Discrediting Ahura Mazdā's Rival

The Original Iranian Creator God "Apam Napāt"

(or Apam Naphāt?)

Abolala Soudavar

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Abolala Soudavar

Houston 2015

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Preface

From the time I first read in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* Mary Boyce's entry on Apam Napāt (a creator god whom she thought was "robbed" of his functions by Ahura Mazdā), I saw this "robbing" as an anomaly that could hardly occur in the normal evolutionary course of religions. A creator god isn't easily demoted and replaced by another one, and religious frictions alone cannot cause such a major upheaval. It required substantial political backing from the ruling elite and the authorities in power. For me, the only event that could have caused such an upheaval was the advent of Darius and the ensuing massacre of the *magi* that Herodotus labelled as Magophonia. Be that as it may, what surprised me even more was the lack of further attention to such an important issue. Steeped in their etymological minutiae, Avestologists seemed to prefer to sweep under the rug the main problems of Zoroastrianism. Jean Kellens, for instance, glossed over this issue, in his 2010 lecture series at the Collège de France, by prefacing it with a mere "*curieusement*" remark. In the same series of lectures, he also asserted that the Greek work *naphtha* derived from Apam Napāt's name. If so, this too pointed to a major problem, that of an aquatic deity whose name evoked fire, with no apparent trace to be found in the Avesta. To me, there was a high chance that Apam Napāt's demotion was somehow tied to the loss of his fire attributes. The study that I have undertaken in this book demonstrates indeed that the two phenomena were interconnected, and were the result of major transformations that affected Zoroastrianism in the post-Achaemenid era.

My conclusions, however, go against nonsensical theories that have permeated the sphere of Ancient Iranian Studies, and in which, many have invested intellectual capital. They try to defend the indefensible, but end up with more vagaries. Appendix I provides picturesque samples of their distorted views, expressed in a lamentation mode that transposes *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* into Avestology; savant-looking but hollow.

Houston – August 2015

"The crucial verse *Yašt* 19.52 shows that in one of his aspects the ancient Apąm Napāt was a mighty creator-god, "who created men, who shaped men" (*yō nərəuš da'a, yō nərəuš tataša*); but in Zoroastrianism Ahura Mazdā is venerated as supreme Creator, and Apąm Napāt thus came to be robbed of this function."

<div align="right">

Mary Boyce

" Apąm Napāṯ" entry

Encyclopaedia Iranica

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding the Avesta - Georges Clemenceau once famously said that "war was too important a matter to be left to the military"; by the same token, I feel that the Avesta is too important a text to be solely left to Avestologists, who are good technicians but may lack historical vision. In the last two decades, due to the domineering positions of Jean Kellens at the Collège de France and Prod Oktor Skjaervo at Harvard, the tendency of Avestologists has been to delve more and more into philological technicalities, at the expense of meaning and purpose. To be sure, philological considerations have much contributed to the deciphering of ancient texts, but, ultimately, the purpose of such an exercise is to produce readable and comprehensible translations. By this measure, the new trend has mostly failed. Many recent translations seem as mechanical as internet-provided translations, and beg the question whether the translator himself ever understood what he was writing. I had previously criticized some of these translations, by pointing out their errors and providing alternative translations in plain English.[1] Here below, I shall produce further examples of incoherent translations that need to be reinterpreted.

One cannot translate the Avesta without trying to understand what its authors had in mind. And that original intent cannot be deciphered if the Avesta is placed on too high grounds, and accorded unwarranted levels of abstraction. For, as I have recently argued, the Avesta is a corpus of texts assembled in the post-Achaemenid era with the double political motives of bringing the greatest number of people under the Zoroastrian tent, as well as exalting Ahura Mazdā and Zoroaster. To do so, older hymns dedicated to a wide variety of deities were added to the Gathic core of the Avesta by judiciously sanitizing their contents, and new hymns were composed to the glory of Zoroaster by presenting him as the master of the universe.[2]

In what follows I shall provide further evidence for the above-mentioned contentions, which I first expounded in my recently published book, *Mithraic Societies: From Brotherhood to Religion's Adversary* (2014). The conclusions that I had reached therein, even though controversial, were developed in a step by step process over a period of ten years, in which each step provided the foundation for the next one. In the process, not

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[1] Soudavar 2014, 343-68.
[2] Soudavar 2014, 191-213 and 222-25.

only weaknesses and errors of contrarian theories were exposed, but the concordance of my own conclusions with a wide variety of issues were also demonstrated. In itself, that progression is indicative of validity, for if not, contradictions would have surfaced somewhere along the way. Avestologists, however, for lack of valid arguments, shun confrontation and have retreated to a self-made enclosure where they can live with the pretense that Zoroaster never existed, or that the Avesta is a wholesome un-manipulated text, in which, the older sections belong to the stratosphere of the second millennium BC and the later ones are pre-Achaemenid.[3]

Two words are essential to the understanding of the Avesta and the kingly ideology that prevailed in ancient Iran. The first is Av. *chithra*/MP *chihr*. For years, the word *chihr*—in the Sasanian kingly slogan of "*chihr az yazatān*"—had been translated as seed, origin, or nature, thereby conferring divine status to Sasanian kings. When I first objected to such translations in 2003, and suggested that *chihr* therein actually reflected the king's *farr*/OP *khvarenah*, it created much resentment; and by the time I extended it to the translation of Av. *chithra* (in 2006), Avestologists took it as an affront, even though, in the meantime Antonio Panaino had reached a similar interpretation for the Sasanian kingly slogan.[4] With the exception of Xavier Tremblay who advocated a new fresh look on the translation of *chithra* in 2008 (see Appendix II), not one Avestologist dared to acknowledge the problems arising from their wrong translation of this word.

As for the second word, *pārsa,* which constituted Darius's main claim to legitimacy when boasting to be "*pārsa* son of *pārsa*," I advocated that it designated a warrior-priest who officiated fire ceremonies. The correct understanding of this word has major implications for Avestan studies as well as Achaemenid history, and as such it has been met with silence on the surface, and negative comments in undercurrents. There again, except for Antonio Panaino who has taken my proposals into consideration,[5] most scholars prefer to ignore it. They may also decide to ignore the additional proofs presented here below, but they cannot do it indefinitely. They will have to either discredit their opponents with credible arguments, or lose credibility themselves. Those who cannot see the ridicule in translating *afsh-chithra* as "containing the seeds of water" will

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[3] At a conference held at the Collège de France, (*La religion des Achéménides: confrontation des sources*, Nov. 7-8, 2013), Clarisse Herrenschmidt, expressed astonishment at how the Avesta debate had culminated in a comprehensive work by Gherardo Gnoli (Gnoli 2000), which, instead of gaining acceptance and/or fostering more debates, had been relegated to oblivion, even though Gnoli had switched sides himself.

[4] Panaino 2004.

[5] Panaino (forthcoming).

inevitably fall on their face, perhaps by slipping on the very "seeds of water" that no one else but them could ever imagine!

The choice of Avestan script - In quoting the Avesta, I shall go back to the script devised by Bartholomae, which, as Ilya Gershevitch noted, "easily and accurately" conveys the Avestan pronunciation.[6] This is the script that the main Zoroastrian website (www.Avesta.org) uses, and where one finds easy access to all the main texts of Zoroastrian literature. It's a choice that may irritate the specialists who have adopted a new system. But my aim here is to reach as many non-Avestologists as possible, whom, I believe, can better equate Avestan words with New Persian ones through this system, and benefit from it, in the same way that I did. By any standard, it's easier to equate NP *div* with *daêva* of the old script, than with *daēuua* of the new script.

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[6] Gershevitch surmised that: "The new fashion of writing ... is by contrast ugly, uneconomic, and to laymen, whom alone it is intended to make happy (experts have no need of transcription), confusing"; Gershevitch 1995, 6.

Fig. 1 – The double-legged-*ankh* caricature of Apam Napāt used here as symbol of *āb-nāf*
(see fig. 9a, b)

PART I

The Textual Testimony

Fig. 2 – Anāhitā holding Apam Napāt' hand. Sasanian silver bottle, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, on loan to the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC

I.1 - Compromising Zoroaster's monotheistic vision

Old beliefs are hard to dislodge, and new religions need time to mature. That is perhaps what Darius (r. 522-486 BC) realized when he imposed his new omnipotent god, Ahura Mazdā, on Iranian nations. Darius pursued a trial and error tactic, while Xerxes (r. 486-65 BC) implemented harsher measures. Achaemenid religious policy then seems to have vacillated between old and new paradigms; and issues such as the choice of an aquatic deity remained unresolved to the very end of Achaemenid reign. After the Macedonian conquests, the Zoroastrian priesthood continued where the Achaemenids had left off. Their approach, however, was one of compromise, in order to attract the maximum number of believers to their cause.

In contravention of the monotheistic vision that Zoroaster had expounded in his Gathas, the Avesta compilers had no qualm in bringing additional deities into the Zoroastrian fold. In doing so, they chose pragmatism over religious intransigence. It's the same choice that the early Islamic propagandists were confronted with. By their doctrine, the defeated enemy had to convert to Islam or die, with the exception of the People of the Book, who could maintain their religion by paying a poll tax, the *jaziyya*. This exception was only meant to be available to Jews and Christians, but was extended to the Zoroastrians who also had a book—the Avesta—even though unconnected to the Abrahamic religions. It was a pragmatic decision; rather than exterminating the Zoroastrians and losing a substantial source of income, they were accepted as People of the Book if they paid the *jaziyya*. The early Zoroastrian priests also made a pragmatic choice. To attract a maximum number of people to their religion, they decided to incorporate popular gods into the Zoroastrian pantheon, albeit as Ahura Mazdā subordinates. The most popular of all Iranian gods was Mithra who had powerful solar credentials. To do away with him, Darius, whose Mazdā-worshipping fervor was no less than Zoroaster's, even tried to empower Ahura Mazdā with solar attributes in Bisotun (fig. 3); his maneuver must have backfired, for that was the first and last time he presented his all-powerful Ahura Mazdā with such an attribute.[7] Mithra was not an easy deity to displace, and that is probably why Zoroastrians preferred incorporating him into their pantheon rather than discarding him. If Mithra was appropriated, why not do the same with all other gods in order to achieve maximum acceptance? That's what they actually tried to do.

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[7] Soudavar 2010, 110-31; Soudavar 2014, 208-218.

There was, however, one god, Apam Napāt, who presented a serious problem for the Avesta compilers. He was a mighty god, an aquatic deity to whom life, and therefore creation, was originally attributed; because in the very dry conditions of the Iranian plateau water was life, and an aquatic deity was naturally perceived as the one who bestowed it.[8] In monotheistic religions, God is an all-powerful abstract entity who cannot share his ultimate power, that of creation, with any other entity. With the advent of Ahura Mazdā as an abstract and omnipotent god, creation had to be his prerogative, and the easiest solution was to eliminate Apam Napāt. That, however, went against the goal of attracting a large part of the general population to Zoroastrianism, since Apam Napāt was a much respected deity.[9] He was also closely linked to Mithra. This linkage was so strong that, despite all attempts to break it, multiple paired symbols of them have survived to this date (see sec. II.8), including in the name and structure of the Islamic *mihrāb (mehr-āb)*.[10] Negating Apam Napāt would have meant negating Mithra. It was difficult to keep one and not the other.

Apam Napāt had also become the underwater guardian of the *khvarenah*. If he was to be eliminated, a substitute aquatic deity was necessary to release the *khvarenah* from the waters. The aquatic female deity Anāhitā, who is first invoked by Artaxerxes II (r. 404-358 BC) in Achaemenid inscriptions, seems to have been conceived as such a substitute. Iranian bureaucratic procedures are normally very conservative, and continue from one administration to the other. Invoking Mithra and Anāhitā, after Ahura Mazdā, by Artaxerxes II was certainly a major departure from past Achaemenid practices. But more surprising is the elimination of Anāhitā in the inscriptions of Artaxerxes III (r. 358-338 BC).[11] It is clearly indicative of a major ideological conflict in the acceptance of Anāhitā: Whether she was suitable to replace Apam Napāt or not? It's symptomatic of a persisting dilemma that continued up to the Sasanian era, and vividly marked their shifting ideology. Orthodox kings would invoke Anāhitā, while the less orthodox ones would portray Apam Napāt and/or Mithra, as their supporters.[12]

This conflict had inevitable reverberations in the Avesta. Jean Kellens, who divided

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[8] Soudavar 2014, 191.

[9] Apam Napāt's epithet of *ahura* (lord) lingered on in the Avesta, despite his rivalry with Ahura Mazdā; Boyce 1986. See also sec. I.8 below.

[10] Soudavar 2014, 293-98.

[11] Artaxerxes II (*A2 Sd*): … May Ahura Mazdā, Anāhitā and Mithra protect me, and whatever I have done, from all evil." Artaxerxes III (*A3 Pa*): … Artaxerxes the King says: May Ahura Mazdā and Mithra protect me, and this country, and all that I have done."

[12] Soudavar 2014,159-61.

Zoroastrian liturgies in to two bundles that he named Proto-Yasna-A and Proto-Yasna-B, primarily saw these liturgies as two sets composed in different times.[13] His arguments, however, show much cross-referencing and cross-borrowing between the two, which is indicative of contemporaneity. A close analysis of the two reveals in fact two different approaches to the water-deity dilemma. In one, Anāhitā replaced Apam Napāt as an all powerful aquatic goddess who dispensed the Aryan *khvarenah*, and in the other, the aquatic deity of old, i.e., Apam Napāt, was favored albeit in a subdued fashion.[14]

What stands out in their endeavor is how they discredited other deities, and reused them in an expanded pantheon of gods subordinated to Ahura Mazdā. Their most difficult task was to find ways to reintegrate Apam Napāt (Apam Naphāt?), a deity who was perceived as the main rival to Ahura Mazdā, and the one who was initially branded as *daeva*. The subtle ways by which they achieved this is a testimony to their mastery in the art of sophistry, at a level seldom seen in the history of religions.

I.2 - The revelatory passages

Even though the Avesta is comprised of a series of texts that were doctored to hide, or diminish, the importance of popular Iranian deities, it nevertheless contains passages that pertain to an un-doctored past. A passage related to Zoroaster's birth, for instance, reveals the dominance of the Mithra/Apam Napāt tandem in Median kingly ideology.

Indeed, to emphasize the greatness of their prophet, Avesta compilers proffered that his birth ushered in a new era of prosperity, and brought greatness to the Iranian people. To justify it, they had to pin his birthdate to an extraordinary event. The most important event that marked the early history of the Iranian people—and put them on the map so to speak—was the sack of the Assyrian capital of Nineveh by a coalition of Iranians led by the Medes, circa 614 BC.[15] But the Medes who had driven Zoroaster out of his fiefdom of Raga could not be praised in conjunction with this momentous event.[16] The solution was to refer to it by its religious repercussions rather than territorial conquests, i.e., by Mithra and Apam Napāt being jointly praised in a wider empire.

The formation of an empire necessitated an appropriate kingly ideology, and that of

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[13] Kellens 1998.

[14] Soudavar 2014, 222-25.

[15] As per the "258 Axiom" of Zoroastrianism, Zoroaster started preaching at the age of thirty, 258 years before the advent of Alexander. His birthday can therefore be calculated to the year 618 BC, i.e., some four years before the fall of Nineveh.

[16] Soudavar 2014, 233-41.

the Medes seems to have been built on the supremacy of a deity pair, Mithra and Apam Napāt, who controlled two different realms: Mithra was a sun god who presided over daytime, while Apam Napāt was an aquatic god who presided over nighttime. They had similar but complementary functions. Full authority was predicated on the backing of both. With the formation of the Median Empire, this Iranian deity pair received recognition beyond Iranian nations, and into conquered territories. It is thus that in the Farvardin Yasht, the expanded recognition that befell these two deities was attributed to the auspicious birth of Zoroaster:

> *Yt.*13:94
> Let us rejoice, for a priestly man is *born*, the Spitamid Zarathushtra...
> **From now on** the good Mazdean Religion will spread through all the seven Climes of the Earth
> *Yt.*13:95
> **From now on**, Mithra … will promote all supreme *authorities* of the nations and will pacify those in *revolt*.
> **From now on,** strong Apam Napāt will promote all the supreme *authorities* of the nations and will subjugate all those in *revolt*

Such an artifice only became available to Zoroastrianism when it shed aside its monotheistic outlook and expanded its pantheon to include Mithra and Apam Napāt, as Ahura Mazda subordinates. Nevertheless, it betrays a pre-existing conception that divided the world into two realms, each presided by its own deity. Hence, two deities performing the same tasks: Mithra operating in daytime, and Apam Napāt in nighttime, both dealing with the same political issues of upholding *authority* and crushing *revolt*.

In another instance, the author of *Yt.*19.52 characterizes Apam Napāt with a legend of old, "who created men, who shaped men," which qualified him as a creator; it echoes the powers of the Vedic Apām Napāt, who was also a creator god in his own context.[17] Without this slip of the tongue we may have never been able to assess the Iranian Apam Napāt's past importance and the reason for his demotion. He had creative powers that clashed with those of Ahura Mazdā, whom later Zoroastrianism was promoting as the

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[17] On the Iranian Apam Napāt, Mary Boyce wrote: "The crucial verse Yašt 19.52 shows that in one of his aspects the ancient Apąm Napāt was a mighty creator-god, "who created men, who shaped men" (*yō nərūuš da'a, yō nərūuš tataša*); but in Zoroastrianism Ahura Mazdā is venerated as supreme Creator, and Apąm Napāt thus came to be robbed of this function." On the Vedic Apām Napāt, she described him as the one "who has created all beings through his power as Asura" (*Rigveda* 2.35.2); Boyce 1986. Kellens, however, says: "La relative *yō nərš tataša* « qui a taillé les hommes » lui attribue curieusement une activité anthropogonique qui est en principe l'apanage exclusif d'Ahura Mazdā. Or tout ceci traduit des conceptions qui sont également repérables dans les hymnes védiques d'Apām Napāt"; Jean Kellens lecture of Dec. 17, 2010.

unique creator.[18] An Apam Napāt who "created men," had really no place in the pantheon that later Zoroastrian priests constructed.

While Mithra was sanitized, and integrated into the Zoroastrian pantheon through a dedicated hymn (*Mehr Yasht, Yt*.13), Apam Napāt was stripped of his, and only referred to here and there, mostly within hymns dedicated to other deities. Also, by aggrandizing the role of Zoroaster, Zoroastrian priests hoped to achieve greater status for themselves. Thus, the ultimate *khvarenah*, i.e., the Aryan *khvarenah*, was taken away from kingship and allocated to Zoroaster. It was done indirectly and through the bias of utterances by the arch-enemy of Iran, Afrāsiyāb, who sought the Aryan *khvarenah* from the deity guarding it underwater. Oddly the *khvarenah* guardian differs from one liturgy to the other. In *Yt*.19, the Aryan *khvarenah* is guarded and/or released by Apam Napāt, but in *Yt*.5, the Aryan *khvarenah* is supposedly released by Anāhitā. In both, Afrāsiyāb recognizes it as belonging to Zoroaster. But this went against the Achaemenid kingly ideology, in which the possession of the Aryan *khvarenah* was the prerogative of Achaemenid kings.[19] No Achaemenid king would have tolerated the permanent attribution of the Aryan *khvarenah* to Zoroaster. Imagine a priest, who had the obligation to recite Avestan hymns five times a day, would utter under Darius's palace that Zoroaster was the possessor of the Aryan Khvarenah and the universal king under whom no one could achieve a higher status than a mere *dahyu-paiti* or tribal chieftain (*Y.19.18*). Darius would have cut his nose, tongue and limbs! [20]

Thus, none of these hymns could have passed through—and survived—the Achaemenid era; they must be post-Achaemenid compositions. They were probably conceived under the Seleucids who did not care what Zoroastrian priests thought or did. More importantly, *yashts* 19 and 5 are indicative of two different outlooks for the supreme aquatic deity; one favored Apam Napāt, and the other promoted Anāhitā. As we shall see, the latter also promoted Anāhitā as the anti-*daeva* and the champion of Zoroastrian orthodoxy.

I.3 - The *daeva* problem

In Zoroaster's Gathas, where Ahura Mazdā is praised, traditional Iranian gods are

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[18] At the beginning of a hymn that gave Zoroaster world rulership (*Y*19.18), for instance, Ahura Mazdā is declared "maker of the corporeal world" and the one created the sky, water, earth, cow, plants, fire, the righteous man, and more generally, all of the corporeal world, and the good things "imbued with the *chithra* (Light) of righteousness" (*Y*19.2).

[19] From Darius onward, they all claimed to be *arya chisa* (i.e., beaming with the Aryan *khvarenah*)

[20] Soudavar 2014, 194.

referred to as *daeva*s, and are not demonized.[21] Unlike other Indo-European languages in which *daeva* derivatives have kept a positive connotation (Sanskrit *deva*, Latin *deus*, French *dieu*), in the Iranian context, *daeva*s were turned into demoniac *div*s that populate folkloric tales and the *Shāhnāmeh* stories. But gods are not easily turned into demons in the normal evolutionary course of religions. Something drastic must have happened, producing a religious cataclysm that turned good gods into bad ones. As I have argued elsewhere, this cataclysm was provoked by the general massacre of the Median magi dubbed as Magophonia by Herodotus. It was unleashed by Darius I and his six co-conspirators against the usurper magus Gaumata and his Median magi supporters. Yet as drastic as such a massacre must have been, it was directed against political adversaries and not gods; Darius's adversaries were the Median magi and not their gods.

