



ČEHR

ČEHR (Av. *čiθra-*; OPers. *ciça*; MPers., Parth. *čīhr*). Following Bartholomae most scholars recognize two homographic neuter substantives *čiθra-* in Avestan, one meaning “face, appearance,” which is translated in Pahlavi as *paydāg*, and another rendered in Pahlavi as *tōhmag* and denoting “origin, lineage,” as well as “seed,” although the latter sense is attested only in compounds (*AirWb.*, cols. 586-87; differently Duchesne-Guillemin, p. 98 n. 6). A similar distribution is found in the Middle Iranian languages, where one finds Pahlavi *čīhr* “form, shape, appearance, face” and “seed, origin; nature, essence” (in the latter sense *čīhr* or *čīhrag*; MacKenzie, p. 22, Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems*, pp. 91-92; differently Nyberg, *Manual II*, p. 55); Manichean Middle Persian *cyhr* “face” (cf. *cyhr’wnd* “beautiful”) and “essence, origin, offspring”; and Manichean Parthian *cyhr* (cf. *hwcyhr* “beautiful”) or *cyhrg* “form, appearance” and *cyhrg* “essence, nature” (Gershevitch, pp. 213-14). In royal inscriptions, however, both Achaemenian or Sasanian, *ciça* and *čīhr* preserve only the sense of “lineage, family” (see below).

The first *čiθra-*, “face, appearance,” is clearly related to the adjective **čiθra-* “manifest, apparent” (Khot. *cāra-*; Bailey, *Dictionary*, pp. 102-03), cognate to Vedic *citṛá-* “brilliant, shining; excellent, outstanding,” Old High German *heitar* “shining,” etc. (Mayrhofer, *Dictionary I*, pp. 387-88). Regarding the derivation of the second *čiθra-*, “origin, lineage,” there is less agreement. Of the analyses that have been advanced to date, the most likely is that *čiθra-* is a substantivized adverb derived from the interrogative pronoun *či-* plus the locative element *-θra-* (with which we may compare Vedic *ku-tra*), implying



that the question “whence do you come?” or “who are you?” (cf. *Y.* 43.7, *čiš ahī*) came to denote the responses which that question evoked, much as the Vedic adverb *kathā* “how?” gave rise to the Sanskrit substantive *kathā*– “story, tale” (Pisani, p. 86; alternately, Insler, p. 214).

Such a derivation would also explain how *čiθra*-, *čīhr* “origin, lineage” can have both a social reference (origin via familial descent) and a physiological one (origin via sexual reproduction). Thus, on one hand, *čiθra*– came to denote the multigenerational kinship groups in which persons’ primary social identity and allegiances depended upon claims of descent from real or imagined ancestors. Examples of this may be seen in the claims of Darius and Xerxes to be *ariya(-)ciča*– “of Aryan lineage” (DNa 14f. and XPh 13, Kent, *Old Persian*, pp. 137 and 151) and Ardašīr I, Šāpūr I, and Narseh’s claims to be “of the family of the gods” (*kē čīhr az yazdān*, see Gignoux, *Glossaire*, pp. 21 s.v. *ctly*, *ctry*, and 65 s.v. *šyhr* for refs.; translated into Greek as *ek genous theōn* in ŠKZ Gk. 1. 1, Maricq, p. 305); the identification of a high-ranking priest as *Manuš-čiθra* “of the lineage of *Manu” (*Yt.* 13.131; i.e., descended from the mythical first priest; see further Christensen, p. 66); Zarathustra’s accusation “You Daēvas are the lineage of the Evil Mind” (*Y.* 32.3, *yūš daēvā . . . akāṭ manajhō stā čīθrəm*); and the assertion that the Lie is *duš-čiθra*– “of evil lineage” (*Yt.* 19.94-95). Similarly, animals such as dogs, wolves, and serpents are described as belonging to their own distinctive families or species (*spa-čiθra*-, *Vd.* 13.16; *vāhrkō-čiθra*-, *Yt.* 3.15; *aži-čiθra*-, *Yt.* 3.9, 11).

On the other hand, that *čiθra*– can also refer to the physical seed or germ from which life originates is clear from the adjective *čiθravatī*, which occurs only in the feminine and always in apposition to two other terms (*daxštavatī*-, *vohunavatī*-), all three denoting a menstruating woman (*Vd.* 15.7; 16.1, 5, 13, 14, 17; 18.67). Such seed—whether male or female—is said to be “the foundation of offspring” in *Dēnkard* 3.194 (*čīhrīg zahag ī zahagan bun*) and “the begetting of material existence” (*gētīg warzīdārīh čīhr*) in *Dēnkard* 3.399, where the life-force (*axw*) is described in parallel fashion as the source of spiritual existence (cf. *Dēnkard* 3.365, where the formative power of seed, *čīhr nērōg*, within the material creation similarly parallels the formative power of speech, *waxš nērōg*, within the spiritual creation). Nor is it only humans whose material being originates in and depends upon such seeds, as the same is implied for virtually all of Ohrmazd’s primordial creations, the seeds of fire being lodged in plants (*Vd.* 3.365), and those of water, earth, plants, and cattle in the stars (*Yt.* 12.29-33; *Sīrōza* 1.13, 2.13; *Yt.* 8.4; *Mēnōg ī xrad*, ed. Anklesaria,



48.7-11; *Bd.*, TD₂, pp. 72.4-9; ed. Anklesaria, 7.2-3, etc., pp. 86-87), although those of cattle are also at times said to be lodged in the moon (thus *Yt.* 7.3, 12.33, *Y.* 16.4, etc.; on this general theme, see further Duchesne-Guillemin, p. 98; for a different interpretation, see Shaki, pp. 285, 303-04).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Christensen, "Reste von Manu-Legenden in der iranischen Sagenwelt," in *Festschrift Friedrich Carl Andreas*, Leipzig, 1916, pp. 63-69.

Dēnkard, bk. 3, ed. J. de Menasce, *Le troisième livre du Dēnkart*, Paris, 1973.

J. Duchesne-Guillemin, "L'homme dans la religion iranienne," in C. J. Bleeker, ed., *Anthropologie religieuse*, Suppl. to *Numen* 2, 1955, pp. 93-107.

I. Gershevitch, *The Avestan Hymn to Mithra*, Cambridge, 1959.

Ph. Gignoux, *Glossaire des inscriptions pehlevies et parthes*, *Corpus Inscr. Iran.*, Suppl. Ser., vol. 1, London, 1972.

S. Insler, *The Gāthās of Zarathustra*, Leiden, 1975.

D. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, London, 1971.

V. Pisani, "Note miscellanea," *Rivista degli studi orientali* 14, 1933, pp. 83-86.

M. Shaki, "Some Basic Tenets of the Metaphysics of the Dēnkart," *Archív Orientální* 38, 1970, pp. 277-312.

(Bruce Lincoln)