



DĀDESTĀN Ī DĒNĪG

DĀDESTĀN Ī DĒNĪG (Religious judgements), Pahlavi work by Manūščihr, high priest of the Persian Zoroastrian community in the 9th century C.E. It comprises an introduction and ninety-two (ninety-four in the translation of E. W. West, who counted the introduction and an irrelevant section at the end of the manuscript) miscellaneous questions (*pursišn*) put by Mihrxwaršēd, son of Ādurmāh, and others to Manūščihr, along with his answers (*passox*). The title traditionally given to the work is of late origin; the author himself referred to it in his introduction as a *pursišn-nāmag* (book of questions). Manūščihr, the son of Juwān-Jam (traditional Pārsī Gušn-Jam), son of Šāpūr (*Nāmagīhā* 1.3.10, ed. Dhabhar, p. 14), came from a notable line of high priests (cf. *Nāmagīhā*, ed. Dhabhar, p. 3). The only extant date for his life is 250 Y./881 C.E., when he completed his *Nāmagīhā* (3.21, tr. West, p. 365). In the closing paragraph of *Dādestān ī dēnīg* (ed. P. K. Anklesaria, p. 190; tr. West, p. 276, chap. 94.13) he referred to himself as *rad* (arbitrator of the faith) of Pārs and Kermān (cf. *Nāmagīhā* 3.1, ed. Dhabhar, p. 91) and *āsrōnān pēšag framādār* “pontiff of the estate of priests” (cf. *Nāmagīhā* 2.9.12, ed. Dhabhar, p. 90, tr. West, chap. 45.5, p. 152; in this chapter Manūščihr refers to these titles as those of the leading priest, who happened to be Manūščihr himself). The title *hērbēd xwadāy* (lord priest; *Nāmagīhā* 3, heading, ed. Dhabhar, p. 91) was not an official one, as West assumed (p. 3 n. 2), but an honorific (cf. *Pahlavi Texts*, ed. Jamasp-Asana, p. 139). In his introduction to *Dādestān ī dēnīg* Manūščihr expressed disapproval of what he considered undeserved titles, which his correspondents must have lavished on him. His desire “to be called just what he is and no more” may indicate that he had not yet become the leader (*sālār*)



of his flock: “I neither claim superiority . . . nor am I pleased when I am called leader, [a rank] higher than my standing (*meh az xwēš sālār*), for I wish such praise as is proper to my rank and capability (*pad xwēš pāyag ud tāyag wimand*). Superiority seems to me to lie in one’s confession of [Iranian] faith (*ērīh*), a superiority the same [as that of other dignitaries] over inferiors (*hāwand-mehīh abar kehān*”; *Dādestān ī dēnīg*, ed. T. D. Anklesaria, introduction par. 11; for Manūščihr’s life and works, see Kanga, 1951).

The text that survives appears complete in the manuscripts, but some questions may have been lost during the transmission, because, as West observed, a chapter apparently on *sag-dīd* (showing a [corpse](#), to a dog before exposure) is mentioned in chapters 16 (par. 20) and 17 (par. 2) but is missing from the text.

Manuscripts and editions. West and [Peshotan Kavashah Anklesaria](#) (1928-69) classed the extant manuscripts of *Dādestān ī dēnīg* as “Iranian” or “Indian.” The Iranian group is represented by K 35, BK, and TD. Manuscript K 35 (see [codices hafnienses](#)) is a codex containing miscellaneous texts, which was acquired by Niels Ludwig Westergaard in Kermān in the year 1843; it is preserved in the library of the University of Copenhagen and was published in facsimile by Arthur Christensen. The *Dādestān ī dēnīg* is contained on folios 99-157 (cf. ed. T. D. Anklesaria, preface; ed. P. K. Anklesaria, 1958, pp. 13-15). While the manuscript was in Westergaard’s possession West used it for his translation (see below). Despite frequent corrupt passages misunderstood by the copyist, this manuscript is of central importance. The concluding folios, with the colophon, are missing. Manuscript BK belonged to Peshutanji Jamshedji Kapadia of Bulsara (see *Pahlavi Rivayat*, ed. Dhabhar, p. 12), but it is not known where it is at present (ed. P. K. Anklesaria, 1958, pp. 17-21). West (in *Grundriss*, II, p. 103) suggested that it was a copy of K 35, and P. K. Anklesaria agreed with him (1958, p. 20). This manuscript contains a colophon with the date 941 Y./1572, which may be close to the date when K 35 was completed. Manuscript TD (P. K. Anklesaria’s “T”) was copied in Kermān about 1510-30 and obtained by [Tahmuras Dinshah Anklesaria](#) (1842-1903) from Yazd in 1870 (West, *Pahlavi Texts* I, SBE 5, pp. xxxii-xxxiii; idem in *Grundriss*, p. 103; ed. P. K. Anklesaria, 1958, pp. 7-11); it consists of folios 71-297, with the *Dādestān ī dēnīg* on folios 84-197 (= pp. 162-393). The two manuscripts K 35 and TD are shown by P. K. Anklesaria to be independent copies of a common ancestor (1958, pp. 38-48).