Moreover, the *div*s that are depicted in the *Shāhnāmeh*—whether in text or image—seem to be political adversaries, since they fight with their opponents, take them prisoners, negotiate their release, and, more generally, act like humans. More than anything, they represent the enemy of the state, those whom in today's political parlance are frequently labeled as "terrorists." One must therefore seek the reflection of the demonization process of the *daeva*s in the political arena, i.e., the official Achaemenid documents, rather than in the Avesta that was assembled at the tail end of this process. Achaemenid inscriptions provide four different evolutionary stages:

1- Darius - The enemies that Darius had to combat were those who questioned his legitimacy and sought to establish themselves on the throne; and the Median magi that he massacred were primarily political adversaries who had tried to usurp the throne. He did not demonize any of the ancient gods, but simply tried to switch their powers to Ahura Mazdā (see sec. II.3). Eventually, however, Darius acknowledged other gods and sought their help.[22] In the case of Mithra, he even upheld the sanctity of his sanctuaries.[23]

Darius's main preoccupation was a tactical as well as a theological one: The Median day/night dichotomy had to be eradicated from the popular mind before Ahura-Mazdā could be accepted as a uniquely powerful god. As his deputy on earth, Darius emphasized that his commands were to be obeyed "by day and by night" (*DB*§7-8). This finds visual expression on Achaemenid tombs where the king is portrayed as a warrior-priest (*pārsa*) officiating a fire ceremony on behalf of Ahura Mazdā, who, from above

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[21] Herrenschmidt & Kellens 1993.

[22] *DPd*: "this is what I request from Ahura Mazdā, with all the gods; may Ahura Mazdā, with all the *gods*, fulfill my wishes"; Lecoq 1997, 228.

[23] Soudavar 2014, 234-35.

the fire, is making an approving gesture to him. To emphasize that the king's officiating function covered both nighttime and daytime ceremonies, a sun and moon combination is depicted on the far right of the scene (fig. 4).[24]
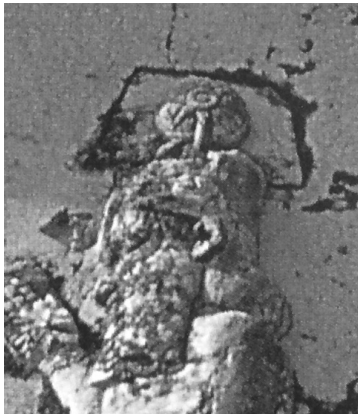

Fig. 3 – Solar emblem added to Ahura Mazdā's hat. Bisotun.
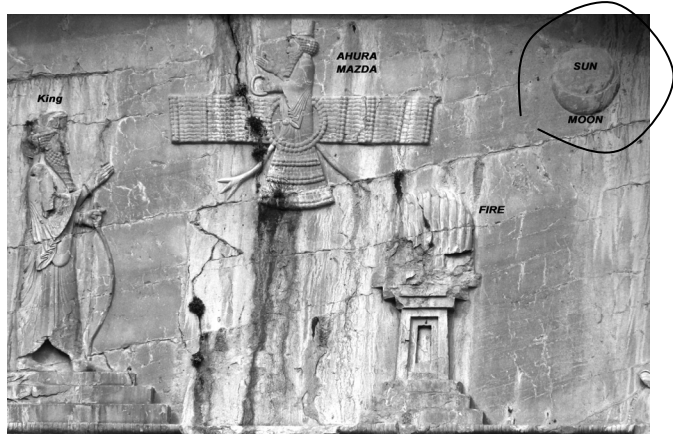
Fig. 4 – Achaemenid *pārsa* king officiating fire ceremonies *by day and by night* (i.e., under sun and moon). Naqsh-e Rostam

Fig. 5 – Lion and bull with sun and moon symbols on a seal from Sardes (Cahill 2010, 185)

Fig. 6 – Lion-Bull combat as symbol of the perpetual day/night revolutions (Soudavar 2014, 214)

In the same vein, Darius devised the impressive lion-bull icons of Persepolis as a symbol of perpetual day/night revolutions in order to blur the separation of the night and

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[24] I had previously thought that this double symbol represented two phases of the moon, i.e., as a crescent and full disk (Soudavar 2010, 56; Soudavar 2014, 99), but I am now convinced that this double symbolism evokes two distinct situations, which is more appropriate for day-night representation than the continuously evolving shape of the moon.

day realms (fig. 6),which was disseminated throughout the Achaemenid empire (fig. 5). The day and night dichotomy was thus abolished through amalgamation.[25]

2- Xerxes (r. 486-465 BC) – As the scion of both Cyrus (r. 559-530 BC) and Darius, Xerxes's legitimacy couldn't be challenged by outsiders. Therefore if he stated in his *XPh* inscriptions that:

> "among these nations there was a place where previously *daivas* (Av. *daeva*) were worshiped. Afterwards, by the grace of Ahura Mazdā, I destroyed that sanctuary of *daiva*s, and I proclaimed: 'The *daiva*s shall not be worshiped!'"

his enemies must have challenged him in a way that threatened the supremacy of Ahura Mazdā, the god who supposedly conferred authority to Xerxes. That challenge must have been primarily placed under the banner of Apam Napāt whose life-giving prerogatives and creation powers clashed with those of Ahura Mazdā. The destroyed sanctuary was where Apam Napāt and most probably Mithra were praised, to the exclusion of Ahura Mazdā. Sanctuary destruction meant demonization of the *daeva*s worshipped therein.[26] And as I have argued elsewhere, the demonization process of the old gods started with Xerxes, who escalated the iconographical rhetoric against the *daeva*s, by increasing the number of combat scenes with them in his throne hall, and aggrandizing them by blowing their sizes out of proportion; and the nation that Xerxes targeted was the Māzandarān, where the *daeva*s maintained their exalted status long after the demise of the Achaemenids.[27]

3- Artaxerxes II – In the succession struggle that pitted Artaxerxes II with his brother Cyrus the Younger, the latter was clearly counting on the support of those longing for the Median ideology, as he donned Median robes and dedicated a special procession chariot to Mithra.[28] Despite victory over his younger brother, Artaxerxes had to show that he was in full possession of the Aryan *khvarenah*. To do so, he needed to invoke two gods who controlled the *khvarenah*, one aquatic and one solar. Mithra could be invoked without posing a major challenge for Ahura Mazdā, but Apam Napāt needed a substitute. Hence the choice of Anāhitā, a river deity who may have been popular in the eastern provinces of the empire (see sec. II.10).

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[25] Soudavar 2010, 127-28; Soudavar 2014, 214-16.

[26] Similarly, Lecoq argues that the word *āyadanā,* which in reality means "religious practices" has been translated as "temple" in the Babylonian and Elamite versions of the Bisotun inscriptions, because in the Mesopotamian context, the destruction or reconstruction of temples was a normal consequence of religious changes; Lecoq 1995.

[27] Soudavar 2014, 241-48.

[28] Xenophon (Cyr. 8.3.12); Soudavar 2014, 333-34.

4- Artaxerxes III - The fact that Artaxerxes III dropped Anāhitā from his invocations is of major importance to our study, since it points to a rejection. Clearly, Anāhitā was unacceptable to an important political faction and was dropped from official statements.

These four stages point to an ideological conflict in gestation, in which, the ruling elite was trying to impose Ahura Mazdā at the expense of traditional gods worshipped by a majority of their subjects. It resulted into a factionalism that erupted into rebellions under Xerexes and Artaxerxes II. By fear of persecution, some of these factions were driven underground in the guise of Mithraic societies that preserved the Median day/night dichotomy associated with the deity pair Mithra/Apam Napāt. This dichotomy and its resulting symbolism are best summarized in the following table:

Mithra	Lord of the Day	sun	light/fire	sunflower	lion, sun cross
Apam Napāt	Lord of the Night	moon	water	lotus, reed	snake, scorpion

More importantly, two symbols of these underground societies, namely the snake and the scorpion, became emblematic of the enemy, i.e., the *daeva*-worshippers. Since the snake was always associated with water, especially under the Elamites, and the scorpion was a nocturnal animal, it stands to reason that their subsequent qualification as *khrafstar* in the Avesta was due to their perceived association with Apam Napāt, the aquatic Lord of the Night.[29] Otherwise, why should any of god's creatures be qualified as a noxious animal that had to be killed?

In what follows, we shall not only see how the Avesta reflects the various Achaemenid attempts to solve the Apam Napāt dilemma, but how Anāhitā was meant to supplant him.

I.4 - Anāhitā, the anti-*daevā* goddess

The preamble to most of the *yasht*s, including that of Anāhitā (*Yt.*5), has a tripartite sentence, which I see as a "profession of orthodoxy":

(a) fravarâne mazdayasnô, zarathushtrish, (b) vî-daêvô, (c) ahura-tkaêshô
(a) I profess to be a worshipper of Mazdā, a follower of Zarathushtra, (b) **against *daeva*s** (*vî-daêvô*), (c) and of Ahuric religion (*ahura-tkaêshô*, NP *ahura-kish*).

To give it more weight, and to present it as a fundamental doctrine, it was also put in the mouth of Gayomard (*Yt.*13.87-89), the Primordial Man who generated the Aryans.

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[29] Soudavar 2014, 79-86, and 167.

While part (a) of this proclamation is clearly a profession of faith, part (b) is antagonistic and enrolls the faithful in a fight against the enemy. As for (c), it's symptomatic of the religious amalgam that the Avesta compilers concocted in the post-Achaemenid era, and that we shall further explicate in sec. I.9. What (b) indicates, however, is that the fight against the *daeva*-worshippers—initiated by Xerxes—had not been resolved by the end of the Achaemenid era, and that the Avesta compilers foresaw more combats ahead. It ties in well with our explanation that the so called *daeva*-worshippers not only left their imprint in Persepolis by defacing Darius and Xerxes, but kept their reverence for the *daeva*s long after the Achaemenids; they survived as underground societies and/or in remote areas such as the Māzandarān.[30] Thus, the fight against the *daeva*s was a perpetual fight that came to define orthodoxy.

Interestingly, parts (b) and (c) of the "profession of orthodoxy" are symmetrically reflected in the first stanza of *Yt.5*, where Anāhitā is qualified as anti-*daeva* (*vî-daêvô*) and of "Ahuric Religion."[31] She is presented as the champion of orthodoxy and the deity who leads the fight against the *daeva*s. And to drive this message into the faithful's mind, this stanza is repeated 29 more times in a hymn that has a total of 133 stanzas. In this repeated stanza, Ahura Mazdā introduces Anāhitā to Zoroaster, as an all powerful deity worthy of praise:

> " Ahura Mazdā said to Spitama Zarathushtra: 'Praise her for me, O Spitama Zarathushtra! the wide-expanding and health-giving Ardvi Sura Anāhitā, *who is against the daeva*s *and is of Ahuric religion*, who is worthy of sacrifice in the corporeal world, worthy of prayer in the corporeal world; the life-increasing Righteous, the herd-increasing Righteous, the fold-increasing Righteous, the wealth-increasing Righteous, the nation-increasing Righteous"

Repetition seems to be a common technique of the Avesta compilers when trying to introduce an unfamiliar notion or one that went against common perception. They hammer it in. The repetitive "Mazdā-created" label that precedes almost all mentions of *khvarenah* in the Avesta, for instance, was used to incorporate this important concept of power into Zoroastrianism.[32] Similarly, the repetition of the above-mentioned stanza was to establish the importance of this newly introduced aquatic deity within an expanded Zoroastrian pantheon.

What's more, through subtle references to her field of action, her origins, and powers, she is introduced not as a mere aquatic deity but one destined to supplant the powerful

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[30] Soudavar 2014, 256-58 and 324.
[31] Dustkhāh 2002, I:297.
[32] Soudavar 2010, 122-27.

Mithra and Apam Napāt deity pair.[33] To do so, like Darius who had insisted that his orders be universally carried "by day and by night," Anāhitā is presented as one who controls the waters "by night and by day" (*Yt*.5.15). But to differentiate her personality from Apam Napāt who is the Lord of the Night, Anāhitā instructs Zoroaster to only praise her from "from sun-rise till sunset" (*Yt*.5.91). Meanwhile, to diminish Apam Napāt, he is denied a dedicated *yasht* in the Avesta and is only praised in the *afternoon* prayers of the Uzerin Gah, along with a group of minor deities.

Furthermore, to make Anāhitā more powerful than Mithra, she is not only given a *quadrigae* with four white horses (*Yt*.5.13), as Mithra was (*Yt*.10.125), but she is said to descend from a place higher than the Sun and through a course that snakes, scorpions, and the likes, cannot harm her (*Yt*.5.90). As snakes and scorpions are *khrafstar*s, and the quintessential emblems of *daeva*-worshippers, Anāhitā's role as the anti-*daeva* goddess is once more emphasized here, with perhaps an oblique hint that Mithra—who rides with the Sun—follows a different course, one that can take him to the *khrafstar*s.

That *Yt*.5 was composed with an eye on Mithra's *yasht* is also apparent from what Kellens had observed about one of its stanzas. In *Yt*.5.53, he saw an incompatibility where three plural adjectives (*rathaêshtârô, jaidhyañtô,* and *tanubyô*) describe the heroism of a lone hero, Tus (Tusô); whereas, in *Yt*.10.11, the exact same sentence, with the same adjectives, qualify warriors (in plural) who praise Mithra. He concludes that the grammatically correct plural form of *Yt*.10.11 was the original, and *Yt*.5.53 a copy.[34]

Clearly, Anāhitā was in competition with both Mithra and Apam Napāt, and its *yasht* was supposed to project her as more powerful than both.

I.5 - Power indicators

If Anāhitā was to supplant the Median deity pair Mithra/Apam Napāt who conferred authority and vanquished the enemy (*Yt*.13.95), a simple declaration of her powers—as in the first stanza—would not suffice to convince the faithful, even if repeated 30 times. Further demonstration of her authority and powers were necessary. To be more convincing, the Avestan authors make use of four techniques in this hymn: (1) they enlist a string of twenty *supplicants* who solicit her support to achieve greatness or to combat the enemy, (2) they use the importance of *offerings* as evidence of their belief in her

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[33] Interestingly, Anāhitā herself seems to be unsure of her acceptance, when she asks in *Yt*.5.8: "Who will praise me? Who will offer me a sacrifice?"

[34] Kellens 1978, 265. For my own views on this grammatical error, see note 115 supra.

power, (3) they dilute the power of her rival by *sharing* his prerogatives with other entities, and (4) by *diminishing* his stature.

1- Supplicants - Out of the 133 stanzas of her *yasht*, 87 stanzas narrate 20 episodes in which renowned supplicants ask for her support and—depending on them being friend or foe—their wishes are granted or denied. In an ultimate display of sophistry, the first supplicant is no less than Ahura Mazdā himself (*Yts*.5.16-19), as he—the Creator—*begs* Anāhitā to intercede with Zoroaster, to propagate the good religion on his behalf! Thus, Ahura Mazdā, Anāhitā, and Zoroaster are associated in a cozy triad of orthodoxy in which all three are in need of one another. This close association is further emphasized in *Yt*.5.89, where Zoroaster and Anāhitā appear as Ahura Mazdā's acolytes and champions of righteousness (read orthodoxy):

> (Soudavar translation) *Yt*.5.89: (Anāhitā to Zoroaster:) "O candid, righteous Son of Spitama! Ahura Mazdā has established *you* as the master/guide (*ratu*) of the corporeal world; Ahura Mazdā has established *me* as the protector of all righteousness (*vîspayå ashaonô stôish)*."[35]

Among the supplicants appear powerful mythological figures from the Indo-Iranian lore, such as Jamshid (Yima), the dragon Azhi-dahāga, and the dragon-slayer Fereydun (Thraetona). The problem though is that none of these figures had any prior encounter, in the Vedic mythology or elsewhere, with Anāhitā. They clearly indicate a deliberate fabrication by the Avestan authors, who, besides glorifying Anāhitā, use the process to further empower Zoroaster. Thus in *Yts*.5.40-43, Afrāsiyāb (Frangrasyān) begs Anāhitā to enable him to "catch the *khvarenah*, that is waving in the middle of the sea Vouru-Kasha, that belongs to the Aryan people, born or unborn, and to righteous Zoroaster." The author subtly uses the process to empower Zoroaster through the words of Afrāsiyāb, who avows that the Aryan *khvarenah*, i.e., the ultimate source of power, belongs to Zoroaster. Anāhitā, of course, refuses his request.

Recognition by the powerful enemy of Iranians certainly looks more potent than a

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[35] By choosing to translate *asha* as "Orderly" in English, and "Agencement" in French, Skjaervo and Kellens have respectively added unnecessary wrinkles to the comprehension of this word. It's true that *asha* evokes a correctly organized system, but more than order it insists on the right way of things. And since English offers a great number of derivatives for "right," they can be effectively used to translate *asha* derivatives. Previous translators, such as Darmesteter, had used them, and with better results. Thus, the last sentence *vîspayå ashaonô stôish,* which literally means "the entire rightful existence," is better rendered as "all righteousness" in plain English. And the adjectives *erezvô ashâum* used to qualify Zoroaster are better rendered as "O candid, righteous ...," rather than the literal translation "O Upright , Orderly ..." that Skjaervo provides; Skjaervo 2006, 78. Similarly, the translation "corporeal world" of old seems far more appropriate for the material world that Skjaervo translates as "Bony Existence" because the Avesta literally describes it as a world "with skeleton" (*astvaite*).

straightforward proclamation to that effect. Thus, the same technique is used in *Yt*.19, but slightly differently. In *Yt*.5, Afrāsiyāb solicits Anāhitā to give him the Aryan *khvarenah*, but in *Yts*.19.52-63 he seeks it on his own, plunging three times into the waters, where the Aryan *khvarenah* had finally landed after Jamshid had lost it. He would then rise up empty-handed from the waters and utter each time that he could *not* catch "the *khvarenah* that belongs to the Aryan people, born or unborn, and to righteous Zoroaster." Both *yashts* empower Zoroaster with the *khvarenah,* albeit *Yt*.19 does it more forcefully, as Afrāsiyāb's utterance is repeated three times. Although, it's not clear who copied whom, one can nevertheless recognize that in copying one another, the authors of these two *yashts* pursued different objectives. In *Yt*.19, the *khvarenah* is left underwater to be guarded by Apam Napāt, which implies that he had to release it for Afrāsiyāb to grab it, while in *Yt*.5, the control of the *khvarenah* is in the hands of Anāhitā. It reflects the tensions generated by the introduction of Anāhitā as a purveyor of *khvarenah,* in lieu of Apam Napāt.

2- Offerings – Important offerings clearly elevate the status of the receiving deity. In *Yt*.5, eighteen of the supplicants offer 100 stallions, 1000 bulls, and 10000 sheep in honor of Anāhitā. These exaggerated numbers may simply reflect a literary formula, but chances are that they were also emulating propagandistic slogans previously formulated by the Achaemenids. Indeed, in his analysis of Herodotus's account of Xerxes sacrificing 1000 bulls to Athena in Priam (*Her*. VII. 43), Gherardo Gnoli rightly concludes that it must have been based on Persian propaganda targeting the Greeks, since they had previously done the same against Babylonians and Egyptians.[36] But, whereas Gnoli supposes that the sacrifice of 1000 bulls to Athena was modelled after the Avestan sacrifice of 1000 bulls to Anāhitā, I believe otherwise: It's the Avestan authors who adapted kingly propaganda to their needs, and not the other way around. From time immemorial, priests had used kingly images, paraphernalia, and protocols, to project majesty for their gods and the prophets. Thus, like the Aryan *khvarenah* that was appropriated for Zoroaster, royal sacrifice propaganda was also appropriated for Anāhitā.

3- Sharing – Strangely the two previous techniques are also used in the short hymn of a minor goddess Drvāspā (*Yt*.9.1-32), solely composed of episodes in which seven supplicants provide the exact same offerings (100 stallions, 1000 bulls, and 10000 sheep). With the exception of one supplicant, Haoma, the other six are the same as those from *Yt*.5 (i.e., Haoshyangha, Yima, Thraetaona, Haosrava, Zoroaster, and Vishtāspa);

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[36] Gnoli 1998, 63.

they are all "good" supplicants, and their wishes are thus granted. Their requests, however, are not the same as in *Yt*.5, but complimentary ones. For instance, whereas in *Yt*.5 Zoroaster requests Anāhitā to facilitate the conversion of Vishtāspa to the good religion, Drvāspā is asked in *Yt*.9 to facilitate the conversion of Vishtāspa's wife, Hutaosā; or, whereas in *Yt*.5 Yima requests universal kingship and governance abilities, in *Yt*.9, he makes a compassionate request to do away with old age, atmospheric vagaries, and nourishment desires. Moreover, these same episodes reappear in *Yt*.17—which is a hymn to the goddess Ashi—but without specifying what was offered.

There have been many attempts to explain these redundancies, but none offer a cogent answer.[37] Whatever the reason, the net effect of this redundancy is a dilution of powers. If other goddesses can grant requests, as Anāhitā does, the latter's aura will be diminished, but so will be Apam Napāt's. One possible explanation may therefore be that, after an attempt to raise the prestige of Anāhitā, a compromise solution was sought by which other goddesses were added to rein in her powers, and at the same time, diminish Apam Napāt's. As we shall see, this blurring technique is also used in *Yt*.8 to further dilute Apam Napāt's powers.

