



AXT

AXT (Av. Axtya), a sorcerer and, according to Zoroastrian tradition, a vehement, early opponent of the Religion. He was defeated in a verbal contest by Yōšt ī Friyān (Yōišta of the Fryānas), who had sacrificed to Ardvī Sūrā Anāhitā, asking “that I may be victorious over the false Axt of dark existence (*duždā təmaṇvhā*; in Dēnkard: *dušdēn ī tam-axw*) and may reply to his 99 difficult questions asked in enmity” (Yt. 5.81-83). The Pahlavi text *Mādayān ī Yōšt ī Friyān* elaborates the legend but attributes only 33 riddles to Axt. It relates how the sorcerer had previously slain many people who failed to correctly answer his questions. In the course of the contest Axt was impelled to slay his own brother, as well as Hufraš—his own wife and Yōšt ī Friyān’s sister. After answering the questions (with divine assistance), Axt in his turn is unable to solve Yōšt ī Friyān’s three riddles. Ahriman, fearing a magical loss of efficacy, refuses Axt the answers; and the defeated sorcerer is ritually slain by Yōšt ī Friyān. *The Selections of Zātspram* (25.10, ed. Anklesaria, p. 92) places this event in year 80 of the Religion. Axt is there given the epithet wšsp’y. The Sasanian Avesta may have contained additional legends about Axt. Fragard 21 of the Warštmānsr Nask dealt with his hostility to Zaraθuštra (*Dēnkard*, ed. Sanjana, XVIII, p. 43.14; ed. Madan, II, p. 869.8-9; ed. Dresden, p. 154.6-7). Dēnkard 3.196 attributes to Axt “of evil knowledge” 10 admonitions against the Religion (ed. Madan, I, pp. 210-12; J. de Menasce, *Le troisième livre du Dēnkard*, Paris, 1972, pp. 203-05). Axt is there depicted as espousing the reverse of Zaraθuštra’s commands: hostility to the gods, friendship with the demons, and the practice of evil works, sorcery, and harm to people.



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