



## NĪRANGDĪN CEREMONY

**NĪRANGDĪN CEREMONY**, a Zoroastrian ritual to consecrate *gōmēz*, or bull's urine; the consecrated liquid is known as *nīrang* or *nīrangdīn*. The ceremony is briefly discussed or referred to in the *Pahlavi Vendidād* (9.32, 19. 21-2), the *Epistles of Manušcihr* (I.7.15.18; II.3.12), and most comprehensively in a hitherto unpublished Pahlavi Text entitled *Nērang Nērangdēn Yaštan az Nibištag Ērān* (Kotwal, forthcoming). In essence, modern Parsi practice corresponds to that described in the Pahlavi sources. The *Nērang Nērangdēn* contains comments on the ceremony by Abarag and Mēdyōmāh, well-known commentators who most probably lived in the late Sasanian period (Macuch 1993: 9-10), and provides a *terminus ante quem* for the origin of the rite in its present form.

The ceremony is conducted by two priests who must have undergone the purificatory *Barashnum* ceremony following a period of abstinence and contemplation lasting nine days and nights. In order to acquire maximum ritual purity (*khūb*), each priest celebrates a *Yasna* with its ritual (*Yasna of Mīnō Nāwar*) in turn on the 11th and 12th day. Then, from the 13th through the 17th day the priests take turns performing the *Yasna* as *zōt* (chief officiating priest) and *rāspī* (assistant priest). After completing the final *Yasna*, each performs a *Bāj* ceremony, consecrating a 'sacred cake' (*drōn, darūn*), and finally making a ritual tasting (*chāshni*) from each other's *drōn*. Thus the two priests become equal in ritual efficacy (*ham-kalām*).

For the ceremony proper, first the utensils for holding the urine and pure water are made ritually pure and the 'sacred bull' [called *varasyō* "that which



supplies hair (Av. *varāsa*)” by the Parsis], a purely white uncastrated bull which has been consecrated, is brought into the building where the rite is performed, and some urine is collected from it. Then, the urine of uncastrated, uncastrated bulls is added to augment the quantity. The priests then begin the preparatory *paragnā* ceremony in the *Uzērin Gāh*, i.e., in the afternoon. In the *Ushahin Gāh*, shortly after midnight, the *Vendīdād* ceremony is then performed with the dedication (*shnūman*) to Sraosha, and with appropriate ritual. The ritual lasts for some seven hours. The vessel containing the urine and another filled with pure water are placed between inside the ritual precinct (*pāvī*), between the fire and the low table on which the ritual utensils are placed (*ālatgāh*). At the end of the ceremony the priests pour a libation (*zōhr*) into the well near the place where the ceremony took place, and go through the prescribed ritual for the morning watch (*HāwanGāh*). They then enter the ritual precinct again, and tie the lids of the two connected vessels containing the urine and water with a cotton thread. This formally completes the consecration. The priests perform the ritual handshake with each other, and then with the supervising high priest, and bottle with ceremonial precaution the consecrated *nīrang* and water.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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