



## DĀMI

---

**DĀMI-**, Avestan word, probably the noun of agency connected with Old Avestan *dāman-* “stake” (Y. 46.6, 48.7; equivalent to Skt. *dā́man-* < Indo-Ir. \**dā* “to attach”; Insler, p. 267), thus “the one who drives the stake” (Kellens, 1989). It was formerly interpreted (*AirWb.*, pp. 736-37) as a masculine noun in *-mi-* (< *dā* “to create” < Indo-Ir. \**dhā* “to put”), which is attested only in the Gathas and refers either to the agent (“the one who creates, the creator,” Y. 31.7, 31.8, 34.10, 44.4) or to the action (“creation”; Y. 43.5, 51.10), depending upon the category of derivation (Wackernagel and Debrunner, pp. 775-76); it is now recognized that as a noun of action it occurs only once (Y. 43.5; Humbach, 1959, II, pp. 89, 101), in connection with a human ritual conceived as the symbolic reenactment of the cosmogony (see [cosmogony and cosmology](#))

The two words *dāman-* and *dāmi-* are the most common elements in the Avestan metaphor for the cosmogonic act, the raising of a tent; except for the single instance (Y. 43.5) noted, then, *dāmi-* was exclusively a noun of agency referring to [Ahura Mazda](#). It cannot be an epithet for [Ārmaiti](#) (see Y. 34.10), as was formerly supposed on the basis of the Younger Avestan expression *dqmīm yqm ārmaitīm* (*Visprad* 19.2); the latter must reflect a defective interpretation of the Gathic passage (Insler, p. 225). The noun of agency must therefore be original, an exact synonym for *dātar-*, referring to Ahura Mazda in his role as creator or orderer of the world.

In Younger Avestan *dāmi-* was used in two ways. It appeared as the first term of the compound *dāmi.dāta-* “established by the *dāmi*,” which seems to have



led to a strange paradox. If it is assumed that the Pahlavi translator of these Avestan texts misunderstood the meaning of the first term (except in *Visprad* 19.15), confusing it with *dahma-*, and rendered it as *dānāg* “wise” (*Avesta*, tr. Darmesteter, I, p. 17 n. 2), then the entire compound can be said to have been preserved in Middle Persian *dāmdād* “creation” (cf. *dmydty* in the well-known Taxila inscription; Humbach, 1973, 168-69). The question has been reviewed by Jean Kellens (1974, pp. 247-59), who has also demonstrated that the supposed compound *dāmi.dāt-* “creating the creation” (*AirWb.*, p. 737) is not in fact attested.

*Dāmi-* also occurred in the genitive singular as a constituent element in the name of one minor divinity, *dāmōiš upamana-* (in *Yašts* 10, 12, 13 and the litanies of the *Yasna*). Because of the previously mentioned Pahlavi translation of *dāmi-* as *dānāg* and its juxtaposition with *āfriti-* (*Y.* 1.15 and similar expressions; *Avesta*, tr. Darmesteter, I, p. 17 n. 2), the commonly accepted meaning—until Christian Bartholomae expressed his total skepticism of it (*AirWb.*, p. 391)—was “the wise man’s curse” (cf. “guardians of the order”; Geldner, p. 486). H. S. Nyberg (p. 76) recognized in *dāmōiš* the designation of Ahura Mazdā and in *upamana-* either Sanskrit *upamāna* “resemblance” (< Indo-Ir. *úpa-mā*, proposed earlier by F. H. H. Windischmann, in connection with *daēnaiiā . . . upamanəm* in *Yt.* 10.126) or a derivation from *upa + man* “to inhabit.” This divinity would thus be an associate of Ahura Mazdā, probably Vərəθraϥna, for in *Yasna* 10.47 he is described in the same terms as the wild boar, which is the fifth avatar of this god (*Yt.* 14.15). Ilya Gershevitch (pp. 166-69) has, however, proposed that *dāmōiš* is a form of the patronymic adjective *dāmi-* “sons or daughter of the *dāmi*,” which was supposedly applied to Ārmaiti (*Y.* 34.10); the identification with Ārmaiti was, however, refuted by Helmut Humbach (1959, II, p. 100). Gershevitch explained the use of the supposed patronymic as a substitution for *ahuraδāta-*, which was reserved for the earth (Ārmaiti) and for Vərəθraϥna, from which it would follow that *dāmōiš upamana* was the alter ego of Vərəθraϥna, a divinity whose original name was not mentioned. This sophistic argument is, however, too fragile, and Nyberg’s hypothesis remains the most probable, though it cannot be accepted without reservation. In no single instance is there any information at all on whether or not the reuse of an Avestan formula implies a conceptual reality. *Dāmōiš upamana-* is perhaps simply an allegorical expression for “the act of remaining near the one who drives the stake or assists him.”



---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

K.-F. Geldner, "Uebersetzungen aus dem Avesta," *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Sprachforschung* 25, 1881, pp. 465-590.

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

H. Humbach, *Die Gathas des Zarathustra*, 2 vols., Heidelberg, 1959.

Idem, "Die aramäische Aśoka-Inschrift vom Laghman-Fluss," in H. Härtel and V. Moeller, eds., *Indologen-Tagung 1971*, Wiesbaden, 1973, pp. 161-69.

S. Insler, *The Gāthās of Zarathustra*, Acta Iranica 8, Tehran and Liège, 1975.

J. Kellens, *Les noms-racines de l'Avesta*, Wiesbaden, 1974.

Idem, "Huttes cosmiques en Iran," *MSS* 50, 1989, pp. 65-78.

H. S. Nyberg, *Die Religionen des alten Iran*, Leipzig, 1938.

J. Wackernagel and A. Debrunner, *Altindische Grammatik*, II/2. *Die Nominalsuffixe*, Göttingen, 1954.

F. H. H. Windischmann, "Mithra," *AKM* 1, 1857, p. 50,

(Jean Kellens)