



AĒŠMA

AĒŠMA “wrath” in Younger Avestan: Gathic *aēšama-*, Middle Persian (*x*)*ēšm*, Pāzand and New Persian *kašm*, *kešm*. (On the word’s root and its derivatives in Old Iranian and Old Indic, see F. Windischmann, *Zoroastrische Studien*, Berlin, 1863, p. 139; S. Wikander, *Der arische Männerbund*, Lund, 1938, pp. 59-60.) The term indicates wrath both metaphysically, as a distinct demon, and psychologically as the function and quality of that demon realized in man. The Avesta expresses abhorrence of Aēšma, for he endangers the integrity of the Good Religion of the Mazdayasnians. He distorts the intention and meaning of the sacrifice through brutality against cattle and violence in war and drunkenness (excluding the effect of *haoma*; see *Yasna* 10.8, *Yašt* 17.5). For the former point, see, in the *Gāthās*, *Yasna* 29.1-2, 48.7, 49.4; cf. 30.6 on the *daēvas*’ running to Aēšma, “through whom men sicken life” (*yā bānayan ahūm marātānō*; see R. Reitzenstein and H. H. Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland*, Leipzig and Berlin, 1926 [repr. Darmstadt, 1965], p. 213). The *yazata* Sraoša, embodying religious obedience, discipline, and devotion, is the demon’s chief adversary in the Younger Avesta; and this divinity will overthrow him at the end of the world. (See *Y.* 57.10, 25; *Yt.* 11.15; *Dādistān ī mēnōg ī xrad* 7.14, ed. D. D. P. Sanjana, Bombay, 1895, p. 22.16; *Pand-nāmag* 38, ed. M. F. Kanga, Bombay, 1960, p. 8.4.) The function of smiting Aēšma is also ascribed to Mithra (*Zand ī Wahman Yasn* 7.34, ed. B. T. Anklesaria, Bombay, 1957, p. 67; cf. *Yt.* 10.97); this is due to the intimate connection between that divinity and Sraoša. (See also G. Messina, ed., *Ayyātkār ī Žāmāspīk*, Rome, 1939, 16.38; H. W. Bailey, “To the *Žāmāsp-nāmak* II,” *BSOS* 6, 1930-32, pp. 583, 588-89.) Aēšma is the messenger of Angra Mainyu,



thus the negative counterpart of Spənta Mainyu's Aša (*Yt.* 19.46; cf. *Vd.* 10.13 and 11.9, also *Yt.* 10.93 and 97, where he is mentioned together with other *daēvas*). Aēšma is especially afraid of the *gāhānbār* and *myazd* rites and of the pious practice of kin-marriage (*xwēdōdah*; *Šāyast nē šāyast* 18.1-3, ed. F. M. P. Kotwal, Copenhagen, 1969, pp. 76-77). At the last day he will flee before Saošyant Astvat.ərəta and his followers (*Yt.* 19.95).

The Middle Persian Zoroastrian books supplement the Avesta's picture of Aēšma, emphasizing the attitude of fear and dread of the demon and his power. He is like Ahriman (*Mēnōg ī xrad* 2.19; ed. Sanjana, p. 68.18). Xēšm comes to the material world once each night but is kept away by Srōš (*Šāyast nē šāyast* 13.43, 22.17; ed. Kotwal, pp. 52-53, 91). He is given seven powers, which he uses to destroy creatures (*Bundahišn*, p. 183.12ff.). Commissioned by Ahriman, he causes an increase in slaughter; and, if he can not sow discord among men, he even incites the demons to fight among themselves (*Dādīstān ī dēnīg*, pp. 89.5ff., 104.10ff.). He is termed the opposite of Wahman (*Pand-nāmag* 27, ed. Kanga, p. 6.4.; *Dēnkard* 3.116, p. 112.18ff., tr. J. de Menasce, *Le troisième livre du Dēnkart*, Paris, 1973, p. 119) or of Srōš (*Wizīrīhā ī dēn ī weh ī Mazdēsnañ*, ed. K. M. Jamasp Asa; *W. B. Henning Memorial Volume*, London, 1970, pp. 204, 207, 214.7-8). Xēšm has a close association with Waran, Āz (Lust), Desire, and Heresy; to help Āz, he was made commander of the east by Ahriman (*Dēnkard*, p. 206.13ff.; *Zātspram* 34.32, p. 143; cf. R. C. Zaehner, *Zurvan. A Zoroastrian Dilemma*, Oxford, 1955, p. 343ff.). Eventually Āz will swallow up Xēšm and the other commanders p. 155.5ff.; cf. Zaehner, *Zurvan*, pp. 182, 354). The great tyrants of Iranian legend were at least mortal; whereas, if power had been granted to the bodiless Xēšm, he would have ruled, immortal, until the Resurrection and the Final Body (*Mēnōg ī xrad* 27.36-37; ed. Sanjana, p. 45.19-22). Xēšm is one of the demons who assail the souls of the dead as these approach the Činvat Bridge for judgment (*Mēnōg ī xrad* 2.115.17).

