giant's head is taken off him like the head of a small bird. An arrow-shot youth rolls like a sheaf. The giant's son perishes like a cup of water. A raging man is like a man pursuing an enemy. The giant's son flees like a wounded deer. The feats of Batraz are like the sun's brilliance. Čeregiqo revenges himself on Boræfærnug's daughter like one winnowing corn. The troops of Agūr are broken like gravel. In battle a body is pierced like a sieve. The sparks from a horse's hooves are like the shining sky and the clods thrown up are like ravens. A drop of blood is like red silk. A man without a horse is like a wingless bird. In distress the spirit (*uod*) is narrower than a hair. A sword cuts an anvil like curds. The giant's lips are like a scoop. A round saddle is like the carcass of a duck. A horse is clean like an egg-shell. The young men move like geese one behind the other. The woman entered the water like a duck. All these similes are largely close to the earth.

One longer simile occurs. The youthful hero asks how fine he looks on his horse. They reply 'As the early morning sun is beautiful upon the morning dew-drop on the green grass of spring, so are you fine on your horse's neck'; 'as moonlight strikes down upon the mountains, so are you fine upon your horse'; or 'as in the spring's warmth the dew-drop is beautiful upon the grass, so are you fine on your horse's back'. A somewhat shorter simile is 'As the sun's ray is beautiful upon the mountain, so is your armour; as the spring dew-drop is fair on the new grass, so is your sword'.

The negated metaphor has been found four times, as follows. 'It was not a dark mist, it was the dust of horses racing'. 'It was not the morning star, it was Acæmæz the son of Acæ'. 'It was not a ball of black mist, it was the grey horse of Alimbeg of the Alægatæ family'. 'It was not the black raven, it was clods thrown up by the horse's hooves'.

Formulae and clichés are frequent. The phrase for despondency takes a variety of forms: 'With shoulder high and head bent', in four variants. The file of walkers is footstep upon footstep. A lord is amazed to find trespassers where no bird dare fly nor ant creep. To leave the Underworld the horseshoes are reversed to deceive the other inmates. A child is rejected as a servant by a ruler because the *qumiz*, fermented milk, is still moist upon his lips. Of a journey, its distance is known only to the *xucau*. There are fixed formulae for prayers.

Humour, especially in relation to Sirdon, is savage. Soslan in the Underworld, as being too virile, is thrown into the Underworld lake. At his mother's long deferred funeral feast Sirdon arranges for his tables to be

overturned, and so excuses himself to his guests. Batraz falling through seven storeys of a tower into a tub of water is more humorous than mythic.

Folklore elements have been cited variously earlier. They are such cases as Oræzmæg's quarrels with Satana, the dog *selan*, the invention of beer, talking animals, nameless servants, magic, Underworld visions of village-like life, Soslan's birth from a stone, the rainbow as Soslan's bow, the child's swift growth in the cradle, resuscitations, rejuvenations, the invention of the *fændur*, the bird messengers, metallic limbs, Soslan's coat of beards, magic talk in the *xatiag* language, the stag-drawn coach, the name *Ulink'æ* 'cubit-size' for the dwarf and *Tuxi furt* 'son of strength' for a giant.

All these features contrast sharply with the heroic fighting, war, expeditions, funeral games and love-making.

Myth has left a few traces, as in the daughter of the Lady Sun, *Xorčeska*; in Batraz guest of the smith Kurd-alægon in the sky; and his descent; the Chechen *Elta* and *Eltayan*. The *xucau* is a celestified autocrat like the Master of the Great House, with the genii as his attendants like an earthly court.

Though rather obscure the geographical archaic names *Agur*, *Aguznæ*, *Babiag*, *Xati*, *Sxuali*, *Astæ* would suit a period between 500 and 700 of our era. Since nomadic customs have remained from the first record almost unchanged they do not suffice to give a date. The Skuthai (Scythians) of Herodotos are similar in their nomadic life, but do not seem to have precise identity with Nartæ traditions. The Nartæ treasures of three pieces of cloth, and the Ūacamongæ Bowl are peculiarly of the Nartæ. The autocrator of the Greeks seems to be rendered in the word *xucau*.

Highly archaic are on the other hand the *ard* 'oath', which is a normal development from a form *rtá-* (prominent in early Iranian texts), and the *izæd* 'spirit, genius, angel', which has developed from older *yazata-* 'recipient of worship', equally familiar in the oldest Indian texts. The word *kovun* 'to make offerings' may belong with the rare Old Indian *kubh-*.

The epic quality of the Nartæ tales can be best seen in the careers of the heroes and the heroines. It is notable that the heroines stand out with distinctive names, Satana, Dzerassæ, Agundæ, Akula and Elda, each with a distinct character.

They thus contrast with the many nameless Nartæ who move about at the assembly-place, the *Nixæs*, and attend the *mijnasæ* feasts, before a still dimmer background of servants.

There are two types of Hero. One is the fighting, vehement man, protector of the Nartæ people. The other is found in Acæmæz who shows incipient artistic traits, as a musician and lover.

The story of the Nartæ ends in their destruction. In one tale they are overwhelmed by the *xucau* beneath a mountain.

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