The Avestan language and its problems

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DURING THE LAST TWO DECADES of the twentieth century, Avestan studies have witnessed an astonishing explosion of scholarly interest, which has been manifested in a large number of monographs concerning both the Old Avestan language, as represented in Zoroaster's Gāthās and the Yasna Haptaŋhāiti,[1] and Young Avestan texts such as the Zamyād Yašt or the Ērbadastān, each of which has been edited twice within the past ten years.[2]

Comparing the competing editions now available, we may note that a high level of agreement has been achieved both in the analysis of individual Avestan word-forms and in the interpretation of the texts which depends on this analysis. Nevertheless every scholar who deals with the language of Zoroaster will admit that the Avestan tradition still conceals many a riddle to be solved by later generations of investigators. In principle, this may be due to three well-known reasons:

First we have to take into account the fact that the Avestan corpus is rather small: less than 1,700,000 characters if arranged in a plain text format. If we compare this with the Vedic tradition, which is what comes nearest to it with respect both to its contents and to the circumstances of its transmission, we may observe that the size of the complete Avestan corpus is less than that of the Ṛgveda Saṃhitā alone, although the latter represents only one tenth of the whole Veda. As for the Old Avestan parts, they are just half of the extent of the only other Old

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[1] Cf. J. Narten, *Der Yasna Haptaŋhāiti*, Wiesbaden 1986; J. Kellens / E. Pirart, *Les textes vieil-avestiques*, 1-3, Wiesbaden 1988-1991; H. Humbach, *The Gāthās of Zarathuštra and the Other Old Avestan Texts*, 1-2, Heidelberg 1991 (hereafter: '*Gāthās*').

[2] Cf. Ph.G. Kreyenbroek, *Sraoša in the Zoroastrian Tradition*, Leiden 1985; A. Panaino, *Tištrya*, 1, Rome 1990; K. M. JamaspAsa (ed.), *The Avesta Codex F1*, Wiesbaden 1991; H. Humbach and J. Elfenbein, *Ērbedestān*, Munich 1990; F. M. Kotwal and Ph. G. Kreyenbroek, *The Hērbedestān and Nērangestān*, 1, Paris 1992; A. Hintze, *Der Zamyād-Yašt*, Wiesbaden 1994; H. Humbach and P. P. Ichaporia, *Zamyad Yasht*, Wiesbaden 1998. For recent works concerning the Avestan language and its transmission in general, cf. J. Narten, *Die Aməša Spəntas im Avesta*, Wiesbaden 1982; J. Kellens, *Le verbe avestique*, Wiesbaden 1984; R. S. P. Beekes, *A Grammar of Gatha-Avestan*, Leiden 1988; K. Hoffmann and J. Narten, *Der Sasanidische Archetypus*, Wiesbaden 1989 (hereafter: '*Sasan.Arch.*'); K. Hoffmann and B. Forssman, *Avestische Laut- und Flexionslehre*, Innsbruck 1996 (hereafter: '*ALF*').

Iranian corpus available to us, namely, that of the Old Persian inscriptions.[3] Under these circumstances it is not surprising that we are faced with an extremely large number of *hapax legomena* which make many Old Avestan passages practically unintelligible even today.

The second reason why we cannot expect to find *ad hoc* solutions to the problems offered by Avestan tradition consists in the fact that we do not dispose of an immediate descendant of the Avestan language in Middle and New Iranian times. In this respect, too, Avestan is different from both Vedic and Old Persian. The former was succeeded by other varieties of Sanskrit (Epic, Classical, Buddhist), as well as by written and vernacular varieties of Middle Indic, which later developed into the modern Indo-Aryan languages; as for Old Persian, we may claim that, in spite of some temporary breaks in the tradition, its linguistic heritage was by and large transmitted through Middle Persian into Modern Persian, so that secondary evidence is available from these later stages of the language. It is true, of course, that most of the Middle Persian texts we dispose of were interrelated directly or indirectly with the Avestan corpus, in that they belong to the same Zoroastrian sphere; today, however, most scholars will agree that the Middle Persian tradition can hardly ever be taken as a reliable witness to the meaning or analysis of Avestan words or passages, even in the case of texts that claim to be translated from Avestan sources. In other words, Middle Persian cannot be regarded as a continuant of the language of the Avesta, either linguistically or with respect to the transmission of its contents—all the more so where the Old Avestan texts are concerned.

The third reason why we are still far from being able to solve all the riddles posed by the Avestan tradition lies in the circumstances of the transmission of the Avestan texts themselves. Three essential points must be considered here.

First, we must bear in mind that the entire corpus of Avestan texts was transmitted orally for a long time before the first attempts were made to write them down. In this respect, the Avestan tradition is very similar to Vedic but again diametrically opposed to that of Old Persian, the written attestations of which are practically contemporary with their composition. Oral transmission obviously had several effects on the shape of the Avestan texts. One such effect, the impact of which can hardly be estimated today, is that of intentional redaction, which may have affected the texts several times during the oral period. This effect may be seen, for example, in the addition of explanatory glosses or the duplication of preverbs and similar elements standing in tmesis, as in Y. 28,10c, where *xšmaibiiā* seems to gloss *və̄*, both meaning 'for you':

   aṯ.və̄. <xšmaibiiā.> *asūnā. vaēdā.   xᵛaraiθiiā. vaiṇtiiā. srauuå̄.*

or Y. 48,7a, where the preverbs *nī* 'down' and *paitī* 'against' are duplicated:

> **nī**. aēšəmō. <**nī.**>diiātąm.   **paitī**. rəməm. <**paitī.**>siiōdūm.

In metrical passages, these effects can easily be identified, because the added elements are normally hypermetrical.[4]

Besides deliberate redactional intervention, there are at least two kinds of unintentional factors that may have affected the texts to a certain degree. Although the Zoroastrian priests no doubt endeavoured to preserve and transmit the original wording as far as possible unaltered, they could not prevent it from being influenced over the centuries by what we might style internal and external interferences. Among the former I should reckon processes of mutual adaptation of Old Avestan and Young Avestan forms, as in the case of Proto-Iranian word-final *-ah (< *-as), which, according to Karl Hoffmann's proposal,[5] yielded -ə̄ in Old Avestan but -ō in Young Avestan; if this suggestion is correct, we would have to assume that doublets like vacō 'word, utterance' (< *u̯áčah, cf. OInd. vácaḥ) appearing alongside vacə̄ in Old Avestan,[6] together with other Old Avestan words ending in -ō instead of -ə̄, reveal Young Avestan influence.

The opposite interference can be seen in cases where Young Avestan shows an intervocalic voiced stop when we should expect a voiced fricative instead, as in frāδəṇte 'they prosper' in Vd. 21,1. The variant frādəṇte with a dental stop is met with several times in the verse[7]

> yeṅhe. šiiaoθnāiš.   gaēθå. aṣa. frādəṇte.
> 'by whose deeds the livestock prospers with truth',

which is a linguistically adapted quotation from a Gathic passage, Y. 43,6c:

> yehiiā. šiiaoθanāiš.   gaēθå. aṣā. frādəṇtē.

In the case of the present root frād- 'to further', the stop also occurs in other Young Avestan forms where Old Avestan influence is not so evident. This is true, for instance, of the various compounds with the participle frādaṯ as their first member, which appear never to have been written with the fricative.[8] But for these words too an Old Avestan model may be found in frādaṯ.gaēθəm, which occurs once in Y. 33,11.

This raises the question of the evaluation of the so-called Pseudo-Old Avestan texts. A good example of this genre is the frequently quoted Yeṅhē Hātąm prayer, which is normally cited as Y. 27,15:[9]

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[4] For the Gathas, a list of preverb duplications is provided in Humbach, *Gathas* I, 59f.; for the Yasna Haptaŋhāiti cf. Y. 41,1: dadəmahicā. cīšmahicā. **āc**ā. <**ā**>uuaēdaiiamahī.

[5] *MSS* 22, 1967: 34 (= *Aufsätze zur Indoiranistik*, II, 491).

[6] OAv. vacə̄ Y. 45,5b; vacō Y. 31,20b; cf. YAv. vacō Y. 8,4 etc.

[7] Y. 19,17; Vr. 2,5; 3,4; G. 4,9.

[8] YAv. frādaṯ.fšu-, frādaṯ.gaēθā-, frādaṯ.nar-, frādaṯ.vaŋhu-, frādaṯ.vīra-, frādaṯ.vīspąm.hujiiāti-, frādaṯ.xᵛarənah-.

