

TINATIN IN “THE KNIGHT IN THE PANTHER’S SKIN”

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In Shota Rustaveli’s poem, *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin*, Tinatin is a heroine blessed with exceptional qualities. She is the most beautiful and perfect, distinguished by her beauty, intelligence, devotion to her beloved, strength of character, and kindness. She is comparable to the sun and similarly radiates light.

The etymology of Tinatin, in a diffused opinion, is related to brightness, light, and flare (a sunbeam). Tinatin in *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* is comparable to the luminary (the sun). Iustine Abuladze, in his dictionary of *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin*, enumerates the epithets of Rostevan’s daughter. The examples emphasize that sun-equal Tinatin is a member of the luminary hosts (Abuladze 1967: 353).

In *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin*, edited by Vakhtang, “Tinatin” is associated with sunlight (Rustaveli 1975: 375). According to Teimuraz Bagrationi’s explanation, Tinatin is compared to the sun likewise (Bagrationi 1960: 18).

Explanatory Dictionary of Georgian Language records “*atinati*”. It is defined as “a beam of light”. In Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani’s dictionary, Tinatin is the same as the reflection of sunlight (Orbeliani 1991: 306). Tinatin’s image in *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* has repeatedly become a source of inspiration for the verse makers. Sargis Kakabadze, in his accompanying study of *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* published under his editorship, cites Chakhrukhadze’s verse, where Tinatin is identified with Queen Tamar and referred to as the “rose of paradise”:

*The sons of khevi, Chakhrukhadze,
Praised Tamar, the Queen of incomparable beauty...
She was young and the most beautiful, looking like an angel
Rose of Paradise, with her face like sunlight.*

Sargis Kakabadze emphasizes that Tinatin, mentioned in the above lines, is ‘the real Queen Tamar’ (Rustaveli 1926: LXXV).

Niko Marr has made a significant contribution to the etymological research of the names of the heroines of *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin*. The scientist’s opinion regarding Nestan-Darejan should be especially noted in this respect. As for Tinatin, N. Marr believes that the name of Rostevan’s daughter does not come from a traditional Christian one but from folk sources, and its meaning is a “reflection of light” (Marr 1917: 428).

In *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin*, the beauty, grace, and perfection of the heroines are often associated with a rose. For Avtandil, Tinatin is a rose distinguished by her beauty. Seeing her and meeting her is a delight for the enamored army commander-in-chief.

Regarding the etymology of Tinatin, I find it interesting to connect it to the female proper name “Tina” (*tina*/*tinah*) prevalent in the East. It is of Persian origin, and its meaning is “rose”. In the Islamic East, this proper name is also observed in the plural form

(*tin-āt*). -*āt* is a suffix that produces the plural of feminine nouns in Arabic. In Georgian Tinatin (*tinatin* < *tīn-āt-īn*), the final -*in* possibly indicates the Arabic regular plural suffix -*in*. The double plural in “Tinatin” expresses the intensity of meaning. Double plural forms are often observed in Arabic dialects. Among them is Central Asian Arabic: *faras-īn-āt* – “horses”, *naḥn-āt* – “we”.

Here are some examples recorded by me in the Arabic kishlaks of Central Asia:

- *zīkl-ōn-āt muy-ōt-um-āt ufrag-at*.

“They ran out of water(s).”

In this sentence, the first word (*zīkl-ōn-āt*) is in the double plural, while the second one is altogether in the triple plural (*muy-ōt-um-āt*).

- *zēn yōm kēyin išūf-ūn-āt*.

“They lived well.”

Here, to the plural form of a verb is added the suffix *āt*, producing the plural of nouns (*išūf-ūn-āt*). It is noteworthy that both forms of this proper name (*tīna*//*tīnāt*), i.e., singular and plural, are simultaneously used in Arabic, and both are recorded in the dictionary of proper Arabic names.

Persian *tīna* (تینا) – “rose” is recorded in the Avesta, in the literature of *zend/pazend*. Persian *tīna* (تینا) is also recorded in the electronic dictionary of proper names as a woman’s proper name meaning “rose”.

Classical Persian “*gul*” (“rose” – گل) is represented in late Middle Persian as *gwl*. This *gwl*, in its turn, must have originated from the restored form of Old Persian **vṛda* (*v^orda*). In Proto Iranian, the initial form of this word is also assumed to be **vṛda*. According to another opinion, *gl* (*gil*) may be derived from the Middle Persian *tīna*.

These versions are based on the alternation of *v* and *g*, which is allowed phonetically. The origin of *gul* from *vard* is mentioned by the Acad. G. Tsereteli in his work *For the History of Iranian Names in Georgia*. In this article, the scholar connects the etymology of the word “*gurji*” with the Persian *varčān*, where it is obvious that *v* > *g*: *vrčān* > *gurčān* > *gurğān* > *gurğ*.

The existence of the same form to denote Iveria and Gurgani indicates a common totemic name. In the case of “*gul*” (گل), the alternation *v* ~ *g* is also quite natural. In the authoritative Persian dictionary (Borhane 1342 AH: 547), *tīna* (تینا) is interpreted as “rose” (گل), which confirms the validity of the etymological research I have presented in connection with “Tina”.

Thus, we can conclude that the etymology of “Tinatin” originates from the Arabic-Persian *tīn-āt-īn*, where *tīn*/*tīnā* means “rose” of Persian origin (*gul* - گل), while *āt* and *īn* represent two Arabic suffixes producing the plural with the intensive function. In the present article, the origin of this proper name is newly interpreted. It represents a Persian-Arabic etymology version of the woman’s proper name prevalent in Georgia, thus expressing a dialogue of cultures.

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