



DŪRAOŠA

DŪRAOŠA-, Avestan word, attested once in the Older Avesta (Y. 32.14), in the Younger Avesta the preferred and exclusive epithet of *haoma*, the ritual liquid. Although the equivalent term in Sanskrit *duróṣa(s)-* is attested three times, in only one instance is it connected with the soma. It is therefore not certain that the single Old Avestan usage refers to *haoma*; another possibility is strongly suggested by the fact that it occurs in the form *dūraošəm*, the object of the causative *saočaiia-* “to set alight,” whereas in the Rigveda (4.21.6) *duróṣa(s)-* is an epithet of Agni (32.14; Kellens and Pirart, p. 92). H. W. Bailey has identified the Khotanese *durauśa* as a survival of this term (1964, p. 4), but doubt has been cast on this identification by Ronald Emmerick (in Flattery and Schwartz, p. 64 n. 28).

Both the etymology and the meaning of the word are uncertain. The great majority of scholars have recognized it as a compound and have agreed that the second term is *aoša-* “death”; this interpretation is, however, not entirely convincing, for the meaning of *aoša-* is more specifically “destruction by fire.” Furthermore, interpretation of the first term has caused considerable difficulty. Although the Pahlavi translator rendered *dūra-* as “distant,” leading to an interpretation of the compound as “whose death is distant” or “who keeps death at a distance,” the parallel with *duróṣa(s)-* seems to exclude that solution. Christian Bartholomae (*AirWb.*, cols. 751-52) was thus led to dissociate the Iranian and Indian words, but more recent scholars, from Jarl Charpentier to D. S. Flattery and Martin Schwartz (p. 130), have attempted to minimize the difference by invoking the individual instance and popular



etymology respectively.

Alternative interpretations also present insurmountable difficulties. Bailey (1936, pp. 95-97) reconstructed **dura-*, derived from *dvar* “to run”; the compound would thus be translated “from whom destruction flees,” though Bailey himself did not propose a compound (see below). He also suggested a reconstruction from Baluchi *dōr* “sadness.” Ilya Gershevitch (p. 49) proposed “painkiller,” apparently with the improbable subject *dur-*. One problem with all the interpretations is that gathic *dūraoša-* contains three syllables, whereas the compound (**dūra'(a)uša-*) would not be contracted (Kellens and Pirart, p. 260). The initial element might be more satisfactorily explained by the Indo-Iranian prefix **dus*, but that suggestion also raises doubts, for in Iranian there is no sandhi in which *s* becomes *r*; furthermore, the proposed consonant modification to **dužauša-* “charred” (Karl Hoffmann, cited in Humbach, pp. 300-01) has no known Iranian equivalent. It can be asked also whether *dūraoša-/duraóša(s)-* is not simply a fossil word, attesting a root and suffix that had otherwise become extinct. Bailey (1957) followed this line of reasoning, reconstructing a root *dur* “injure” with a derived adjective meaning “pungent in taste,” but his arguments are not persuasive.

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