[9] Within the Yasna liturgy proper (cf. below), this prayer is repeated 72 times (Y. 4,26; 5,6; 6,21; 7,27; 10,21; 13,7.8; 17,19; 18,8.9; 19,21; 20,5; 21,1.5; 26,11; 27,15; 28,12; 29,12; 30,12; 31,23;

> *yeṅhē. hātąm. āaṯ. yesnē. paitī. vaṅhō.*
> *mazdå. ahurō. vaēθā. aṣ̌āṯ. hacā.*
> *yåṅhąmcā. tąscā. tåscā. yazamaide.*

Theoretically, this formula might represent either an older variety of Young Avestan itself or a Young Avestan text reshaped after the model of Old Avestan. And indeed, a presumptive Gathic model of it can be found in Y. 51,22:

> *yehiiā.mōi. aṣ̌āṯ. hacā.*   *vahištəm. yesnē. paitī.*
> *vaēdā. mazdå. ahurō.*   *yōi. åṅharəcā. həṇticā.*
> *tą. yazāi. x^vāiš. nāmə̄nīš.*   *pairicā. jasāi. vaṇtā.*

Comparing this strophe with the *Yeṅhē Hātąm* prayer, we find several clear indications that the latter is closer to Young Avestan than Old Avestan, such as the genitive form of the relative pronoun, *yeṅhē* 'whose', which matches Young Avestan *yeṅhe* rather than Old Avestan *yehiiā*, or the comparative form *vaṅhō* 'better' which contrasts with Old Avestan *vahiiō*. Note that the Gathic strophe, Y. 51,22 is also quoted as such several times in other environments in the Avesta, such as Y. 15,2 or Y. 63,1,[10] with Pseudo-Old Avestan *yeṅhē.mē.* replacing Old Avestan *yehiiā.mōi.*:

> *yeṅhē.mē. aṣ̌āṯ. hacā.*   *vahištəm. yesnē. paitī.*[11]

On the other hand, it should be noted as a special feature of the *Yeṅhē Hātąm* prayer that it provides the verbal form *vaēθā* 'he knows' with a voiceless fricative

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32,17; 33,15; 34,16; 35,102; 36,6; 37,5; 38,5; 39,52; 40,4; 41,72; 41,8; 42,6; 43,17; 44,21; 45,12; 46,20; 47,7; 48,13; 49,13; 50,12; 51,23; 53,10; 54,2; 55,7; 56,5; 57,4.6.8.10.12.14.18.20.22.26.29. 32.342; 59,29.33; 60,13; 63,3; 65,18; 67,8; 68,24; 70,7; 71,24.31.

[10] Y. 65,16; 69,1; 69,2 (+ rep.); 69,3 (+ 2 reps.). Further quotations of this and the *Yeṅhē Hātąm* prayer are found in the extra passages of the Vispered, Vidēvdād, and Vištāsp Yašt liturgies (cf. below), esp. within Y. 59,33 and Y. 71,16.

[11] An interference of the Gathic strophe Y. 51,22 may be responsible for a certain disagreement in the manuscript tradition concerning the verse structure of the *Yeṅhē Hātąm* prayer; cf. Geldner's n. 1 to Y. 4,26. Those manuscripts which insert the Pahlavi translation after *paitī* (Pt4, F2 in Y. 4,26; in Y. 6,21 also J2, K5, Mf9) may be influenced by the fact that the first verse of Y. 51,22 ends in *paitī*. Interestingly enough, Mf4, the sister manuscript of Pt4 which was not available to Geldner when he prepared his edition but which has meanwhile been published in facsimile (K. M. JamaspAsa and M. Nawabi (ed.), *Manuscript D90, Yasnā With its Pahlavi Translation*, 1-2. Pahlavi Codices and Iranian Researches, 19-20, Shiraz 1976), inserts the break after *vaṅhō* in Y. 4,26 (cf. fig. 1, extracted from p. 103 of the facsimile edition, with *yeṅhe* (!) and *vaṅhō* marked), which would agree with an original verse structure of 3 × 11 syllables as proposed by Geldner. (In Pt4, *vaṅhō* is simply omitted in 4,26.) Mf4 is also important for preserving, though not consistently, the palatal *ṅ* of *vaṅhō* which was postulated as the original reading by Karl Hoffmann, *Festgabe deutscher Iranisten zur 2500-Jahrfeier Irans*, 1971: 69 (= *Aufsätze zur Indoiranistik*, I, 321): within attestations of the prayer, Mf4 has *vaṅhō* in Y. 7,27, 27,15, and 60,13 (cf. fig. 2, showing Y. 27,15, extracted from p. 334 of the facsimile edition, with *yeṅhe* (!) and *vaṅhō* marked). Cf. pp. 180f. below for further consideration of this question.
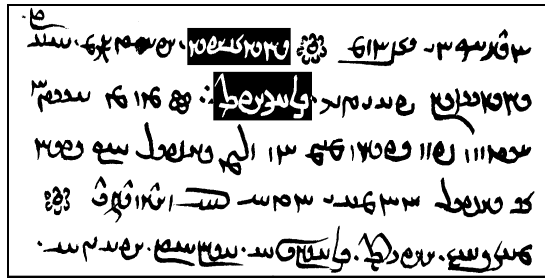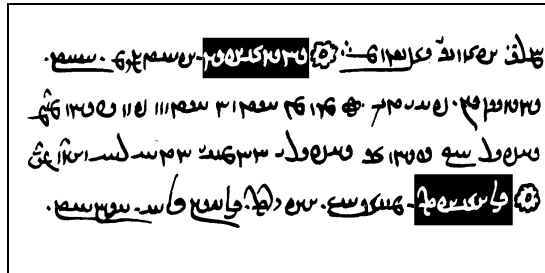
Figure 1. Y. 4,26 in Mf4 (p. 103).

Figure 2. Y. 27,15 in Mf4 (p. 334)

instead of the voiced δ we find in *vaēδa* in the clearly related Young Avestan passage Vr. 16,3.[12]

> *yaēšąm. nō. ahurō. mazdå. ašauua.*
> *yesne. paiti. vaŋhō. vaēδa.*

This may well be compared with the interchange of -δ- and -θ- as present in Young Avestan doublet forms from the root *dā-*, such as *daδāiti* vs. *daθāiti*,[13]

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[12] The passage is quoted twice in Vr. 24,0 and reappears again in Yt. 13,148.

[13] *daδāiti* (3 sg. pres. ind. act.) is attested 54 times (Y. 9,22; 65,2; Yt. 2,12^2; 5,2; 8,49; 10,3^3. 26^2. 28. 62^2. 107; 13,5; Vd. 3,34. 35; 15,2. 3. 9. 11. 13. 15; 18,12. 34. 37; Vr. 7,3; Ny 4,3; N 17. 25^2. 37. 61. 62. 84. 105^2; P. 6(7). 50; Vn. (FrK.) 8. 27^2. 37^2. 62. 71-72; Vyt. 5,34; 7,46. 48; Nik. 5^2. 16. 17. For *daθāiti* there are only two attestations in the Pursišnīhā: P. 23(24) and 34(35); the 3 sg. pres. subj. act., however, is attested with -θ- only (*daθaṯ*): Y. 11,5; Yt. 5,19. 23. 27. 31. 35. 39. 43. 47. 51. 55. 59. 66. 70. 74. 79. 83. 89^2. 99. 106. 110. 114. 118; 9,5. 11. 15. 19. 23. 27. 32; 11,15; 14,29. 31. 33; 15,4. 9. 13. 21. 25. 29. 33. 37. 41. 43^4. 44^2; 16,7. 10. 13; 19,10. 94; Vd. 18,29; 19,9^2; Vr. 12,4; Ny. 4,8; P. 31(32); Vyt. 4,25. The problem becomes even more complicated if we consider the forms of the perfect active participle: as against -δ- in 19 occurrences of the nom.sg. *daδuuå* (Yt. 5,17; 10,50. 143; 13,83; 15,2. 4. 9. 13. 17. 25. 29. 33. 37. 41; 19,16; Vd. 2,20. 21; 7,52; 22,7) and 12 of the acc.sg. *daδuuåŋhəm* (Y. 6,1; 16,4. 5. 6; 70,1; Vd. 18,7. 13. 60. 66; S. 2,8. 15. 23), we find -θ- alone in the oblique case forms, viz. in 18 attestations of the gen.-abl.sg. *daθušō* (Y. 1,1; 4,7; 16,3; 22,1; 24,12; Yt. 13,78. 157; 15,44; Vd. 19,4; Vr. 11,16; S. 1,8.15. 23; A. 3,7. 8. 11; Vyt 7,46. 51) and one of the (secondary) abl. *daθušaṯ* (Yt. 5,7).

although we have to note that *vaēθa*, albeit frequently quoted in Avestological literature as the equivalent of *vaēδa*, is not attested as such in Young Avestan. The *hapax legomenon vaēθāca* in Yt. 1,26, which seems to represent **vaēθa* plus copulative -*ca*, is unintelligible and has no evidentiary value, all the more so since the passage in question (*vaēθāca. taṯca. kaēθica.*) displays extreme manuscript variation.[14]