The manuscripts in the Indian group are of inferior quality. All seem to have



been derived from a defective manuscript that T. D. Anklesaria had borrowed from a Persian *mowbed* named Nāmdār (hence P. K. Anklesaria’s “N”), had completed and bound, and had returned to Persia, where its present location is not known (letter from T. D. Anklesaria to West of 27 October 1892; see T. D. Anklesaria and Bharucha, introduction p. 38; ed. P. K. Anklesaria, pp. 34-35). Earlier West had thought that a Persian manuscript allegedly in the library of Dhanjibhāi Frāmji Pātel was the ancestor of the Indian manuscripts (in *Pahlavi Texts* II, p. xvii), but there is some doubt about the identity of this manuscript (ed. P. K. Anklesaria, p. 35). Among the manuscripts in this group are J (belonging to J. M. Jamasp-Asana), which was copied in 1819-41; D 6 (in the Mulla Feroze Library, now preserved in the [Cama Oriental Institute](#), in Bombay); T 60 (preserved in the Meherji Rana Library in Navsari); H (owned by H. Jamaspji); and M 14, a copy of J (in the Staatsbibliothek, Munich; see Bartholomae, pp. 211-17, M 59).

An edition of the first fifteen questions was published by Darab Peshotan Sanjana in 1897. T. D. Anklesaria prepared an edition of the first forty *pursišns*, which was published in 1911 by his son Baharamgore [Tahmuras Anklesaria](#) (1873-1944). An edition of the remaining fifty-two *pursišns* was prepared by P. K. Anklesaria, a distant relative of the other two, as a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of London in 1958 but remains unpublished.

The entire work was translated into English by West in 1882. T. D. Anklesaria and Shehriarji Bharucha had translated it into Gujarati some years before that, but the translation was published only in 1926; it is now quite dated. West’s translation is also largely dated but contains valuable information on specific points. Individual questions have been transcribed and translated into English by Bahmanji Nasarvanji Dhabhar (*pursišns* 53, 55-59, in *Persian Rivayats*, tr. Dhabhar, pp. 182-89), Maneck Ferdunji Kanga, and P. K. Anklesaria. Short passages have also been transcribed and interpreted in such works on Iranian religion as Harold W. Bailey’s *Zoroastrian Problems*, Marijan Molé, Mansour Shaki (1971), and Robert C. Zaehner; *pursišns* 34-35 were included in Nyberg, *Manual* (I, pp. 105-06). A revised edition and annotated translation of the entire text are long overdue.

Style. The text of *Dādestān ī dēnīg* is notoriously abstruse, written in a dense and elliptical style heavily influenced by New Persian; it must have been incomprehensible to the laity to whom it was primarily addressed. Manuščihr himself was apparently conscious of the difficulty, for he commented in the introduction: “Because these texts concerning expositions (*čim-nimāyišnīh*) are