4- Diminution – For Apam Napāt to be an acceptable god in the Zoroastrian pantheon, his stature needed to be diminished. Dilution of prerogatives was one way to achieve this; another way was to diminish his stature through loss of popularity. That is what *Yt*.5.72 is about. It emphasizes a switch of allegiance from Apam Napāt to Anāhitā by prominent community leaders or commanders. Unfortunately, Avestologists' lack of understanding for this has resulted in incomprehensible translations. Skjaervo, for instance, is clearly hesitant about his own proposal, and puts an asterisk next to the translation that he provides for the Avestan word *upa*:

(Skjaervo 2007, I:76) *Yt*. 5.72: Ashavazdah son of Pourudhakhshti sacrificed to her, and Ashavazdah and Thrita, sons of Sayuzhdri, *approaching (*upa*) the lofty lord, the one in command, the radiant Scion of the Waters with fleet horses, a hundred stallions, a thousand bulls, ten thousand rams.

Skjaervo, who systematically substitutes the literal translation "Scion of the Waters" for Apam Napāt, proposes "approaching" for *upa,* while Darmesteter chooses "by" from meanings that Avestan dictionaries offer for *upa* (= upon, onto, near, towards, *by*, up to):

(Darmesteter 1898) *Yt*.5.72: To her did Ashavazdah, the son of Pouru-dhakhshti, and

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[37] Kellens 1996.

Ashavazdah and Thrita, the sons of Sayuzhdri, offer up a sacrifice, with a hundred horses, a thousand oxen, ten thousand lambs, by (*upa*) Apam Napat, the tall lord, the lord of the females, the bright and swift-horsed.

In Skjaervo's translation, three supplicants sacrifice to Anāhitā to get close to Apam Napāt; but in Darmesteter's translation, Apam Napāt becomes a mere helper.[38] Neither makes sense. Why should lofty epithets be used for auxiliaries with undefined functions? In reality, *upa* is used here as "onto," in order to reveal the supplicants' linkage to Apam Napāt. Similar to English, where "being onto something" evokes devotion or full focus, *upa* describes supplicants who were previously devotees of Apam Napāt, but were now sacrificing to Anāhitā. This stanza should therefore be translated as:

(Soudavar) *Yt*.5.72: Ashavazdah son of Pourudhākhshti and Ashavazdah and Thrita, sons of Sāyuzhdri, who were onto (i.e., worshipped) the blazing lord,[39] the shining commander, the swift-horsed Apam Napāt, now sacrificed to her a hundred stallions, a thousand bulls, ten thousand rams

The use of lofty titles for Apam Napāt only enhanced the prestige of Anāhitā, because it conveyed the idea that the said supplicants had dropped a mighty god for an even mightier one. Authors and poets often weave older composition into their own, and here, the Avestan author saw no harm in using Apam Napāt's former epithets, but in so doing, he also opened a vista unto how this deity was previously viewed.

This defection scenario goes hand in hand with the reduced prayer time allocated to Apam Napāt, since he was to be praised only in the afternoon, and as part of the Uzerin Gah liturgy. It's in contrast to the symmetrical roles envisaged in *Yt*.13.95 for Mithra and Apam Napāt that pertain to two well-defined symmetrical time spans, which can only relate to a day/night division. In that division, Mithra was the Lord of Daytime and Apam Napāt the Lord of Nighttime.[40] Apam Napāt's previous hold on nighttime also transpires here and there in the Avesta, as in *Yt*.8.4, where Tishtrya (Sirius) is said to have obtained its brilliance from him (see below). As such, prayers for Apam Napāt must have been formerly conducted at nighttime; and their shift to the afternoon must constitute one more

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[38] I had previously accepted the translation "by" for *upa,* to deduce that Apam Napāt had become a mere auxiliary to Anāhitā (Soudavar 2014, 223). It must now be corrected even though both translations diminish the stature of Apam Napāt.

[39] I explain the translation of *berezañtem ahurem* as "blazing lord" in sec. I.8.

[40] Boyce argues that Apam Napāt was an avatar of Varuna; Boyce 1986. My guess is that Apam Napāt was implanted on Varuna as an import. In either case, his closeness to Varuna provides one more argument for defining nighttime as Apam Napāt's domain, since Varuna was essentially associated with the night, and the Vedic Mitra was associated with the day.

attempt to dissociate Apam Napāt from his nighttime domain. Our analysis of *Yts*.94-95 (next section) shall further confirm this assessment.

I.6 - Purifying the libations

Various translations of stanzas 94 and 95 of the Ābān Yasht clearly demonstrate that philology may not be of much help if the hymn's purpose is not understood. To illustrate this point, these two stanzas are reproduced hereunder, along with three existing translations:

Yt.5.94. *paiti dim peresat zarathushtrô aredvîm sûrem anâhitãm, aredvî sûre anâhite kem idha tê zaothrå bavaiñti ẏase-tava frabareñte drvañtô daêvayasnånghô pasca hû frâshmô-dâitîm.* *Yt*.5.95. *âat aoxta aredvî sûra anâhita, erezvô ashâum spitama zarathushtra [ni-vayaka₁ ni-pashnaka₂ apa-skaraka₃ apa-xraosaka₄] imã paiti-vîseñte ẏã mâvôya pasca vazeñti xshvash-satâish hazangremca ẏâ nôit haiti vîseñti daêvanãm haiti ẏasna.*

(Darmesteter 1898) *Yt*.5.94. 'Then Zarathushtra asked Ardvi Sura Anahita: "O Ardvi Sura Anahita! What becomes of those libations which the wicked worshippers of the *Daeva*s bring unto thee after the sun has set?" *Yt*.5.95. 'Ardvi Sura Anahita answered: "O pure, holy Spitama Zarathushtra! howling, clapping, hopping, and shouting, six hundred and a thousand *Daeva*s, who ought not to receive that sacrifice, receive those libations that men bring unto me after [the sun has set]."

(Skjaervo 2007, I:78) *Yt*.5.94 . Zarathustra asked her in turn, Ardvi Sura Anāhitā: O Ardvi Sura Anāhitā! *How do the libations of yours become here, which they offer as yours, the one possessed by the Lies who sacrifice to the old gods, after the sun has set? *Yt*.5.95. Thus she spoke, Ardvi Sura Anāhitā: O upright, Orderly Spitama [Zarathustra]! as to be "woe"d down, to be (ground) under the heels, as to be *laughed back, to be howled back, are they accepted, these (libations) that fly after me by six-hundreds and a thousand, which are not accepted at the sacrifice of the old gods.

(Malandra 1983, 127) *Yt*.5. 94. Zarathushtra asked her, Ardvi Sura Anāhitā: "O Ardvi Sura Anāhitā, now what becomes of the libations to you when the *daeva*-worshipping *drugvant*s bring them to you after sunset?" *Yt*.5.95. Then Ardvi Sura Anāhitā said: O upright righteous Spitamid Zarathushtra; the frightful(?), the ... (?), the slanderous (*daeva*-worshippers) install themselves by these (libations).

All three translations of stanza 94 agree with one another, except for the "after sunset" time constraint. While Darmesteter and Malandra see it as the time when libations were brought in, Skjaervo correctly perceives it as the time when the old gods, i.e. the *daeva*s, were worshipped.[41] As for their translations of the second stanza, they differ widely. In

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[41] Clearly, the time constraint *pasca hû frâshmô-dâitîm* (after the sun has set) affects *daeva-yasnånghô* (those

Darmesteter's, 1600 of the wicked ones take hold of libations destined for Anāhitā, which projects weakness rather than strength for Anāhitā. In Skjaervo's though, 1600 libations pursue aimlessly Anāhitā in the air; but we are not told why, and for what purpose. As for Malandra, he simply drops the towel and avows incomprehension. Overall, none of them makes sense.

The correct understanding of the stanza 94 is crucial for the understanding of stanza 95, because it lays out a problem for which stanza 95 provides a solution. If the problem is not understood, its solution won't be either. In stanza 94, Zarathushtra wants to know what must be done with libations that he characterizes in three ways: (a) they are destined for Anāhitā,[42] (b) they are "brought to use" (*frabareñte*) by the wicked ones, (c) for *daeva*-worshipping ceremonies *after sunset*.

Libations were used by the priesthood as means of communication with the gods, generally through two media, water or fire. From the standpoint of *Yt*.5, Anāhitā is the supreme goddess of the waters, and therefore any libation poured into water was inevitably considered to be hers, even though prepared by others, including *daeva*-worshippers. But no priest was ever able to collect and prepare the libation ingredients by himself; they were generally brought from the four corners of the realm, and then mixed and prepared by the priest. As most of the population, especially the peasantry, had still not converted to Zoroastrianism, these ingredients were mostly gathered by non-believers.[43] At issue here is the acceptability of water libations prepared with ingredients gathered by unsuitable people, who are characterized as worshipping *daeva*s after sunset. Nighttime being the realm of Apam Napāt, these *daeva*-worshippers are clearly those who still considered Apam Napāt as the god of nighttime.

When a group of people are demonized, they are automatically considered as vile and unclean. They can thus contaminate what they produce, or touch. That's what purity laws are created for: To clean what is contaminated by the unclean. The question here (what to do with water libations supplied by *daeva*-worshippers?) can have two answers: 1- They must be discarded, 2- They can be used, but must be purified. It's the latter that is advised here, and it's done by structuring the answer into three distinct parts.

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who worship the *daeva*s) after which it is placed, and not *frabareñte* (carried through) that appears far behind in the sentence.

[42] In this stanza, where Zoroaster is addressing Anāhitā, he qualifies the libations as *ẏase-tava*, meaning "for you" or "to you."

[43] If *daeva*-worshippers would switch allegiance, as the supplicants of *Yt*.5.72 did, and then prepare ingredients for water libations and deliver them in good faith for a sacrifice to Anāhitā, no such a problem would exist. Obviously, many of them did not convert.

First, in lieu of *zaothra* (libation), stanza 95 refers to this liquid matter by using the four processes that its ingredients are put through. They appear as a block—that I have bracketed within the Avestan text—and are described by four verbs: [what is *verb₁*, (what is) *verb₂*, (what is) *verb₃*, (what is) *verb₄*]. These verbs are preceded by the suffixes *ni* (down, under) or *apa* (away, apart), and reflect the processes described by Gherardo Gnoli for the preparation of libations: "The offering made to the waters at the conclusion of the Yasna was prepared by blending milk, the leaves of a plant, and the juice squeezed from the stems of a different plant."[44] Indeed, to squeeze the juice out of the stems, they need to be trampled, as grapes are in wineries; verb₂ (*ni-pashna-ka)* explains this process as it relates to NP *pāshna* (heel) and what goes under it (because of the suffix *ni*). Verb₄ (*apa-khraosa-ka)* relates to NP *kharās* (stone mill), and designates the act of grinding and pulverizing grains or dry leaves.[45] Verb₃ (*apa-skaraka*) relates to the root **skard* (pierce) and/or NP *kārd* (knife),[46] which, together with the suffix *apa*, means cutting apart, or simply "chopping." As for the first verb (*ni-vayaka*), it's not related to MP and NP *vāy* (woe), as Skjaervo has surmised, but to NP *vāya* (wish, fruit),[47] which, because of the suffix *ni,* seems to convey the idea of picking and bringing down fruits. As such, these four verbs refer to the water-libation ingredients brought forward by supposedly unclean people.

In the second part, the required purification is explained by the verb *vazeñti,* which means air-blowing (NP *vazidan*). Because the libation ingredients are prepared by devilish people, they must be purified to a high degree; thus 1600 air-blows are advised. The last part then declares that, once purified, they can be used as if not prepared or touched by unclean people. It should thus read:

(Soudavar) *Yt.*5.94. Then Zarathushtra asked Ardvi Sura Anāhita: "O Ardvi Sura Anāhita! What shall become of those libations destined for you but brought by the wicked who worship *daeva*s after the sun has set? Yt.5.95. Thus spoke Ardvi Sura Anāhita: "O candid, righteous Spitama Zarathushtra! [What is picked, trampled, chopped, and ground], it can be brought forth to me after 1600 air-blowing, as if not brought by *daeva*-worshippers for their sacrificial ceremonies

Based on the fact that the unclean people are designated here as those who bring

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[44] Gnoli 2004, 4535.

[45] Cheung also offers the following **xrau* : to scratch, to break; Cheung 2007, 447.

[46] See Cheung's entry for **kart* and**skard* (to pierce); Cheung 2007, 243 and 346.

[47] Fruit or benefit: (جز سوختن خویش دگر وایه ندارد , no <u>benefit/fruit</u> shall come besides self burning); wish: (سایلان را روا شود وایه , The beggars shall have their <u>wishes</u> fulfilled);
reward: (چنین گر دهد وایهٔ شاعران , if poets are so <u>reward</u>ed…)

water libations after dark, it stands to reason that they are Apam Napāt worshippers, who neither recognize Ahura Mazdā as the Creator, nor are prepared to accept Anāhitā as supreme water deity. They are thus considered as the enemies of Zoroastrianism, and labeled as *daeva*-worshippers. Their sin was to believe in the old un-sanitized version of Apam Napāt, and not the one that was integrated into the Zoroastrian pantheon.

I.7 - Agents of fertility

A further example of diminishing the stature of Apam Napāt is found in *Yt*.8.34. It seems to be based on an older ode to Apam Napāt, in which fertility of the land was solely attributed to him. Instead, in *Yt*.8.34, his role is diluted through the introduction of additional contributors. This purpose being lost on Avestologists, they have tweaked meanings to produce intelligible translations, but fall short nevertheless. By way of example, I produce hereunder the Avestan text with two recent translations, one by P.O. Skjaervo and the other by Almut Hintze:

> *Yt*.8.34.   *[apãm napåse tå âpô] spitama zarathushtra anguhe astvaite shôithrô-baxtå vî-baxshaiti vâtasca ýô darshish awzhdâtemca hvarenô ashaonãmca fravashayô.*

> (Hintze 2009, 140) *Yt*.8.34. Apam Napat, O Spitama Zarathushtra, distributes to material life these waters assigned to the dwellings; and (so does) the bold Wind, and the Glory deposited in water, and the Choices of the truthful ones.[48]

> (Skjaervo 2007, I:88) *Yt*.8.34. Those waters, the Scion of the Waters, O Spitama Zarathustra, distributes to the bony existence, distributed by settlements, as (does) the impetuous wind, and the Fortune placed in the water, and the pre-souls of the Orderly ones.

In both translations, waters are supposedly distributed; but whereas Hintze deprives the dwellings from their water in order to give it to the material world,[49] Skjaervo directly distributes it to a material world that he calls "bony existence," which is allegedly parceled into settlements. Both translations are wrong, because they both suffer from the same syntactic error: The waters (*âpô*) they supposedly distribute belong to a block of words situated before the addressee, i.e., Zarathustra. That block as a whole (which I've bracketed) is the subject of the verb that comes after Zoroaster (*vi-bakhshaiti*). One cannot pluck "waters" out of its block, and turn it into the object of a verb located after the addressee. It's as if a Parsi from Mumbai, who had attended Jean Kellens's lecture in Krakow (in 2011), went back home and recounted to his Mowbad: "Kellens who is a

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[48] Hintze, 2009, 129-44.
[49] Hintze's interpretation is in tune with Boyce's (Boyce 1986).

professor at the Collège de France, O Mowbad, said that he doubted Zoroaster ever existed," but in translation, the same sentence was wrongly rendered as "Kellens, O Mowbad, said at the Collège de France that he doubted Zoroaster ever existed." The words preceding "O Mowbad" define the subject of the verb "said," and in translation, one cannot arbitrarily move parts of it to the other side.

This error is compounded—and perhaps caused—by the incorrect translation of the verb *vi-bakhshaiti* as "distributes," which in turn has affected the translation of the adjective *bakhta,* rendered as "distributed," since Avestologists consider the two words to stem from the same root *baksh*. But *bakhta* is akin to NP and MP *bakht,* meaning fortune or gift. When applied to *shoithro* (toiled lands),[50] it clearly designates fortunate or gifted lands, i.e., potentially fertile lands, even more so since *Yt*.8.34 follows stanzas that describe the water cycle, from evaporation to cloud formation, and to rains, which come back on earth to irrigate agricultural lands (*Yts*.8.32-33). And based on NP *bakhshesh* and *bakshāyesh,* meaning gift and endowment, *bakhshaiti* should be understood as endowing more fertility to the "gifted lands." As for the suffix *vi* (apart), it emphasizes that its effect was widespread. This stanza should therefore be translated as:

> (Soudavar) *Yt*.8.34. [The "water-child" of those waters], O Spitama Zarathushtra, wholly endows the gifted lands of the corporeal world (with fertility); as does the bold wind, and the *khvarenah* residing in the water, and the *fravashi*s of the righteous ones

I have substituted "water-child" for *apãm napåse*, because I think it refers to Apam Napāt in a derogatory way, which I shall explain in sec. I.7. But no matter how his name is interpreted, he is presented here as a fertility agent, along with three others. Of the three, there may be some justification for the wind, as the process of growth in plants needs air, i.e., oxygen, even though air always exists, with or without wind. The other two, though, are outright problematic. The *khvarenah* is a power source that empowers other entities; when lost by Jamshid, it was carried away by the bird *vareɣna,* to be eventually guarded underwater by Apam Napāt. But here, its ties with Apam Napāt are purposefully severed, since the *khvarenah* is presented as an independent force residing in the waters, and capable of enhancing the fertility of the land. As for the *fravashi*s, I am not sure how they were supposed to intervene, and it is not clear for what reason they were introduced into the Avesta in the first place; perhaps to emulate Xerxes, who according to Herodotus not only sacrificed to Athena in Priam, but also to the *fravashi*s

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[50] Hintze herself acknowledges *shoithro* to mean "toiled soil" but then opts for "dwellings" in her translation of *Yt*.8.34; Hintze 136.

of Iranian and Greek heroes of the past.[51] They were probably seen as one more factor that could loosen the hold of Mithra and Apam Napāt on the people's beliefs. Be that as it may, *Yt*.8.34 effectively diminishes Apam Napāt's stature by sharing his fertility powers with three other entities, by severing the *khvarenah* from him, and more importantly, by referring to him as "water-child," which simply sounds derogatory in a culture where old age represents wisdom, and youth is a symbol of foolishness.[52]

I.8 - The Burning Water

The name Apam Napāt has generally been understood as the "Child of the Waters," because the first component clearly relates to NP *āb* (water), and the second has been construed as a word related to *naveh* (grandchild) in NP, or "nephew" in English.[53] It's an interpretation supported by Sasanian iconography, since Apam Napāt is represented in the guise of a flying Eros (i.e., winged child) handing a *dastār* (victory ribbon) to the king, in the rock reliefs of Shāpur I (r. 242-270).[54]

But, as a name, "Child of the Waters" hardly suits a powerful god who maintained lofty epithets in the Avesta. Sensing perhaps the inadequacy of such a translation, Skjaervo has used the word "scion" instead of child. The word scion has no equivalent in Persian culture; the closest NP term is *navādeh,* which designates a progeny with no emphasis on family grandeur as the English term does. Whether "Napāt" is understood as child, scion, or progeny of waters, it still represents a lesser version of a more important entity, i.e., the Waters. It is precisely for this reason that proponents of Sasanian orthodoxy promoted an iconographical composition in which Apam Napāt's subordination to Anāhitā jumped to the eye: He was depicted as a child held by Anāhitā, referred to as the Lady of the Waters (figs. 2, 7, 66). We may therefore assume that the "Child of the Waters" was a derogatory reinterpretation of a more-important-sounding name, which we have to resuscitate.

The primary indicator for Apam Napāt's original meaning is provided by its Vedic counterpart, Apām Napāt, who embodies the fire that burns in the water, a phenomenon that many saw as a paradox.[55] And yet, there is no paradox at all because it refers to a

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[51] Gnoli 1993, 63-64.

[52] It's as if one would address him today as *āb-bacheh* (water-child).

[53] Boyce 1986.

[54] Soudavar 2009, 426-27; Soudavar 2012a, 32-34.

