



SŪDĠAR NASK AND WARŠTMĀNSR NASK

SŪDĠAR NASK and **WARŠTMĀNSR NASK**, the first and second of three commentaries on the Old Avesta (the five *Gāthās* [*Gāθās*] and *Yasna haptanḥāiti*), extant in a Pahlavi resume in book nine of the *Dēnkard*, the third being the *Bag nask*. They are three of the 21 *nasks* (parts of the *Avesta*), which, according to *Dēnkard* book eight, constituted the Avesta in the ninth century CE. All three contain 22 *fragards*, corresponding to the traditional division of the *Gāthās* into 17 sections (*hāitis*), the *Yasna haptanḥāiti* (as per the Avestan manuscripts, its seven *hāitis* are treated as a single unit and called *Yasn*; cf. *Nērangestān* 18.3, ed. Kotwal and Kreyenbroek, p. 101, n. 343), and four *fragards* on the four sacred prayers (*Ahuna vairiia*, *Aṣəm vohū*, *Yeṇ'hē hātəm*, and *Ā airiīṣ mā išiiō*). In addition, the *Sūdgarhas* a brief introduction (*Dēnkard* 9.1.1-2), the *Warštmānsrhas* an introductory *fragard* on the birth and life of *Zoroaster* (*Dēnkard* 9.24), and the *Baghas* a final *fragard* with quotations from the Pahlavi *Gāthās* on the future existence (*Dēnkard* 9.69).

The *fragards* are called by the Pahlavi forms of the names of the Avestan *hāitis* (e.g., *Xwadmēd* for *Xvaētumaitī hāiti* = *Yasna* 32; *Kamnamēz* for *Kamnamaēzā hāiti* = *Yasna* 46), but *Yasna* 28 (*Ahiīāsā hāiti*) is named after its introductory text (*Yasna* 28.0), the (archaizing) Young Avestan *Yānīm manō* (thus also in *Wizīdagīhā ī Zādspram* 28.3, ed. Gignoux and Tafazzoli, pp. 92-93). The Young Avestan *Yasna* 42 (between the *Yasna haptanḥāiti* and the second *Gāthā*) and *Yasna* 52 (between the third and fourth *Gāthās*) are not included (Molé, pp.



142-43, argued that this shows a traditional awareness of the structure of the Old Avestan corpus).

Whether there were complete Avestan *nasks* is uncertain; the only text with an extant Avestan original is the last *fragard* of the *Warštmānsr nask*, the *Ērmān fragard* (commenting on the *Ā airiia'mā išiiō* = *Yasna* 54.1), which is the translation of the so-called *Fragment Westergaard* 4.1-3. This suggests that at least some of the *fragards* were based on Avestan originals.

The style is terse and best described as a “table of contents”; most sections are introduced by the preposition *abar* (“about, regarding”) and are often followed by *ud ēn-iz kū* (“and [it says] this also”), introducing additional explanations (cf. West, 1892, p. xlvi). The *Sūdgar* is more expansive in its interpretation of the Old Avesta than the *Warštmānsr* and *Bag nasks*, which, at least at times, follow the Pahlavi *Gāthās* closely, whereas the *Sūdgar* often draws on material from the *Vīdēvdād* and the *Yašts*.

Sūdgar may mean “the benefit-maker,” but *swtyklyhy* > = *sūd(i?)garīh* in the [Pahlavi Psalter](#) renders Syriac “supplication” (see Andreas and Barr, p. 54). In the *Zand ī Wahman yasn* (1.1) and the Persian *rivāyats* (Dhabhar, 1932, pp. 2-3) it is called *Stūdgar* or *Istūdgar*, “the praise-maker,” by popular etymology (Cereti, p. 171). In *Dēnkard* 8.1.12, the *Sūdgar* is listed as the first of the *gāhānīgnasks* (Gathic *nasks*), and its contents and style are briefly described in *Dēnkard* 8.2.2-4. The *nasks* are listed in the same order in the Persian *rivāyat* of Bahman Punjya (Dhabhar, 1932, p. 1), but in the Pahlavi *Wizīrgird ī dēnīg* and the Persian *rivāyats* of Kama Bohra, Narimān Hoshang, and Dastur Barzoi, it is listed second, with the *Stōt yašt* (Av. *Staota yesniia*) listed first (Dhabhar, 1932, pp. 1-2).