not clear even to penetrating and erudite people (*bārīk-wēnišnān ud dāramag-dānišnān*), because of their profundities and subtle wording (*zofrīh <ud> bārīk-saxwanīh*), as well as scant elaboration of the subject matter (*andak frāz-iz padēxwīh ī saxwan*), there may be a strong suspicion that I am poorly informed. Thus, regarding the purpose of these questions, if you desire that they should be more lucidly expounded and better reasoned (*rōšntar paydāg ud čīmīgtar*), the best way to [receive] accurate and intelligible exposition (*rāst nigēzišn ud rōšn*) is no other than [to seek] the judgment of a sagacious religious leader (*wizīr ī frazānag pēšōbāy ī dēn*). Whenever you inquire and I am able, I shall offer my answers, to the extent of my knowledge and ability (*čāndom dānišn ādūgīh*; *Dādestān ī dēnīg*, pt. 1, introduction pars. 24-25, pp. 7-8). The influence of New Persian is especially noticeable in the use of the postposition *rā* (e.g., *man xwēš rāy . . . nē dānom* “I do not consider myself . . .”) and of Middle Persian words and phrases with New Persian meanings (e.g., *mēnōg mardān* “spiritual men,” cf. NPers. *mardān-e rūḥānī, rūḥānīyūn*; *parastišn kunišn* “worship,” cf. NPers. *parasteš kardan*; *A. ku gyāg ast?* “Where is A. situated?” cf. NPers. *A. kojā-st?*). Manūščihr used a learned Pahlavi vocabulary, regrettably often to the detriment of clarity, intelligibility, and sometimes even standard Pahlavi grammar. Some sentences are laden with awkward compounds, following the literary vogue in contemporary New Persian. The following sentence from the introduction is typical of his style: *nūn-iz radān, mowbedān, dastwarān, dādwarān ud abārīg-iz dēnīgān ud dēnīgbedān kustag kustag. ud anē-z hērbedān ud mēnōg-mardān ī ošmurd-mānsr ī dranjēnīd-Zand, uskārd-dādestān ī āgāh-dēn ī nimūdār-čīm ī wizīdār-kirbag pad čand gyāg hēnḍ . . .* “Even now there are in various regions many religious leaders, priests, religious authorities, judges, and other believers and masters of the faith, as well as learned priests and spiritual men, who are students of the holy word, conversant with the Zand (i.e., commentary on the Avesta), interpreters of the law, well-versed in religious matters, instructors of the purpose (the religion), and seekers (lit., “those who prefer”) of meritorious (choice) deeds” (*Dādestān ī dēnīg*, pt. 1, introduction par. 6, p. 3). The language of the answers, being technical and based mainly on traditional Middle Persian phrasing of the Sasanian period, is generally free of such flowery innovations.

Content. *Dādestān ī dēnīg* is a strictly orthodox and traditional work, dealing with a variety of subjects ranging from religious to social, ethical, legal, and philosophical questions, as well as [cosmology](#), natural phenomena, and the like. In his replies Manūščihr claimed to have followed the authentic teachings



of his predecessors, the ancient teachers of the faith; when the authorities were themselves divided, he decided on the “most reasonable” version: “Whatever I know and have stored in my memory from the sayings and teachings of former religious authorities (*pēšēnīgān dastwarān*) about the religion that is credible (*pad xrad sahišn*) I have written as the answer beneath each question. Because what we know from the religious authorities, who were wiser [than we] and were our lords, leaders, and authorities (*axw ud rod ud dastwar*), was in dispute even among them (*jud-dādestānthā*), I have adopted as the principal version (*pad mādagwar dāšt*) those judgments on these questions in the way our authorities in our family had long maintained. Thus, there is no disagreement with the pronouncements of those religious authorities who maintain otherwise (*anē ēwēnag*), and, if there be any, it seems to me that I have apprehended the correct judgment (*šnāsišn ī drust*)” (*Dādestān ī dēnīg*, pt. 1, introduction par. 18, p. 6).

The subjects of the questions are traditional, except for a few that arose about life under Islamic domination. Manūščihr must have had access to Middle Persian works now lost, for he mentioned that the second month of the year was called “Zaremaya” in the Avesta (*pursišn* 30 par. 14, p. 61) and that there were two places, rather than one, considered intermediate between heaven and hell (in *hamēstagān* “purgatory”), one for those not good enough for heaven and one for those not bad enough for hell (*pursišns* 23 par. 6, p. 50, 32 par. 2, p. 69), which contradicts the definition in *Mēnōg ī xrad* (ed. Anklesaria, chap. 11 par. 14; ed. Sanjana, chap. 12 par. 14; Nyberg, *Manual* I, p. 79) of *hamēstagān* as “the place of those whose virtues and sins are equal” (*kē-š kirbag ud wināh rāst gāh pad hamēstagān*). This singular view must have been put forth by one of Manūščihr’s unnamed authorities (see [dūzak i](#)).