[55] Dumézil 1981, 21-23. Jean Kellens further said: "Les deux hymnes védiques qui lui sont consacrés expriment, de toutes les manières possibles, qu'il brille et brûle « sans bois d'allumage » (*anidhmá-*). Désignant le feu qui brûle dans l'eau, son nom est à l'origine de gr. *νάφθα* « naphte »"; J. Kellens,

natural phenomenon that was perceptible in western Iran where petroleum products—in liquid and gaseous form—emerged from water and burnt in open air. This burning substance was called by a name that has given us *naft* (petrol, bitumen) in NP, and *naphtha* in Greek. The phenomenon was understood to portend power in Sasanian Iran, since Ardashir I (r. 224-42) conceived his kingly glory (*khavrenah*) as the fire emerging from water; and his fire tower in the capital city of Ardashir-khvarrah, as well as the fire altar on his coinage, reflected this concept, because in both, fire sprang out of water and projected Ardashir's control over the *khvarenah* (MP *khvarrah*) that resided in the main fire of his realm (see sec. II.1).[56]

Moreover, in the Avesta, Apam Napāt is qualified by two epithets *berezant-* and *borz*, which are wrongly translated as "lofty." The mistranslation of *borz* was due to the fact that it's usually accompanied by the NP word *bālā*, which can mean "tall silhouette" and may thus infer a meaning of "lofty." But the correct meaning of *bālā* is "high stature", especially since *borz* and *bālā* are usually complemented by the word *chihr*.[57] Moreover, the mistranslation of *chihr* as "seed" has added to the confusion. If *chihr* was correctly understood to be the manifestation of the *khvarenah* as light, so would have been *borz,* especially when a person is said to be endowed with the "Kayānian *borz* and *farr*."[58] Both words (*chihr* and *borz*) belong to a cosmogony of light that projected the power of the *farr* (OP *khvarenah*). Furthermore, etymologically, *borz* is connected to a number of words that are all related to fire, burning, or radiance, e.g., NP *bereshteh* (burnt), MP *brēzan* (oven), MP *brāzidan* (shine, gleam), Fr. *braiser* (to braise, to cook), Eng. *blaze*, Old English *blæse* (torch). Thus, *borz* and *berezant-* describe a blazing substance, i.e., burning *naphtha*.

So important was this light cosmogony that multiple words were used, each describing the intensity and shades of light emanating from a particular source.[59] As a result, these words acquired secondary meanings that were specific to the light source. The *chihr* of a person, for instance, was meant to represent his *khvarenah*, but it also provided an image—so to speak—of his power; hence *chihr* got a secondary meaning of "image" in addition to its primary meaning as radiance or brilliance. Similarly, the

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Collège de France lecture of Dec. 10, 2010.

[56] Soudavar 2012b, 58-61; Soudavar 2014, 152-157.

[57] *Bālā* is adjectivised in NP as *vālā* (of high stature); see also Dehkhoda, "Borz":

جهاندار گفتا چنین است راست   *   بدین، **بُرز و بالا و چهرش** گواست

[58] Dehkhoda, "Borz" :   پرستنده با **فر و برز کیان**   *   به زنار کی شاه بسته میان

[59] The same cosmogony is used, later on, by Shāhoboddin-e Sohravardi in his *Hekmat-ol Eshrāq*, where one's power is determined by the intensity of rays that illuminate him.

Avestan adjective *raevant-*, which means glittery, determined the light intensity of jewelry and precious stones;[60] hence a secondary meaning as "rich," or "wealthy." It's a plague of Avestan studies that original meanings are often sidestepped in favor of secondary meanings. Thus *raevant-* is translated as "wealthy" instead of "glittery," and *berezant-* is described as "lofty" rather than blazing or radiant. A case in point is Skjaervo's translation of *Yt*.8.4, a stanza that describes the qualities of the star-god Tishtrya:

Yt.8.4 *tishtrîm stârem raêvañtem,* *hvarenanguhañtem ýazamaide,* *afshcithrem sûrem berezañtem,* *amavañtem dûraêsûkem,* *berezañtem uparô-kairîm,* (Q) *ýahmât haca berezât haosravanghem?* (A) *apãm nafedhrat haca cithrem.*	(Skjaervo 2007, I:85) *Yt*.8.4 We sacrifice to the star Tishtriya, *wealthy* and munificent, *containing the seed of water*, rich in life-giving strength, lofty, forceful, *whose eyesight reaches into the distance*, *lofty*, whose work is above, the *tall* one from whom (comes) good fame. From the Scion of the Waters (is its?) seed.

Tishtrya is generally recognized to represent the star Sirius, the most luminous fixed star of nighttime.[61] As such, its only praise-worthy quality is its luminosity. And yet, so oblivious is Skjaervo to this obvious fact, and so mechanical are his translations, that the adjectives he uses to describe Tishtrya hardly make sense. How can a star be "wealthy" in anything but light? How can a pinpoint-looking star be qualified as "lofty" or "tall"? How can water have a "seed," which is then placed on a star? How can stars have "eyesight"? These incongruent notions stem from a lack of understanding for a cosmogony in which the value of each entity is measured by the light it emits. Thus, a star can be glittery (*raevant*), like jewelry; it can be *afsh-chithra*, i.e., scintillate like water drops, because *afsh* means water drop, and *chithra*/*chihr* means brilliance (but not water seeds). As for *dûraê-sûkem*, it describes how far (NP *dur*) the light (NP *su*) of the star can go, rather than how far-sighted a star can be.[62] More importantly, the structure of the stanza follows a literary pattern in which qualities are first enumerated, and then punctuated by a

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[60] Soudavar 2006, 156-57.

[61] "Tishtrya" often referred to a tri-star grouping, the Winter Triangle of Canis Major, that appears as an exact equilateral, with Sirius at one of its edges; Soudavar 2014, 47-52.

[62] If the word *su* is also used to describe vision, it's because vision was believed to depend on a light emitted by the eye. Thus, NP *kam-su* can be equally used to describe low vision, and a low-power lamp; Soudavar 2006, 156.

question and answer sequence.[63] But Skjaervo's translation, as well as all other translations that I have seen, treat the last two sentences of the stanza as a continuation of previous descriptions, rather than a punctuating device.

In (Q), the luminous attributes of Tishtrya are characterized as *berezât haosravanghem*, which would be described in NP as "Khosrovāni radiance," i.e., kingly radiance; it's a metaphor that is often used in Persian poetry.[64] In (A), the same lights are treated as *chithra*, i.e., as manifestation of the *khvarenah*. Thus, different terms are used to characterize Tishtrya, but they all describe the star's brilliance and gravitate around the notion that light is a source, or indicator, of power. (Q) asks: Where does this light come from? (A) answers: From *apãm nafedhrat*. Whereas in the Avesta, grammatical declension hardly affects proper names, in *Yt*.8.4, "Napāt" is radically transformed into *nafedhrat,* which is akin to *naphtha*. It seems to revert back to what Apam Napāt originally meant: A fire in water that the epithets *borz* and *berezant* describe as radiant and blazing. The Avestan sentence *berezato ahurahe naphedhro apam* (*Y*.1.5) seems to confirm this, since *naphedro* acts therein as an adjective—placed before *apam*—to describe an entity qualified as the Blazing Lord (*berezato ahura-he*) at the beginning of said sentence. *Naphedhro apam* must therefore convey a similar meaning, that of "burning water" rather than "child of the waters." It explains that Tishtrya's light came in fact from Apam Napāt, i.e., the Lord of the Night. I therefore suggest the following translation:

(Soudavar) *Yt*.8.4. We praise Tishtrya, the bright and glorious star, that scintillates like water-drops, that is powerfully radiant, high-powered and far-lighting, and brilliant up-high.
(Q) From whom comes (all) this *khosrovāni* radiance?
(A) From the Burning Water (i.e., Apam Napāt) comes (all) his brilliance.

The question then is: How was this deity's name switched from "burning water" to "water-child"? It was done, I believe, through punning, a favourite Iranian device to belittle somebody or something.[65] Indeed, the Pahlavi translation of a sentence from *Y*.2.5 (*berezañtem ahurem xshathrîm xshaêtem apãm napâtem),* reads *borz i khwadāy … i roshn i ābān nāf,*[66] and provides a clue to this effect. Here, *borz* (The Blazing) designates

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[63] The same literary technique is used in *Y*.19; Soudavar 2014, 343-58. In sec. I.6, *Yts*.94-95 use a question and answer sequence to emphasize that the *daeva*-worshippers were unclean.

[64] Suzani-ye Samarqandi, for instance, uses the expression *āftāb-e khosrovān* (the kingly sun) to qualify the kingly *khvarenah* (Soudavar 2003, 15-16). A simple search in Google would show the expression used by the poets Qāāni, Bidel-Shirāzi, as well as Juzjāni in his *Tabaqāt-e Nāseri*.

[65] See Soudavar 2012b (65), how Darius's epithet *chihr-āryā* was switched to *chihr-āzād*.

[66] Panaino 1995, 121.

Apam Napāt, who is also described as *khwadāy* (lord) and *roshn* (shiny), which are praising terms, and then as *ābān nāf* (navel of the waters). The latter, which supposedly translates Apam Napāt's name into Pahlavi, should have had qualities in tune with the other epithets*;* but a *nāf* (navel) has no radiance, and is hardly appropriate to describe a *khwadāy* or *ahura*. If the second part of the deity's name was equated with "navel," it's because the two probably sounded the same. His name must have been spelled with an "h," and originally written as Naphāt, especially since navel is spelled as *nābhi* in Sanskrit. The Pahlavi translation should have been *ābān nāpht* rather than *ābān nāf*. But *nāf* was adopted in order to extrapolate it into a childish figure, such as *naveh* (grandson).[67] As speculative that this proposition might seem, it finds full justification in Sasanian imagery, where artisans make use of tight spaces to convey the maximum amount of information. The judicial positioning of the two-legged ankh symbol as caricature of Apam Napāt on a Sasanian cosmetic box (figs. 9a-b) clearly demonstrates how this deity's name was deformed into a combination that basically meant "navel-water" (*āb-nāf*). In modern parlance, "burning water" would be described as "*āb-naft*." For punning to have occurred in ancient times, I can only suppose that this deity's initial name was "Apam Naphāt."

The *nāf* and child interpretation eventually prevailed through repetition, and its spelling drifted toward one that would better present him as the Child of Waters, i.e., toward Apam Napāt. As such, his childish aspect was reemphasized in *Yt*.8.34, where he is referred to as "the water-child of those waters." It was an ingenious scheme to tarnish the blazing glory of the Median creator god Apam Naphāt (?), who threatened the supremacy of Ahura Mazdā. The sanitized Apam Napāt could afterward safely appear in liturgies where water was invoked, with an added reminder, however, that all waters were "created by Mazdā" (*Y*.1.4, *Y*.2.5, and *Y*.4.10).[68]

I.9 - Unification through amalgamation

As already stated, the substitution of Anāhitā for Apam Napāt must have been initially met with strong resistance, to the extent that Zoroastrian priests had to readopt Apam Napāt, albeit in a subdued and sanitized version. Thus two gods of the waters came to

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[67] In Latin, *nepōs* can equally mean nephew or descendant; the *nāf*/navel can thus stand as the hub of family connectivity.

[68] In consideration of Apam Napāt's "*borz*/blazing" epithet, the idea that his Chamrosh bird was perhaps a firebird needs further investigation (Soudavar 2014, 218-21), especially since this bird seems to have been appropriated for Anāhitā and Hāriti (see figs. 63, 64), and that in fig. 7, Apam Napāt is riding an aquatic bird, i.e., a duck.

exist side by side, which was confusing to the Zoroastrian flock. To alleviate the problem, the two were amalgamated into one, or more precisely into a family of mother and son named Ābān (Waters). Thus, *Yasht* 5, which was originally composed in praise of Anāhitā, became known as *Ābān Yasht*, and where the *Bondahesh* describes the flowers that symbolized each deity, it allocates the lotus to Ābān, rather than to Anāhitā or Apam Napāt, since, in reality, lotus represented both of them.[69] Amalgamation smoothened contradictions.

By the same token, I believe that the term *ahura-tkaêshô* (Ahuric Religion) inserted in the proclamation of orthodoxy, referred to an expanded Mazdaism that amalgamated together three *ahura*s, i.e., Ahura Mazdā, as well as Mithra and Apam Napāt (both qualified as *ahura* in the Avesta). Thus, *ahura-tkaêshô* could not mean "follower of Ahura Mazdā" alone; and if included in the proclamation of orthodoxy, it was to insure that the believers accepted the sanitized versions of Mithra and Apam Napāt, i.e., those who were given the same *ahura* epithet as Mazdā, but were stripped of many of their prerogatives. It created an ingenious compromise. New adherents, who had to worship Mazdā, were comforted by the fact that Mithra and Apam Napāt formed an *ahura* triad with Ahura Mazdā, over and above all other deities. The "Ahuric Religion" thus represents the compromise that was necessary to bring in those who worshipped the Median deity pair. The ones branded as *daeva*-worshippers were those who did not accept the sanitization of these deities, and continued to worship the Apam Naphāt of old in lieu of the sanitized Apam Napāt. The *daeva* par excellence was thus Apam Naphāt, the Burning Water who gave life, and was perceived as the main competitor to Ahura Mazdā.

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[69] Pakzad 2005, 219; Soudavar 2014, 157 and 201.

PART II

The Iconographic Evidence

Fig. 7 - Apam Napāt, as Child of Waters, riding a duck and holding a cattail reed (Lat. *typha*) under the supervision of Anāhitā as Lady of the Waters

In what follows, we shall explore the visual evidence that complements the textual one we analyzed in the previous sections.

II.1 - From "Burning Water" to "Navel-Water"

Two iconographical indices crystallize the corruption process of "Apam Napāt's" name, from fire-related water to a navel-associated one. The first is a Median or early Achaemenid seal that shows two Iranian priests next to a fire altar, on top of which is a water-wave symbol (fig. 8). As a universally recognized emblem of water, this wavy graffiti was placed above fire to reflect the initial status of Apam Napāt as the water that harbored fire, and was thus named "Burning Water."

Fig. 8 - Fire altar and Apam
Napāt's wave symbol
(Curtis & Simpson 2010, 389)
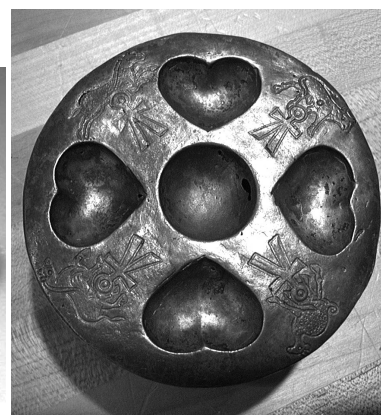
Figs. 9 a, b – Sasanian cosmetic box (in silver)
Christie's New York, *Antiquities* sale of Dec. 6, 2001, lot 732.

The water wave was by no means the only symbol of Apam Napāt. By the time he was officially recognized as "Child of the Waters," a double-legged *ankh* symbol was adopted to invoke this deity. From coinage to rock reliefs, the double-legged *ankh* sign was clearly used as an auspicious symbol of authority.[70] By contrast, its quadruple presence on a Sasanian cosmetic box that recently appeared on the art market can in no way be connected to kingship or authority, especially since all four emblems are tightly squeezed into the bellies of four quadrupeds (figs. 9a, b). Atop this box are four heart-shaped receptacles, with an image-label next to each designating the substance that went in them; an unlabelled round hole was placed in the middle for mixing the ingredients of

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[70] Soudavar 2009, 426-27.

the adjacent receptacles. Four animals appear in these image labels: A horse, a cow, a camel and a fourth quadruped that seems to be a musk deer. Their *ankh* sign, though, had a purely utilitarian function; it was supposed to make them more meaningful. Indeed, musk is a substance that is extracted from a gland under the belly of the musk deer, and in Iranian parlance it is referred to as *nāfeh*, or *āb-nāf* (the navel-water) of the musk deer. We can then surmise that the tight fitting of this *ankh* sign under the belly of the quadrupeds was to describe each of these labels as underbelly or navel secretion. For the cosmetic-box designer, the name of Apam Napāt did not signify child, nephew, or son of the Waters, nor did it mean from the "family of the Waters." He took the name of this deity at face value, and reduced it to its bare etymological meaning, "navel-water." Clearly such a name did not befit an important deity, one who, as we argued in sec. I.8, had epithets such as *borz* (blazing) or *ahura* (lord). If he was called by this name, it was through punning; one that was meant to diminish him and not glorify him.
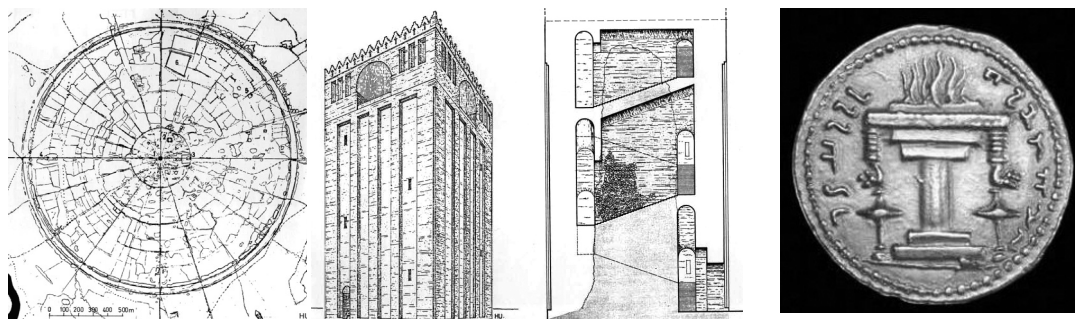
Figs. 10 a, b, c – a) Plan of Ardashir-khvarrah; (b) Fire tower built at the center of star-shaped water drainage system; c) inside stairs (Courtesy of D. Huff)

Fig. 11 - Moveable fire altar hanging above *two* water fountains. Coin of Ardashir I. Private coll.

But no matter how much Apam Napāt was maligned, the idea of fire emerging from fire remained a potent metaphor for the projection of *khvarenah*, to the extent that the Sasanian Ardashir I built his very capital city of Ardashir-khvarrah around this concept (figs. 10 a, b, c). The fire tower that he built in the middle of a star-shaped water drainage system evoked this concept on a monumental scale, and the fire altar that he put over two water fountains on the reverse of his coinage did the same on a minute scale and (fig. 11). What's more, the coin design replicated what was on top of the fire tower, where, according to the *Fārsnāmeh* of Ebn-e Balkhi, fire came out of *two* water fountains.[71] The

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[71] See Soudavar 2012b, 60 n.69, for the explanation Ebn-e Balkhi's entry (Ebn-e Balkhi 1968, 138).

"Burning Water" concept still evoked the rise of the *khvarenah*, even if no longer associated with Apam Napāt's name.

II.2 - Agent of fertility and life

As the Lord of the Night, the guardian of the *khvarenah* in its dormant underwater stage, and the deity who was once thought to give life and shape it, Apam Napāt was a multi-facetted deity for whom various specific symbols had been devised. We already saw two of them, the pre-Achaemenid water wave and the Sasanian double-legged *ankh* sign. A more popular symbol was the pearl, conceived as the luminous and perfectly round-shaped receptacle of the *khvarenah* in its underwater stage (see fig. 56). It clearly evoked Apam Napāt as the guardian of the *khvarenah,* in its underwater stage.

The most complete representations of the *khvarenah* cycle are found in the brick walls of Susa and the bas reliefs of Persepolis, where the underwater receptacle of the *khvarenah* is precisely depicted as a pearl: To project it as a spherical object, it appears as a multicolor sequence of concentric circles, whether carried by the bird *vareγna*, engulfed in whirling waters, or sitting under stacked lotuses.[72] To my knowledge, this concentric symbol first appears on a late 8th-century Urartu basalt slab,[73] and subsequently, in the now-dispersed 7th-century glazed bricks from the temple/castle of Bukān (fig. 11).
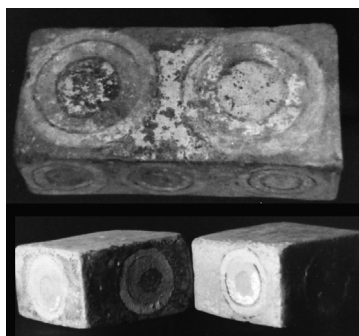
Fig. 11 - Pearl roundels on Bukān bricks. Private coll. Geneva
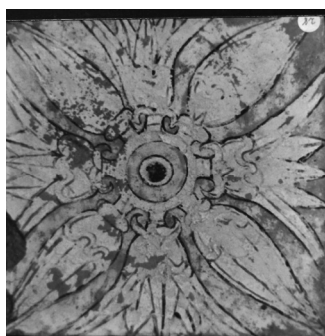
Fig. 12 - Vegetation stemming from pearl roundel. Bukān brick. Private coll. Geneva

Fig. 13 – Pine corn, lotus and sunflower assembly. Assyrian slab, British Museum

An ovoid silver jar that appeared in a recent sale sheds more light on the subject (fig. 15). It is made of almost pure silver (%97-99) and bears an Elamite inscription,

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[72] Soudavar 2012b, 47-48; Soudavar 2014, 202-203.
[73] The slab is from Toprak-kale; British Museum ME 121137.

undeciphered as yet. Like objects from the Kalmākareh horde, it was probably made from the silver that the Medes and their allies looted from Nineveh.[74] Stylistically and conceptually, it is close to the Bukān bricks, which often echo Assyrian designs. Indeed, the brick of fig. 12 faithfully replicates an Assyrian slab motif (fig. 13), except for its central element where it has a pearl roundel instead of a sunflower. Whereas the Assyrian design was a pure assembly of vegetal symbols, the Bukān brick projects that vegetation stemmed out of the pearl, the very symbol of *khvarenah*.
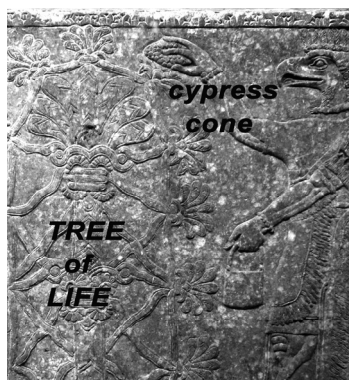
Fig. 14 - Assyrian stone slab with "tree of life". British Museum

Fig. 15 – Silver jar with "tree of life" and cypress cones, between pearls and sun symbols. Iran, circa 600 BC.[75] Private coll.

