



BAHMAN YAŠT

BAHMAN YAŠT, Middle Persian apocalyptic text preserved in a Middle Persian version in Pahlavi script, a Pāzand (i.e., Middle Persian in Avestan script) transliteration containing supplementary material, and a garbled New Persian translation made in 1496 (see West, *Sacred Books of the East*, Oxford, 1880, V, pp. lvi-lviii; not 1497 as stated by J. C. Tavadia, p. 122). The designation *Bahman yašt* stems from Anquetil du Perron, the pioneer of Zoroastrian studies in Europe (A. H. Anquetil-Duperron, *Zend-Avesta, ouvrage de Zoroastre* . . . , Paris, 1771, I/2, pp. xviii-xix), and is an abbreviation of *Zand ī Wahman yasn*, the title of the Middle Persian and Pāzand versions. In chapter 3.1 of the Pahlavi text, the source of the work is named as *Zand ī Wahman yasn* (which West unwarrantedly emended to *yašt*). This must have been the Middle Persian translation of an Avestan text. Almost certainly no part of the Avestan original has been preserved, because even if there is truth in the tradition that *Yašt* 1.24-32 is a remnant of the lost *Bahman yašt* (J. Darmesteter, *Le Zend-Avesta* II, Paris, 1892-93, repr. 1960, p. 331), this section has nothing in common with the well-attested *Bahman yašt* texts. According to Ph. Gignoux an Avestan original never did exist (“Sur l’inexistence d’un Bahman Yasht avestique,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 32, Tokyo, 1986, pp. 53-64).

Contents of the Middle Persian version. Chapter 1, modeled on the *Stūdgar* (sic, i.e. *Sūdgar*) *nask*, recounts Ohrmazd’s revelation to Zarathustra and describes a tree with four branches, of gold, silver, steel, and “mixed” iron, symbolizing four periods to come after the millennium of Zarathustra.

Chapter 2 tells how, in the time of Mazdak, Kōsrow I (531-79) ordered that the



Bahman yašt and other Avestan texts should be made public but their *zands* (i.e., Pahlavi commentary) should be reserved for the students among the clergy.

Chapter 3, modeled on the *Zand ī Wahman yasn*, repeats chapter 1 in greater detail and describes, among other things, a tree with seven branches, of gold, silver, copper, bronze, tin, and “mixed” iron.

Chapters 4 and 5 tell how calamities which will befall Iran at the end of the tenth millennium when enemy nations—Arabs, Byzantines, Turks, Chionites, Hephthalites(?), Tibetans, Chinese (see H. W. Bailey, “Iranian Studies,” *BSOS* 6, 1932, pp. 945-53), and others, will push almost as far as Padašxwārgar and conquer Iran, causing decay of religion, breakdown of social order, debasement of law and morality, and degeneration of nature.

Chapter 6 is another account of events at the end of the millennium of Zarathustra: domination by Roman Christians, Turks, and Arabs, escape of Iranian fugitives to Padašxwārgar.

Chapters 7 and 8 describe events of the eleventh millennium, that of Ušēdar. Before and during this time, the warrior Wahrām Warzāwand and Wištāsp’s immortal son, Pišyōtan the Priest, combine to overcome the hostile armies and restore Iran and its religion. Finally the god Mihr (Mithra) intervenes on Pišyōtan’s side in the struggle against the demons, who have exceeded their term of rule by 1,000 years, and defeats the demon Xešm, whereupon he and his followers flee back to hell.

Chapter 9 begins with a statement that Ušēdar will appear in the year 1800 (variant reading: 1600; after the start of the millennium of Zarathustra?) and Pišyōtan at the end of the millennium. This is followed by a sketch of conditions in the millennium of Ušēdarmāh, an account of the unloosing of Aži Dahāk (see [aždahā](#)) and the great harm done to the world by this monster before his death at the hands of Karšāsp, and finally a portrayal of the final deliverance by Sōšyāns.