Leaving aside *vaēθāca* in Yt. 1, the question remains how to account for the interchange of -*δ*- and -*θ*- in Young Avestan word-forms. The proposal to see a dialectal phenomenon here, which is once again due to Karl Hoffmann,[15] can be interpreted in two ways: Either it is a case of divergence between two dialects of Young Avestan proper, i.e. dialects of the Avestan language as spoken at the time of the composition of the texts; or it results of an *external* factor, namely, inter-ference from other Iranian dialects, which might have taken place as the texts were being transmitted orally by native speakers of these dialects. Karl Hoffmann himself seems to have favoured the latter interpretation, pointing to a similar development in Parthian, where the present stem of the root *dā* 'to give' appears as *dah*- from an older **daθ*-. The assumption that (Proto-)Parthian (or another Iranian language which shared the same trait) might have been responsible for the emergence of voiceless -*θ*- in the Young Avestan verb seems to be further supported by the fact that the 'Parthian' form of the present stem is also found in Zoroastrian Middle Persian (*dah-/dih-*).[16] Here too it is usually regarded as an

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[14] According to Geldner's apparatus, the reading *vaēθāca* is supported by Mf3, Pd, K36, Lb16, Ml2, while J9 has *vae.θāca*. Another group of manuscripts, including F1, the allegedly oldest Yašt manuscript available, provides quite a different reading: *auuaṯ.θāca* (F1, L11), *avaṯ.θāca* (Jm4), *auuaδa.θāca* (E1, P13, K19), *auuadaθāca* (L18, K12, J10, O3), *auuaδaθaca* (Pt1). Instead of *taṯca* (Mf3, Pd, Ml2), we find *dadaca* in J9, F1, *..daca* in Mb1, *dadaci* in Jm4, L11, *daδaca* in K19, J10, P13, E1, L18, K12, and *daθaca* in Pt1. *kaēθica* is provided by Mf3, Pd, K36, Lb16, as against *kaeθaṯca* (J9, Jm4), *kaeθaδaca* (E1, P13, L18, K19, O3), *kaeθadaca* (Mb1, F1), and *kaθaδaca* (Pt1, J10, K12). It is clear that we have a dichotomy of manuscipts here, Geldner's text being based on the group consisting of Mf3, Pd, K36, and Ml2, all of which are Khorde Avesta manuscripts rather than Yašt manuscripts proper. On the basis of F1 and its descendants, one might prefer to restore **auuaθắca. *yaθa. *kaθaca.* 'in just that way and what way so ever', which reminds one of the curse formula which appears in Yt. 19,57 (*iθe. iθa. yaθna. ahmāi*), 60 (*iθe. iθa. yaθna. ahmāi. auuaeθa. iθa. yaθna. kahmāi.*) and 63 (*iθe. iθa. yaθna. ahmāi. auuaθe. iθa. yaθna. ahmāi. auuōiia. iθa. yaθna. ahmāi.*); but **vaēθāca. *yaθa. *kaθaca.* 'and I know, in what way so ever' also remains possible (for *yaθa. kaθaca* cf. Yt. 4,7; 19,82; Vd. 2,11.15.19, and N. 37). The formula *auuaδa. aētaδa. aētahe. šiiaoθnahe. yaθa. vaēθənti* 'when they blame (somebody) there for this deed here', which appears five times in Vd. 4,50ff., is too remote to be compared here, albeit it seems to contain another instance of the development -*δ*- > -*θ*- (if *vaēθənti* belongs to √*u̯id* as proposed by Bartholomae, *Airan.Wb.*, 1322).

[15] *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, 4: *Iranistik*, 1: *Linguistik*, Leiden 1958: 8 (= *Aufsätze zur Indoiranistik* , I, 65); *ALF*, 97f.

[16] Cf., e.g., 3 sg. pres. ind. *dahēd* <YHBWNyt>, *Mēnōg-ī xrad* 21,41 (ed. Sanjana, p. 40, l. 6); the Pāzend version, ed. Antiâ reads <dahāṯ> (p. 301, l. 22); 3 pl. pres. ind. *dahēnd, ibid.*, 41,16 (<YHBWNd> p. 62, 6 / <dəhənd> p. 317, 12).

element borrowed from a Northern dialect, since the Manichaean variant of Middle Persian shows not *dah- but *day-,[17] which must reflect *daδ-.

It is true of course that interference from languages spoken by the transmitters has been held responsible for other features of the Avestan texts as well. A striking example is the emergence of one of the most characteristic traits of Avestan orthography, the representation of underlying postconsonantal slides $i̯$ and $u̯$ by the graphic sequences of double <ii> and <uu>. This feature can be compared with what we find in Old Persian forms such as *aniya* or *haruva*, whose graphic representation <a-n-i-y>[18] and <h-ru-u-v>[19] seems to indicate that they were pronounced with three syllables, a homorganic anaptyctic vowel having arisen within the consonant cluster. The same process seems to have left its mark in their Avestan equivalents *aniia-* and *hauruua-*; but, unlike the Old Persian case, this cannot be taken as a feature of the language as spoken at the time of the composition of the texts, since it had no effect on the metrical value of the words in question, both *aniia-* and *hauruua-* being treated as bisyllables /ania̯-/ and /harua̯-/ in all metrical parts of the Avestan corpus.[20] On the other hand, Karl Hoffmann was certainly right in postulating that the graphic notation we find in the Avestan manuscripts reflects a trisyllabic pronunciation,[21] which must accordingly have emerged after the composition of the metrical texts. Thus the assumption that this was due to interference by speakers of Old Persian, in whose phonological system the glides $i̯$ and $u̯$ did not occur in postconsonantal position and who were not able to pronounce them as such in Avestan words, has a good deal in its favour.

We must, however, be careful about trying to draw conclusions from this case for that of the interchange of -δ- and -θ- in Young Avestan. In the first place we have to note that the 'double' representation of glides affected the whole Avestan corpus whereas the replacement of -δ- by -θ- occurs only sporadically in the Young Avestan texts. If this too were a matter of transmission (in the sense of a substitution of *daθāiti* for *daδāiti*), we should have to ask why it did not affect the complete Young Avestan corpus, but only parts of it. (Old Avestan, of course, could not be affected because it had no intervocalic -δ-). As a matter of fact, this would not be easy to account for on the basis of an assumption that speakers of Parthian (or a related language) were responsible for the transmission of the complete Avestan corpus after the interference of Old Persian speakers had taken place, i.e. in Arsacid times.

Nevertheless, there remain several conceivable scenarios. If we do not want to give up the idea of speakers of Parthian transmitting Avestan texts, we might

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[17] E.g. 3 sg. pres. ind. *dayēd* in M 49 I R 3 (*Mir.Man.* II, 306, l. 13), 3 pres. ind. *dayēnd* M 11 V 5 (Waldschmidt-Lentz, *Man.Dogm.*, 557).
[18] Thus, e.g., DB 1,95 and 3,32.
[19] Thus DB 1,40 and 1,80.
[20] Cf. Hoffmann, *ALF*, 36.
[21] *Sasan.Arch.*, 39 ff.

presume that the whole corpus was not transmitted by the same people, Parthian influence manifesting itself only in those parts transmitted by Parthians. Alternatively, we might take refuge to the idea of Proto-Parthian influence at the time of the composition of the texts in question, which again could be interpreted in two ways: it might mean that there was a dialectal split within Young Avestan as a spoken language, one dialect showing interference from (neighbouring) '(Proto-) Parthian', or it might mean that the texts were composed by speakers of '(Proto-) Parthian' who used Young Avestan as a sacral language. For the latter case, one might well compare the use of Latin as a sacral language in Europe, which caused some similar effects when adapted during the past millennium by speakers of languages as different as French, German, English or Hungarian. Finally, each of the scenarios envisaged above has a chronological aspect, in that it might be interpreted as indicating a certain age for a text containing the feature in question.

We cannot expect to be able to solve this riddle as long as several other problems raised by the Avestan tradition remain unclarified. If we speak of 'parts' of the Young Avestan corpus which might have been influenced by Parthian, we presuppose that the Young Avestan texts available to us are in some way heterogeneous, and we should expect certain features that can be interpreted as 'dialectal' in the sense outlined above to appear as bundles within these parts. At present, however, we are still far from being able to establish the existence of such bundles or to delimit in detail the specific parts of the text which are characterised by them. This unsatisfactory situation is due to several awkward peculiarities of the Avestan manuscript tradition.

