



YAŠTS

YAŠTS, the group of 21 Avestan hymns in praise of various deities of the Zoroastrian pantheon. They form an important and integral part of the sacred texts of the Zoroastrians collected in the [Avesta](#). In principle, each Yašt (abbreviated *Yt.*) is entirely devoted to the praise of one particular deity and can be recited by any member of the community, priest or layperson, male or female (Choksy and Kotwal, 2005). In the contemporary understanding, the *Yašts* thus differ from the [Yasna](#) (abbreviated *Y.*), which is celebrated to worship the entire Zoroastrian pantheon but only by priests within the fire temple. Historically, however, the *Yašts* also formed part of a priestly high ritual, the *Bagān Yasn*, now lost, by way of their intercalation into the *Yasna cum Visperad*, along the model exemplified by the *Vištāsp Yašt Sāde* (Kreyenbroek, 2004, 2008, pp. 254-56; Cantera, 2009; König, 2012; Kellens, 2012, p. 475). The earliest historical reference to the *Yašts* is widely thought to be found in the *Histories* (I 132) of the Greek historian [Herodotus](#) (ca. 484-425 BCE), who relates that during a sacrifice by the Persians a Magus (see [MAGI](#)) stands close by and recites a ‘theogony.’ Most scholars have interpreted the latter term as an Avestan composition similar to or identical with a *Yašt* (de Jong, 1997, p. 118 with fn. 140).

Name. While the nouns *yasna-* and *yašt* both derive from the same Avestan verb *yaz* “to worship ritually,” *yasna-* is an Avestan word, but *yašt* a Middle Persian (Pahlavi) form, possibly from Avestan *yašta-* “worshipped” (Nyberg, 1938, p. 52; Panaino, 1994). In the *Avesta*, the *Yašts* are referred to as a *yasna-* in which a sacred being “worthy of worship” (Av. *yazata-*, Pahl. *yaz(a)d*) is



worshipped and invoked by the repeated declaration of his or her name. In particular, both [Miθra](#) and [Tištrya](#) insist on being worshipped with an *aoxtō.nāmana yasna* “a sacrifice in which one’s name is pronounced” (*Yt.* 8.11, 23-25; 10.30, 31, 54-56, 74), and *Miθra* is described as “a sacred being whose name is uttered” (*aoxtō.nāman- yazata- Y.* 1.3, 2.3; *S* 1.16, 2.16). In the Avesta the word *yasna-* either refers to the *Yasna Haptanghaiti* or is an ordinary noun “sacrifice, worship” (Hintze, 2004, pp. 311-15) referring to the hymns addressed to individual deities as well as to the praise of the entire pantheon. The Middle Persian terms *yasn* and *yašt* (*yast*) are interchangeable in the Pahlavi literature, in the Pahlavi headings of the *Yašt* manuscripts, and in *Kirdēr’s* (see [KARTIR](#)) inscriptions (Kellens, 1998, pp. 480 f.; Panaino, 2006, p. 171).

Transmission. The *Yašts* are transmitted in two types of manuscript: [Khorde Avestas](#) and pure *Yašt* codices. The oldest *Khorde Avesta* is *Jm4* (1352 CE, Geldner, 1886-1896, I, p. v) and the principal and oldest extant pure *Yašt* codex is *F1* (1591 CE, JamaspAsa, 1992). Some *Khorde Avestas*, including *E1* (1601 CE), *J10*, *K12*, and *Pt1*, incorporate all the *Yašts*, others only a selection which varies according to the manuscript (Panaino, 1989 [1992], pp. 177-79). By far the most popular hymn is the one to [Ahura Mazdā](#) (*Yt.* 1, *Ohrmazd Yt.*), which features in virtually all *Khorde Avestas*. Other common hymns are *Yašts* 2 ([Haft Ameshaspend](#)), 3 ([Ardibehešt](#)), 11 (*Srōš*), and 14 (*Bahirām*). Two *Yašts* are transmitted not only in the *Yašt* and *Khorde Avesta* manuscripts but also in those of the *Yasna*: the *Srōš Yašt* (*Yt.* 11a) constitutes chapter 57 of the *Yasna* and the *Hōm Yašt* (*Yt.* 20), which is abbreviated in *F1* and *E1* but fully written in *J10* and the collective codex *M12*, its sections 8.9-10.21.

