



ARD YAŠT

ARD YAŠT, Middle Persian name of the Avestan hymn (*Yašt* 17) dedicated to Aši (q.v.). Other forms of the name (see Avesta, ed. Geldner, II, p. 231) are *Aršišvang Yašt* and *Aršasang* or *Aršašasang Yašt* (with *-s-* for *-uu-* as not uncommonly in the mss. of the Avesta), all corruptions of *Ašišvang Yašt* from Av. Aši Vanϑhī “the Good Aši” as she is commonly called (see Bartholomae, *AirWb.*, cols. 241ff.). The textual transmission is based on one group of mss. (its oldest representatives are F₁ and J₁₀) all going back to the same archetype (see Geldner, *Prolegomena*, pp. xlvf.). *Yašt* 17 is not found in the *Ḳorda Avesta* mss. and has no Pahlavi version.

With its sixty-two verses, *Ard Yašt* belongs to the shorter of the “great, old” *yašts*, i.e., the Avestan hymns to single deities, which incorporate material reaching back to pre-Zoroastrian Iran but were later adapted to the teachings of Zarathuštra (see, e.g., Boyce, *Zoroastrianism* I, pp. 19f., 268ff.). Among the old *yašts*, however, *Ard Yašt* is quite outstanding both for its literary qualities, especially in its sensually graphic description of the homes of Aši’s favorites and their wives, who lie awaiting their men’s return from battle on sumptuously decorated couches, and for the concern for marital values expressed in it (see below).

Like the other old *yašts*, *Ard Yašt* contains a broad range of subject matter. As her name indicates (from Aryan *ṛti-* “the act of obtaining, the thing obtained,” (see Bartholomae, *AirWb.*, col. 243, notes, and Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems*, p. 4), Aši is the goddess of recompense, and in her hymn she appears as the personification of “fortune” or “capricious luck” (Boyce, *op. cit.*, pp. 225f.),



which Zaraθuštra in his *Gāθās* transformed into “recompense for good deeds” (ibid.). She is described as beautiful, tall, strong, profit-bringing, with healing powers, and high intelligence (vv. 1-2). As a goddess of the fortune of battle she drives in a chariot (vv. 17, 21; in *Yašt* 10.68 she is Miθra’s charioteer, with whom she is associated also elsewhere, see Gershevitch, *The Avestan Hymn to Mithra*, Cambridge, 1967, p. 217). Twice her family relationships are mentioned: In verse 2 she is said to be the daughter of Ahura Mazdā, and the sister of the Aməša Spəntas, in verse 16 her parents are Ahura Mazdā and Ārmaiti, her brothers Sraoša, Rašnu, and Miθra, and her sister the Mazdayasnian Religion (see also Narten, *Die Aməša Spəntas*, p. 31).

Aši grants plenty and riches to those whom she favors, cf. her standing epithet Vaṇvḥī “good” and her probable representation on Indo-Scythian coins (under the name ARDOXŠO) holding a cornucopia (see Bailey, op. cit., pp. 65-68; Boyce, op. cit., p. 65), and then also of fertility, as is reflected in verse 54, where unfertile individuals are barred from partaking of her offerings. In verses 6-11, 14 the homes of her favorites are described as full of treasures, cattle, and beautiful furniture; their wives and young girls are beautifully and richly clad and wear wonderfully precious jewelry. (A. Christensen, *Études sur le zoroastrisme de la Perse antique*, Copenhagen, 1928, p. 9, remarked that this description accords well with the refined civilization of the Achaemenid empire, but it is not certain that this section of the *yašt* was composed that late.) As the goddess of fortune, Aši is depicted in verses 12-13; as conferring victory on those whom she favors.

In verses 15-22 Aši is invoked by Zaraθuštra, who tells her how at his birth, Anra Mainiiu was forced to leave the earth when Zaraθuštra struck him with the Ahunvar prayer and burnt him with the Ašəm Vohu. Aši tells Zaraθuštra that he is beautiful, with a beautiful body, that *xʷarənah* is placed in his body and long bliss in his soul.

Verses 23-25 contain a list of the old Iranian heroes, who sacrificed to Aši (identical with the corresponding list in *Yašt* 9. 3-31 to Druuāspā, originally perhaps an epithet of Aši, see Boyce, op. cit., p. 82): Haošiiāṇha, Yima, Ōraētaona, Haoma, Zaraθuštra, and Kauui Vištāspa.

In verse 53 are listed the individuals who are not to receive a share in her offerings. These are the man whose semen has dried up, the “prostitute” (*jahikā*, term used to designate any “bad” woman) who is past the age of fertility, and young men and women who have not yet reached puberty (cf.



Boyce, op. cit., p. 116). As a sort of commentary to the last statement, verses 55-56 bring what appears to be a fragment of an old myth concerning Aši, in which Aši, being pursued by the Turanians and the Naotarids hid herself first under the foot of a bull and then under the neck of a ram (recalling Ulysses and the Cyclops), but was uncovered by the young boys and unwed girls (cf. Boyce, op. cit., p. 65 with n. 290).

Finally, in verses 57-59 Aši utters three complaints to Ahura Mazdā, about the “prostitute” with a barren womb, the “prostitute” who brings to her husband a child by another man, and about the powerful men who let the young women go unmarried, asking Ahura Mazdā if she must hide herself in the heaven above or under the earth on account of these. But Ahura Mazdā answers her complaints (vv. 60-61) telling her not to hide but rather to come into his beautiful, royal house, where he will worship her with a sacrifice such as the one Vištāspa offered her.

See also [Ahrišwang](#); [Aši](#).

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