First of all, we have to take into account the fact that most of the manuscripts which have come down to us contain not separate texts but collections of texts, the composition of which is not due to their dialectal or chronological uniformity, not even to their contents, but only to their applicability for certain liturgical purposes. This is especially true for the Yasna collection, which represents, as is well known, the texts and text elements to be uttered by the Zoroastrian priests in the course of the *Haōma* sacrifice. It is for exclusively liturgical reasons that this collection contains, right in its middle, the oldest Avestan texts available to us, i.e. the Gathas and the Yasna Haptaŋhāiti, as well as such strange Young Avestan passages as the one following the so-called Hōm Yašt, which is cited as Y. 11,9:

> *yō.nō.* **aēuuō.** *at̰.tē.* **uiiē.** *θrāiiōidiiāi.*
> **tūrahe.** *maṇdāidiiāi.* **xšuuīdəm.** **haptāž̌diiāi.**
> **nauua.** *das*me. *yōi.vō.* *yaēθma.*

These 'verses' represent nothing but a sequence of quotations from Old Avestan texts which contain the numerals from one to ten, or word-forms resembling these numerals, partially concealed in unrelated infinitives, which were adapted to Young Avestan and thus obscured in a 'cabbalistic' way with the result that there is certainly no point in trying to interpret them meaningfully; cf. the following synopsis:

OAv. *yə̄.nə̄. aēuuō.*, Y. 29,8a; Oav./YAv. *aēuua-* 'one, only';
OAv. *at̰.tōi. ubē.*, Y. 34,11a; OAv. *ubē*, YAv. *uiie* 'both';
OAv. *θrāiiōidiiāi.* 'to shelter', Y. 34,5a; YAv. *θrāiiō* 'three';
OAv. *tūrahiiā.* 'of Tūra' (PN), Y. 46,12b; YAv. *tūiriia* 'fourth';
OAv. *məṇdaidiiāi.* 'to keep in mind', Y. 44,8b; (YAv. *paṇca* 'five');
OAv. *xšuuīdəm-cā* 'and the milk', Y. 29,7a; YAv. *xšuuaš* 'six';
OAv. *haptaiθē* 'in the seventh', Y. 32,3c; YAv. *hapta* 'seven';
OAv. *ā̆ždiiāi* 'to reach', Y. 51,17c; YAv. *ašta* 'eight';
? OAv. *nā.vā.* 'either a man', Y. 35,6; 41,2; YAv. *nauua* 'nine';
OAv. *yōi.və̄. yōiθəmā. dasəmē.*, Y. 28,9b; OAv. *dasā*, YAv. *dasa* 'ten', *dasəma-* 'tenth'.

In the present case, it is not only the verses themselves that are obscure, but also their relationship to the context in which they are located. According to the manuscripts that preserve liturgical instructions in Middle Persian (Pahlavi or Pazend) alongside the Avestan Yasna text, they were uttered by the *rāspī*, i.e., the second priest of the ritual, assistant of the *zōt̰*, at the moment when both priests had finished their joint recitation of the so-called Hōm Yašt. This latter text, though extending across three Yasna 'books', from Y. 9,1 to Y. 11,8, shows a clear linguistic and textual uniformity, so that we are justified in treating it as a unity (as its traditional name 'Hōm Yašt' reflects). However, it shares no obvious common traits with the following verses, so that these may pertain to any other stratum of Young Avestan which one may care to postulate.

In the case of the Yasna liturgy, we also have to consider the fact that the collection as transmitted in the manuscripts contains not only texts of the types indicated above, which can at any rate be assigned a coherent structure, but also various litanies, whose structure is less consistent. In these cases, we are not dealing with inconsistencies in the Yasna text itself but with differences between at least four kinds of liturgies, of which the Yasna proper merely forms something like a common skeleton. The four liturgies in question can easily be distinguished in accordance with the manuscript classes that contain the respective texts: besides the Yasna proper, handed down in manuscripts of the so-called Pahlavi-Sanskrit Yasna and Yasna Sāda types, we find the Vispered liturgy in Pahlavi Vispered and Vispered Sāda manuscripts, the Vidēvdād liturgy in Vendidād Sāda manuscripts and the Vištāsp Yašt liturgy in the unique Vištāsp Yašt Sāde manuscript K4. The interrelationship between the four liturgies can be outlined in the following way. In the Vispered liturgy, the 24 'chapters' of the text collection named 'Vispered' are inserted into the Yasna text in such a way that, for instance, Vr. 1,1-9 are arranged between Y. 1,9 and 1,10, or Vr. 12,1-5 between Y. 27,5 and 27,6. The Vidēvdād liturgy further extends this mixed text by inserting the 22 chapters of the Vidēvdād proper, grouped into ten sections, beside the Yasna and Vispered elements; thus, *fargards* 1 to 4 of the Vidēvdād are also placed at the end of Y. 27, after the inserted text of Vr. 12,1-5, and so on. The Vištāsp Yašt liturgy is similar to the Vidēvdād liturgy in that the eight 'chapters' of this text

are inserted in the position of eight of the ten Vidēvdād 'sections', Vyt. 1 appearing after Y. 27 and Vr. 12,1-5 but before Y. 28. The interrelationship thus established can roughly be illustrated in a diagram such as the one given in Table 1.[22]

Y.	1_{1-8}		1_9-2_8		2_9-11_8		11_{9-15}		11_{17}-13	14-15	16-17		18-21		22	
Vr.	"	1	"	2	"	3_{1-5}	"	3_6-4	"	5-6	"	7-8		9	"	10-11
Vd.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Vyt.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"

Y.	23-27		28-30			31-34			35-42			43-46		
Vr.	"	12		"	13		"	14		15	"	16-17		"	18
Vd.	"	"	1-4	"	"	5-6	"	"	7-8	"	"	"	9-10	"	"	11-12
Vyt.	"	"	1	"	"	2	"	"	3	"	"	"	4	"	"	5

Y.	47-50		51			52-53		54		55-71	
Vr.	"	19		"	20	21-22		"	23		"	24		"
Vd.	"	"	13-14	"	"	15-16	"	17-18	"	"	19-20	"	"	21-22	"
Vyt.	"	"	6	"	"	7	"		"	"	8	"	"		"

Table 1. Arrangement of Yasna, Vispərəd, Vidēvdād, and Vištāsp Yašt liturgies.

	Liturgies:	
Yasna & Vispered	Vidēvdād (& Extr.Wg. 1A)	Vištāsp Yašt (& Extr.Wg. 1B)
frauuarāne. mazdaiiasnō. zaraθuštriš. vīdaēuuō. ahura.ţkaēšō		
hāuuanēe.	*dātāi. haδa.dātāi. vīdaēuuāi. zaraθuštrāi.*	*haδa.mąθrāi. zaini.parštāi. upairi. gātubiiō. gərəptāi. mąθrāi. spəṇtāi.*
ašaone. ašahe. raθβe.		

Table 2. Textual deviations depending on the liturgical context in Y. 3,24.

Under these circumstances, it would still be justifiable to treat the four text collections of Yasna, Vispered, Vidēvdād and Vištāsp Yašt separately, as Westergaard and Geldner did in their editions, were it not for certain deviations in the arrangement and wording of the Yasna text contained in the 'extended' liturgies. These deviations, of which Y. 3,24 provides a typical example (cf. Table 2), have hardly ever been dealt with thoroughly in Avestological literature, and they are only partially accessible in the editions: while Westergaard listed eight of them, which he took from Vidēvdād Sāda manuscripts and K4, under the heading of 'Extrakte', Geldner confined his information about such deviations to the critical

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[22] This table, which agrees with the one provided by Geldner in *Grundriß* II, 11f., shows only the major deviations. The picture becomes much more complicated when minor divergences are considered.

apparatus and only H. Brockhaus's edition of the Vendidād Sada, nowadays easily available again in reprinted form,[23] covers the complete text of the Vidēv-dād liturgy.

One further example may suffice to show that these deviations are not just a *quantité négligeable*. This is the so-called *Ahuna Vairiia* prayer, which is usually quoted as Y. 27,13 because it is written in full at this position in most manuscripts containing the Yasna:

> yaθā. ahū. vairiiō.   aθā. ratuš. aṣ̌ātcīt̤. hacā.
> vaŋhə̄uš. dazdā. manaŋhō.   š́iiaoθənanąm. aŋhə̄uš. mazdāi.
> xšaθrəmcā. ahurāi.ā.   yim. drigubiiō. dadat̤. vāstārəm.

In addition, this prayer is referred to in many other places within formulae which are uttered by the *zōt̤* and the *rāspī* in dialogue form and which indicate which part of the prayer is to be recited by which attendant at the sacrifice. The most frequent formula is printed as Y. 3,25 in Geldner's edition; here, the *zaotar-* is named as the main reciter, both by himself and the *rāspī*:

> zōt̤:   yaθā. ahū. vairiiō.   **zaotā.** frā.mē. mrūtē.
> rāspī: yaθā. ahū. vairiiō.   yō. **zaotā.** frā.mē. mrūtē.
> zōt̤:   aθā. ratuš. aṣ̌ātcīt̤. haca.   frā. aṣauua. vīδuuå. mraotū.

Another formula, appearing in Y. 15,4 and Vr. 3,6, mentions instead the fire-priest, *ātərəuuaxš-*:

> zōt̤:   yaθā. ahū. vairiiō.   yō. **ātərəuuaxšō.** frā.mē. mrūtē.
> rāspī: aθā. ratuš. aṣ̌ātcīt̤. haca.   frā. aṣauua. vīδuuå. mraotū.