Following are the questions (*pursišn*) put to Manūščihr by his correspondents; an asterisk indicates questions that have been paraphrased or summarized.

*I. Why is a righteous man (*mard ī ahlaw*) more exalted in creation than the fixed stars (*starān*), the sun, the moon, and the fire of Ohrmazd?

II. For what function (*kār*) is the righteous man created in the world, and how should he act in the material world?

III. What is the reason for this exaltation (*mehīh*) of the righteous man?

IV. What is the judgment on the violence and terror (*zaxm ud tars*) that come



upon us from the retribution (*pādāšn*) of the times and other evils and defects in the good religion? Is there a preferential right (*wehdādestānīh* “*optimo iure*”) for us in the ideal (*mēnōgān*) or not?

V. Why does evil always come more upon the good than upon the bad?

VI. Why are we men (*mardōm*) created in the material world, and what are we to perform in it?

VII. Does the meritorious deed done for a person [by someone else] after his death affect him when, in the dawn after the third night, he goes to the balance (*tarāzūg*, held by Rašn, god of justice), or are only the merits attained by him [taken into account]?

VIII. Does the merit of using one’s own property for services for the soul differ from that when the expenses are paid by other people?

IX. How much does the merit of one’s good works (*kirbag*) increase from the time they are achieved until the end of one’s life?

X. Is the increase in merit as commendable in the fourth night (after death) as the original merit?

XI. Does the increase of merit from good deeds revoke sin, as the original merit (*kirbag ī bun*) does, or not?

XII. In the fourth night will the sin that is reckoned with merits be revoked (*az bun šawēd*), or are the sins and merits punished (*pādifrāh kunēd*) and rewarded (*pādāšn dahēnd*) separately?

XIII. Who will reckon the sins and merits of the soul, and where will they reckon? Where will be their place when they are punished?

XIV. Are the agony of death (*gyān kandan*) and the tearing of the corpse by dogs and birds reckoned in [the punishment] of sins? Do they revoke sins or not?

XV. Is the soul conscious of the tearing of the corpse by dogs and the birds, and is it vexed (*dušxwārīh*) by that?

XVI. What is the reason for giving the corpse to the birds?



XVII. Is it better to give [the corpse] to the birds?

XVIII. When the souls of the righteous and the souls of the wicked depart to the spiritual world (*mēnōgān*) will they see Ohrmazd (see *ahura mazdā*) and *Ahriman* or not?

XIX. To what place do [the souls] of the righteous and wicked go? (*ō ku gyāg šawēnd?*)

XX. What are the bridge of separation (*čīnwad puhl*), the peak of Dāiti (see *čagād ī dāiti*), and the paths of the righteous and wicked like?

XXI. When a righteous man who has performed much worship of god and many meritorious works dies do the spirits of religious ceremony (*yazišn*), religion, the Mazda worshippers, water, earth, plants, and animals complain to Ohrmazd about his death? Are they distressed about his death, or how is it?

XXII. When they take the vital spirit (*gyān*) from the body of a man how does it depart?

XXIII. When a righteous man dies where does the soul (*ruwān*) stay on the first night, the second, and the third? And what does it do?

XXIV. When a wicked person dies where does the soul stay the first night, the second, and the third, and what does it say and do?

XXV. What is the nature of heaven, and what are the comforts and pleasures of heaven like?

XXVI. What are the pain and discomfort of punishment and the stench of hell like?

XXVII. What is the purpose of the ceremony of the three nights (*sidōš*; see Nyberg, *Manual* II, p. 174, s.v. *sat-ōš*)? And for when within the three days have they prescribed the performance of the ceremony of the sacred bread dedicated to *Srōš*?

