



HAMĒSTAGĀN

HAMĒSTAGĀN, a word of uncertain etymology, used in Pahlavi literature to designate the intermediate stage between paradise and hell (see below). It is related to the Avestan *hāmiiasaite*, attested in *Yasna* 33.1, where, according to Helmut Humbach (I, p. 136, II, p. 93), it means “reckoned together,” in a passage referring to the one “whose defects and virtues are counted together” (*ham.yā.saiti*). Gert Klingenschmitt (1972) has shown that the expression *misuuan- gātu-* in the Young Avesta should not be confused with *hamēstagān*, contrary to Mary Boyce (*Zoroastrianism* I, p. 237), who, following Christian Bartholomae’s definition as “place of mixture” (*AirWb*, col. 1168), thinks that they are equivalent. Gert Klingenschmitt translates the word as “raised together (to the same height).” David N. MacKenzie (p. 41) interprets it as “the neutral station between the earth and the sky,” which should not be compared to “the Limbos,” nor the purgatory of Christianity.

Situating this intermediate place between hell (q.v.) and paradise took place rather late and probably resulted from the queries of Mazdean theologians, who were concerned to allot a proper destiny to the soul of the deceased whose sins and good deeds were exactly equal when weighed on the scales of the god Rašnu. It is indicated in *Ardā Wirāz-nāmag* (6.5) that this category of the dead remains in *hamēstagān* until the resurrection. They are subjected to the cold and heat of atmospheric movements, but that is their sole suffering. In the *Dādestān ī Mēnog ī xrad* (chapter 7), the Spirit of Wisdom is asked about the number of paradises, of *hamēstagāns*, and of hells. The answer is that there are three paradises and that *hamēstagān* is situated between the earth



and the sphere of the stars (the first paradise) and that the only adversary of those who go there is cold and heat. The *Pahlavi Rivayat* (ch. 65, 1-2) is more restrictive, because, according to it, even those people whose good deeds outweigh their mistakes but have not done the *yašt*, will also go to *hamēstagān*. According to the *Dādestān ī dēnīg* (23.6), there are two *hamēstagāns*, the *hamēstagān* of the good and the *hamēstagān* of the wicked, an emphasis surely dictated by strict adherence to dualism. It seems that Keršāsp/Garšāsb, whose heroic deeds are counterbalanced by grave mistakes, deserved to go to *hamēstīg axwān*, (*Dēnkard* 9.14.4) which is none but *hamēstagān*. In the *Dēnkard* VIII (14.7-8), it is also called “the place of those whose good deeds and sins are equal” (*gyāg ī hāwandān ī kirbag ud wināh*), and, according to the *Dēnkard* V (ch. 8), it is “an intermediate place” between the center of the earth and the sphere of the stars, combining elements of both. According to the *Pahlavi Rivayat* (ch. 31, c8), after having repented and confessed, Jam, coming from the north, became the king of *hamē-stagān*. Perhaps it is the same possible evolution of which speaks chapter 350 of the *Dēnkard* III (de Menasce, p. 320), where it is said that one can go from hell to *hamēstagān*, and from there to paradise by changing one’s moral conduct, no doubt in comparison with one’s conduct in this world(?).

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