It seems to have escaped notice so far that two further versions of the formula are met with in the deviant passages of the Yasna contained in the 'extended' liturgies, within Y. 59,33 and Y. 65,17. Here, two other officiating priests are named, namely the *sraošāuuarəz-* and the *frabərətar-*:

> zōt̤:   yaθā. ahū. vairiiō.   yō. **sraošāuuarəzō.** frā.mē. mrūtē.
> rāspī: aθā. ratuš. aṣ̌ātcīt̤. haca.   frā. aṣauua. vīδuuå. mraotū.   (Y. 59,33)

> zōt̤:   yaθā. ahū-. vairiiō.   yō. **frabərəta.** frā.mē. mrūtē.
> rāspī: aθā. ratuš. aṣ̌ātcīt̤. haca.   frā. aṣauua. vīδuuå. mraotū.   (Y. 65,17)

Although both these titles appear several times in other Avestan passages such as Vd. 5,57, Vr. 3,1, G. 3,5, Vyt. 3(15) or the Nirangistan (67 ff.), it is interesting to note that it is only from the formulae discussed above that it becomes clear that the persons bearing them are involved as speakers in the ritual. And it may be remarked that in both cases the additional attestations thus obtained help to establish the correct phonetic shape of these titles, which are now confirmed by the Vispered manuscript K7 of 1288 A.D.—supposedly the oldest Avestan manu-

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[23] H. Brockhaus (ed.), *Vendidad Sade*. Leipzig 1850 (repr. Hildesheim 1993).

script extant. So we can now take it for granted that *frabərətar-* 'attendant' had 'hysterodynamic' inflexion with zero-grade root, *-bərə- < *-bʰr̥-,* throughout its Avestan paradigm, as against *variae lectiones* with *-arə-* (reminiscent of Vedic 'proterodynamic' *prábhartar-*) in Vištāsp Yašt (K4) and Nirangistān manuscripts.[24] As for the officer 'producing obedience', we gain further evidence for the conspicuous long *ā* vowel which appears at the boundary of most compounds containing the root *varəz-* 'to produce' as their second member, *sraošāuuarəz-* agreeing with *vāstriiāuuarəz-, huuarštāuuarəz-, dužuuarštāuuarəz-, ́siiaoθnā-uuarəz-* and *haiθiiāuuarəz-* (as against the ambiguous *huuarəz-* /hŭ-u̯arz-/ and *vohuuarəz-* /u̯ohŭ-u̯arz/).

Whatever one may think about this peculiarity, the deviations from the Yasna text which occur in the 'extended' liturgies leave us with two dilemmas. The minor one consists in the problem of how to refer to the passages in question. Given that Geldner did not bother with them at all, basing his edition on the Yasna liturgy proper, we have no choice but to confine ourselves to indicating the 'enclosing' Yasna passages (e.g., Y. 59,33), wherever these can be determined. Maybe this was one reason why Bartholomae in his Wörterbuch took notice only of Westergaard's 'Extracts'; if he had worked through Brockhaus's edition of the Vendidād Sāda, he would have encountered the same problem.

The major dilemma brought about by such deviations is one of the most striking problems Avestan studies have by now been facing for several centuries, namely, the question of the evaluation of manuscript tradition. It is true that Geldner's investigations, undertaken in preparation for his edition and continued during the course of this work, yielded immense progress with respect to the classification of the manuscript material available to him; and again we must be grateful to Karl Hoffmann, who significantly improved our understanding of the matter by reassembling and reformulating the particulars scattered throughout Geldner's Prolegomena. Nevertheless, the knowledge we have gained in this way does not yet suffice to clarify all the problems connected with the transmission of the text.

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[24] Nom.sg. *frabərəta* in HJ, facs.-ed. D. P. Sanjana, fol. 135v, l. 3 (the passage in question is part of N. 67, p. 110 in Waag's edition); TD, facs.-ed. Harvard Iranian Series 3, fol. 91v, l. 5 has *frabərəta* at this place as well. In other places, both HJ and TD have *frabərət-*: HJ 139r, l. 12 / TD 94r, l. 1 (= N. 68a) and HJ 146v, l. 12 / TD 98v, l. 1 (= N. 71a) (nom.sg. *frabərəta*); HJ 155r, l. 12 / TD 105r, l. 2 (= N. 74a), HJ 157r, l. 11 / TD 106r, l. 2 (= N. 79f) and HJ 159r, l. 5 / TD 107r, l. 7 (= N. 81i) (gen. sg. *frabərətarš*); HJ 159v, l. 11-12 / TD 107v, l. 6 (= N. 82b) (acc. sg. *frabərətārəm*). In other contexts, forms containing *-bərə-* are only rarely met with: Geldner notes dat. sg. *frabərəθre* instead of *frabərəθre* for Mf2 in Vd. 5,58 (n. 4), *frabərətārəm* instead of *-bərətārəm* for K11 in Vr. 3,1 and for K12 in G. 3,5. The assumption of a 'hysterodynamic' *frabərətar-* further matches with the MPers. equivalent *fraburdār* (cf., e.g., the diagram printed in Geldner's edition at the beginning of Vr. 3, which shows the respective positions of the sacrifice participants, among them the *fraburdār*, according to the Vispered tradition).

First of all, the information available from Geldner's edition is, in the case of the Yasna tradition, concentrated on the manuscript tradition of the Yasna liturgy proper, as we have just seen. Although we may well believe that the Yasna part of the text as contained in Vispered, Vendidād or Vištāsp Yašt Sāda manuscripts is derived from what we find in Pahlavi Yasna or Sanskrit Yasna codexes, this has not yet been proved. In other words, it is still open to us to doubt whether we have to assume that there was a single archetype for each of the major Avestan texts, as Karl Hoffmann did, or whether there might have been several independent first attempts to write them down, depending on their usage in liturgy, which would have manifested themselves in the divergent manuscript classes established by Geldner.

Secondly, the material Geldner's edition provides does not suffice for a thorough reinvestigation of this question. This is not only due to the fact that Geldner, in preparing his Yasna edition, ignored most of the deviations of the 'extended' liturgies discussed above, but also to the fact that he regarded several graphic peculiarities as negligible. This holds true, for example, for the distinction of <ao> and <aō>, <š> and <ṧ> or <ŋ> and <ń>. With a view to establishing a critical text, his decision may have been justified, but for investigating the interdependence of manuscripts, especially those which Geldner himself reckoned as less important, such distinctions may be crucial.

Finally, at least one manuscript that has become available eversince Geldner finished his Yasna edition is important enough to deserve checking systematically for the readings it preserves, namely Mf4. It was Geldner himself who belatedly realised the value of this manuscript, which he proved to be a sister manuscript of Pt4 and a prominent member of the Iranian Pahlavi Yasna family.[25]

It is on the basis of these considerations that I decided some years ago to undertake a project whose objective is the reassembly of the available material in digital form and the application of new methods based thereupon to the study of Avestan. As I have described the scope of the project named 'AUREA' in detail on another occasion recently,[26] I shall try to be brief on this subject here.

The starting-point of the AUREA project was the first digitised version of the Avestan corpus which was prepared by Sonja Gippert-Fritz in the 1980s in connection with Bernfried Schlerath's *Avesta Dictionary* project in Berlin. As the electronic version produced at that time contained only the plain text as represented in Geldner's edition, the first task to be undertaken in the present project, with a view to tackling the problems outlined above, consisted in digitising the data contained in Geldner's critical apparatus. For the Yasna, this task has meanwhile

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[25] Cf. n. 11 above for a discussion of the value of Mf4.