In the apocalyptic books Xēšm represents one of the heaviest visitations of the latter times; his *dēw* progeny with disheveled hair are understood as the Arabs (see, e.g., *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* 4.3, pp. 17, 106; the identification as the Tāzīgān is explicit in *Ayyātkār ī Žāmāspīk* 15.28, p. 65). In the New Persian versions of the two texts just cited, the names Hēšm (*hyšm*) and Hāšem (*h'sm*) are interchanged. This indicates a Zoroastrian interpretation of contemporary events in the fight of traditional apocalyptic speculation, identifying Kēšm/Hēšm with the Hāšemī branch of the Qorayš, and so with the Muslims



generally. (See B. N. Dhabhar, *The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz and Others*, Bombay, 1932, pp. 457ff., 481ff. Cf. also, perhaps, the Pāzand *Ayyātkār*, where the written form is *hāēšām*; see S. Hartman, “Secrets for Muslims in Parsi Scriptures,” *Islam and its Cultural Divergence*, Urbana, 1970, pp. 68-71.) Thus *Ḳēšm* continued to be regarded seriously. A *yasna* rite not carried out properly is said to reach *Ḳēšm* just as if it had been performed for him (*Darab Hormazyar’s Rivayat*, Bombay, 1922, I, pp. 489.17-490.2; Dhabhar, *Rivayats*, pp. 335-36). He remained especially opposed to *Srōš*, with the function that “he throws anger and malice into the hearts of men and encourages every evil which enters the world and assists sinners, so that they become more fearless in sinning” (*Ṣaddar Bondaheš* 2.1 and 36, ed. Dhabhar, Bombay, 1909, pp. 70, 73; Dhabhar, *Rivayats*, pp. 505, 507).

Aēšma’s standing epithet is *xrvi.dru*– “of the bloody club” (*AirWb.*, col. 540), rendered in Mid. Pers. as *xurdruš*; to this term is opposed *Sraoša*’s epithet, *darši.dru*– “of the strong (Ahurian) club” (*ibid.*, col. 699). The demon’s other epithets include: *dušx^varənah*– “ill-fated” (*Yt.* 10.95), *duždā(y)*– “malignant” (*Yt.* 57.25, *Yt.* 10.97), *drvant*– “owner of falsehood” (*Yt.* 10.93), and *pesō.tanū*– “having his body forfeited” (*Yt.* 10.97). I. Gershevitch comments on this last that “it may be that this demon “owes his body” to Mithra “the Judge”” (*The Avestan Hymn to Mithra*, Cambridge, 1959, p. 247). It is rendered *tanāpuhrag* in Mid. Pers. (*Dēnkard*, p. 643.10-11; cf. H. S. Nyberg, *A Manual of Pahlavi II*, Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 191); the same passage also gives the epithet *mūtag* “destructive” (*ibid.*, II, pp. 134-45).

Mani took over parts of Zoroastrian demonology in fashioning his gnostic religion, and *Xēšm* came to play a remarkable role as the active, destructive spirit of *Āz* (“Hyle”). The Parthian text M 741, on the seduction of the archons, relates: “The dirt and dross flows from him to the earth. It clothes itself in all phenomena (*dīdan*) and is reborn in many fruits. The dark *Išmag* (*šmg*, i.e., *Xēšm*) is ashamed, for he was distraught and had become naked. He had not attained to the higher and had been bereft of what he had achieved. He left the body an empty shell and descended in shame. He was clothed in the womb of the earths, whence he rose in brutishness” (M. Boyce, “*Sadwēs* and *Pēsūs*,” *BSOAS* 13, 1951, p. 912; *idem*, *A Reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian* [Acta Iranica 9], Tehran and Liege, 1975, p. 99). He seems to have been the prototype for a class of negative powers, the “Wraths” (*xēšmān*, *išmagān*) sent by Satan. (See *Mir. Man.* I, pp. 182, 194; III, pp. 875, 879-80, 882, 887; cf. the term *išmagšft* “*išmag*-ism” in III, p. 880.) He also acted as an



invisible power within man, the *mēnōgīh* of the body: wrath, desire (*āz*), and lust (*āwaržōg*; *Mir. Man.* II, p. 300; cf. I, pp. 196, 198ff.).

Outside the Iranian world, Aēšma occurs in the Talmud as *šmd'y* and in the Book of Tobit as Asmodaios (variant of Codex B: Asmódaus), both from Av. **aēšmō.daēva-*. It has been argued against this derivation that such a compound is not actually found in the extant Avesta. But this is invalidated by the fact that only a very limited part of the Avestan corpus has been preserved; moreover Mid. Pers. “Xēšm Dēw” is attested in sources which reproduce older material (e.g., *Bundahišn*, p. 183.12; *Dēnkard*, p. 643.4). Nor does the claim that the name comes from Hebrew *šmd* hold good, for a meaning “destroyer” would seem to require a *hif'il* form of some kind. In the Book of Tobit (3:7ff.), Asmodaios figures as a demon who has slain each of the seven husbands of Sarah, daughter of Raquel, before any of the marriages was consummated. With the aid of the angel Raphael, the demon is at last defeated (8:3). This account does not contradict Aēšma’s Iranian role as representative of destructive activity; and other indications of Iranian influence in the Book of Tobit support the etymology.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See also J. Müller, *Beiträge zur Erklärung und Kritik des Buches Tobit* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 13), Giessen, 1908, p. 10.

J. H. Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism*, London, 1926, pp. 250ff.

A. V. W. Jackson, *Zoroastrian Studies*, New York, 1928, pp. 89-91.

Gray, *Foundations*, pp. 185-87.

Alexander Kohut, *Additamenta ad Librum Aruch Completum*, ed. S. Krauss, New York, 1955, p. 70.

W. O. E. Oesterley, *An Introduction to the Books of the Apocrypha*, London, 1958, pp. 166-67.



R. N. Frye, "Qumran and Iran," *Studies Dedicated to Morton Smith*, ed. J. Neusner, Leiden, 1973, p. 170.