XXVIII. Why is it not allowable to perform the ceremonies of *Srōš* (*yazišn ī Srōš*), the lord (*axw*), and other propitiations (*šnūman*) when they worship him separately?

XXIX. What is the reason for consecrating separately at dawn the three



ceremonies of the sacred bread, with the three dedications (*šnūman*)?

*XXX. In what manner does the soul of the righteous go to heaven? Who comes to meet it, who leads it, and who takes it into the presence (*handēmān*) of Ohrmazd?

*XXXI. In what manner does the soul of the wicked go to hell? Who comes to meet it, and who leads it to hell? Does any of the infernal ones (*dušaxwīgān*) come to meet it?

XXXII. In which district and which region is hell?

XXXIII. What is the nature of the path of the righteous to heaven and that of the wicked to hell from the peak of Dāitī?

XXXIV. Does this world [first] become uninhabited (*abēmardōm*), without earthly existence (*astōmand*), and do they then bring about the resurrection (*ristāxēz*), or how is it?

XXXV. Who are those required for realization of the Renovation (*frašegirdārīh*), and how are they chosen?

XXXVI. How will they bring about the resurrection, and how are the dead prepared (*wirāyēnd*)? What will the prepared dead be like? When they have achieved it, is the light of the stars, moon, and sun still necessary or not? Are there seas, rivers, and mountains? And will the world be exactly the size of this one, or does it become greater and wider?

XXXVII. How great is the measure of meritorious works prescribed for us [to attain salvation]?

XXXVIII. What are the reason for and purpose of putting on the sacred girdle (*kustīg*)? Is the merit of wearing it as great as the sin of not wearing it?

*XXXIX. What is the merit of the sacred girdle and the sacred shirt (*šabīg*), [and what is] the sin of going about “loose” (not wearing the *kustīg*)?

*XL. What is the sin of those who believe that it is not necessary to be steadfast in Mazdaism or [who] apostasize to another religion (*be ō anērīh šawēd*)?

*XLI. What is the merit or sin of those who save others from apostasy?



*XLII. When consecrating the sacrificial bread (*drōn*), from how many steps' [distance] is it proper to look at the fire?

*XLIII. Is it proper to pay a stipend (*nirmad, bahr*) to a priest who is not the official priest of the district, so that he will perform religious ceremonies?

*XLIV. What is the duty of a teacher priest (*hērbed*), and what is that of the pupil?

*XLV. Is it permissible for priests who cannot earn their livings from the priesthood to abandon it for other work?

*XLVI. Is a priest who knows the Avesta or one who is well versed in the Zand and the *Šāyest-nē-Šāyest* more entitled to the foremost seat at a sacred feast (*myazd*)?

*XLVII. What is the proper way to perform the religious service (*yazišn*)? How does it vex the evil spirits and the demons? What is the purpose of the ceremony, and at what time should it be performed?

*XLVIII. What is the judgment on those who hoard corn in order to sell it at a high price?

XLIX. What is the judgment on those who sell wine to foreigners (*anērān*) and infidels (*ag-dēnān*)?

L. What is the judgment on a person of the good religion who drinks wine immoderately (*apaymān*) and suffers injury on that account? How much wine drinking is permitted?

*LI. Is a man who bargains to deliver wheat in a month and takes a deposit (*bun-ē*) bound to deliver it if the market price rises enormously?

LII. What is the legal judgment on Mazdeans who do business with non-Zoroastrians or sell to prodigal (or improvident) people (*wanīgarān*) and on Zoroastrian traders who sell to infidels when people of the good religion cannot afford to buy?

*LIII. Is the master of a house without male issue entitled to bequeath all his estate to one daughter or part of his property to someone in ill health?

LIV. Who are the people whose proper function (*xwēškārīh*) is to arrange the



ceremony of *sidōš* for the deceased?

LV. What are *stūrīh* (marriage by proxy) and family guardianship (*dūdag sālārīh*), in what manner should they be instituted, and whence should they be provided with food and clothing (see [children iii](#))?

