



GŌZIHR

GŌZIHR, the Middle Persian development of an old Iranian compound adjective **gau-čīθra-*, recorded in the Younger Avesta (Yašt 7, *passim*; Y. 1.11; 16.4; Vd. 21.9), in the form *gaočīθra-*, as an epithet of the moon, “bearing the seed, having the origin of cattle” (or, “the ox”). This is translated in the Pahlavi Zand as *gōspand-tōxmag* or *gōspand-čihrag*, indicating that *gōzihr* had already been specialized as an astronomical and astrological term. As such it became the name of the imaginary Dragon, spanning the sky between the two nodes of the moon. Of these, the ascending node (where the moon’s orbit crosses the plane of the ecliptic from south to north) formed its Head (*gōzihr sar*) and the descending node its Tail (*gōzihr dumb*). This Dragon was first conceived by the Chaldeans as having been created before the constellations and the planets, and watching over the universe with its head towards the sunrise and its tail to the sunset. The nodes being within the zodiac, and 180 degrees apart from each other, the Dragon is represented as carrying six zodiacal constellations on its back, the other six hanging from its belly. Since eclipses of sun and moon only occur when both heavenly bodies conjoin within a few degrees of the moon’s nodes, their name also acquired this connotation. In the Manichean Middle Persian text M 556, the sun and the moon becoming eclipsed are said to ‘*don gōzihr*’ (*gwcyhr pymwcyd*). Although the nodes actually retire in the opposite direction to the moon’s movement, so as to change places, Head for Tail, in just over 9 1/4 years, the Dragon came later to be connected with the fixed Milky Way, which was regarded as being the “brilliance of the Dragon” (*brēh i gōzihr*). Taken over by Muslim astronomers and astrologers, the word became *jawzihr* in Arabic, variously corrupted



(jawizahr, jawzahar). When unspecified it applied to the moon, but was also used for the nodes of any other named planet, ra's (head) the ascending and ḍanab (tail) the descending. Those of the moon were also specified by translating the Dragon, as ra's al-tennin and ḍanab al-tennin respectively.

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