[26] Cf. my paper 'Indo-iranistisches Textretrieval' presented at the conference 'Indogermanisch und Indo-Iranisch' which has meanwhile been printed in B. Forssman and R. Plath (ed.), *Indoarisch, Iranisch und die Indogermanistik. Arbeitstagung der Indogermanischen Gesellschaft vom 2. bis 5. Oktober in Erlangen*, Wiesbaden 2000, pp. 133-45.
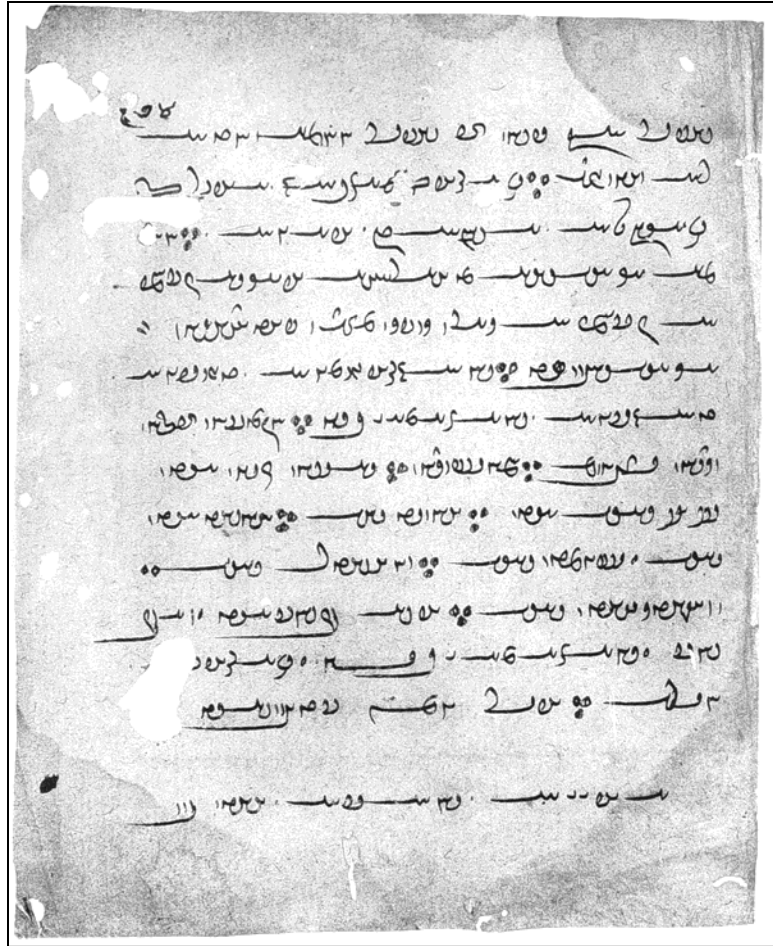
Figure 3. Y. 27,14 to 28,1 in J2 (p. 341)

been finished, thanks to the efforts of Michiel de Vaan, who also collated and incorporated additional variant readings given in Westergaard's edition. As his second task, de Vaan started recollating several important manuscripts that are available via facsimile editions or microfilms; besides Mf4, which I have already discussed, these include the Pahlavi Yasna manuscripts J2[27] and K5,[28] the Vendi-dād Sāda manuscript P1[29]—which was the basis for H. Brockhaus's edition —and the Vištāsp Yašt Sāda manuscript K4, a microfilm of which was obtained from the Copenhagen Royal Library. Subsequently, de Vaan collated the readings of Br2 noted in Geldner's Nachlaß in Marburg University Library, and a microfilm

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[27] Facsimile edition by L. H. Mills, Oxford 1893.
[28] Facsimile edition by K. Barr, Copenhagen 1937.
[29] Facsimile edition (produced manually) by E. Burnouf, Paris 1829-1843.

of Pt4 procured from the Bodleian Library in Oxford. My own contribution to this task consisted in the recollation of the Vispered Sāda version contained in K7.[30] The database of variant readings thus produced is, of course, open to further extension; the next manuscript we hope to obtain for this purpose is J3, which is housed in Oxford and which is, according to Geldner's stemma, a very valuable manuscript of the Sanskrit Yasna family.

Figure 4. Y. 27,15 to 28,1 in P1 (fol. 84r)

As a by-product of these efforts, we intend to prepare digitised copies of the manuscripts themselves wherever possible; by now, J2 and P1 have been scanned completely from the printed editions and they are ready to be republished in both digital and printed form (cp. Figs. 3 and 4, showing Y. 27,14/15 to 28,1 as they appear on fols. 341 and 166 of these manuscripts, respectively).

Another digitised manuscript was placed at the disposal of the project by Petr Vavroušek from Prague. This manuscript, which seems not to have been taken

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[30] Facsimile edition by K. Barr, Copenhagen 1944.

notice of anywhere, is in the possession of Charles University and is another derivative of the Vendidād Sāda family. Although its readings have not yet been thoroughly checked, at first glance it seems to be fairly worthless; nevertheless, we intend to collate it, and for convenience I propose to refer to it henceforth as Pr1 (cf. Fig. 5).
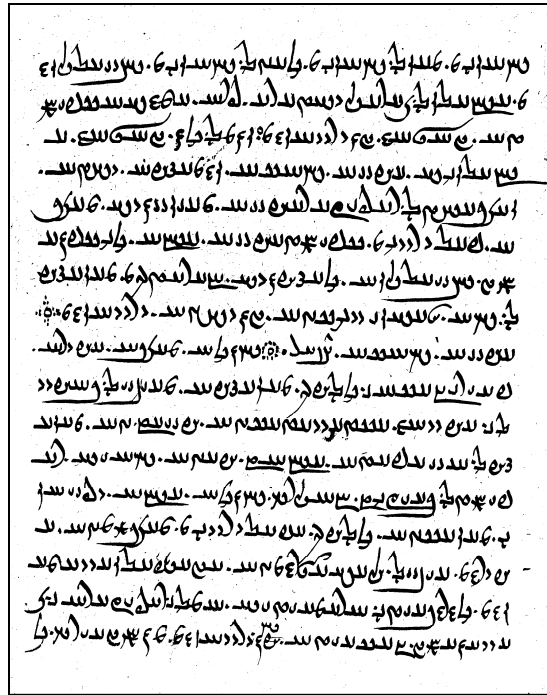

Figure 5. Y. 28,1 in Pr1 (fol. 84r).

As was stated above, however, the primary goal of our work on the manuscript tradition is to establish a reliable database of variant readings which can enable us to investigate the consistency of readings and the interdependency of manuscript classes. One example may suffice to show how such a database can be used, what has been achieved and what it still to be desired.

In connection with the *Yeṅhē Hātąm* prayer (cf. p. 168 above), I mentioned the form *vaṅhō* 'better' which distinguishes the 'Pseudo-Old Avestan' text from its presumptive model, Y. 51,22, with Gathic Old Avestan *vahiiō*. In Geldner's edition, the younger form is regularly written *vaŋhō*, with a nonpalatal *ŋ*. Leaving aside the occurrences in the 'Pseudo-Old Avestan' *Yeṅhē hātąm* prayer, we find five attestations of this comparative form in the Young Avestan parts of the Yasna, in Y. 59,30.31, 65,11.14 and 71,13. For these five occurrences, a total of 93 manuscript readings is now known either on the basis of the information given by Geldner or through the collation of manuscripts undertaken as part of the pre-

sent project. Fourteen of these readings show the palatalised velar nasal *ń*, which, according to Karl Hoffmann's reasoning (cf. n. 11 above), must be taken as the original variant. By listing them according to the manuscripts, we find Geldner's assumptions about the close relationship of Mf4 with Pt4 and Mf1 confirmed; moreover, the value of the branch they represent, i.e. the Iranian Pahlavi Yasna, stands out clearly, all the more so since K5, which represents the Indian branch of the Pahlavi Yasna, agrees with them in at least one case, Y. 65,14. Surprisingly enough, Pt4 and Mf4 have *vaŋhō* with a plain velar nasal in Y. 71,13, where K5 agrees with Mf1 in reading *vańhō* again. In other manuscripts, *vańhō* appears only twice (K36, Pd). The findings may be summarised in tabular form as follows:

	Iranian Pahlavī Yasna			Indian P.Y.	Khorde-Avesta	
	Mf4	Mf1	Pt4	K5	K36	Pd
59,30	**vańhō**	**vańhō**	*vaŋhō*	*vaŋhō*		
59,31	*vaŋhō*		**vańhō**	*vaŋhō*		
65,11	**vańhō**	**vańhō**	**vańhō**	*vaŋhō*	**vańhō**	
65,14	**vańhō**	**vańhō**	**vańhō**	**vańhō**		**vańhō**
71,13	*vaŋhō*	**vańhō**	*vaŋhō*	**vańhō**		

Table 3. Representation of YAv. *vańhō* 'better' in Yasna manuscripts. (Readings indicated by Geldner are presented with a shaded background.)

While all this agrees with what we might expect, two questions remain open.

First, there is no way yet to evaluate the two other manuscripts reading *vańhō* in Y. 65, namely K36 and Pd. These two manuscripts were classified by Geldner as belonging to the 'Khorde Avesta' type, which means that they cannot be assigned a position within the stemmata of Yasna manuscripts off-hand. Nevertheless, it is worth while trying to find out whether or not the readings they provide in Yasna passages depend on any particular branch of the manuscript tradition, a task which Geldner did not even attempt. For this purpose it is necessary to study in greater detail the transmission of lesser liturgical collections such as the so-called 'Mayā Yašt', within which Y. 65 is enclosed in the manuscripts in question. As a matter of fact, neither Geldner's nor any other edition of the Avesta gives any information about the elements that constitute this liturgy[31], the editorial practice having always been determined exclusively by 'greater' units such as the Yasna collection or the Vidēvdād.

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[31] For the 'Mayā Yašt' or 'Mayā Zōhr', cf. Geldner, *Grundriß*, II, 9 nn. 10 and 11, according to whom the two titles are mentioned in the manuscripts Mf3 and ('Wilson's Ms. Nu. 1' =) W1, respectively; according to the Prolegomena to his edition (p. xi), the Mayā Yašt includes Y. 65 in Mf3.