Yašts and Bagān Yašt Nask. Of the 21 *Nasks*, or divisions, of the Sasanian Avesta, now lost in this arrangement, the *Yašts* comprised the *Bagān Yašt Nask*, the seventh of the *dādīg* section (see [BAGĀN YAŠT](#); König, 2012, pp. 359-70). According to the brief summary of its contents in *Dēnkard* 8.15, the *Bagān Yašt Nask* was primarily about the worship of *Ohrmazd*, the foremost of the deities (*bagān*; see [BAGA](#)), secondly, about that of the visible and invisible *Yazads* from whom the names of the days derive, and finally, about that of the many other *Yazads* who are invoked in any *Yašt* in which a deity’s personal name is pronounced (*awēšān any-z was yazdān ī andar ān ī awēšān yast guft-nām hēnd*, *Dk.* 8.15.2). This summarizes three characteristics of the *Yašts*: first that *Ohrmazd* is the principal deity and his hymn the most important one, secondly that some *Yašts* are correlated with the days of a month, and thirdly

that the number of Yašts is potentially as unlimited as that of the Yazatas (cf. Darmesteter, 1892-93, p. xxvii; Kellens, 1998, pp. 510-11; on a lost Avestan hymn to Vohu Manah, see BAHMAN YAŠT).

In contrast to the *Dēnkard* account, which provides no details as to the number of Yašts, some Persian *Rivāyats* state that the *Bagān Yašt* Nask consisted of sixteen Yašts, although some fluctuation as to the number of Yašts is indicated by the fact that other Persian *Rivāyats* mention seventeen (Kotwal and Hintze, 2008, pp. 1-2). The figure of sixteen Yašts agrees with the numbering provided by the manuscripts F1 and E1, which entitle Yašts 14 to 19 as Fargards 11 to 16 (JamaspAsa, 1991, pp. xi-xii). Yašts 1 and 5-19 of the manuscripts accordingly correspond to the sixteen Yašts of the *Bagān Yašt* Nask. In total, the manuscripts F1 and E1 incorporate the text of twenty-two Yašts, of which *Yt.* 11, the *Srōš Yašt Hādōxt*, is explicitly marked as taken from the *Hādōxt Nask* (*māhe yasta srōš əz naska hādōxta bun*, see JamaspAsa, 1991, p. 157). Of the remaining Yašts transmitted in the Avestan manuscripts, the five Yašts 2-4 and 20-21 are not counted among the 16 or 17 Fargards of the *Bagān Yašt* Nask.

Yašts and Sīrōze. In Zoroastrian religious practice, the Yazatas and Yašts are closely connected with the calendar (see CALENDARS). Yazatas provide the names of both the thirty days of the month, enumerated in *Yasna* 16.3-6 (Kellens, 1998, pp. 506-7), and of the twelve months of the year. The earliest evidence for the use of the Zoroastrian day names is the expression *bywm dyn* “on the day Dainā” (day 24 of the Zoroastrian calendar) in an Aramaic leather document from Bactria, possibly dated 329 BCE (C3 (Khalili IA 22; lines 2 and, perhaps, 18, see Naveh and Shaked, 2012, pp. 35-36, 195, 261). Each day is presided over by a divine being, a certain Yazata who is invoked on that particular day with a special formula preserved in the *Siroza* (see SĪH-RŌZAG; Raffaelli, 2014). The order of the days agrees with that in which the Yašts are arranged in the manuscripts. In theory, each day would be expected to have its own hymn, but in fact the agreement between Yašts and *Siroza* is only partial (Panaino, 1989 [1992], pp. 173-76). Thus, neither Yašt 20 (*Hōm*) nor 21 (*Vanant*) have a name day, and there is no hymn in praise of *Ātar* (day 9), *Vāta* (day 22), *Āsmān* (day 27), *Māθra Spənta* (day 29), or *Anayra Raocah* (day 30). Such discrepancies indicate that the association between Yašts and days of the month came about over a period of time. Some of the days may have been associated with a Yašt for deliberate, theological reasons, such as the association of *Māθra Spənta* (day 29) with *Haoma* (*Yt.* 20) and of *Anayra Raocah* (day 30) with the star *Vanant* (*Yt.* 21). Similarly, there is a natural and