The name *Warštmānsr* refers to the working/composing (*varz-*) of a *mąθra* (cf. *Yasna* 45.3 *mąθrəm varəšəntī* “[those who] shall work a *mąθra*”; *Yasna* 3.4 *gāθanąmca sraoθrəm huuarštā mąθrā* “and the recitation of the *Gāthās*, the well-wrought *mąθras*”). In the Persian *rivāyats* it is called *Wahišta-mānsar* “the best *mąθra*” by popular etymology (ibid., 1932, p. 3). In *Dēnkard* 8.1.12, the *Warštmānsr* is listed as the second of the *gāhānīg nasks*, and its contents and style are briefly described in *Dēnkard* 8.3.1-5, where it says (8.3.4), “whatever is said in the *Gāthās*, then in the *Warštmānsr* something is said about it.”

Manuscripts. *Dēnkard* 9 is found in six published manuscripts. The only complete manuscript is J5 (copied in 1865 from B, now in Bombay; Jamasp Asa



and Nawabi, 1976b), but it is modern and less reliable than the others (e.g., *AMT* = *ka* “when” is typically used for *MNW* = *kē* “who, which”). The three oldest, but incomplete manuscripts are DH (copied in 1577, now in Bombay; ed. P. K. Anklesaria), K43b (copied in 1594, from DH, now in Copenhagen; ed. Christensen), and B (copied in 1659, now in Bombay; ed. Dresden; see [DĒNKARD](#)). The remaining two modern manuscripts are D10a (copied from Bin 1868, now in Bombay; ed. Jamasp Asa and Nawabi, 1976a) and MR24II (= Meherji Rana; copied in 1893 to fill the lacunae of B, now in Navsari; ed. Dresden).

DH (and K43b) and B represent two separate manuscript traditions (evidenced by variant readings and divergent text in certain parts), but both go back to the Baghdad manuscript copied by Māhwindād in 369 A.Y./1020 CE, whose colophon (the oldest in Pahlavi literature) is preserved in B (Sanjana, 1928, XIX, pp. 95-100; see the translation in West 1892, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv).

The *Sūdgar nask* is missing in B and D10a, except the end of the 10th and all of the 11th *fragard* (cf. West 1892, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii). The *Warštmānsr nask* is missing in B and D10a, and K43b has only the first eight *fragards* (West relied upon K43b, and his translation is therefore incomplete). Only the first half of the first *fragard* (*Ahunwar*) is preserved in MR24II.

Editions and translations. The only complete editions of the two *nasks* are those of D. M. Madan (1911, pp. 787-818 [*Sūdgar*], and pp. 818-72 [*Warštmānsr*]) and D. P. Sanjana (1922, XVII, pp. 1-65 [*Sūdgar*], pp. 66-98 [*Warštmānsr*], and 1926, XVIII, pp. 1-57 [*Warštmānsr*]). The only complete translation is that of Sanjana (1926, XVII, pp. 1-50 [*Sūdgar*], pp. 51-75 and XVIII, pp. 1-42 [*Warštmānsr*]). E. W. West’s translation of the *Sūdgar* (1892, whose paragraph numbering is used here) is complete (pp. 172-226), but that of the *Warštmānsr* (pp. 226-303) is lacking a portion of the 10th-11th and 14th *fragards* (*Dēnkard* 9.33-34, 37). Dresden provides concordances for manuscripts B, MR24II and K43b, and the editions of Sanjana and Madan. For concordances of all the published manuscripts and editions of the *Dēnkard*, book 9, see Vevaina; also see Vevaina; also see [TABLE 1](#).

Contents. The *Sūdgar* contains numerous references to characters and events from the mythological narratives found primarily in the Young Avestan *yašts* (Menasce, p. 1175; cf. Darmesteter, pp. CIII-CIV). Many passages have parallels in other Pahlavi texts and the Persian *rivāyats*; for instance, in the section on the *Ahunwar*, the number of times the prayer is to be recited in particular



circumstances is listed as “nine when one wishes to throw seeds into the earth, ten when one wishes to release the male animals [into the females], eleven when one goes to seek a wife” (*Dēnkard* 9.2.11-13); similar texts about how many times to recite the *Ahunwar* are found in the Pahlavi *Supplementary Texts to the Šāyest-nē-šāyest* (e.g., 19.9: “corn will ripen in nine months,” cf. West, 1880, p. 392; ed. Kotwal, pp. 76-81) and the Persian *rivāyat* of Bahman Punjya (tr. Dhabhar, 1932, pp. 9-10).