Fig. 16 – Neo-Elamite silver beaker with spiral ribs adorned with wave and sun motifs. Iran, circa 600 BC. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington DC.

The same principle is applied to the design of the ovoid jar, as it has budding cypress cones, alternating with "tree of life" motifs, placed above pearl roundels (fig. 15). Both motifs are Assyrian fertility emblems, since their deities symbolically sowed cypress cones to obtain vegetation represented by a "tree of life" (fig. 14).[76] The jar design thus projects that vegetation stemmed out of the pearl that Apam Napāt guarded underwater. It's the visual confirmation of *Yt.*19.52 (which divulged that Apam Napāt was the deity who gave life) and of *Yt.*8.34 (which acknowledged Apam Napāt's role in providing fertility to the land). It ties in well with a description provided by the *Bondahesh* that the "*khvarenah* of Fereydun sat at the bottom of the reed,[77] especially since the reed is often

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[74] Soudavar 2014, 229-30.

[75] Sale Pierre-Bergé on Nov. 26, 2013, lot 185.

[76] For the "tree of life" see Parpola 1993, 161-64. For a study of its iconography, see Kepinski 1982.

[77] Pakzad 2005, 399. See also Soudavar 2014, 232-33, where I argue that this *Bondahesh* statement reflects the pearl roundels placed under a bundle of reeds on the Egyptian-like crown of Mithra in Pasargadae.

associated with Apam Napāt (see sec. II.10). Moreover, above the trees and cypress cones appears a band of gold-plated semi-circular solar emblems. If water brought life to vegetation, solar light nurtured its growth. The former was associated with Apam Napāt, and the latter with Mithra. It's a pairing that is duplicated on a neo-Elamite silver beaker, where semi-circular emblems of the sun are juxtaposed with wave symbols of the waters (fig. 16). They are both reminders of how closely Mithra and Apam Napāt were associated, and how difficult was the task of dissociating one from the other. As the pairing of these two deities finds its ultimate expression in the Islamic *mihrāb*, which clearly reflects the name of these two deities (see sec. II.8), we shall henceforth use the name *mehr-āb* to designate the iconographical pairing of the theses deities' symbols.

II.3 - Bisotun's imbedded attack on Median ideology

With this Median perspective in mind, Darius's seemingly lone attack on Mithra in Bisotun, where he tried to empower Ahura Mazdā with Mithra's solar attributes (fig. 4), did not make sense: How could he disenfranchise Mithra without doing the same to Apam Napāt? And more importantly, why would he place such an important political statement up high, instead of opposite the existing water pond, where rock reliefs were traditionally situated, and were his message would have been more visible? Fortunately, a recent study of Bisotun by Wouter Henkelman provides an answer to both of these questions.[78]

While examining Bisotun, Henkelman had noticed two openings—right below the frame of the rock relief and centered around its median line—from which water gushed out after heavy rains on the nearby mountain (fig. 17). The flow of water from these orifices had produced substantial erosion below, and in reading the inscriptions that surrounded the eroded areas, Henkelman expected much of the text to have been washed out. To his surprise though, the text was almost complete; which implied that water was pouring out from the mountain face in the very days Bisotun was being carved. In addition, Henkelman, who witnessed the water-activity of these orifices after a rainfall, had found the scene to be spectacularly powerful. Presumably, the underground waters were not depleted in Darius's time, and there was a continuous surge of water below the rock relief. We can then understand Darius's reasons for situating the carvings so high up. Not only the spectacular roaring waters attracted attention, but the scenery allowed him

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[78] I am indebted to Wouter Henkelman for allowing me to use the result of his discoveries as explained during a conference at Asia House, London (*From Persepolis to Isfahan: Safeguarding Cultural Heritage* Jan 16-17, 2015).

to claim that Ahura Mazdā—to whom he was attributing all his victories—controlled both the sun (because of the solar emblem placed on Ahura Mazdā's hat) and the waters over which stood Darius as his deputy on earth. It was a visual attack on the duality of the *mehr-āb,* which implied a world presided by two deities rather than one.

Fig. 17 – Bisotun rock relief, with waterfall imprints (↑) under Darius and Ahura Mazdā, in between inscriptions. Bisotun

We thus see that the attack on the Median deity pair had been mounted early on by Darius, who wished to discredit both of them by transferring their prerogatives to Ahura Mazdā. He also tried to eradicate the day/night division of the world, which provided each of these gods a separate domain to rule upon. In other words, the Avestan priests, who sought to discredit the Median deities, were only following in the footsteps of Darius. They strove to systematically cleanse and doctor every existing stanza, like *Yt.*8.34 that reflected Apam Napāt's role in land fertility. It was a notion embedded in hymns, but also in imagery, which was more accessible to the general population. The Avestan priests had thus a tall task ahead, as they had to fight on multiple fronts. Rather than banning all existing hymns, and destroying a multitude of related imagery, they judiciously chose to distort the image of old gods and diminish their stature. In last resort, they only demonized those who challenged the supremacy of Ahura Mazdā. Judging by

the results, they were quite successful at it. They not only discredited Apam Napāt, and the Median dualistic ideology, but were able to achieve a strong hold on kingship, and politics in general, by defining what was demoniac and what was not.

II.4 - The Hellenistic resurrection of the *mehr-āb* iconography

Despite the Achaemenid attempt to break up the strong pairing of Mithra with Apam Napāt, these two deities remained popular among the population at large and on the peripheries. The Hellenistic period provided new means for the *mehr-āb* pair to reemerge, especially in Anatolia, where the pairing of a day god with a night god had been a staple feature of its *mithraea* (fig. 35a). A couple of Anatolian pendant earrings are quite revealing in this respect. In the first (fig. 18), a winged Eros, is hanging below a rosette. The rosette is, of course, the quintessential solar symbol, and to emphasize that the Eros was meant to represent Apam Napāt, he is riding a dolphin. It reflects the salient aspects of Apam Napāt, i.e., a "childish" and aquatic deity as on the Sasanian bottle of fig. 7, where he is riding a duck and holds a cattail reed. A second earring (fig. 19) similarly conveys the *mehr-āb* symbolism. From its rosette hangs an Eros with two features that are unequivocally associated with the Iranian iconography of Apam Napāt:

Fig. 18 – Apam Napāt riding a dolphin, attached to sun symbol. Hellenistic gold earring[79]

Fig. 19 – Apam Napāt holding a *dastār*, shell symbol attached to sun symbol. 3rd-cent. BC. Hellenistic gold earring[80]

Fig, 20 – Aphrodite with a cape inspired from the shell of Apam Napāt. 3rd-cent. BC, gold earring (Martinez et al. 2015, 278)

[79] Sale of Pierre Bergé (Paris), May 30th, 2015, lot 176. The same combination, i.e., Apam Napāt riding a

Firstly, he holds a *dastār* (ribbon) in his hands, the same that Apam Napāt delivers to Shāpur I (r. 240-70) as symbol of victory (fig. 21), or to another king on a Sasanian silver plate (fig. 23). It also appears in the hands of a flying Apam Napāt over the cows of the Moon chariot on the Mithraic stele of San Stefano Rotondo (fig. 25). It's clearly an Iranian implant on the Roman Mithraic scene, as its appearance therein has no Roman justification, but refers to Apam Napāt's guidance of the Moon chariot, as Lord of the Night. It reflects a similar idea expressed on Sasanian silver plates, such as the one in fig. 20, in which Apam Napāt is shown harnessing and guiding the Moon's chariot.

Fig. 21 – Apam Napāt handing a dastār to Shāpur I. Bisotun

Fig. 22 - Apam Napāt guiding the Moon's chariot. Sasanian silver plate

Fig. 23 – Apam Napāt handing a *dastār* with three pearls symbol of Tishtrya. Islamic Museum. Berlin.

Fig. 24 – Apam Napāt encircled by a solar petal ring (Martinez et al. 2015, 208)

Fig. 25 – Mithraic stele with Apam Napāt guiding the Moon chariot. San Stefano Rotondo

Secondly, and more importantly, the Apam Napāt of fig. 18 is set against a backdrop

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dolphin, was used in Hellenistic Bactria; see Soudavar 2009, 426, 459.
[80] The item was sold by Artcurial (Paris) on Aug., 7th 2015, lot 30.

that is a shell, and not a piece of clothing. Indeed, if it were a cape, a robe, or a skirt, it would have been attached at some point to the body of the winged child, but it's not. Like the dolphin of the previous earring, the shell was a further pointer to the Apam Napāt identity of the Eros-looking entity: The shell was the logical symbol for the role of this deity as underwater guardian of the *khvarenah* conceived as a pearl. And, as we shall see, the shell is a pivotal element for the transmission of the *mehr-āb* duality, all the way to the Islamic *mihrāb*.

Two items from a Thracian treasure recently exhibited at the Louvre further confirm our interpretation. One is a medallion (fig. 24) that clearly reflects the *mehr-āb* duality, as it displays the child-like Apam Napāt with a long *dastār* over his shoulders, encircled by a radiating band of lotus petals. The other is an earring imitation of fig. 19, but adapted to the Thracian world (fig. 20).[81] The male Eros is transformed into a female deity, a winged Aphrodite (Venus), holding a *cornucopia* in her right hand and a *patera* in her left. The below-the-waste backdrop is now conceived as a cape, and the separate rosette has been transformed into a voluminous headgear. None of them makes much sense, especially a cape for a naked female body. The overall design of the previous earrings was solely copied for aesthetic reasons, with a loss of meaning for its *mehr-āb* elements.

II.5 - The Mithraic conduit

Like the solar disk that symbolized Mithra, the shell symbolized Apam Napāt, and became a prized emblem. A Byzantine ivory plaque of the consul Anastasius Flavius shows how the shell, by its position behind the head of the consul, projected the same auspiciousness and power that the solar disk did (fig. 26). It parallels the eastward migration of the *mehr-āb* symbolism, where another symbol of Apam Napāt, namely the lotus flower, was used to create a solar disk behind the Buddha's head (fig. 27). The conduits for the westward propagation of all these symbols were primarily the Mithraic Societies and their avatars, which disseminated the spirit of brotherhood throughout the Roman Empire, especially among its legionnaires.[82]

Eventually, the shell was adopted as chivalry symbol, whether for the French Order of St Michael or the Order of Santiago of Spain (fig. 28). But it was also espoused by the brotherhoods of vagabonds and thieves, such as the Coquillards who roamed European territories in medieval times and had St James of Compostela as their patron saint (fig.

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[81] A similar earring is at Istanbul's Archaeological Museum. For another radiating petal ring see fig. 78.
[82] Soudavar 2014.

29).[83] Chivalry orders and brotherhood gangs had much in common with Mithraic Societies, in their hierarchical structure as well as for their initiation procedures and symbols.

Fig. 26 – Byzantine ivory plaque of Anastasius Flavius with shell nimbus. 517 AD Victoria & Albert Museum

Fig. 27 – Buddha with a lotus nimbus. 6th century China, Eastern Wei. EMS collections.

Fig. 28 – Shell sign and cross on the sepulture of a knight of Santiago. c. 1500 Victoria & Albert Museum

Fig. 29 - Coquillard with `ayyār-like sheepskin, pouch, gourde and *knife* (Mediavilla 2006, 23)

II.6 - *Yt.8.4* and the pairing of two celestial symbols

Luminous celestial bodies had *chithra* (brightness) and conveyed the *khvarenah.* For the Sasanians who advertised the *chihr az yazatān* slogan on their coinage it behooved to depict as many celestial elements as possible. For small surfaces, small symbols were needed. Thus, numerous small symbols were devised and incorporated into coinage, all reflecting Avestan descriptions. First and foremost was the two-legged *ankh* (see figs. 30-31) as a caricature rendering of the name Apam Napāt, understood as "Child of the Waters." Next was the cow sign (fig. 31) reflecting the moon's Avestan epithet of *gao-chithra* (milk-bright). Not only this symbol was a caricature of the cow but it also incorporated the three stages of the moon, from crescent to full circle to a simple trait (as symbol of nothingness).[84] A third symbol, that of three dots (fig. 30), reflected the *afsh-chithra* epithet of Tishtrya in particular, and stars in general, as "scintillating like rain drops." Each dot represented a rain drop, and the triple dot referred to Tishtrya whose name evoked a tri-star grouping from the constellation of Canis Major, known as the

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[83] Soudavar 2014, 28 and 293.
[84] Soudavar 2009,??

Winter Triangle and shaped as an exact equilateral triangle. Hence, Tishtrya's three dots regrouped into a similar triangular configuration.[85]

   As Lord of the Night, Apam Napāt's symbol often accompanied the other two nightly symbols on Sasanian coinage (figs. 30-31). It's pairing with Tishtrya's symbol evoked the last stanza of *Yt.8.4*, where Tishtrya is said to have obtained all of its brightness from Apam Napāt (see sec. I.8). As such, the coupling of these two created an auspicious celestial dual symbol that widely travelled East and West, especially among brotherhoods and avatars of Mithraic societies. Not only Tamerlane incorporated them onto his seal,[86] but the Ottomans, whom he had defeated and humiliated, adopted the pair as the underlying emblem of their imperial power (fig. 33). They also appear in Dura Europos, on the walls of a hall that I have argued to be a *mithraeum* and not a synagogue (fig. 32). And as an ultimate exercise in loading images with double and triple meanings, the *dastār* that Apam Napāt holds in his hands (NP *dast*), on a Sasanian silver plate (fig. 21), undulates like a wave and has a three-pearl pendant symbol of Tishtrya.

Fig. 30 - Symbols of Apam Napāt and Tishtrya on coin of Bahrām II

Fig. 31 - Symbols of Apam Napāt and the moon on coin of Bahrām II

Fig. 32 – Triple dot and water symbols on framing bands of Dura Europos hall
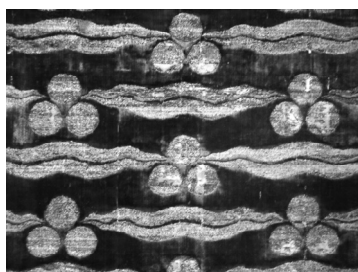
Fig. 33 – Triple dot paired up with water wave symbol on Ottoman velvet. Metropolitan Museum

Fig. 34 – Light rays emanating from a triangle symbol over water wave. Window bay decoration, Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna.

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[85] Soudavar 2014, 47-51.
[86] Soudavar 2014, 52.

Most interestingly, the three-dot symbol and the wave appear in tandem at the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna (fig. 34). This basilica was mainly built under the Ostrogoths who had come from the Eastern parts of the Roman Empire, and favored Arianism. As such, the mosaics of the doorways and window openings of the basilica (including figs. 34, 41) belong to the Ostrogothic period, and not to the decoration later added by Justinian (r. 527-65). They reflect eastern concepts and have two characteristics that strengthen our suggestions: A) their wave lines are filled in their convex parts with water, stressing their aquatic nature, B) from a triangular symbol on the crest of the wave lines, emanates three light rays that, to me, can only represent the light projected by Tishtrya. It once again emphasizes that the light of Tishtrya's tri-star grouping emanated from Apam Napāt.

II.7 - Ravenna and the blend of Mithraic and Christian emblems

As I have argued elsewhere, the initial iconographical vocabulary of Christianity owed much to that of Mithraic societies, to the extent that the Sun and Moon symbols of the *mithraeum* were often transposed as personified gods above the Virgin Mary (figs. 35 a, b). Similarly, the sun cross was integrated into Christianity as the Greek cross, but maintained its solar attribute all along, especially when incorporated into the sun disk behind Jesus's head (fig. 37).
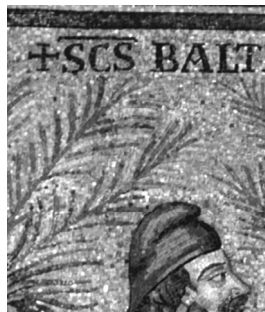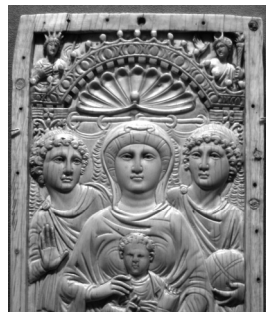
Figs. 35 a, b – Personified Sun and Moon on top corners of: a) Roman bronze Mithraic plaque, b) Ivory Byzantine plaque. Metropolitan Museum of Art

Figs. 36 a, b - Mosaics from San Appolinare Nuovo, Ravenna: a) symmetrical sun cross before Balthazar's name, b) crucifix symbol before St Euphemia's name

In Ravenna, at the Basilica of San Appolinare Nuovo, we can see how the sun cross evolved into the crucifix cross. On one side, the older mosaics of the Ariani period display the three magi in red Mithraic bonnets and garments approaching the infant Jesus with their names preceded by a symmetrical sun cross (fig. 36a). Those sun crosses were clearly there to designate them as Mithraic or Sun priests. On the opposite side, however,

where new mosaics were added, the names of the saintly figures are preceded by a Greek cross with one leg elongated toward the ground (fig. 36b). If the crucifix was meant, these crosses would have not had an end part on each limb. On the other hand, the end parts of the totally symmetrical sun cross were to recall the roundness of the sun in this caricature emblem. It clearly mimics the sun symbol behind Jesus's head (fig. 37). These end parts also explain the sun cross's original Persian name as *chār-pā* (the four-legged), written as *clyp`*

Fig. 37 – Sun cross in sun disk. Aya Sofia

in MP, and rendered as *salib* in Arabic for lack of the sounds "ch" and "p" in that language, which was then extended to the crucifix.[87]

Fig. 38 – Sun cross over shell, from the Coptic monastery of Baouit. Louvre

Fig. 39 – Sun symbol over shell from the Coptic church of El-Tod, Egypt. Louvre

Fig. 40 – *Chi-Rho* under shell. Byzantine. Metropolitan Mus.

Fig. 41 – Sun cross above shell design, and water wave on column head. Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna

Fig. 42 – Crucifix under shell, on a 5th century sarcophagus. Galla Placidia mausoleum, Ravenna

Back to the Basilica of San Vitale, we can see a further *mehr-āb*-like combination consisting of a shell and a sun cross above an archway (fig. 41). It's a combination that replicates itself across the Christian world, with the shell maintaining a constant

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[87] For further discussions on the origins of the sun cross see Soudavar 2014, 79-81.

presence, while its solar component alternates between sun cross (fig. 38) and rosette (fig. 39), to finally be transformed into the *Chi-Rho* and the crucifix (figs. 40, 42). What's more, the San Vitale shell-cross composition is above columns decorated with the wave and tri-star pattern. While the latter reflects the last stanza of *Yt*.8.4, the former was based on the *mehr-āb* tandem that was repudiated by orthodox Zoroastrianism.

II.8 - The *mehr-āb* niche: From Jerash to Medina

To my knowledge, the earliest appearance of the shell niche in the Mediterranean regions is in the 2nd-century Roman ruins of Jerash in Jordan. It is conceived therein in two ways. In one, the shell is incorporated into a monumental gateway over a window opening high above ground (fig. 43b); and in the other, we have a shell niche that harbored a lamp or candelabra (fig. 43a). The latter is used again in the Omayyad mosque of Amman, where shell niches appear along the walls of its outdoor perimeter (fig. 44).

Fig. 43 a, b – Roman shell niches from Jarash, Jordan:
a) candelabra niche, b) window niche in a gateway

Fig. 44 – Shell niches for candelabras, on
walls of `Ommayad mosque, Amman

In all of these, we have a shell in tandem with a light emblem, i.e., the basic *mehr-āb* symbolism. What ultimately provides a proof for their Iranian origin is the *mihrāb* name that is applied to the shell niche in the Islamic context. Indeed, the first known *mihrāb* is the one reportedly built by Walid I (r. 705-715) into the Medina Mosque,[88] which was replicated half a century later in Bagdad at the al-Mansur Mosque. The latter still exists

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[88] Porter 2007, 555-56.

and clearly displays a lamp hanging under a shell niche (fig. 45). More importantly, as Melikian-Chirvani has demonstrated, the Arabic word *mihrāb* is an Iranian loanword that designated the focal point of an edifice or its most important spot.[89] Because of its dual symbolism and its etymology, the Islamic *mihrāb* clearly ties the preceding string of shell niches to the *mehr-āb* imagery that once flourished in the Iranian world, was banned by the Achaemenids and Zoroastrianism, but survived in underground Mithraic societies as they moved westward. It is a testimony to the cohesive strength of the Mithra and Apam Napāt tandem and its positive reception in other domains and cultures.