mythological affinity of the Waters (Ābān, day 10) with Anāhitā (Yt. 5), and of Gəuš Urvan (day 14) with the animal goddess Druvāspā (Yt. 9), while the link between the *Zamyād Yašt* (Yt. 19), which is chiefly in praise of the Glory (*x^varənah-*; see FARR[AH]), and the Earth (day 28) is motivated by the list of mountains at the beginning of the hymn. No individual Yašt exists for any of the four Amesha Spentas (see AMĒŠA SPĒNTA), to whom days 2 (Vohu Manah), 4 (Xšaθra Vairya), 5 (Spənta Ārmaiti) and 7 (Amərətāt) are dedicated, but their praise may be collectively covered by the *Haft Aməšāspənta Yašt* (Yt. 2; Belardi 1977, p. 154, n. 2). Similarly, the *Rām Yašt* (Yt. 15), which praises the Good Wind (Vayu, day 21), could have doubled up as a hymn in praise of Vāta, the Wind (day 22) (Kellens, 1998, p. 509). *Arštāt* is mentioned in the hymn of Day 26 (Yt. 18) only in the initial Pazand invocation. However, this hymn which praises the Aryan Glory (*airiianəm x^varənah-*) might have been associated with that day because of its proximity to the other hymn in praise of the Glory, Yt. 19, on Day 28. Days 1, 8, 15, and 23 bear the name of the principal deity, the ‘creator Ahura Mazdā,’ a fact which accounts for the frequency of the *Ohrmazd Yašt* in the Khorde Avesta (see Table 1).

Deities praised in the Yašts. The Yašts are in praise of a heterogeneous range of Yazatas, who may be divided into four groups. The first comprises deities with roots in Indo-Iranian, namely Haoma (Y. 9-11, Yt. 20, Vedic *sóma-*), Miθra (Yt. 10, Vedic *mitrá-*), and *Vərəθraϥna* (Yt. 14; cf. Vedic *vṛtra-hán-* “breaking resistance”; Kellens, 2012, pp.481-85); the second, the Iranian divinities Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā (Yt. 5), Druuuāspā (Yt. 9) and the ‘Glory’ (*x^varənah-*; Yt. 18 and 19). The third consists of divine beings who embody natural phenomena, such as the sun (Xwaršēd, Yt. 6), moon (Māh, Yt. 7), wind (Vayu, Yt. 15 = Rām Yašt), and stars *Tištiriia* (Yt. 8) and Vanant (Yt. 21); and the fourth, the specifically Zoroastrian Yazatas Ahura Mazdā (Yt. 1), the Amesha Spentas (Yt. 2), *Aša* (Yt. 3), *Hauruuatāt* (Yt. 4), *Sraoša* (‘Hearkening’, Yt. 11, Y. 56-57), *Rašnu* (“Justice,” Yt. 12), the *Fravashis* (“Choices,” Yt. 13), *Cistā* (“insight,” Yt. 16 = *Dēn Yašt*), and *Aši* Varj^vhī (“Good Reward,” Yt. 17).

Meter. Apart from the *Gathas*, the Yašts are the only other Avestan texts that are metrical, although the meter is far more irregular and its nature subject to continuing scholarly debate. K. F. Geldner (1877) noticed that verse lines of eight syllables dominate, but the existence of many with more or less syllables remains an unsolved problem (research surveys in Panaino, 1989 [1992], pp. 180-83; Hintze, 1994, pp. 52-54; and Kellens 2006, pp. 257-60). Different explanations have been put forward to account for the observed irregularity.

According to one proposal, the number of syllables per verse line varies because the meter is conditioned by a word's emphatic accent rather than its number of syllables. Appealing to verse poetry in Middle Iranian languages, which were dominated by a stress of great intensity, W. B. Henning (1942, pp. 52-56) argued that each line generally had three stresses and a varied number of unstressed syllables. This yielded an average of around eight syllables per line, but occasionally significantly more or less depending on the length of the words employed. However, a strong emphatic accent, which is characteristic of Middle Iranian languages (see [PROSODY iii. MIDDLE PERSIAN](#)) and the principal cause of significant morphological change from Old to Middle Iranian, is unlikely to have existed at the time when the earliest Yašts were composed. The presence of a functioning inflectional system suggests that the Avestan accent was of the same type as that of the closely related Vedic language (Kellens, 2006, p. 259). G. Lazard (1984 and 1990) has conclusively demonstrated that the meter of the Yašts is dominated neither by an expiratory accent nor by syllabic quantity but by the octosyllabic verse line, although the many exceptions and correct way of counting the syllables in Young Avestan remain open questions (Hintze, 1994, p. 53, fn. 148; Pirart, 2004, pp. 149-248; Kellens, 2006). C. Rimunicci-Heine (forthcoming) argues that, in addition to the standard octosyllabic verse line, the meter of the Yašts allows for a variety of syllables per verse line and a flexible caesura.