Secondly, it is not at all clear whether the list of readings Geldner provides is complete in the sense that all the manuscripts he had to hand were checked in all five cases and whether the variant reading with palatal *ŋ́* is really restricted to the few manuscripts named. Today, all we can do is to try to reconstruct Geldner's practice in this respect by comparing the information he gives for manuscripts such as J2 or K5 with what a recollation of these manuscripts may reveal. One example may suffice to show that even in the case of these manuscripts, which Geldner valued extremely highly, he neglected a significant number of variants. For the relative pronoun *yeŋ́hē*, which introduces the *Yeŋ́hē Hātąm* prayer, Geldner mentions three cases where J2 has a short final *e*, thus yielding a 'normal' Young Avestan *yeŋhe* instead of the expected Pseudo-Old Avestan form: Y. 21,1 (in the prayer formula itself), Y. 61,1 (where the introductory words are used to build a hypostatic feminine noun denoting the prayer, *yeŋ́hē.hātąmca. hufrāiiaštąm. fraēšiiāmahī*) and Y. 12,1 (in another 'Pseudo-Old Avestan' text, the *nāismī. daēuuō* prayer, in the formula *yeŋ́hē. gāuš*). He gives no indication, however, of the fact that *yeŋ́he* is by far the most usual variant in J2, appearing in as many as 62 further recitations of the *Yeŋ́hē Hātąm*,[32] one further attestation of the name of the prayer (Y. 72,1) and nine other 'Pseudo-Old Avestan' passages within the Yasna.[33] As a matter of fact, the 'correct' form *yeŋ́hē* is attested only once in J2, at the point where Y. 15,2 (itself an adaptation of Y. 51,22, cf. above) is repeated in Y. 69,2, a piece of information which may indeed be significant, all the more so since the two other repetitions of the same formula in Y. 69 (1 and 3) show the usual *yeŋ́he*. In the light of these observations, we may expect that the recollation of less-studied manuscripts such as J3 or Mf1 will reveal a great deal of additional information.

It goes without saying that the database we have been establishing since 1996 now can and will also be used as a basis for up-to-date editions of the texts. Unlike Geldner's, these editions can be so arranged as to meet the requirement of illustrating the position of a given passage within its liturgical context, not only by distinguishing the different liturgies, as discussed above, but also by contrasting the divergent types of text that constitute them: coherent hymnic or poetic structures such as the Gathas or the Hōm Yašt; formulaic prayers such as the *Ahuna Vairiia* and their repetitions; litanies such as those which abound in the Young Avestan parts of the Yasna and in the Vispered; quotations and adaptations of strophes or verses from both Old Avestan and non-Old Avestan texts; and simple allusions to elements contained in other contexts. It is conceivable that

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[32] Y. 5,6; 6,21; 7,27; 10,21; 13,7.8; 17,19; 18,8.9; 19,21; 20,5; 21,5; 26,11; 27,15; 28,12; 29,12; 30,12; 31,23; 32,17; 33,15; 34,16; 35,10; 37,5; 38,5; 39,5; 40,4; 41,7; 43,17; 44,21; 45,12; 46,20; 47,7; 48,13; 49,13; 50,12; 51,23; 53,10; 54,2; 55,7; 56,5; 57,4.8.10.12.14.18.20.22.26.29.32.34; 59,29.33; 60,13; 63,3; 68,24; 70,7; 71,24.31. In Y. 36,6 and Y. 67,8, the word is damaged but its final -*e* is clearly legible. In Y. 4,26 and 42,6 the manuscript is damaged precisely at the end of the word; in Y. 41,8 and Y. 57,6 the prayer is omitted in J2.

[33] Y. 12,1³; 15,2; 58,4; 63,1; 65,16; 69,1.3.

such a differentiation requires a more elaborate system of referencing than the one we have used so far, and not only with respect to the 'extra' passages inserted into the Yasna text in the Vispered, Vidēvdād and Vištāsp Yašt liturgies. Such a system is at present being developed.

There is yet another aspect of the AUREA project that may be of interest here. At the beginning of this paper, I drew attention to the fact that our understanding of Avestan is limited to a considerable extent by the small size of the corpus that has come down to us and by the absence of any daughter language. This is why comparison with cognate languages plays a much greater rôle in the interpretation of Avestan than it does in the case of any other ancient Indo-European language and why the use of Vedic as a standard by which to measure Avestan has become common practice. The basis of this comparative method, which has brought about innumerable convincing results, is a set of well known sound correspondences, the applicability of which is regarded as being extremely regular. Nevertheless, it seems that the validity of this view has never been thoroughly checked; that is to say, the consistency of the rules and the relative chronology implied has never been tested systematically. Such a test, however, is a necessary precondition to the use of Vedic evidence for the explication of Avestan. As a matter of fact, the number of deviations from acknowledged sound correspondences to be met with in alleged Vedic-Avestan word pairs should not be underestimated.

Let me give just one example.

The Avestan word for 'utterance', the nom.-acc. sg. form of which appears in the variants *vacə̄* and *vacō* in Old Avestan as we have seen above, has a clear counterpart in Vedic *vácaḥ*, which is attested 51 times in the R̥gveda-Saṃhitā alone;[34] both can be traced back to a Proto-Indo-Iranian stem in -*s*-, ***u̯ácas*, which finds a more distant cognate in Greek ἔπος, all being inherited from Proto-I.E. ***u̯ék^u̯os*, a derivative of the verbal root ***u̯ek^u̯*- 'to speak'. The close relationship between Old Indic and Avestan, which leads to the assumption of a common Proto-Indo-Iranian mother language as an intermediate stage between Proto-Indo-European and the attested Vedic and Old Iranian languages, is made still clearer by the systematic equivalence to be observed in other case forms of this word, such as the instr. sg. *vacaŋhā*[35] which has its exact counterpart in Ved. *vácasā*,[36] both attested also with the enclitic particle -*ca* 'and' attached,[37] or the loc. sg. *vacahi* (-*cā* Y. 30,3) and the gen. pl. *vacaŋhąm* (Y. 31,19), albeit the regular

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[34] RV 1,26,2.10; 30,4; 54,3; 57,4; 75,1; 78,5; 83,3; 84,19; 91,10; 93,2; 94,8; 101,1; 114,6; 144,7; 145,2; 2,31(222),5; 3,10(244),5; 3,33(267),8; 4,33(329),5; 5,1(355),12; 11(365),5; 22(376),4; 39(393),5; 54(408),15; 6,48(489),11; 7,8(524),6; 96(612),1; 101(617),5; 8,8(628),11; 19(639),12; 24(644),20; 25(645),20; 39(659),2; 43(663),27; 46(666),14; 61(670),1.9; 66(675),5; 74(683),1; 101(710),5; 9,101(813),13; 103(815),1; 10,17(843),14; 37(863),6; 50(876),6; 64(890),10; 97(923),14; 108(934),8; 122(948),2; 150(976),2.
[35] Old Avestan attestations: Y. 31,22; 32,5; 33,2; 34,1.
[36] RV 1,76,4; 2,18(209),3; 14(248),6; 4,1(297),15; 5(301),14; 25(321),2; 5,29(383),6; 6,62(503),5; 10,151(977),1.
[37] *vacaŋhā-cā*, Y. 47,1 (and repetitions); 48,4; *vácasā-ca*, R̥V 2,32(223),3.

correspondents of these forms, *vacasi* and *vacasām*, seem not to be attested in Vedic but only in later Epic Sanskrit.[38]

Less clear is the case of the nom.-acc. pl. form, which appears as *vacā̊* in Old Avestan[39] as against Vedic *vácāṃsi*.[40] It is by no means certain that these reflect the same underlying PIIr. form. We might argue that the final vowel seen in Vedic *vácāṃsi* could have been lost in its Iranian equivalent which developed into Avestan *vacā̊*, because it was a Proto-Indo-Iranian *shwa* reflecting a Proto-Indo-European laryngeal; but we might equally well suppose that Vedic and Avestan here preserve two morphologically distinct formations, Avestan *vacā̊* going back to PIE *$u̯ék^u̯ōs$, with no 'collective' ending *-h_2 attached.

The question whether Avestan and Vedic continued two different formations of the nom.-acc. pl. of neuter *s*-stems has a crucial bearing on at least one passage that may be regarded as problematic. This is Y. 32,14, where we seem to meet with a form *$varəcā̊hi$-cā*, which, if it could be established as such, might represent *varəcāhi-cā*, as an exact equivalent of Ved. *várcāṃsi* (plus *-ca*), nom.-acc. pl. of *várcas-* meaning 'energy' or 'splendour'. This interpretation, first proposed by C. Bartholomae,[41] is hampered by the manuscript tradition, however, which in Y. 32,14 indicates a word boundary after *varəcā̊*, leaving both this (or the variant reading *varəcā*)[42] and the remaining *hīcā* as hapax legomena:

> ahiiā. gərəhmō. ā.hōiθōi.   nī. kāuuaiiascīṯ. xratūš. <nī.>dadaṯ.
> varəcā̊.hīcā. fraidiuuā.   hiiaṯ. vīsəṇtā. drəguuaṇtəm. auuō.
> hiiaṯcā. gāuš. jaidiiāi. mraoī.   yə̄. dūraošəm. saocaiiaṯ. auuō.

