



DAHM YAZAD

DAHM YAZAD, the Middle Persian name of the Zoroastrian divinity (also known as Dahmān Āfrīn and Dahmān) who is the spirit or force inherent in the Avestan benediction called Dahma Vaṇuhi Āfriti, or Dahma Āfriti. This benediction invokes blessings on the house of the just man, the *ašavan*, and is incorporated in the *yasna* liturgy as *Hā* 60.2-7, the longer form of its name being given in the following *hā*. There (Y. 61) it is said to be the fourth most powerful of all utterances.

The adjective *dahma* is thought to have meant originally “instructed, initiated,” that is, into the Zoroastrian faith (Bartholomae, *AirWb.*, cols. 704-05), but its attested sense is “pious, good.” It is glossed by Pahlavi *weh*, and occurs frequently with *ašavan* as a description of the good Zoroastrian. Thus *Yasna* 61.2 praises the “Pious Good Blessing of the pious just man” (*dahmahe-ca narš ašaonō dahmaqm-ca vaṇuhīm āfritīm*). *Dahma* is, however, frequently substantivized, and this is the usage recognized by the authors of the Pahlavi *zand* (translation) of *Yasna* 61, who state: “Truly, a *dahm* (is) a just man” (*dahm-iz mard ī ahlaw*; Dhabhar, 1946, p. 258). The fact that the word needed glossing shows that it was not current in ordinary Middle Persian, belonging presumably to the religious vocabulary. Moreover, as an Avestan epithet it is used exclusively of Āfriti among the divine beings, and it is only as an adjective for her that it occurs in the feminine. All this evidently confused the authors of the Pahlavi *zand*, who were led to render the name of the benediction as *Dahmān Wehān Āfrīn*, taking the Avestan accusative singular feminine adjective as a substantivized masculine plural, and understanding



the words to mean: “Blessing of good pious (men).” This mistranslation, or more often a briefer Dahmān Āfrīn, became the regular Pahlavi rendering of the benediction’s name, and hence also of that of its *yazata*, which in priestly usage is regularly further shortened to Dahmān.

In *Vidēvdād* 22 **Ahura Mazdā** tells Zoroaster how after Anra Mainyu (see **ahriman**) brought diseases into existence he, Mazdā, appealed successively to Maθhra Spenta, Saoka, and Airyaman to find cures for them, promising each that he would reward them with abundant sacrifices and bless them “with the beautiful pious blessing (*srīra dahma āfriti*), the dear pious blessing (*friθa dahma āfriti*)” (*Vd.* 22.5, 12, 18). The immense value of the benediction is stressed in practical terms in *Vidēvdād* 7.41, 9.37, where it is said that a priest is to be cured medically or cleansed ritually not, like lay people, for payment in kind but “for a *Dahmā Āfriti*” (*dahmayāt parō āfritōit*), of which the Pahlavi commentator declares: “It has no equivalent in the measure of material goods” (*-š xwāstag paymān nē hamāl*). In the Avestan fragment P31 (32) the *yazata* of the benediction appears herself. There it is said: “Whenever . . . the pious just man (*dahmō ašava*) completes a full (worship of) the *Ratus*, then there comes to him the Pious Good Blessing in the form of the finest of camels which (is as if) frenzied by the first (treading) of wine” (tr. JamaspAsa and Humbach, I, p. 49). Since the camel is strongest when in rut (cf. *Yt.* 14.11-13), this was an image, it seems, for the power of the benediction. A parallel has been sought between the use of this image and the concept of Dahmā Āfriti’s liturgical companion, the perplexing Dāmōiš Upamana, as a “wild aggressive boar” (*Yt.* 10.127).

This and an obscure mention in the next fragment, P32 (33), are the only references to the *yazata* in the extant Avesta, apart from that in *Sīrōza* 33; but a Pahlavi passage contains a citation from the lost *Sūdgar Nask* “about the coming to the whole world, every night, of Ešm once and Bušāsp twice for causing destruction and decay, and of the just Srōš thrice and Dahmān Āfrīn four times for prosperity. And the greatest saviour from demons has been Dahmān Āfrīn (*buxtārtom az *dēwān dahmān āfrīn būd*)” (*Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, p. 815.4-8; tr. Kotwal in *Šāyest nē šāyest*, Suppl., p. 106; see similarly *Šāyest nē šāyest*, Suppl., 13.43, pp. 52-53). In the Pahlavi commentary on *Sīrōza* 33 (Dhabhar, 1927, p. 175; idem, 1963, p. 334) it is further said; “If property (is) honestly acquired, then it (is) protected (by) Dahmān Āfrīn (*-š pānagīh [az] dahmān āfrīn*).” This also appears among the praises of the *yazata* in the



Greater Bundahišn, 26.94 (TD₂, p. 175.6-12; tr. Anklesaria, p. 227). Other references to Dahmān Āfrīn are to be found in the *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān-ī dēnīg*, chap. 46.4-5 (Williams, I, pp. 160-63), *Dēnkard* 7.9.3 (Molé, pp. 92-93), and *Dēnkard* 3.82.1, 195.8 (de Menasce, pp. 92, 203).

Although there is no *yašt* in her honor, Dahmā Āfriti was apparently originally given the dedication of the twenty-third day of the month, being one of the three divinities who were, it seems, displaced when three further days were devoted to Ahura Mazdā. She is still regularly invoked with the other two divinities (*Apām Napāt*, and Haoma) every month after the divinity of the thirtieth day, Anagra Raočā, and his helpers (see *Sīrōza* 33; and, further, Boyce, 1993).

Otherwise the *yazata* is invoked particularly at the *yašt-i čahārom* “worship of the fourth (day).” This is an *Āfrīnagān* service held at sunrise on the fourth day after death to bid the soul farewell, for it was believed that “Dahmān is the *yazad* who receives from the hands of Srōš the souls of the just and leads them to the sky” (Anquetil du Perron, II, p. 65). Among the Irani Zoroastrians she is further invoked at *Āfrīnagān* services performed just before sunset on the tenth, thirtieth, and first anniversary days, these services being called the *Dahmān* of *daha*, *sīrōza*, and *sāl* (*Persian Rivayats*, ed. Unvala, I, pp. 153.2, 153.4, 155.8-9; tr. Dhabhar, pp. 168, 169; Khodadadian, pp. 91-93, 95, 97; Aḏargošāsp, pp. 56-58).

The *Āfrīnagān* is the most regularly performed “outer” service, which can be adapted to almost all occasions. It has three parts (*karde*), of which the first is variable, but the second two (except on special occasions) are dedicated to Dahmān Āfrīn and Srōš. In Irani Zoroastrian usage the Pahlavi *ḵšnūman* (dedicatory formula) of all services devoted to Dahmān is essentially the same: *Dahm Yazad be-rasād* “May it reach Dahm Yazad!” Parsi priests used this formula at the *čahārom* ceremony, but at most regular *Āfrīnagān* services devoted the second *karde* instead to the *yazad* of the day and his or her helpers. The Avestan *ḵšnūman* remained nevertheless always essentially the same for every service, namely *dahmayā vaṇhuyā āfritōiš uyrāi dāmōiš upamanai xšnaoθra* “for the satisfaction of Dahma Vaṇuhi Āfriti (and) the mighty Dāmōiš Upamana.” (On these liturgical anomalies see in more detail Boyce, 1993.) The evidence in general suggests that as a divinity of prayer Dahm Yazad was once of great importance to priests, but that even for them,



and overwhelmingly for the laity, she came latterly to be overshadowed by the greater guardian of prayer, Sraoša, with whom she is closely associated.

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- (Mary Boyce)