



FRAWARDĪN YAŠT

FRAWARDĪN YAŠT (New. Pers. *Farvardīn Yašt*), the thirteenth of the Zoroastrian *yašts* (see [AVESTA](#)), devoted to the *fravašis*. It is accounted one of the eight great *yašts*, and is the longest of all (158 verses). It is also the most frequently recited, after that to Ohrmazd, being used in funerary rites (see [DEATH](#)). For this reason it is found generally in *Ḳorda Avestas* (service books), as well as in the old *yašt* manuscripts F1 and J10 (Kellens, 1975, pp. 5-7), and its text is relatively well preserved. There recurs all through it the formula, *kšnūman*, by which its recital is devoted to the *fravašis*. This formula (cf. *Sīrōza* II 19) is: “We worship the good, strong, bounteous *fravašis* of the righteous” (*ašāunəm vaŋuhīš sūrā spəntāfrauušašaiiō yazamaide*). Its recurrence to some extent divides the *yašt* into long and short sections (*karda*), but in places it is repeated in successive verses.

The *fravaši* cult appears to represent the fusing of an ancient general one of the souls (*urvan*) of the dead with a particular one of those of warrior-heroes, the *fravašis* proper. The *yašt* is evidently the work of generations of priests, composing within a fluid oral tradition. This tradition continued, it is reckoned, until some 400 years after the lifetime of Zoroaster (Burrow, p. 138; Kellens, 1987), when the Young Avestan texts were fixed essentially by being fully memorized. Till then priests would have worshipped the *fravašis* partly with verses which they learnt by heart from their teachers and elders, partly with others which they composed or adapted themselves, so that there was a continual process of preserving, losing, adding and reshaping, during which pre-Zoroastrian materials became Zoroastrianized, and Zoroastrian doctrines



suffered some manipulation in the interests of glorifying the *fravašis*. The existing text deals repetitively with various themes. Its literary quality is uneven, with some fine poetic verses, and others which are as prosaic as their content, while yet others are dully imitative. Verses of the last type were probably included mainly to lengthen the *yašt*, and so honor the *fravašis* more greatly.

The simplest way to Zoroastrianize materials was to present them as part of Ahura Mazda's revelation to his prophet, with the standard words, "Said Ahura Mazda to Spitaman Zarathuštra" (*mraoṭ ahurō mazdā spitamāi zaraθuštrāi*), and this is how *Yašt* 13 begins. The verses which follow are, in contrast, by no means stereotypical, but boldly adapt fundamental Zoroastrian doctrine to exaltation of the *fravašis*, who are presented, in verses rich in traditional poetic phrases, as on a plane with the lesser *yazatas*. The supreme deity is represented as declaring (vv. 2-10) that he brought into existence the encircling sky and the broad earth, which supports waters and plants to sustain cattle and men, through the "glory and splendor" (*raiiā xvarənaŋhaca*, a standard *yašt* phrase referring to the powers of *yazatas*) of the "mighty, victorious *fravašis*" (*frauuāšinəm uyranəm aiβiθūranəm*). These two epithets, which recur, may well belong to the *fravašis* as they were originally conceived. Moreover, without their aid, Mazda is represented as saying (vv. 12-13), "cattle and men" (*pasu.vīra*) would not have been his, but would have belonged to Anra Mainyu (see [AHRIMAN](#)), who would never thereafter have yielded to Spənta Mainyu. This declaration is wholly unorthodox, and unsupported by any other text; but a slight measure of accord has been seen between it and accepted doctrine, in that the *fravašis* are, it seems, the souls of valiant warriors, and Zoroaster taught that humanity generally has a vital part to play in the cosmic battle against evil (Zaehner, pp. 147.).

Verses 14-15 are the first of a number, scattered through the *yašt*, which tell how the *fravašis* continue to sustain the material world and mankind. Verses 16-17 turn from cosmic themes and celebrate their ability to give aid both in trials of eloquence and "mighty battles" (*uyrāhu pəšanāhu*). These are the first of many verses which celebrate the *fravašis*' warrior prowess, and which may well have their remote origins in the original *fravašicult*. In the main the "fravašis of the righteous" are assimilated to Zoroastrian ethical dualism by being presented as helpers of the righteous, the *ašavan*; and in verse 41 it is said that they will give good fortune to that man who worships them as did righteous Zoroaster. Amoral elements nevertheless remain. The *fravašis* are to



be invoked generally, it is declared, “at fights, where brave men fight in battles” (*pəšanāhu* □ *iḍa yaṭ narō taxma pəratənte vərəθrayniiaēšo*, v. 27); and there is a magico-religious character to the instruction to learn their invocation by heart, so as to obtain their help at times of peril (v. 20).

Verses 49-52 form a short *karda* in which the *fravašis* appear in the quite different role of the *urvan*, for it is told that they return to their (former) dwellings at *Hamaspaθmaēδaya* (see [FRAWARDĪGĀN](#)), seeking to be worshipped by name and given gifts of food and clothing, for which they will bless those living there. This *karda* is known to priests by its opening words as the *yā visāda*. It forms the variable section of several *Āfrīnagāns*, notably those of *Ardā Fravaš* and *Dahmān* (see [DAHMYAZAD](#)), and so is frequently recited.

Verses 96-144 have also evidently been taken over from the *urvan* cult, for they consist in the main of a list of names of Zoroaster’s first disciples and of leading members of the early community, venerated with the formula: “We worship the *fravaši* of righteous so-and-so.” (For a detailed commentary see *Avesta*, tr. Darmesteter, II, pp. 530-54). This long roll of honor of “heroes” (hence called *fravašis*?) of the faith was presumably included in the *yašt* as part of the putative campaign to have the *fravaši* cult accepted as orthodox; and some names shed a faint light on the early history of the community and the date of the final version of the *yašt* (Burrow, p. 138). Before the list begins, worship is offered, preposterously, to the *fravaši* of Ahura Mazda himself, and to those of some lesser *yazatas*; and the list is further dignified by being set in a frame of general veneration of the *fravašis* of all righteous humanity, from *Gayō.marətan*, the First Man (v. 87) to the *Saošyant*, who will be the last (v. 145). A number of epic and mythical figures are introduced, and there are fine lines among verses 87-94, devoted to the *fravaši* of Zoroaster.

Late in the hymn, verses 149, 155, offer worship to both *urvan* and *fravaši* as distinct components of man’s immaterial nature (see further under [FRAVAŠI](#)). This suggests the influence of schoolmen of the Young Avestan period. The *yašt* ends with a prayer, suitable to its regular devotional use, that the *fravašis* may come to “this house,” be satisfied, and return to Ahura Mazda and the *Aməša Spəntas*.



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For further bibliography, see [FRAVAŠĪ](#).