While *varəcā̊* might still be, as a 'regular' nom.-acc. pl. of *varcah-* 'might, energy', the equivalent of Ved. *várcāṃsi*,[43] *hīcā* would, as single word, have to be interpreted as the instr. sg. of a verbal root noun *hic-* meaning the 'act of pouring'; this solution was, hesitantly, envisaged by H. Humbach[44] and further supported by J. Kellens.[45] Another solution was put forth by S. Insler who proposed to see here a locative sg. *$varəcahī$-ca*,[46] which would be equivalent to Ved. *várcasi(-ca)*.[47]

It goes without saying that all the solutions mentioned are quite acceptable from a syntactic point of view, in that either an acc. pl. *$varəcāhi$-ca* or an acc. pl.

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[38] Post-Vedic *vacasi*, Mbh. 12,59,138; *vacasām*, Mbh. 14,44,5.

[39] Y. 31,1; 33,8; 35,9; 58,6.

[40] RV 1,145,3; 3,33(267),10; 4,3(299),16; 38(334),10; 6,32(473),1; 52(493),14; 7,23(539),1; 8,101(710),7; 10,65(891),13; 66(892),11; 95(921),1; 108(934),6.

[41] *Airan.Wb.*, 1367.

[42] The manuscripts reading *varəcā* are, according to Geldner, K5, Pt4, K4 and Lb2, to which Mf4 and Br2 can now be added.

[43] Thus AVS 4,22,3; unaccented *varcāṃsi* twice in AVP (3,21,2, 6,19,9).

[44] Gathas II, 88 (cf. already his earlier edition *Die Gathas des Zarathustra*, Heidelberg 1959; II, 37).

[45] *Les nom-racines*, 88 sq.; Kellens-Pirart, II, 328.

[46] S. Insler, *The Gāthās of Zarathustra*, Tehran–Liège, 1975, *ad loc*.

[47] Cf. unaccented *varcasi* in AVP 20,53,7.

varəcå̊ might depend from *nī ... dadaṯ* 'they lay down', in concord with the acc. pl. *xratū́š*, and a loc. sg. **varəcahī-ca* might also depend from the same verb, in concord with the loc. sg. *ā.hōiθōi* 'in the tying'; while *hīcā*, if taken as the instr. sg. of a verbal noun 'pouring', might represent a syntagmatic unit together with the following *fradiuuā*, taken as an adjective meaning 'everlasting'.

The question posed above of the regularity of sound correspondences is involved in this problematic case both internally, i.e. with respect to the representation of Old Avestan sounds by graphemes in the manuscripts, and externally, i.e. with respect to the relationship of the proposed readings to their Vedic counterparts. The former would present us with the problem of evaluating the difference between the variant readings, i.e. -*å̊* vs. -*ā*, in connection with the divergent interpretations. As for the latter, we would have to investigate the question whether we are right at all in assuming **varəcāhi* to be the regular outcome of the Proto-Indo-Iranian preform which yielded Vedic *várcāṃsi*. Within the AUREA project, several steps have already been undertaken with a view to these investigations, the preparation of the database of variant readings being only one of them. Another preparatory step consisted in the compilation of a list of acknowledged or alleged equivalences between Old Avestan and Vedic on the level of word-forms, for the purpose of analysing with a special computer programme the relative chronology and the consistency of the sound correspondences involved. It may be of interest to note that the list of presumable equivalences contains about 900 Old Avestan word-forms out of a total of less than 2000, which indicates a very high degree of agreement indeed. The computer programme (developed by R. Gehrke and K. U. Bux) is still in the state of testing; we hope to be able to present it (and the results it offers as to the relationship of Old Avestan to Vedic) to the public within a few months.

In the case of problems such as that of *varəcā.hīcā* in Y. 32,14, however, it is not only questions of sound correspondences that must be considered. As a matter of fact, a comparison with Old Indic may be helpful on many other levels as well, both linguistic and philological. As in many other cases, it might be worthwhile investigating the textual usage of Ved. *várcas-* and the other equivalents of the Avestan lemmata that occur in the passage in question, a method well established in Avestan studies. If we do so, we will soon come across two verses of the Atharvaveda Saṃhitā (AVS 4,8,5-6), where *várcas-* occurs in a narrow syntactic juncture with the verb *sic-* 'to pour', thus immediately reminding us of the conspicuous *hīcā* of Y. 32,14:

> yắ ā́po divyā́ḥ páyasā mádanty   antárikṣa utá vā pṛtʰivyā́m /
> tā́sāṃ tvā sárvāsām apā́m   **abʰí ṣiñcā́mi várcasā** //5//
>
> **abʰí tvā várcasā́sicann**   ā́po divyā́ḥ páyasvatīh /
> yátʰā́so mitravárdʰanas   tátʰā tvā savitā́ karat //6//

The verses in question pertain to a hymn whose topic is the consecration of a king. The procedure indicated here is the so-called *abhiṣeka-*, which consisted of the 'pouring of water upon the person to be consecrated', as W. D. Whitney explained in his translation:[48]

> 'The waters of heaven that revel with milk, in the atmosphere or also on the earth,
> — **with the splendor** of all those waters **do I pour upon** thee.
>
> The heavenly waters, rich in milk, **have poured upon** thee **with splendor**;
> that thou be an increaser of friends, so shall Savitar make thee.'

Although it is quite possible that an act of consecration, or rather enthronisation, executed by the Kavis was alluded to by Zoroaster in our Gathic strophe, we have to note that there is a difference in the syntactic behaviour of the words in question: Ved. *várcas-* appears in the instrumental, not the accusative, when governed by *abʰí-sic-*, whose direct object is the consecrated person.[49] In the context of Y. 32,14, however, it is hardly possible to regard *varəcā̊* as governed by *hīcā* at all; as an accusative in concord with *xratū́š*, it seems rather to depend on *nī ... dadaṯ* as stated above.

The latter view finds its confirmation in Vedic text material as well. In one of the mantras of the White Yajur Veda, VS 9,22, the plural form *várcāṃsi* occurs along with three terms denoting 'power' or 'might', namely *indriyá-*, *nṛmṇá-* and *krátu-*, the last of which is the acknowledged counterpart of Av. *xratu-*:

> asmé vo astv indriyám   asmé nṛmṇám utá **krátur**   asmé **várcā̐si** santu vaḥ
> 'Ours be your strength,   ours your power and might, ours be your splendours.'

Even though *krátu-* is not used in a plural form in this mantra, its co-occurrence with *várcāṃsi* is striking enough to be taken as a parallel to the Avestan verse in question. It may be added that in the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa, where the usage of the given mantra within the Vājapeya ritual is discussed (ŚBM 5,2,1,15), the four terms are resumed in the sequence *yáśas-*, *índriya-* and *vīryá-*, arranged syntactically as direct objects of *dʰatte* 'he lays (into himself)':

> sò 'sya sárvasya yáśa indriyáṃ vīryáṃ saṃvṛ́jya tád ātmán **dʰatté** tád ātmán kurute
>
> 'By appropriating (to himself) the glory, the strength, the manly power of this All (i.e., Prajāpati), he **lays** (them) into himself, he makes them his own.'

This too is reminiscent of Y. 32,14, where the equivalent verb *(nī ...)dadaṯ* is used. We thus arrive at the following interpretation[50] which tries to take both correspondences with Vedic into account:

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[48] Harvard Oriental Series 7: 157f. (note *ad loc.*).

[49] In AVP 6,19,9 *varcāṃsi* is nom. pl., subject (not object) of *saṃ ... siñcantu*.

[50] For a previous treatment of Y. 32,14 which focussed on the verbal form *mraoī*, cf. *Mír curad, Fs. Calvert Watkins*, Innsbruck 1997, 165-81. The revision presented here does not affect the main points of that paper.

> 'As a *grᵊhma*- in (close) connection with this one, even the *kavi*s (continue to) lay down (on him) power[s] and splendour[s], by daily pouring (?), whenever they get near the deceitful one to assist (him), and whenever the cow is ordered to be killed, to assist (him) who inflames the one who is hard to burn'.

My aim in taking up the example of Y. 32,14 has been to illustrate why I believe that further progress in Avestan studies can only be achieved by taking a closer look at the similarities and interdependencies which connect the Avestan language with Vedic Old Indic. For studying Vedic, it may not be necessary to compare Avestan; but for the study of the Avestan corpus, the evidence of Vedic should never be underestimated.

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