Fig. 45 – Shell-lamp *mihrāb* of al-Mansur mosque, Baghdad (web image)

Fig. 46 – Shell motif, lamp, and *muqarnas* on stone *mihrāb*. Ince Minar Madrasa, Konya

Fig. 47 – Sasanian shell-shaped drinking vessel. EMS collections
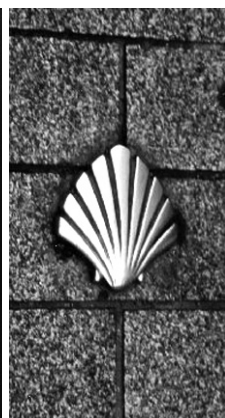
Fig. 48 – Shell on road St James Compostela (web image)

In the Iranian world, however, the long-standing animosity toward Apam Napāt had probably left a negative view toward his symbols; and there seems to have been a concerted effort to do away with the shell as an architectural element, [90] and replace it with a geometrical pattern of stalactite-like elements that came to be known as the *muqarnas*. A geometrical succession of small niches was thus substituted for the shell-niche design. But once again, it's through the peripheries that we have proof of this transition process. The portal of the 13th-century Palestinian Red Mosque in Safad (fig. 50) clearly shows how the shell niche was expanded into the *muqarnas*, with a shell at its apex expanding into a stalactite structure. And a *mihrāb* from Konya (fig. 46) maintains a

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[89] Melikian-Chirvani 1990, 109-112; Soudavar 2014, 293-98.
[90] Only two shell niches from antiquity are known to have survived. A Parthian one at the Persepolis museum and another one from Bishāpur; Soudavar 2014, 297.

hanging lamp below a *muqarnas* structure that in each of its small niches has a stylized shell, echoing the shell niche. That stylized shell motif is a cross between the tree of life on the ovoid jar of fig. 15, the Sasanian shell-shaped drinking vessels (fig. 47), and the stylized shell sign of the Coquillards and St James of Compostela (fig. 48).

Fig. 49 – Sun disk on shell. Al-Aqmar mosque's portal. Cairo (web image)

Fig. 50 – Shell motif above *muqarnas* of Red Mosque's portal. (web image)

Fig. 51 – Shell squinces under the dome of the Kairouan mosque. Tunisia

But as we reach Egypt, where Iranian influence must have been negligible, we encounter the old shell-niche design in full force at the Al-Aqmar mosque of Cairo (fig. 49), where its portal maintains the niche design from the Coptic edifice of El-Tod (fig. 39). And further west, the dome of the Kairouan mosque in Tunisia, clearly displays the use of the shell motif for its corner squinches (fig. 51).

II.9 - The *mehr-āb* lion: From Esfahān to the Alhambra

Discussing appellations acquired through functionality, Pavel Lurje has convincingly argued that the NP word *shir,* as referring to taps and faucets, stemmed from the multitude of water fountains in which water came out of a lion's mouth.[91] This, however, raises a new question: What made this model of fountain so attractive that it was replicated from Esfahān to the Alhambra (fig. 52)? And although Lurje mostly focused on European lion fountains, it's hardly imaginable that a Western model was used at the Safavid palace of Chehel Sotun (fig. 53), when its lions are so distinctly stylized in the Iranian fashion.[92] It's also highly improbable that Iranians had no word of their own for water fountains, and had to await a European import to call their fountains *shir*. Like in

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[91] Collège de France lecture of March 15, 2015: *Selected Sogdian Words and Realia behind Them*
[92] For stylized Iranian lion stone sculptures see, for instance, Khosronejad 2011, 2-5-206.

the case of the *mehr-āb* niche, the Iranian origin of the widely propagated lion fountain is supported by its Persian name, as well as its inherent dual symbolism, the lion referring to Mithra and the water to Apam Napāt.

Moreover, the lion often appears in other *mehr-āb* combinations, at odds with Zoroastrian orthodoxy. For instance, the Sasanian seal of fig. 54 has a lion, symbol of Mithra, and a scorpion, which orthodox Zoroastrianism abhorred for being a night animal and a symbol of Apam Napāt. What's more, the surrounding inscription *abestān o yazatān* (support from gods) is a wish formula that supposedly invokes the *yazatān*, i.e., gods in general. But in conjunction with the animals on the seal, *yazatān* clearly refers to the Mithra-Apam Napāt tandem of old, and shows why "*yazatān*" was a ruse to invoke this tandem in a camouflaged way. On another seal (fig. 55), a sun cross and a scorpion are squeezed into a monogram that should be read as *NWRA ZY* (fire/light of).[93] The combined elements are therefore evoking the *chihr* (light) associated with another *mehr-āb* symbolism.

| | | (Gyselen1993, 30.E.6) | (Bivar 1969, pl.28, NG9) |

| Fig. 52 – Alhambra water fountains Granada. Spain | Fig. 53 – Water fountain at Chehel-sotun. Esfahān | Fig. 54 – Seal with symbol | Fig. 55 – Seal with sun-cross and scorpion |
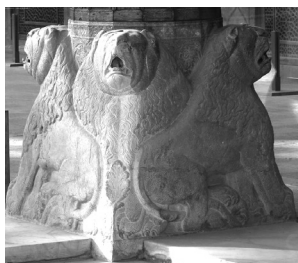
We thus have a good indicator as to what *yazatān* meant in the Sasanian slogan *ki chihr az yazatān*. By claiming that their *chihr* (as manifestation of the *khvarenah)* came from the *yazatān,* they had a formula that could be interpreted in many ways. The general population, still associating the *khvarenah* with Mithra and Apam Napāt, naturally understood it as emanating from those two deities. As to the orthodox Zoroastrian clergy, they could find no fault in it, since, technically, *yazatān* could also refer to the more acceptable gods such as Ahura Mazdā and Anāhitā. The use of the plural *yazatān* became

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[93] I had previously suggested by mistake that this monogram was duplicating, as a mirror image, the word *afzun*; Soudavar 2003, 29. I suggested a new reading of this monogram (for another seal) in Soudavar 2014, 165, fig.188.

so banal that it was used as a singular, and passed into NP as one of the names of Allah.[94]

II.10 - Apam Napāt and the reed

The aforementioned *Bondahesh* statement depicting the *khvarenah* as lying under a reed makes a conduit out of the reed (fig. 57),[95] which like stacked lotuses, brings the dormant *khvarenah* out of the waters. It's a concept that is succinctly depicted on Achaemenid glazed bricks (fig. 56), even though no extant text fully describes the *khvarenah* cycle, since it was so closely associated with Median deities.
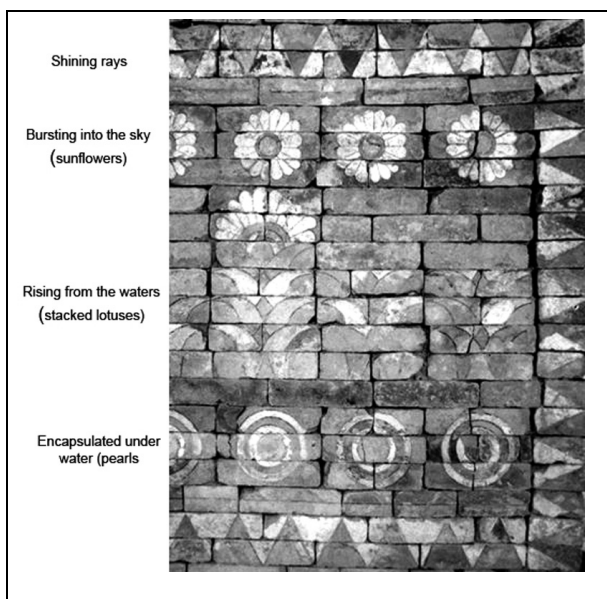
Fig. 56 – The *khvarenah* cycle, rising through stacked lotuses from the underwater stage (as pearl). Persepolis

Fig. 57 – Cattail reeds emerging from water. Detail of a Shāhnāmeh illustratiion (Soudavar 1992, 168)

The reed is thus directly associated with Apam Napāt, as it's both an aquatic plant and related to the *khvarenah*. No wonder then that on three Sasanian silver bottles, depicting Apam Napāt as the "child" of Anāhitā, he is holding a reed in his hand. In fig. 58, Apam Napāt is riding a duck and holding a cattail reed (Lat. *typha*) in his hand, and on another (fig. 59), he holds a straight reed. The most interesting specimen though is the one in which Apam Napāt is holding a cane (fig. 60). As the etymology of "cane" clearly

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[94] Soudavar 2014, 163-69.
[95] See note 77 supra

indicates it's basically a reed (it derives from Old Fr. *cane*, meaning "sugar cane," which goes back to Gr. *κάννα*, and Aramaic *qanhā, qanyā*, and Akkadian *qanu*, meaning "tube, reed").[96] As such it provides a solution to another dilemma, the cane symbol on the walls of the Yazidi Shrine of Shaykh Adi (fig.61), a symbol that M.I. Mochiri had also noticed on some post-Sasanian coinage that he had qualified as "Yazidi" (fig. 62).[97]

Fig. 58 – Apam Napāt holding a cattail reed. Detail of fig. 7

Fig. 59 – Apam Napāt holding a regular reed. Detail of fig. 2

Fig. 60 – Apam Napāt holding a cane. Detail of fig. 66

From serpents, to sun emblems and the mandrake, Yazidis have cherished many symbols that connected them to a Mithraic past, as a result of which it was often thought that their name referred to one deity (MP *yazatā*, NP *yzad*), i.e., Mithra.[98] The deciphering of their cane symbol as one relating to Apam Napāt, however, may suggest that they were praising the *yazatān* duo Mithra and Apam Napāt, rather than Mithra alone. They were "*yazdāni*" rather than "*yazadi*."
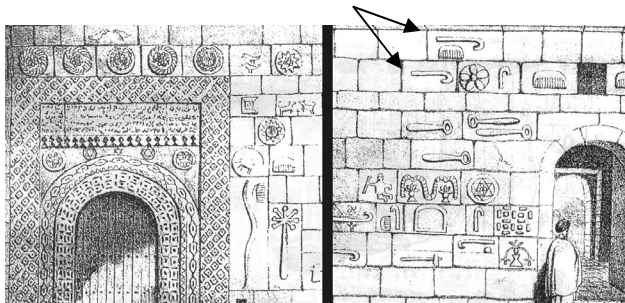
Fig. 61 - The Yazidi shrine of Shaykh Adi with cane symbols (↑) (Badger 1857) (courtesy of M.I. Mochiri)

Fig. 62 - "Yazidi coin with cane emblem (↑) and mandrake (Mochiri 2003, Fig. 3)

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[96] Wikipedia.
[97] Mochiri 2003.
[98]

II.11 - An eastern goddess promoted against the Mithra/Apam Napāt tandem

To displace Apam Napāt, another aquatic deity was needed. The river deity of the Herat-Kandahar area was the closest available. She was originally called **Harahvatī,*[99] and was integrated as Anāhitā into the Iranian pantheon, and subsequently, as Hāriti into the Buddhist pantheon.

Fig. 63- Hāriti with flower, child and bird. Metropolitan Museum

Fig. 64- Anāhitā holding a lotus and bird. Metropolitan Museum

Fig. 65- Hāriti holding a lotus and fruit bowl. Cleveland Museum

Fig. 66 - Anāhitā holding Apam Napāt and fruit bowl. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
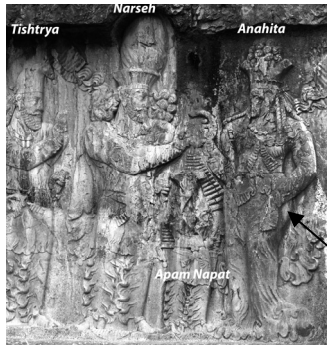
Fig. 67 – Anāhitā with long-sleeve robe and Apam Napāt before Narseh. Naqsh-e Rostam

Fig. 68 – Princess in long-sleeved robe. Freer Gallery (F1946-12-114)

Fig. 69 – A 15th-century Herāti ruler painted by Behzād (Soudavar 1992, 98)

Fig. 70- Vima Kadphises with long sleeve. Bactrian Coin (www.zeno.ru)

As Buddhism moved further east and into Chinese territories, Hāriti carried along iconographic symbols borrowed from the eastern Iranian world. She was presented as a strong-breasted female who held—or was surrounded with—a long-stemmed lotus flower, a fruit platter, or birds, which are all found in the Sasanian representations of Anāhitā (figs. 63-66). But following Shapur Shabazi, a number of scholars have opined

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[99] This eastern Iranian area derived its name from hers (*Harahvat)*; Boyce 1989.

that the long sleeve was a sign of "subordination" that designated the crowned female persona on the right of Narseh's victory scene in Naqsh-e Rostam, as the queen (fig. 67).[100] This can't be. There is ample evidence that this type of sleeve was typical of Herat and its vicinity. Whether on the coin of the Bactrian ruler Vima Kadphises (c. 90-100AD) (fig. 70), or a painting by the celebrated Behzād that depicts a 15th-century Herati sovereign (fig. 69), or a 16th-century painting by the Herati artist Shaykh Mohammad depicting *Queen Zolaykhā of Egypt approaching Yusof* (fig. 68), kings and queens of the Herat region, and further east, wore the long sleeve. Sasanian sculptors were very much aware of Anāhitā's origins, and it's a testimony to their iconographic precision that they depicted her in fig. 67 with a long-sleeved robe, typical of Herat and the Eastern Iranian world.

Furthermore, this is a composition where deities are hailing the initial victories of Narseh—before his final defeat by Gallienus (r. 260–68). Anāhitā and Apam Napāt are both making approving gestures toward Narseh: Anāhitā is giving him the *yāreh* ring as emblem of support, and Apam Napāt is waving to him the sign of excellence (fingers configured as number 20), as does Tishtrya standing behind Narseh.[101] The scene conforms to the norms of Zoroastrian orthodoxy, since Anāhitā dominates all other deities. By putting her on the same side as Apam Napāt, it reflects the blurring process by which aquatic deities were bundled into the plural *Ābān,* one as the Lady of the Waters, and the other as her child. They reappear as an auspicious duo in the seal of fig. 65, where Anāhitā is offering a lotus flower as symbol of *khvarenah*. It also parallels the scene in fig. 66 where Anāhitā has regal attributes, namely a solar disk and a wind-blown *dastār* behind her head, while Apam Napāt is naked and "childish." On the bottle of fig. 64, however, instead of the previous regal symbols, she is placed under a sunflower arch, as if to say that even the sun supports Anāhitā. More generally, the solar emblems on these two bottles clearly indicate that Anāhitā was meant to supplant Mithra.

The widespread popularity of the *mehr-āb* tandem is a testimony to the insurmountable problem that nascent Zoroastrianism faced in trying to impose Anāhitā in lieu of Mithra and Apam Napāt. To confront this problem, Anāhitā was to be visually as powerful, and as regal, as possible. She would thus often wear a regal crown as in Naqsh-e Rostam, or on the seal of fig. 72. It would be as wrong to think of them as queens, as to consider the Virgin Mary a queen in fig. 71. Neither, Mary or Jesus, wore a Carolingian crown in Nazareth; if they have been given one, it's to make them as important and regal

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[100] Soudavar 2012a, 36-39.
[101] Soudavar 2012a, 37-38.

as possible. In Medieval art, an unlabelled crowned woman instantly evoked the Virgin Mary, with or without the infant Jesus on her lap. By the same token, the unidentified crowned woman of the seal of fig. 72 evoked Anāhitā; even more so in the Sasanian context, where effigies never provided a realistic portrait. Human faces were either generic, or embellished to the best of the artists' abilities. In other instances, Anāhitā's high status was projected, by other means: With a crenellated crown as in figs. 67 and 72, or through regal symbols such as the solar disk and *dastār* as in fig. 66, or a ram-horned headgear with a pomegranate (fig. 73), all projecting the auspiciousness of *khvarenah*.

Fig. 71 – The crowned Virgin Mary and Jesus Victoria & Albert Museum

Fig. 72 – Sasanian seal with Anāhitā's effigy. H. Afshar collections.

Fig. 73 – Anāhitā with a ram-crown symbol of *khvarenah*. Sasanian silver plate. Walters Art Museum

Fig. 74 – Anāhitā holding Apam Napāt's hand. British Museum

II.12 - Anāhitā the anti-*daeva* and symbol of orthodoxy

As the anti-*daeva* goddess, Anāhitā was bound to play an important role in Sasanian coinage, especially for the kings who wanted to emphasize their orthodoxy. To understand her role, one must be able to recognize her, especially on the coinage of Ardashir I, where she first appears (fig. 75). Numismatists, however, had previously labeled the bust before Ardashir as his crown prince, and have now settled for a new term, "the throne successors," to generally qualify the coinage in which a bust appears before the king. It's confusing and wrong as it stems from a lack of understanding for the "architecture of Sasanian coinage," which remains "unexplained despite the multitude of publications on the subject."[102] I had expressed the same in 2009, and yet, numismatists

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[102] Soudavar 2009, 418.

still prefer to hide behind the vague "throne successors" label, and push aside criticism with a slight of hand.[103] If the coin architecture is misunderstood, it's because:

1- Since the Avestan descriptive adjectives for celestial bodies, such as *afsh-chithra* and *gao-chithra,* are still mistranslated, not only the triple dot symbol and the cow sign of Sasanian coinage are not understood, but also their interrelationship with the double-legged *ankh* sign.

2- Sasanian iconography is governed by conventions, and if the spot before the ruler is occupied by a deity once, it will always remain so. One cannot say that the bust before Zāmāsb is Ahura Mazdā (fig. 76), but when it comes to Ardashir, it represents his successor. Moreover if the bust is handing a beribboned *yāreh* to the king (fig. 79), it must be a deity and not a prince.

Fig. 75 – Ardashir facing the Anāhitā with flapped bonnet. Private coll.

Fig. 76 - Zāmāsb facing the bust of Ahura Mazdā. Private coll.

Fig. 77 – Bahrām II facing Anāhitā with flapped bonnet. Private coll.

Fig. 78 – Anāhitā facing Bahrām II on a silver bowl from the Teflis Musuem.

3- Numismatists have been unable to understand the significance of the *chihr az*

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[103] Andrea Gariboldi, for instance, remarked in a footnote (Gariboldi 2011, 90): "L'affirmazione di Soudavar2009, 418, di essere in grado di fornire un completo e decisamente apodittica e forviante, come l'esempio che i Sasanide avrebbero sempre raffigurato i sovrani sulle monete a destra, i segno di discontinua rispetto alla moa partica di rappresentare il volto del re a sinistra o frontalmemte. In verita, ci sono molte ecceezzioni a questa regola. Trovo inutile indugiare in grossolane semplificazioni che non giovano al progresso degli studi." For him, ignoring 42 pages of my arguments seems to be the answer, and mischaracterization seems to be the way for "progresso degli studi." But after explaining that the Sasanians adopted the right-facing convention for the king's effigy, I had stated that "with a few **minor exceptions**" they followed it to the very end of their dynasty. Gariboldi, however, for lack of arguments, had to distort what I had said. I wonder if he ever calculated the number of non right-facing issues (which are mostly commemorative coins) to see whether they constitute "minor exceptions" as I claim, or "molte ecceezzioni" as he does. In a proper scientific debate, one disproves arguments by logical constructs and counter-examples to achieve "progresso degli studi.". A wholesale condemnation, as his, is a sign of incapacity.

yazatān slogan for Sasanian coinage. Such an important political slogan was <u>bound to affect, and govern,</u> the architecture of the coin. If the king is said to have obtained his *chihr* (light) from the gods, the one before the king is the deity that provides it. With the word *yazatān* in plural, it could always be interpreted as pointing to the Mithra/Apam Napāt tandem; and it is to avoid such an attack that Ardashir probably saw fit to put the bust of the anti-*daeva* Anāhitā before himself.

4- Even though the crenellated crown was worn by both male and female deities, numismatists see the flapped bonnet as a uniquely male headgear. But the bust before Ardashir in fig. 66 has the same bonnet as the one before Bahrām II in fig. 77, and on the silver bowl of Bahrām II at the Teflis Museum (fig.78), which is clearly a woman. They all show Anāhitā with the same headgear.

5- Moreover, on certain coins of Bahrām II such as fig. 80, the bust before the king has visibly two breasts, much like the female deity on both sides of fig.79; she can only be Anāhitā. On the Teflis bowl, Anāhitā—with visible breasts—has a bonnet, but in figs. 79 and 80, she wears a Phrygian bonnet with an animal head. Like Shāpur I and Ardashir I who sported different headgears, deities too could wear different ones.

Fig. 79 – Anāhitā represented as female bust before Bahrām II
on the obverse of his coin, and as full woman on the reverse
(Gyselen 2004, 109, n. 170)

Fig. 80 – Breasted bust of Anāhitā
before Bahrām II
(Mitchiner 1977, 155, no. 851)

6- Furthermore, numismatists as much bewildered about the reverse of the Sasanian as for the busts on the obverse. To figure it out, one needs to not only understand the *chihr az yazatān* slogan, but also the reason for its adoption. Basically, the reverse of the Sasanian coinage is a continuation of the *pārsā* imagery that Darius had established. As the *pārsa* king, Darius stood weapon in hand by a fire edifice. Thereafter, all rulers of Persis followed the same example. Whether holding a bow or a sword, whether standing before an outdoor fire altar or fire tower, the

king stands weapon in hand, close to the fire (figs. 81-83), which reflects the very meaning of *pārsa,* i.e., the one who stands close to the fire.[104] But something happened along the road, which forced the Sasanians to slightly change the *pārsa* imagery. Whereas the Achaemenid political slogan emphasized the "*pārsa son of pārsa"* pedigree of the king, it also claimed that the king was possessor of the Arya *chisa*, i.e., the Aryan *khvarenah.* In the meantime, however, the Zoroastrian priests had allocated the Aryan *khvarenah* to Zoroaster, and a pious Zoroastrian king could no longer claim to possess it. The formula had to be tweaked ever so slightly, along with its imagery. The *chihr az yazatān* formula was an extremely clever substitute, since it did not specify the type of *chihr* that the king claimed to have, and left open to interpretation the deity that supposedly bestowed the king's *khvarenah.* And since *chihr'*s secondary meaning was image/shape, it seemed logical to bring down the Ahura Mazdā that hovered up high (fig. 74), and put him on the right side as the mirror image of the king on the left. That's what Shāpur I did, when he first projected the *chihr az yazatān* formula on the reverse of his coinage (fig. 75). By virtue of the imprecise word *yazatān*, the identity of the right side deity varied according to the wishes and preoccupation of the ruler; if he was concerned with orthodoxy, as Bahrām II was, he could even place Anāhitā on the opposite side (fig. 70).

pārsa

Fig. 81 – Coin of of Dareios II of Persis. 1st century BC

Fig. 82 – Coin of Artaxerxes II son of Dareios II of Persis. 1st-century BC

Fig. 834 – Coin of Autophradates I of Persis, with Ahura Mazdā above

Fig. 84 – Coin of Shāpur I, lance in hand and standing opposite Ahura Mazdā

As the anti-*daeva,* Anāhitā was the deity of choice for the Sasanian kings who wished to be in the good books of the orthodox clergy. As such her appearance in Sasanian iconography provides an accurate gage for assessing the religiosity of each.