The remuneration of priests is frequently hinted at, e.g., “he who goes according to the law of the demons, is going over to the demons, or has committed deceit is like a wealthy person who gives nothing to a worthy supplicant” (*Dēnkard* 9.4.2 on the *Yeŋ’hē hātqm*), and “he who gives something to Zoroaster’s disciples, his fee/salary [*mizd*] and reward [*pādāšn*] are just as if you gave something to Zoroaster (himself)” (*Dēnkard* 9.13.9 on *Yasna* 43). Another frequent theme in both the *Sūdgar* and the *Warštmānsr* is the rise of heresy (*ahlomōyih*), e.g., “regarding the complaint of the spirit of the *Gāθās* that, when a herbed or dastur dies away from home and the body of that man does not return to his own land, for that reason, in the land of his birth, there will oppression by heretics” (*Dēnkard* 9.6.2 on *Yasna* 29).

Anachronistic interpretations are found in both the *Sūdgar* and the *Warštmānsr*. In the exegesis of *Yasna* 31 (*Tā və’ uruuātā hāiti*) in the *Sūdgar* (*Dēnkard* 9.8.1-7), the four ages of mankind are described as the golden age, in which Ohrmazd (*Ahura Mazdā*) revealed the *dēn* (“religion”) to Zoroaster; the silver age, in which Wištāsp received it from Zoroaster; the age of steel, in which *Ādurbād ī Mahraspandān* (lived 4th century CE) was born; and the age mixed with iron, when heresy is confused with religion, sovereignty, goodness, and virtue weaken, and character and wisdom deteriorate and disappear from Iran. The same description is explicitly cited from the “*Stūdgar*” in chapter one of the *Zand ī Wahman yasn* (Cereti, pp. 139, 149). In the exegesis of *Yasna* 46.7 in the *Warštmānsr* (*Dēnkard* 9.39.13), it is suggested that the Avestan text is about the characteristics of the fiend, the cripple *Mani* (3rd century CE) and the evil people who are his Hearers (*niyōšāg*) and the beating, which came upon him from the lord of the land (*dahibed*).

A famous passage in the *Warštmānsr* is the exegesis of *Yasna* 30.3 on the twin “spirits” (*mainiuis*), where the demon Arš says that Ohrmazd and *Ahriman* were two brothers in one womb (*Dēnkard* 9.30.4-5). Here, this view (often ascribed to “Zurvanism” by Western scholars) is repudiated in favor of the separate origin of light and darkness. A similar statement is found in a



Manichean polemical hymn (see Skjærvø, pp. 245; cf. Henning, pp. 50-51), and the doctrine is critiqued in greater detail in the Armenian Christian theologian Eznik of Kolb's "Refutation of Sects" (4th-5th centuries CE; cf. Zaehner, for other polemics against Zurvanism).

A unique ritual interpretation is found in the exegesis of *Yasna* 50.1-11 in the *Warštmānsr* (*Dēnkard* 9.43.7). Here, the three steps taken by the priest (*zōt*) when libating the waters (see *ĀB-ZŌHR*) at the beginning of the *Ābān niyāyišn* are interpreted as the three steps through good thoughts, words, and deeds from the earth, via the star, moon, and sun stations (*pāyag*) up to paradise (*garōdmān*; this is also the path of the soul after death, cf. *Mēnōy ī xrad* 7.8-12, tr. West, 1885, pp. 29-30, ed. T. D. Anklesaria, pp. 39-40 [6.8-12]; *Ardā Wirāz-nāmag* 7-10, ed. Gignoux, pp. 53-56, 161-63). In the modern *Yasna* ritual, these three steps are taken during the recitation of *Yasna* 64.3-4 = *Yasna* 50.7-8 (the *Ātaš niyāyišn*) before the beginning of *Yasna* 65 (the *Ābān niyāyišn*); *Yasna* 50.8 contains the statement "with the steps (*pada-*) that are renowned as those of the milk libation (*īžā-*)," which evidently prompted the exegesis (cf. West, 1892, pp. 292-93, see p. 293, n. 1-2; Darmesteter, I, pp. 400-1, for further details on the ritual actions of the officiating priest; and Windfuhr, pp. 30-31, on related matters).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Friedrich Carl Andreas and Kaj Barr, *Bruchstücke einer Pehlevi-Übersetzung der Psalmen*, SPAW, phil.-hist. Kl. 1, 1933, no. 1, pp. 1-64.

