



GĒUŠ URUUAN

GĒUŠ URUUAN “the soul of the Cow,” the name of the archetypal Bovine, whose plight is a subject of Zoroaster’s *gāθā* (Y. 29), often identified as “the Cow’s Lament.” In this poem Zoroaster drew upon an old Indo-Iranian motif of a semi-divine cow. While the grammatical gender of *gau-* is feminine, the word can refer to “cattle, bovines” generally, and has been so understood by various interpreters (e.g., Lommel, pp 177 ff.). In the later Pahlavi literature the *Gōšorun* (q.v.) is the female counterpart to the Primordial Bull (*gāw ī ēwag dād*; see *GĀW Ī ĒWDĀD*). In the Avesta the figure of the *gau-* appears to be a cow and this is supported by comparative date from the Indian Vedic and epic traditions (see Lincoln pp. 140ff.). *Yasna* 29 is composed in the form of a dialogue involving *Gəuš Uruuan* and various of the divine beings, including the *Gəuš Tašan* (the fashioner of the Cow). While there is little agreement among scholars regarding many details of the poem and even its ultimate meaning, there is consensus over the basic outline. *Gəuš Uruuan*, suffering at the hands of the forces of the Lie laments to Ahura Mazda (q.v.) and the other divinities about her wretched condition. She despairs over her abandonment, her lack of an adequate herdsman for her protection. After some indecisive discussion by the divinities, in which they are unable to identify a proper protector, they recognize that Zoroaster is the only one fit for the job. She laments all the more, since she regards him as a weakling, but ultimately she must make do with him. Zoroaster intended at least two levels of meaning. Basic was the inherited figure of the suffering cow (cf. *Yt.* 10.38) mistreated in the hands of enemies. That is, she symbolizes the plight of Zoroaster’s community and its cult. More abstractly, and more significantly, *Gəuš Uruuan*



is a metaphor for the poetic vision (*daēnā*) that Zoroaster has received from Ahura Mazdā (see GĒUŠ TAŠAN). In later Avestan literature Gəuš Uruuan is simply the deity of the 14th day of the month (Mid. Pers. Gōš).

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