Types of Yašts. While the Yašts, like most of the Avesta, usually entail a dialogue between Ahura Mazdā and Zarathustra, they differ considerably from one another with regard to length, character, and poetic structure. As to length, the shortest one, the hymn to Vanant (*Yt.* 21) consists of one stanza only, plus introductory and concluding formulae, while the longest, the *Frawardīn Yašt* (*Yt.* 13), is made up of 158 stanzas divided into 31 sections or *Kardes*. With regard to their character and poetic structure, the Yašts have been grouped into 'legendary,' 'hymnic,' and 'minor' types (Kellens, 1978; Skjærvø, 1994, p. 212). The principal structuring device of the 'legendary' and 'hymnic' Yašts is a series of recurrent verses which demarcate the beginning and end of a section. The opening lines of a Karde vary from hymn to hymn but are the same within a given Yašt and always include mention of the name and some characteristics of the deity to whom the hymn is dedicated. For instance, each of the Kardes (30) in *Yt.* 5 opens with the verses "May you, O Spitama Zarathustra, worship her, Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā" (*Yt.* 5.1, 10, etc.); those (35) in *Yt.* 10 with "We worship Miθra of wide cattle grazing" (*Yt.* 10.7, 10, etc.); and those (15) in *Yt.* 19 either with "We worship the mighty Glory



belonging to the *Kavis*” (Yt. 19.9, 13, etc.) or, in the three central ones, with “We worship the mighty un-taken Glory” (Yt. 19.45, 55, 65). With the exception of the *Rašn Yašt* (Yt. 12), where the formulaic invocation of Rašnu (Yt. 12.5-8) is repeated at the end of each of its 30 sections, and of the *Frawardīn Yašt* (Yt. 13), the concluding verses of a Karde typically start with “because of his (i.e. Ahura Mazdā’s (?)) wealth and glory I shall worship him/her with audible worship” (*ahe raiia x^varənaṅhaca təm/tqm yazāi surunuata yasna*). This is then followed by the deity’s name, further formulaic verses, and finally, the *Yeṅhē hātqm* prayer, which recurs at the end of every Karde. The number of octosyllabic or other verse lines that intervene within the introductory and concluding frame is open. For instance, 6 lines form the body of Karde 4 of the *Ābān Yašt* (Yt. 5.14-15), but 136 that of Karde 6 of the *Zamyād Yašt* (Yt. 19.30-45), one of the longest sections. Moreover, a particular theme may be expanded or compressed according to the demands of the occasion, a typical feature of oral poetry (Skjærvø, 1994, p. 212 with references). For instance, Yt. 5.38 describes only one of the exploits of the hero *Kərəsāspa*, namely, the slaying of *Gaṇdarəβa*, but in slightly different terms from the account of the same incident (along with several others) in Yt. 19.38-44. The Kardes constitute the characteristic and intrinsic poetic form of the ‘legendary’ and ‘hymnic’ Yašts, which in manuscripts such as F1 and E1 are numbered. By contrast, their further subdivision into stanzas is not found in these manuscripts, but was only introduced by the first editor of the Avesta, N. L. Westergaard, for the convenience of quoting passages (Hintze, 1994, pp. 277-78; 2009, pp. 49-54). The Yašts of the third group are characterized by apotropaic verses similar to those found in the *Vīdēvdād* (see [VENDĪDĀD](#)) and by a lack of the structuring device found in the Kardes.

All Yašts share the similar introductory (stanza 0) and concluding verses. They vary only with regard to a formula from *Sīrōza* 1, which depends on the deity to whom the hymn is dedicated (Darmesteter, 1892-93, II, p. 332; Lommel, 1927, pp. 8-12). The introductory verses consist of text in Pāzand, quotations from Y. 17-19, the Gathas (Y. 33.14), and Siroze 1 and, finally, the *Ahuna Vairya* prayer. The appropriate formula from the Gāhs depends on the time of the day at which the hymn is recited. The conclusion again starts with a text in Pāzand and continues with quotations from *Nyāyišn* 1.17, the appropriate formula from *Sīrōza* 1 and passages from Y. 68.11 and 72.11. The quotations from the Yasna in the introductory and concluding verses reinforce the relationship between the Yašts and the daily liturgy of the Yasna.