Importance for the history of religion. The *Bahman yašt* is the most important apocalyptic work in Zoroastrian literature, primarily because its vision of the tree (in chapter 3, and in an older form in chapter 1) is obviously comparable with Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of the image of the world empires (in Daniel 2:27-45; see also Daniel 7). Until recently the hypothesis of Irano-Babylonian



influence was accepted by most scholars (see A. Hultgård, “Das Judentum in der hellenistisch-römischen Zeit und die iranische Religion,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt II: Prinzipat XIX/1*, ed. W. Haase, Berlin and New York, 1979, p. 525, nn. 59 and 60; T. Olsson, “The Apocalyptic Activity. The Case of Jāmāsp Nāmāg,” in D. Hellholm, ed., *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, Tübingen, 1983, pp. 26-27). This hypothesis implies that the Iranian apocalyptic concepts were a source of the Judeo-Christian concepts. Against it, arguments for the direct dependence of the Iranian on the Jewish tradition have now been advanced by E. Bickerman (*Four Strange Books of the Bible, Jonah, Daniel, Koheleth, Esther*, New York, 1967, pp. 68, 117) and J. Duchesne-Guillemin (“Apocalypse juive et apocalypse iranienne,” in U. Bianchi and M. J. Vermaseren, *La soteriologia dei culti orientali nell’Impero Romano*, Leiden, 1982, pp. 758-59). (For earlier opinions to this effect, see Olsson, op. cit., p. 26 n. 34.) The text does not, however, support Bickerman’s and Duchesne-Guillemin’s interpretation of “mixed iron” as “iron and clay.” M. Boyce (“On the Antiquity of Zoroastrian Apocalyptic,” *BSOAS* 47, 1984, pp. 70-72) suspects borrowing from Greek sources in western Iran in the late fourth century B.C. and dependence of the Daniel apocalypse on the Iranian apocalypse. Her interpretation of the difficult words *āhan (ī) abar gumēxt* as “iron ore” is also problematic. (For an explanation of these words as being corrupted from *āhan xāk abar gumēxt* “iron mixed with earth,” see Ph. Gignoux, “Nouveaux regards sur l’apocalyptique iranienne,” *Comptes rendus de l’Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, Paris, 1986, pp. 334-46.) A. Hultgård (op. cit., pp. 524-26), while stressing the originality of the Iranian imagery, concludes that the author of the Book of Daniel took over an Iranian concept of successive world empires, which had been passed on by the Seleucids, together with a Zoroastrian picture of four world eras. Weight is lent to this opinion by the fact that the presentation of the four ages in the *Sūdgar nask (Dēnkard 9.8)*, ed. Madan, p. 792; West, *Sacred Books of the East XXXVII*, Oxford, 1892, pp. 180-81) gives the impression of having been revised and updated rather than conceived in the Sasanian period. On the other hand it is possible that the metal symbolism in the Book of Daniel may have been thought up first; if so, this would be an argument for early dependence of the Iranian tradition on the Jewish tradition.

There are also some similarities between the *Bahman yašt* and the “Oracles of Hystaspes” (1st century B.C.). On the strength of them F. Cumont and G. Widengren have judged the oracle to be dependent on an Iranian source, while J. Duchesne-Guillemin has come to the reverse conclusion (F. Cumont,



“La fin du monde selon les sages orientaux,” *RHR* 52, 1931, pp. 64-93; J. Bidez and F. Cumont, *Les mages hellénisés* II, Paris, 1938, pp. 361-76; G. Widengren, “Leitende Ideen und Quellen der iranischen Apocalyptic,” in D. Hellholm, op. cit., pp. 121-26; J. Duchesne-Guillemin, op. cit., pp. 757-58). The fact that the prospective enemies are called “girdle-wearers” in the Egyptian potter’s oracle as well as in the *Bahman yašt* has recently been discussed, but Iranian origin denied (L. Koenen, “Die Adaptation ägyptischer Königsideologie am Ptolemäerhof,” in E. van’t Dack, P. van Dessel, and W. van Gucht, *Egypt and the Hellenistic World*, Louvain, 1981, pp. 181-83).

Source material and elaboration. Being a literary work, the *Bahman yašt* should not be simply equated with the transmitted material which it contains. E. W. West surmised that the extant texts are versions of an 11th- or 12th-century “epitome” of a Middle Persian *Zand ī Wahman yasn* written at the end of the 7th century (*Sacred Books of the East* V, pp. liii-lvi, p. 194 n. 4), and that the Avestan text was probably a compilation of older source material made under the early Sasanians (pp. liv-lv). M. Boyce (op. cit., p. 68) thinks that the original may have been a late Avestan text dating from the troubled time of the Macedonian conquest, and S. K. Eddy attempted to reconstruct such an “original version of Hellenistic date” (*The King is Dead*, Lincoln, 1861, pp. 343-49). G. Widengren (op. cit., pp. 105-19) inferred from an analysis of chapters 7-9 that the Middle Persian text may be based on a Parthian zurvanistic adaptation of a zoroastrianized *yašt* (which in that case cannot have been *Bahman yašt*). On several points, however, different perceptions are also possible. West had already cited the linguistic evidence for an Avestan origin of the Middle Persian text, but had also acknowledged that the typical style of the Avesta might have been imitated in the Middle Persian text.