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[104] Soudavar 2014, 93-100.

II.13 - The impact of Zoroastrian deliberations on Hāriti's Chinese journey

Besides those already discussed, Hāriti shares a most important feature with Anāhitā: She was considered the facilitator of child birth and protector of pregnant women, which ties in well with two stanzas of the *Ābān Yasht* (*Yts*.5.2 & 5.5), where Anāhitā is portrayed as the one who purifies "the wombs for giving birth, gives easy delivery to all females, and brings down milk to all females." Oddly, Hāriti is at first an ogress who devours children, but repents and becomes a protector of children, when the Buddha abducts her own child in order to show her the suffering of the mothers who were victimized by her.[105] But no matter how much a child-devouring ogress has repented, it is hard to imagine her as a deity that pregnant women would have felt comfortable with, and would have espoused her as their patron saint. Chances are that, initially, she was just a goddess of procreation, one that facilitated child birth, as *Yts*.5.2 & 5.5 also seem to indicate; and that the anti-child feature was a later transplant.[106] There is otherwise no justification for such an abrupt transformation.

Fig. 85 – Buddha attacked by Hāriti's demons
Chinese scroll details; ink on silk, 18th century (Private collection)

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[105] For various versions of Hāriti, see Murray 1981. A similar scroll is produced in Giès 2004, 163.

[106] As no Indian or Chinese sources have been found for this myth, a Gandharan origin is often proposed; Giès 2004, 162.

The child-devouring theme must have stemmed from the antagonism between Anāhitā and Apam Napāt, the *daeva* who was sanitized into a child. And it stands to reason that if Anāhitā was the anti-*daeva,* and opposed to Apam Napāt, she was perceived—at one point in time—as an anti-child; this, of course, would have been in conflict with her primary role as the deity who facilitated child birth. Myths generally develop to dissipate internal conflicts, and to produce an acceptable narrative. The Hāriti myth was developed to forge together the two contradictory aspects of a water deity, which spilled over from the Achaemenids to their neighbors.
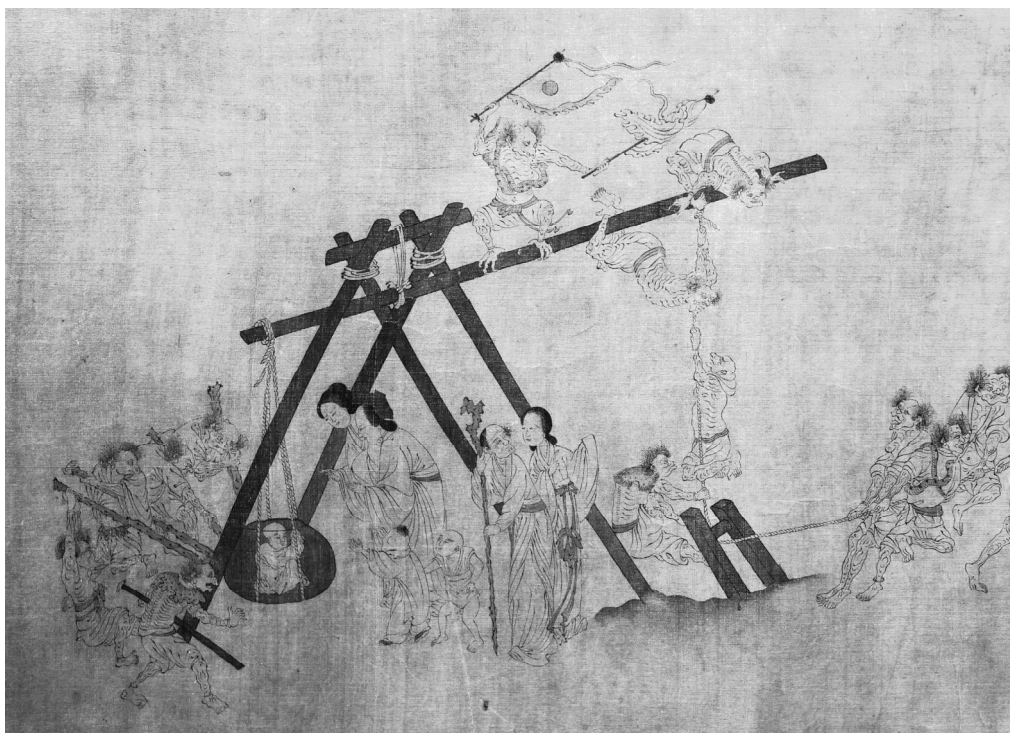
Fig. 86 — Hāriti demons raising the alms bowl that hid her child.
Further details from scroll of fig. 76

Such was the dominant position of the Achaemenids in the ancient world that their ideological problems and travails must have affected neighboring countries as well. It had begun with the killing of the magus Gaumāta, and the massacre of the Median magi, symbolized by the horned lion chimera that Darius is stabbing in his palace of Persepolis,

which provided the *div* prototype for Iranian narratives.[107] Interestingly, the same demoniac characters populate the Chinese scrolls of the Hāriti myth, which depict her endeavors to recover the child that the Buddha had hidden under an alms bowl. Hāriti has an army of demoniac figures that she first directs to attack the Buddha; to no avail, their arrows turn into lotus flowers and fall down (fig. 85). She then orders them to lift the alms bowl to recover her child; again, they are unsuccessful (fig. 86).

Figs. 87 a, b – Other details from the scroll in Fig. 85
a) Hāriti with children and pregnant women, b) flame-spouting figure riding a dragon

This army of demoniac figures cannot represent her own children, because the child under the alms bowl, and those surrounding Hāriti (fig. 87a), are normal human children.[108] It thus seems that the Iranian *div*s, who came to represent Anāhitā's opponents branded as *daevas,* also entered the Hāriti myth. The *div*-like creatures of the scroll act as her accomplices, at a time when she hasn't repented as yet. The demoniac Hāriti may reflect the un-sanitized Apam Napāt, the one known as the Burning Water and branded as *daeva*; a dragon-riding fire-spouting figure in Hāriti's retinue even seems to reflect him (fig. 87b). The last phase of the myth, when Hāriti repents and vows to protect all children, mirrors the harmonization of the two antagonistic water deities of

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[107] Soudavar 2014, 241-48.
[108] Hāriti's own children are sometimes qualified as "demon-children," in which "demon" is the attribute of the mother and not the children; Murray 1981, 253.

Zoroastrianism, namely Anāhitā and Apam Napāt, when they were integrated as mother and child into the Ābān family of gods. In this phase, children were reunited with Hāriti (fig. 87a), as the child-like Apam Napāt was with his supposed mother Anāhitā (fig. 35). The visible entanglement of Anāhitā with Hāriti further establishes the former as a transplant deity from the eastern Iranian world.

II.14 - The flaming pearl

When the Medes integrated Mithra and Apam Napāt into the *khvarenah* cycle, one became its celestial purveyor, and the other, its underwater guardian. In its underwater stage, the *khvarenah* was best represented by a pearl, which was both luminous and spherical (see sec. II.2, and fig. 56). It seems that by virtue of being guarded by the "blazing" Apam Napāt, the pearl got affixed with flames and travelled eastward, all the way to China, as an auspicious symbol of power similar to the *khvarenah*. In Chinese mythology, this flaming pearl is unsuccessfully pursued—through clouds and seas—by a dragon-snake (fig. 88);[109] and in Japan the flaming pearl is transformed into a luminous crystal ball (fig. 89). Their relative stories, of uncertain origin, recall the unsuccessful attempts of the dragon-snake Azhi-dahāga to capture the *khvarenah*, before landing in the hands of Apam Napāt (*Yts*.19.46-51); and since they echo Apam Napāt's original association with fire, pearl and snakes, they may well represent a further drift of his saga into the myth domain.
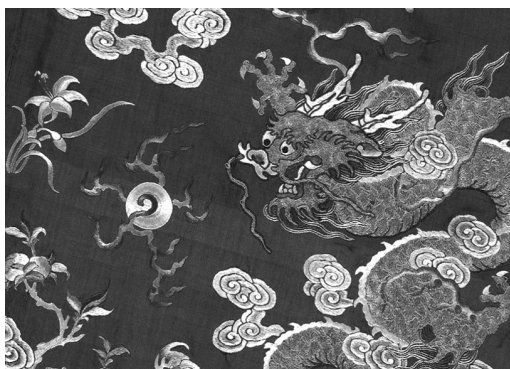
Fig. 88 – Dragon chasing a flaming pearl. Chinese silk brocade. 19-20th century. Honolulu Museum of Art.

Fig. 89 – Dragon chasing a luminous pearl. Japan 19th c. Cantor Arts Center, Stanford University

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[109] See for instance the wonderful scroll of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, painted by Shen Rong (*http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/nine-dragons-28526*).

EPILOGUE

The Avesta is a complex text and, at times, a deceitful one. Philological considerations alone cannot untangle such complexity. All avenues, including the repercussions of Iranian religions on neighboring countries as well as banned ideologies, must be explored. Images can play an important role in this process. Contrary to the textual documents written by the learned, who were affiliated to the elite and defended the official point of view, artisans often reflected in their works popular beliefs. It is thus that the cosmetic box of fig. 9b offers an explanation for Apam Napāt's name, nowhere to be found in texts. All references to such a fundamental concept as the *khvarenah*, whether in Zoroastrian texts or Achaemenid inscriptions are tongue in cheek and convoluted. A concept so strongly associated with the Median deity tandem, namely Mithra and Apam Napāt, could not be glorified but only alluded to in a cryptic fashion. Where Avestan texts fail to explain the *khvarenah*, iconography provides a detailed schema (fig. 56). Similarly, from the lion fountain to Hellenistic earrings, and to the Islamic *mihrāb*, the surviving *mehr-āb* symbols attest to the enduring popularity of these two deities in tandem.

Of the two, the more onerous deity was Apam Napāt, for he was formerly associated with life and creation. His popularity, on the one hand, and his rival status vis à vis Ahura Mazdā, on the other, created a dilemma for Darius and his successors, as well as the Zoroastrian priesthood. At first he was ignored, then branded as *daiva* and replaced by a minor and Eastern aquatic deity, Anāhitā. The latter was afterward designated as the anti-*daeva* and champion of Zoroastrian orthodoxy. But no matter how praised she was, she could not displace or break up the powerful tandem deity of old. A compromise was thus sought, by which, Mithra and Apam Napāt would be integrated into the Zoroastrian pantheon, with less status and less power, but addressed with the epithet *ahura*, at par with (Ahura) Mazdā. This polytheistic compromise, nominally referred to as the Ahuric Religion, was a drastic departure from Zoroaster's monotheistic vision that exalted Ahura Mazdā alone. Still, Apam Napāt, the god whose name evoked "Burning Water," represented a major problem for Zoroastrianism. He was stripped of his *yasht* and powerful attributes, and attempts were made to diminish him in a multitude of ways, including a new definition of his name through punning. His name was manipulated to

mean Child of Waters, and as such, he was represented by a winged Eros or a two-legged *ankh* sign. This allowed Anāhitā, who, in the meantime, was named the Lady of the Waters, to hold the hand of the Child of the Waters as a motherly figure (figs. 2, 7). It projected a powerful image, belittling Apam Napāt and aggrandizing Anāhitā. What remained of Apam Napāt's past glory, was just a few allusions here and there in the Avesta, mainly because of the use of earlier material by later Avestan authors.

What emerges from this study is also a proof for what I had long suspected: That the negative connotation of "*daeva*" was mainly because of the animosity that flared up under Darius and early successors, against the Median magi. There is no better proof for this than *Yts*.5.94-95 in which, those who worshipped the Median Apām Napāt at nighttime were labeled as *daeva*-worshippers; what's more, they were so vilified that whatever they touched had to be purified. It shows purification laws as directed, not against harmful food or noxious animals, but against those who were perceived as the "enemy." I believe that it set Zoroastrianism on an aggressive path to vilify opponents by presenting them as impure, and creating a list of untouchables, essentially aimed at isolating their opponents. It represents a milestone in the evolution of Zoroastrianism, with important consequences in the political and religious spheres.

I have often advocated that Western Avestologists would be well served by the study of NP translations of the Avesta, and by the search for NP parallels of Avestan words and sentences.[110] Sadly, modern specialists think of New Persian as so unconnected to the Avestan language that they hardly invest any time in it. If anything, this study shows how relevant can New Persian be to Avestan studies, since the deciphering of the hitherto incomprehensible *Yts*.94-95 was only achieved through finding connections between Avestan verbs and NP words. O.P. Skjaervo had done the same for one verb only, when linking Av. *vi-pāshna-ka* to NP *pāshna* (heel); I extended it to three other verbs, which all together described four stages in the preparation process of libation ingredients.

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[110] In a recent article (Hintze 2009), Almut Hintze rejects the possibility that the Avestan name *avô* could mean water. Her rejection is predicated on accepting incongruent translations such as "having the seed of water" for *afsh-chithra* (p. 141), or misunderstanding *Yt*.8.34 (as explained in sec. I.7 above). She also translates the term *avô-hvarenåsca* of *Y*.2.16 as "manger" rather than "drinking place," based on the assumption that its MP cognate *akhwarr* (NP *ākhor*) also means the same, i.e., a "place where food and drink is deposited for domestic animals" (p. 137). But as in French, where water is pronounced *eau*, many Iranian dialects still use a similar sounding term (*auw*) for water; and the word *ākhor*, which is really an abbreviation of *auw-khor*, denotes a place where water was drank. It could refer to a spring or pond, as well as a man-made instrument. And since *ākhor* was used more and more for the man-made drinking trough, a new term was adopted to denote the natural watering place: *ābesh-khor*. This is the term that Jalil Doustkhah has used for his translation of *avô-hvarenåsca* in NP (Dustkhāh 2002, I:105).[110] It's more appropriate, and better fits the natural setting that *Y*.2 describes.

Similarly, in the case of *Yt*.8.4, a number of adjectives relative to the brightness and light power of Tishtrya had exact NP counterparts. What's more, to better comprehend this stanza one had to be familiar with New Persian literary techniques and expressions. For instance, at the end of this stanza, the luminescence of Tishtrya is highlighted by a question and answer sequence. Familiarity with this technique had allowed me to offer elsewhere a comprehensive explanation for *Y*19, which was lacking in existing translations.[111] And yet, in reaction to my explanation of this technique, one reviewer opined that the question-and-answer technique was a "common phenomena in the ancient world," and no big deal.[112] If so, how come no one else discovered it in *Yt*.8.4?

Be that as it may, the expression *berezât haosravanghem* ("*khosrovāni* radiance") has numerous counterparts in Persian literature, as *āftāb-e khosrovān* (kingly sun), all alluding to kingly radiance and the solar disk depicted behind Sasanian rulers' head. This Avestan expression may thus allude to a kingly radiance, or kingly *khvarenah*, carried by *haosrova,* i.e., Kay Khosrow of the *Shāhnāmeh.* Various modern scholars have noted the many similarities between the Cyrus saga and that of Kay Khosrow,[113] and it stands to reason that Cyrus would embody the most powerful of kingly radiances because of his unparalleled victories and conquests.

In sum, in this stanza alone, we have a number of indices all militating for the late redaction of *Yt*.8. On the one hand, we have close similarities of Avestan words and expressions with New Persian, and on the other, we have a reference that most probably evokes Cyrus. Like so many other indices, they push forward the redaction date of the Avesta, close to the late Achaemenid or early post-Achaemenid period.

This of course is anathema to Avestologists, who try to fend off their detractors, and especially outsiders like me, by invoking incompatibilities with supposed grammatical and etymological rules that the Avesta followed with clockwork precision. And yet, like any other text, the Avesta suffers from inconsistencies. For instance, as I have argued elsewhere, the drop of one *Apam* in *Yt*.19.94, where two successive ones should have appeared, is a common scribal error that occurs across different scripts and languages.[114] Also, by Kellens's own admission, a passage of *Yt*.5.53 that replicates *Yt*.10.11 is grammatically incorrect.[115]

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[111] Soudavar 2014, 348-56.
[112] It was expressed by an anonymous reviewer (I believe Almut Hintze), see Soudavar 2014, 368.
[113] An extensive table on this topic has now been compiled by R. Zarghamee; Zarghamee 2013, 538-39.
[114] See Soudavar 2012b, 72.
[115] See note 34 supra.

More importantly, in the Iranian culture, form takes precedence over content. Whether in poems or in prose, authors often mutilate spelling and set aside grammatical rules for the sake of rhyme, rhythm and meter. Where Kellens sees a grammatical mistake in three (underlined) adjectives of *Yt*.5.53, I see a deliberate attempt to have a better rhyme (especially for the first adjective *rathaêshtârô*) with *taxmô tusô:*

> *Yt*.5.53
> *tãm ýazata,*
> *taxmô tusô rathaêshtârô,*
> *barshaêshu paiti aspanãm,*
> *zâvare jaidhyañtô hitaêibyô,*
> *drvatâtem tanubyô...*

In a hymn that was composed for political motives, purpose can override grammar. Whether by mistake or on purpose, these errors show that grammar wasn't sacrosanct for Avestan authors, and it leaves Avestologists empty handed, once again.

APPENDIX I

Below are the comments of two reviewers of *Studia Iranica* based on a shorter version of this study (basically Part I) that I had submitted. Reviewer 1 wants to defend at all cost the untenable early Avesta dating, championed by Boyce and Kellens. Reviewer 2 transposes French emotional adjectives into his/her rebuttal ("annoying", "irritating", "hilarious"…) in lieu of logical arguments she cannot find. The parallelism of the two shows a coordinated effort, most probably inculcated the gatekeeper of *Studia Iranica*. The problem though is that they bluff and I shall call their bluffs point by point. My answers are in italic.

Reviewer 1 :
Discrediting Ahura Mazdā's Rival, the Original Iranian Creator God Apam Napāt (ApamNaphāt?)
Submitted for Studia Iranica 2015

This article proposes to discuss the ways in which Apām Napāt was reintegrated into the Zoroastrian religious system by the priesthood of Achaemenid times, having allegedly previously been rejected as a Daiva. The author claims to have identified "subtle ways" in which the priests would have tried to achieve this.
The author advocates an approach to the sources within the framework of his own historical reconstruction of which he is firmly convinced while he rejects those of others without, however, engaging with the scholarly debate. The author is convinced of his own conclusions and the fact that they cohere in his imagination is taken as proof for their infallible validity, while he accuses Avestologists to be caught in a "self-made enclosure" (p.5).
     Yes, and these reviewers' comments provide further proof of this.

The article seems to be directed to the non-specialist who is in no position to judge the sustainability of the numerous claims made. The author declares that this article is designed not for Avestologists, but for non-Avestologists (p.5), although the article is largely concerned with Old Iranian (Avestan and Old Persian) source material. The author displays little understanding of methodology in Indo-Iranian Studies with regard to comparison of Old Iranian and Vedic and the reconstruction of a prehistoric linguistic and conceptual world. On p. 14, for example, the author comments that in Vedic Yama has no "encounter" with Anāhitā, without noting that the name Anāhitā has no direct Vedic equivalent.
     Before posing as a savant, I suggest he/she should first consult the provided reference Boyce 1989 (EIr): "The proper name of the divinity in Indo-Iranian times, H. Lommel has argued, was Sarasvatī, "she who possesses waters…. <u>She was still worshiped in Vedic India by this name</u>, which was also given there to a small but very holy river in Madhyadeśa. In its Iranian form (*Harahvatī), her name was given to the region, rich in rivers, whose modern capital is Kandahar ". I just say: "Among the supplicants appear powerful

mythological figures from the Indo-Iranian lore, such as Jamshid (Yima), the dragon Azhi-dahāga, and the dragon-slayer Fereydun (Thraetona). The problem though is that none of these figures had any prior encounter, in the Vedic mythology or elsewhere, with Anāhitā." In fact, if the reviewer's contention was to be true, it provides added support for my thesis: that Anāhitā's interaction with heroes of the Indo-Iranian lore were without precedent and pure fabrications

At the outset, the author declares his rejection of purely philological methods. He discards translations of the Avesta by Avestologists which in his view are too philological and obscure. He provides alternative English translations without, however, engaging with the Avestan original. According to him, incoherent translations need to be re-vamped and reinterpreted. One enters, of course, a vicious circle here if one tries to translate the Avesta by first having a preconceived idea of what it should mean. This, however, is the approach which the author seems to advocate (p. 2). Instead of examining the Avestan original, he has recourse to New Persian and attempts to translate Avestan in the light of New Persian words that sound similar to the Avestan words. Several unclear Av. words are discussed and connected with NP words such as, for example, philologically difficult and partly obscure attributes that describe the libations of Daiva-worshippers in Yt 5.95.