Tehmuras Dinshaw Anklesaria, *Dânâk-u Mainyô-i Khard. Pahlavi, Pazand, and Sanskrit Texts*, Bombay, 1913.

Peshotan K. Anklesaria, *The Codex DH, Being a Facsimile Edition of Bondahesh, Zand-e Vohuman Yasht, and Parts of Denkard*, Tehran, 1971.

Carlo G. Cereti, *The Zand ī Wahman Yasn. A Zoroastrian Apocalypse*, Serie Orientale Roma 75, Rome, 1995.



Arthur Christensen, *The Pahlavi Codex K 43, Second Part*, Copenhagen, 1936, repr. in *Pahlavi Codices and Iranian Researches* 42, ed. Kaikhusroo M. Jamasp Asa and Mahyar Nawabi, Shiraz, 1976.

James Darmesteter, *Le Zend-Avesta I-III*, Paris, 1892-93, repr. Paris, 1960.

Bamanji Nasarvanji Dhabhar, *The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz and Others. Their Version with Introduction and Notes*, Bombay, 1932.

Mark J. Dresden, *Dēnkart. A Pahlavi Text. Facsimile Edition of the Manuscript B of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute Bombay*, Wiesbaden, 1966.

Philippe Gignoux, *Le livre d'Ardā Vīrāz, translittération, transcription, et traduction du texte Pehlevi*, Paris, 1984.

Idemand Ahmad Tafazzoli, *Anthologie de Zādspram*. *Studia Iranica*, Cahier 13, Paris, 1993.

Walter Bruno Henning, *Zoroaster. Politician or Witch-Doctor*, London, 1951.

Helmut Humbach and Pallan Ichaporia, *The Heritage of Zarathushtra: A New Translation of his Gāthās*, Heidelberg, 1994.

Kaikhusroo M. Jamasp Asa and Mahyar Nawabi, *Manuscript D 10a. Dinkart. Books 4-9*, 2 vols., *Pahlavi Codices and Iranian Researches* 9-10, Shiraz, 1976a.

Idem, *MS. J 5. Dinkart. Books 5-9*, *Pahlavi Codices and Iranian Researches* 22, Shiraz, 1976b.

Firoze M. P. Kotwal, *The Supplementary Texts to the Šāyest ne-Šāyest*, Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, *Historisk-filosofiske Meddelelser* 44, 2, Copenhagen, 1969.

Idem and Philip G. Kreyenbroek with contributions by James R. Russell, *The Hērbedestān and Nērangestān*, vol. II: *Nērangestān, Fragard 1*, Paris, 1995.

Dhanjishah Meherjibhai Madan, *The Complete Text of the Pahlavi Dinkard*, Bombay, 1911.

Jean de Menasce, "Zoroastrian Pahlavī Writings," in *CHI* III/2, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 1166-95.



Marijan Molé, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie dans l'iran ancien. Le problème zoroastrien et la tradition mazdéenne*, Annales du Musée Guimet, Bibliothèque d'Études 69, Paris, 1963.

Behramjee Sanjana and Peshotan Sanjana, *The Dīnkard. The Original Pahlavi Text*, 19 vols., Bombay, 1874-1928.

Prods Oktor Skjærvø, "The Manichean Polemical Hymns in M 28 I," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 9, 1995 [pub. 1997], pp. 239-55.

Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina, "Studies in Zoroastrian Exegesis and Hermeneutics with a Critical Edition of the *Sūdgar Nask* of *Dēnkard* Book 9," Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University (Cambridge, 2007).

Edward William West, *Pahlavi Texts I: The Bundahis, Bahman Yast, and Shâyast lâ-shâyast*, SBE 5, Oxford, 1880 (repr. New Delhi, 1993).

Idem, *Pahlavi Texts III: Dīnâ-î Maīnôg-î Khirad, Sikand-Gûmânîk Vigâr, Sad Dar*, SBE 24, Oxford, 1885 (repr. New Delhi, 1994).

Idem, *Pahlavi Texts IV: Contents of the Nasks*, SBE 37, Oxford, 1892 (repr. New Delhi, 1994).

Gernot Windfuhr, "The Ties that Bind. Sacred Geometry in the Zoroastrian Yasna Ritual (Nērangestān 60-61)," *Nāma-ye Irān-e Bāstān* 4/1, 2004, pp. 3-40.

R. C. Zaehner, *Zurvan. A Zoroastrian Dilemma*, Oxford, 1955 [1971].