When the title *Bahman yašt* seemingly promises information about Bahman, Vohu Manah of the Avesta, who escorted Zarathustra to the presence of Ohrmazd, the fact that Bahman does not enter into the work at all is bound to cause surprise. It indicates that the naming and perhaps also (as suggested by West) the literary recension were secondary developments. This certainly seems true of the tree simile drawn in chapter 1 and redrawn in chapter 3, which is ascribed to the *Stūdgar nask* although in the epitome of the *Sūdgar nask* in the *Dēnkard* the same theme is presented without the tree imagery.

Both the existence of an Avestan substratum (Widengren, op. cit., pp. 112-17; Boyce, op. cit., p. 69) and the occurrence of repeated revisions (Widengren, op. cit., p. 118) may be taken as proved. Also discernible are some secondary



borrowings from old traditional sources (Olsson, op. cit., pp. 38-46) and even, in chapter 9, some responses to the undue delay of the appearance of Ušêdar (West, op. cit., p. 231 n. 1). The pretensions to apocalyptic knowledge in the *Bahman yašt* were what prompted its continual revision and elaboration. The result is an often contradictory mixture of various layers of tradition (West, pp. lv-lvi), which are all the harder to differentiate because of the poor state of preservation of the text. The extant versions give the impression of being a work of elaboration and supplementation rather than an epitome. The probably original component appears to begin with chapter 3, where the *Zand ī Wahman yasn* is mentioned by name, and to end with the last section of chapter 5, which is a Middle Persian translation of the *Yerjhe hātqm*, the prayer at the close of most parts of the *yasna*. If this is so, the original subject matter would have been concerned solely with the tenth millennium, i.e., the time-span of the tree vision.

See also [apocalyptic i: in zoroastrianism](#).

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See also J. C. Tavadia, *Die mittelpersische Sprache und Literatur der Zarathustrier*, pp. 121-24, and M. Boyce, "Middle Persian Literature," pp. 49-50, n. 8, and idem, "The Poems of the Persian Sibyl and the Zand ī Vahman Yašt," in *Mélanges Lazard*, Paris (forthcoming).

BAHMAN MĪRZĀ, BAHĀ'-AL-DAWLA, the thirty-seventh son of Fath-'Alī Shah, born 26 Šawwāl 1226/13 November 1811 of Golbadan Bājī, originally a (Georgian?) slave girl of Fath-'Alī Shah's mother Mahd-e 'Olyā (Aḥmad Mīrzā 'Azod-al-Dawla, *Tārīk-e 'azodī*, ed. 'A. Navā'ī, Tehran, 1355 Š./1976, p. 22). Bahman Mīrzā's mother came to prominence after Mahd-e 'Olyā's death, when she was chosen as head of the household pursestrings, a task she performed with efficiency and fidelity (*Tārīk-e 'azodī*, pp. 22-24). When the shah married her she received the title Kāzen al-dawla (treasurer of the state).

A prince of the realm, Bahman Mīrzā was entitled to participate in the government of Iran, however, as the shah's thirty-seventh son his power was limited. In 1252/1836, he replaced 'Abbās-qolī Khan Javānšīr as governor of Kāšān and in 1256/1840 became the governor of Yazd. As governor, he led an expedition against the *Isma'ili Āqā Khan I Maḥallātī*, but was defeated and fled ignominiously back to Yazd (Rezā-qolī Khan Hedāyat, *Tārīk-e rawzat al-ṣafā-ye nāšerī*, Tehran, 1339 Š./1960, pp. 250-51).

Bahman Mīrzā appears to have been interested in books. A manuscript purchased by E. G. Browne (*Lit. Hist. Persia* IV, p. 450 n. 2) had been copied for him. Bahman Mīrzā also wrote a diary which contains notes on Qajar history (Monzawī, *Noskaha* VI, p. 4329).

Given in the text. See also Yağmā Jandaqī, *Majmū'a-ye ātār*, ed. S. 'A. Āl-e Dāwūd, Tehran, 1362 Š./1983, II, pp. 123, 229-30.

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