Oddly, he/she admits that I provide explanations for "unclear Av. words" but evokes unspecified "philological difficulty". Where is the difficulty?

The method is applied with very limited success due to the fact that basic phonological rules are not observed. For example, on p.21 bottom, Persian kārd 'knife' belongs with the root kart 'to cut' (Cheung p.243f.), not with *skard 'to pierce' as claimed by the author.

*I provide 2 possibilities related to *skard and NP kārd, which together with the suffix apa can both explain an unexplained (or "unclear") Avestan term, apa-skaraka, that I define as a "cutting apart" or "chopping" process. If both are rejected, how should apa-skaraka be translated? I do believe, however, that the two roots are related, and Cheung shouldn't have separated them; this passage somehow provides proof of this.*

Some of explanations proposed here are pure fantasy. They include the view that *apąm napāt-* mean 'burning water' while the usual 'grandson of the waters' would be a later development which the author reconstructs in a series of unsubstantiated claims (p.29).

Fantasy? I provide a substantial amount of arguments. Which one is specifically wrong?

The author is rather quick with drawing far-reaching conclusions on the basis of very slight evidence. A case in point is the discussion of the Aryan *xwarenah* (p.7) and the way he reaches the conclusion that Yt 19 and Yt 5 were composed in post-Achaemenid times. In connection with the story related in Yt 19 and 5, where Frangrasyan is described as desiring the glory of the Aryan people, and which belongs to Zarathustra, the author claims that "no Achaemenid king would have tolerated the attribution of the Aryan xwarenah to Zoroaster" (in itself one of the author's many unsubstantiated claims) and therefore neither of the two Yashts could have survived

the Achaemenid Era. Therefore, the author concludes, both Yashts must be products of
the post-Achaemenid period, "probably conceived under the Seleucids". This example
illustrates how the author draws conclusions from his own assumptions, internally
coherent, but entirely hypothetical and unsubstantiated. He neither engages with
contradictory evidence nor with the scholarly debate.

He/she of course ignores the extensive arguments provided in my 2014 book If any scholar thinks
that Zoroastrian priests could proclaim 5 times a day that the Aryan khvarenah belonged to Zoroaster and
not the Achaemenid king, and that no region of the world was rules by a khshatra but only by regional
chieftains under Zoroaster (Y19.17-18), then I think there is no need for further discussions, for it negates
everything that images or script project about the Achaemenid king. This is the crux of the matter, and
cannot be summarily dismissed.

The author rejects Hoffmann's system of transliterating Avestan and proposes to
return to Bartholomae's. However, Bartholomae's system is not followed either, and
instead an idiosyncratic way of writing Avestan words is used.
At times they are disfigured beyond recognition. For example, on p.26 Av. *berezant-* a n d *borz*
(presumably *bərəz* is meant here).

I use the transcription of the main Zoroastrian site Avesta.org, which is accessible to everybody
and very functional

Points of detail
p.1 The abstract does not really provide a summary of the argument of this article.
p.3 The description of Ahura Mazda as an "omnipotent" god needs to be specified.

Really? He/she wants me to reiterate Darius' Bisotun inscription that all he achieved was by the
will of Ahura Mazdā?

p.4 The author regards the aquatic female deity Anāhitā as a "substitute" for Apām
Napāt, who according him was a competitor of Ahura Mazdā. It is, however, unclear
why Apām Napāt should have been a competitor while Anāhitā was not.

I am not sure Reviewer1 can read English, and understand it at the same time. I explain more than
once that Apam Napāt was the original "creator" god. It's even in the title. Anāhitā never had such pretense

p.8 The statement "In Zoroaster's Gathas, where Ahura Mazdā is praised, traditional
Iranian gods are referred to as daevas, and are not demonized" inaccurately reflects
Herrenschmidt & Kellens 1993, as they take the view that in the Gathas daevas are the
bad gods. Nowhere in the Avesta are the daevas gods that perceived as positive.

This person simply cannot read. Herrenschmidt & Kellens write in EIr. : "In the Gathas the
daēuuas had not yet, in fact, become demons. As Émile Benveniste (1967) clearly established, they
constituted a distinct category of quite genuine gods, who had, however, been rejected."

The view that the demonisation of the Daivas was caused in connection with the
magophonia referred to by Herodotus is entirely hypothetical.
If one cannot read the EIr, one won't be able to read the extensive arguments presented in my 2014 book,
either.

p.20–21 The reconstruction of how a ritual was prepared is entirely hypothetical. That the ingrediants for the libations were collected from the "four corners of the realm" seems to be the author's invention.

In this person's view, the ingredients were simply available in a drawer under the fire altar!!!

p.21 Av. *zaotar-* is not 'libation'. The Av. word is *zaoϑrā*
True. (There were many typos)

21 bottom Persian kārd 'knife' belongs with the root kart 'to cut' (Cheung p.243f.), not with *skard 'to pierce' as claimed by the author.
Already addressed

p.23 The reasoning about the translation of the object (not subject, as the author seems to insinuate) is bizarre. He seems to forget that Avestan has free word order.
Really? Says who?

Neither Hintze nor Skjaervoe interpret the 'waters' as the subject of the sentence in Yt 8.34.
That's why both translations are wrong and don't make sense. That passage of the Avesta talks about nature and water-rain cycles. It does not talk about modern land reform, or land distribution. It's about land fertility because of the water cycle.

The author's own translation of the 'waters' as a gen.pl, is impossible.
Really? The dictionary of Avesta.org defines apô as "[ap](G,plNA) water" or an adverb, and occurs 15 times. Either his/her contention is wrong, or at best, creates a controversy. As such, context is the ultimate arbiter, and in this case, context and the syntax clearly support my translation. Moreover, when composing Iranian hymns and poems, poets may take liberties. One cannot analyze poetry by strictly adhering to grammatical or etymological rules. "Impossible" has no meaning in this context

p.24 The root underlying *baxšaiti* and *baxta* and NP *baxt* is the same root *baj* 'to distribute, apportion'. The author seems to be unaware of this.
I did not negate this common root, but simply observed that baxta was more akin to NP bakht. Derivations from the same root can take divergent meanings. In any case bakht is often explained as a distribution from the gods. The irritating point (or annoying as the other reviewer says) is that the Avesta is many ways much closer to Persian that they think

p.24f. Wild speculations about the origins of the fravashis.
I have yet to see a better one. If one has it, I am all ears

p.26 The discussion of the etymology of *napāt-* disregards the forms in which this term in attested in Vedic and Avestan.
I raise an objection based on solid arguments and my Naphāt proposal is followed by a (?), i.e. I am not very sure about its original form.
p.31 The author's spelling Azhi-dahāga is strangely hybrid. It should be either Av.

aži- dahāka- or MP *aždahāg.*
p.34 the name of Henkelman is misspelt repeatedly.
p.34 fn.70: read 2015.
true.

p.36 That **Harahvatī* was an Iranian river deity in addition to a geographical
region is an unsubstantiated claim. The claim that the Buddhist *Hāriti* is an
Iranian loan needs to be supported with at least a reference where such a
borrowing is argued for.
> *see Boyce 1989 (above).*

p.39 To call the Avesta "deceitful" doesn't seem the right expression.
> *The word "deceit" should be easy to understand for these reviewers, as they both practice it.*

p.38 offers some wild speculations on the Iranian origin of the motif that the
Buddhist monster *Hāriti* devours her children.
> *One has the duty to explain oddities in a plausible way, and needs vision, which is not the forte of philologists*

p.39 The conclusion on p.39 section XI is rather weak. The author reiterates his
agenda rather summarizing the argument and conclusion of this paper

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Reviewer 2
(emphasizing in bold & underline is by me)

 The paper "Discrediting Ahura Mazdā's Rival, the Original Iranian Creator God Apam Napāt (Apam Naphāt?)" should not be published. It is an exposé of the author's own ideas lacking any scientific argumentation and discrediting scientific approaches to the same problems. It is just an accumulation of **unscientific** ideas combined to make a completely **fictive** construction. Own ideas are used as arguments for new assumptions. This is, for example, the case when assuring that the Yašts cannot be redacted in Achaemenian times, since the kings would not have allowed the attribution of the *xarənah* to Zozoroaster.
 A scientific approach is primarily based on logic and common sense. It is rather presumptuous, for one who lacks both, to judge what is scientific and what is not

 Furthermore, author's methodology is far beyond any acceptable scientific standards. I'll limit myself to some of the most obvious problems. The whole presentation is driven by the idea that the Avestan past can be explained out of much later materials. Thus he explains the rejection of the daeuuas recurring to political reasons and uses the Šāhnāme as argumentation.
 Although I use the Shāhnāmeh as an example, the main problem I cite is that: good gods do not turn into bad ones in the normal course of events. Drastic events must have triggered it, and I argue in here as in my book that it was the massacre of the magi by Darius.
 Much **irritating** is the rejection of well-established etymologies produced with the <u>not questionable</u> methods of the comparative Indo-Iranian linguistics. the author postulates new ones just on the basis of the

simple sound similarity with some New Persian words. The author **lacks any sensibility** for the historic evolution of languages and produces thus some **hilarious** etymologies: e.g. the connection between *napāt* and *naphtha* which has for the author far reaching consequences. It is very **disappointing** that he does not loss a minute in explaining what should be wrong in the old and sure etymological connection with a great number of identical words in other Indo-European languages (like Lat. *nepos*, *nepotis*).

Nothing is "wrong" with nepos, nepotis, and nephew as they are all attached to the umbilical cord and the navel (NP nāf), so to speak. I just propose that there was, through punning, a change of name from something that was akin to naphtha to a similar-sounding name that meant navel.

Quite <u>sad</u> is always the disregard of any scientific approach concerning the interpretation of Av. *bərəz-, bərəzaṇt* that is obviously identical (**<u>as universally known</u>**) with OInd. *bṛh-, bṛhant-* "lofty", but that is compared by the author with New Persian *beresteh, brēzan*, etc.

"Sadly," every dictionary takes into consideration NP derivatives. If one cannot rely on NP words, then I suggest that all dictionaries must be tossed out. Conveniently, he/she forgets to mention my examples in French (braiser) and English (blaze, blæse)

Not less <u>annoying</u> is his explanation of Av. *apa.xaraosa-* as connected with NP *kharās* "stone mill".
Why is it annoying? She must have an aversion to stone mills

The list could be extended, but it should be enough to notice that there is no new etymological interpretation by the author that has the minimal chance to be right. His etymological approaches lack any acceptable scientific methodology. The same is true for the semantic analysis that are mostly limited to accept for the Avestan words the same meaning as their (alleged) cognates present in New Persian. **<u>Unforgettable</u>** is the translation of *baxšaiti* as "endows with fertility". For maintaining his impossible semantical analysis the author is compelled to an also <u>impossible syntactical analysis</u>. He criticises without any serious reasons the analysis of *apō* as accusative plural and object of *baxšaiti* and translates it as a genitive plural (!!!) "of those waters". The arguments employed do not belong in a scientific journal.

Why is my syntactical analysis "impossible"? I highlight the problem through an example. To claim impossibility, he/she needs to produce an counter example. He/she obviously cannot. As for his "genitive plural (!!!)" remark, he/she claims the same nonsense that Reviewer 1 does..

It should not be a big problem to use a different transliteration from the standard one (Hoffmann's system). However, he claims to use Bartholomae's, but it is in fact not at all true. The transliteration employed is simply wrong and do not allow the reader to reconstruct the real Avestan text.
I use the standard in Avesta.org, a major Zoroastrian site and accessible to everybody.

And the only reason for adopting it is, to say the less, extemporaneous: that thus the relationship to the Persian words is easier to be recognized! It is simply obvious that the author lacks the necessary skills of the Avestan language for publishing scientific papers discussing Avestan passages and interpretations. As solid training in Avestan could solve many of the problems present in this paper.
Nowadays, those with solid Avestan credentials are precisely those who produce unreadable translations.

We could as well discuss other conceptual problem of the paper, but in my view the absolute disregard of

> the most simple rules of the Avestan linguistics and philology makes impossible the publication of this paper in a scientific journal

The above comments of *Studia Iranica's* reviewers clearly follow the same turf-protection pattern that I had experienced before. The late Richard Frye, who had endorsed my *Aura of Kings* in 2003, once told me that a colleague of his had walked into his room and objectionably asked: How could he approve of such nonsense? To make sure that I had understood him correctly, I brought up the subject once again, when I saw him last in Sarajevo (2013). He reiterated the same, without revealing the name of the objector. This was by no means an isolated incident. When the *IRAN* journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies published an article of mine in 2012, anonymous objectors raised the same question with its editor: How could he allow the publishing of such an article?

In another instance, an anonymous reviewer for *Iranian Studies* asked why I insist to translate Avestan passages when, by my own admission, I had no basic knowledge of Avestan grammar or philology; my answer was then, as it is till today, that I shall continue to do so whenever I encounter translations that don't make sense, and I am somehow able to explain.[116] And since she wove into her comments a quote from Hannah Arendt, I'd like to reciprocate the favor by evoking an equally famous quote of said author: "the banality of evil." For Arendt, mankind's evil essentially stemmed from the self-righteous belief in the absolute truth, and the refusal to confront logic or common sense. I am afraid that, in a most banal way, self-righteousness has also been the plague of Ancient Iranian Studies.

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[116] Soudavar 2014, 368.

APPENDIX II

Xavier Tremblay's entry on *chithra/chihr:*

Avec toutes les félicitations et les meilleurs voeux pour vous et votre famille de l'auteur, en signe de haute estime pour vos travaux,

Iranian Historical Linguistics in the Twentieth Century – Part Two

This second part[1] was basically composed, as the first, during the year 2002. Its protracted editing history has allowed the author to add much new bibliography, but since it had to be inserted in the way of corrections, a total rewriting of the text and exhaustivity were beyond the author's strength. He may thus have overseen, forgotten to add, or not given in his treatment the due place to some titles as well as insufficiently balanced or articulated developments due to the years' distance in the redaction, and begs in advance the reader's indulgence.[2]

II. Avestan

For Avestan we have accurate critical bibliographies by Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin (1962) for the period 1904-1960; Émile Benveniste (1970) for 1961-1968; Jean Kellens (1971/1973) for 1961-1972 and (1991a) for 1972-1990 (see also in *CLI*, 8-20). Therefore, we will be content ourselves with covering the literature which has appeared after 1990.

2.1. Avestan philology (text-editions, dating, and history of the literature).
2.1.1. Text-editions and commentaries

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[1] The first part of this article appeared in Volume 11, No. 1 (September 2005) of this publication. We regret the delay in publishing this second part but are happy that it is now appearing.

[2] As an aide to the reader, I repeat the scribal conventions found in part one: Proto-Indo-European reconstructions are preceded with an asterisk; forms in a script that marks the vowels defectively (as is typical in the Old Persian syllabary or Aramaic alphabet) are transliterated in bold italics; transcription restoring the vowels may be given in italics. The transliteration follows the general modern use of each discipline, with the following exceptions for Avestan: μ instead of m̨, ạ instead of ą̇; č and ǰ instead of c and j; n̨ and n are not distinguished. C represents any consonant, K any obstruent, T any voiceless and D any

voiced obstruent, X any fricative, Π any labial, Γ any velar, Δ any dental/H any laryngeal, Y any semi-vowel (r/r̥, l/l̥, m/m̥, n/n̥, i/i̯, u/u̯), R/R̥ any liquid, N/N̥ any nasal, U/U̯ yod or waw, V any vowel. Accented vowels are marked by the accent á, unaccented ones by the grave à. The end of a stem is marked by the hyphen, the junction of the root and the nominal suffixes by a supralinear point ·, the compound-boundary by a superscripted circle with hyphen °, a truncated word by a superscripted circulus °. A reconstructed form is marked by the asterisk, a philological conjecture by a crux +, a variant attested in the manuscripts but not chosen by the editor is identified by a St. Andrew's cross' *. The † indicates a ghost-word. cf. Part One of this article (published 2005), third section.

Thus another etymology turns up, relating *x^{v}arənah-* to the root **(s)pH₂elH-* 'to move', Ved. *viṣpuliṅgakā́ḥ RV* I.191.12; *viṣphuliṅga-* 'clinkers', *sphuliṅginī-* 'one of the seven tongues of the fire' < **spH₂lH′n-* (*AIG* II:2, §390a); most probably *farnah-* continues a preform without *s mobile*. The same evolution **šf > *x^v* is met within Waxī *niçind* 'to extract' < **nix^{v}anda-* < **niš-fanda-*, Šugnī *naçfiϑ-* 'to be pulled off', pt.pass.prt. Sogd. *X fst-xwmp*, cf. Tremblay (2000:194; 2005a:425; 2008:569, forthcoming a). A similar etymology (including the connection *x^{v}arənah- ≈* Ved. *sphuliṅginī-*) was propounded (apparently independently) by Elfenbein (2001:489-91). Non uidi: Jacobs 1997:215ff.)

cazdō.ŋ^{v}hant-: Tremblay (2005a:428-29), with earlier literature. Emended (in my opinion arbitrarily) by Werba 1986:356-61, followed by Schwartz (2002:62, n.5).

ciϑra-: This word is classically divided in two homonyms, *čiϑra¹-* 'clear; beam, (bright) appearance, characteristics' (*-ra-* adjective, often substantivised, to the root *čaēt* 'to be conspicuous') and *čiϑra²-* 'origin, stem' (*AIW* 587). Although doubts on the existence of this second word had been already ventilated by Kellens (1996:89 and *EAM* I:18, both ad *gao.čiϑrəm* Y.1.11), Soudavar (2003:43; 2006) first systematically questioned the second translation for the Avestan and its cognates OPers. *čiça* MPers. *čihr*, on religious historical grounds. He did not, however, discuss all Avestan passages (2006:164-70) ~~and stirred rebuttals from Panaino~~ ╰┼╮ ~~(2004:279-80)~~ and stirred rebuttals from Panaino (2004:279-80) and apparently Alram, Blet-Lemarquand, and Skjærvø (2007:34-37) (who however do not quote Soudavar 2003 or 2006) and Hintze (forthcoming). Linguistically, one must in any case concede (1) that *čiϑra-* 'origin' cannot be connected with a root attested in Indo-Iranian; the best etymology remains Bailey's (1979:102) as **ki-tro-*, from the root of Gk. ἔκιον; (2) that the Middle Iranian attestation of **čiϑra-* 'origin' is at best slender (one possible cognate in the Arm.

loan-word *čet*, disputed passages in epigraphical Middle Persian; nothing in Pahlavi), the New Iranian one inexistant. Thus at least a favorable heuristic prejudice should attach to tentatives to try the translation 'appearance' on the passages (especially the OPers. *a-r^a-i-y^a a-r^a-i-y^a c-i-ç^a* DNa 14-15 and parallels "Iranian, of Iranian origin" or "Iranian, with the Iranian glory"?) where the meaning 'origin' seems to fit evidently, all the more that interesting results are therewith attained.

čiiaŋhat̤ Y.44.12: contra the analysis of Kellens-Pirat (*TVA*:1.51, 3.188): Schindler (1987:181) and Skjærvø (1997d:109). Actually *^{x}čiiə̯ŋ^{v}hiiat̤*, from a sequence Pre-Av.**cī ianh u̯iat* 'how those whom covers...' that the diascevasts did not understand and could not divide in words (Tremblay 2006b).

dax̌iiu-: (unhappy) attempt at an etymology by Skalmowski (1991).

danarə, tarō.danan- and *ϑanuuan-*: Janda (1998:9-10).

dar$^{(i)}$- 'to tear': Praust (2000:439) contends that the root was anit̤.

dāta- vīdaēuua-: see *vīdaēuua-*.

drafša- 'banner, milk drop': to the matches in OInd. and MIr. cf. Oberlies (1990:157-58 with notes; de Jong 2003:196-201). See also Flattery and Schwartz (1989:108-11).

ϑβars- 'shape': Lubotsky (1994:96-97 assumes insufficiently substantiated emendations in order to derive all forms of this root from a zero-grade.

Ɵraētaona-: Et. "The son of the one who defeats/defeated the third" Kellens (2001b:476); analogical remodelling of *Ɵraētāna-* after theonyms in *-u-H₃no-* according to Oettinger (2002).

ϑraotō.stāč- 'course of a river' (Kellens 1974:252-53, 282-83): The word survived in Middle Iranian: Phl. *lwtst'k*, Arm. *rotastak* Agathangelos (Thompson 1976:375), Georg. *⁺rudastagi* 'River country' Conversion of Kartli (Bielmeier 1994:38-40).

paiti- 'lord, husband': Tremblay (2003b:246-47).

parsu- and *pərəsāu-*: Tremblay (1998).

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The crucial verse *Yašt* 19.52 shows that in one of his
aspects the ancient Apąm Napāt was a mighty creator
-god, … but in Zoroastrianism Ahura Mazdā is vener-
ated as supreme Creator, and Apąm Napāt thus came
to be robbed of this function."

Mary Boyce on "Apąm Napāṯ"
Encyclopaedia Iranica