LVI. Who is and who is not eligible for *stūrīh*?

LVII. How many kinds of family guardianship and *stūrīh* are there?

LVIII. What is the [minimum] necessary property for establishing a *stūrīh*?

LIX. What sin arises from not appointing a *stūr*?

LX. What are the propriety and impropriety, the merit and demerit, of family guardianship?

LXI. What are the laws of inheritance among the people of the good religion, and how do they stand therein?

LXII. Are the people of the good religion authorized to take away any property from foreigners and infidels?

LXIII. From where came the first creation of mankind, and how did men originate? What issued from Gayōmart, and from what have Mašyē and Mašyānag arisen? This chapter contains the statement “Ohrmazd, ruler of all, produced from the infinite light the Form of Fire (*asro-kerpa* < Av. *āθrō.kəhrpa-*), the *xwarrah* (GDH) of which was that of Ohrmazd and the light of which was that of fire” (cf. Shaki, 1970, pp. 283-96, add. p. 512). West’s misreading of GDH (*xwarrah*) as SM (*nām* “name”) has misled some scholars and given rise to unfounded speculations.

LXIV. From where and what came the original substance of mankind (*buntōhmag*; cf. Shaki, 1970, pp. 289-93), which they say (was through) next-of-kin marriage (*xwēdōdah*)?

*LXV. Is it possible to reduce a priest’s fees for a complete religious ceremony (*hamāg-dēn*) when others will take less?

LXVI. What is the rainbow (**stkys*, Pers. *sadkīs*, for ms. *stwwys*?), which encircles the sky?



- *LXVII. What causes the phases of the moon?
- *LXVIII. What causes eclipses?
- *LXIX. What are earthquakes (**bwm-wzndk*, **būm-wizandag* for ms. ZNH *zndk*), and what causes them?
- *LXX. What things happen through fate (*baxt*) and what through action (*kunišn*)? Is anything that happens to men a work of the moon?
- LXXI. What is the grave sin of committing sodomy? Is it proper to perform a sacred ceremony for him [after his death] or associate with him?
- LXXII. Does the stench of a sodomite rise to the sky, and, if it does, how far does it rise?
- LXXIII. Do the Holy Immortals (*amahraspandān*) overcome that stench?
- LXXIV. Do they restore his body [at the resurrection] or not ?
- *LXXV. Is the killing of a sodomite reckoned as a merit or a crime?
- LXXVI. Will you explain the seriousness of the sin of sodomy?
- LXXVII. In regard to sinfulness, or adultery, and its retribution, which is specified in revelation, will you point out the modes of punishment?
- *LXXVIII. What is the sin of not repeating the full grace before drinking, and how can one atone for it?
- LXXIX. What is the judgment on a person who does not order religious ceremonies [for his own soul]?
- *LXXX. What is the purpose of the ceremony *zīndag ruwān* (the living soul)? Why is it necessary, and how can it best be performed?
- *LXXXI. What happens if a person orders religious ceremonies (*yazišn-ē be framāyēd*) but the one who takes the money does not perform them?
- LXXXII. Is a priest (*mog-mard*) obliged to undertake complete religious rites and ceremonies (*hamāg-dēn ud abārīg yazišn*)?
- LXXXIII. Is it desirable to give in excess the gift for religious ceremonies (*dāšn ī*



yazišn), which it is not desirable to diminish?

*LXXXIV. What are the advantages of increasing the ceremonial gifts?

*LXXXV. What is the harm of reducing the gift [for the ceremonial]?

LXXXVI. What is the merit of giving a gift for the ceremonial?

*LXXXVH. Are indigent persons who offer to perform the ceremonials for less than 350 *drahms*, a reduced rate that the priests refuse to accept, authorized to undertake them?

*LXXXVIII. Would it be a sin for a man who has at first resolved to go to Pārs with gifts for the priesthood and fires to dispatch another person with the gifts?

*LXXXIX. Before the advent of the Good Religion who and how many were made immortals? Where is the realm of their sovereignty, and are there fires and people of good religion?

XC. From what is the sky made, and with what is it raised (*pad čē winārd ēstēd*)?

XCI. Which are the greatest and the best waters and rivers? Is Ardwīsūr greater or Weh (Daīti)? Where is Ardwīsūr situated?

*XCII. From what place does Tištar receive its water? How does it pass into clouds, and how does the cloud rain?

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