



AIWYĀNHANA

AIWYĀNHANA, Avestan term “wrapping round, girdle” (from the root *yāh*, OInd. *yās* “to put on, wrap,” *AirWb.*, col. 948); it designates a strip from a date-palm leaf which is consecrated in the Yasna liturgy and used to tie the bundle of wires which constitute the *barsom* (Av. *barəsman*), originally a seat for the divinities at the sacrifice, as in Vedic ceremonial. In the Avesta and after, it was a bundle of sacred twigs held in the hand of the officiating priest during the performance of rites (see, e.g., *Vd.* 19.19). Depending on the ceremony, the number of twigs varied, usually between three and thirty-three. Eventually metal wires were substituted, but the *aiwyānhana* binding remained equally necessary. In preparation for the Yasna rite, the *zod* (Av. *zaotar*, the officiating priest), who has observed the *xūb* (the *barešnūm* purification), goes before a date-palm tree in the precincts of the Dar-e Mehr (fire temple) and washes a leaf three times, reciting the usual formula of *xšnaoθra Ahurahē Mazdā* (*Yt.* 1.0). He cuts off the leaf and removes the twig, washes it again, and, after placing it in his water pot, carries it to the *yazišn-gāh*. There he divides the leaf into six strips, which he twists into one string knotted at both ends. He places this in a clean metallic cup and lays it upon the *barsom* stand (*māhrū*). After the recitation of appropriate prayers, the *aiwyānhana* is wound three times around the middle of the *barsom* and tied with two knots. Later, as the priest completes the Yasna rite with recitation of *hā* (chapter) 72, he ties five additional knots.

The word *aiwyānhana* is also employed in the Avesta for the *kusti* or sacred girdle.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

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