‘*Legendary*’ *Yašts*. The first, ‘legendary’, group is comprised of the six hymns *Yt.* 5 (Ardwīsūr, see [ĀBĀN YAŠT](#)), 9 (Druwāsp, see [GŌŠ YAŠT](#)), 15 (Rām, in praise of Vayu), 16 (in praise of Cistā, see [DĒN YAŠT](#)), 17 (see [ARD YAŠT](#)), and 19 (see [ZAMYĀD YAŠT](#); Kellens 1999). The classification of these hymns as ‘legendary’ is based on the distinctive feature that they predominantly, though not exclusively, relate the names and stories of previous worshippers of the deity. Both Ahura Mazdā and a succession of heroes and rulers were able to carry out the feats for which they are famous because they had previously prayed and sacrificed to the deity praised in the hymn or because, in the case of *Yašt* 19, they were accompanied by the Kavyan Glory (see [KAYĀNIĀN xii](#)). The story of each worshipper typically constitutes one *Karde*. The chronological order in which they are arranged is fixed, with the god Ahura Mazdā at the head, followed by kings and heroes, including [Haošyaṇha](#), [Yima](#), [Ōraētaona](#), [Kərəsāspa](#), and a series of *Kavis*, especially [Haosravah](#). The catalogue usually concludes with Zarathustra, who in *Yt.* 5.103-105 constitutes the fulfillment of Ahura Mazdā’s wish expressed at the beginning of the hymn (*Yt.* 5.18), followed by [Kavi Vištāspa](#) and, finally, in *Yašt* 19, the Victorious [Saošyant](#) and his comrades. The mythical and legendary history of the Iranian people as related in the *Yašts* largely agrees with that of the Persian epic, especially [Ferdowsī’s Šāh-nāma](#) (Darmesteter 1892-93, II, pp. xxviii-xxxii; Kellens, 1976; see [EPICS](#); [KAYĀNIĀN](#)).

The *Karde* structure provides ample room for variation with regard to the number and choice of worshippers and to the detail with which their stories are recounted. For instance, additional sacrificers such as Taxma Urupi Azinavant (*Yt.* 15.10-13; 19.27-31), Haoma (*Yt.* 9.16-19; 17.36-40), Paurva (*Yt.* 5.60-66), and the *Kavis* (*Yt.* 19.71) may be inserted at the correct chronological point. Moreover, stories may be told in greater detail, such as for instance the story of Yima in *Yt.* 19.30-44, and the chariot race of Kavi Haosravah in *Yt.* 19.73-78, which is merely alluded to in *Yt.* 5.50 (Hintze 2009, pp. 54-57). Although parts of the ‘legendary’ *Yašts* consists of ready-made formulaic phrases, there are also significant variations. For example, Ahura Mazdā’s wish presented to the deity is usually that Zarathustra may embrace the *Daēnā Māzdaiiasni* (see [DĒN](#)), but in *Yt.* 15 it is that the god may slay the creations of [Angra Mainyu](#) but that no one might slay those of Spənta Mainyu (*Yt.* 15.3). Similarly, Zarathustra usually requests that Vištāspa may become his follower, but in *Yt.* 9.26 it is Hutaosā, the legendary sister and wife of Vištāspa. Another woman, Hvōvī, appears as a sacrificer to “Insight,” Cistā, in *Yt.* 16.15 and desires Zarathustra to become her husband (*voḥu.bayəm*). The composition of



Yt. 16 is unusual in so far as the list of sacrificers begins, rather than concludes, with Zarathustra, who occupies the first four Kardes (Yt. 16.1-13). There is also variation with regard to the location of the sacrifices. For example, Haošyaṅha Paraḍāta usually worships at the foot of the mountain Harā, but in Yt. 15.7 does so on its peak.

‘Hymnic’ Yašts. The second, ‘hymnic’ group comprises the six hymns Yt. 8 (Tištar; see [TIŠTRYA](#)), 10 (see [MIHR YAŠT](#)), 11 (Srōš), 12 (see [RAŠN YAŠT](#)), 13 (see [FRAWARDĪN YAŠT](#)) and 14 ([Bahrām](#)). In contrast to the ‘legendary’ Yašts, which focus on stories and characteristics of worshippers whose ritual activity is denoted by the verbal form *yazata* “he/she worshipped,” the ‘hymnic’ Yašts predominantly describe features and functions of the deity praised in each hymn (Skjærvø, 1994, p. 220). The characteristic verbal form here is “we worship” (*yazamaide*) and occasionally “I worship” (*yaze*) or “I shall worship” (*yazāi*, Kellens, 1978, p. 263; Skjærvø, 1994, pp. 232-33). The hymns comprise mythological-cosmological sections relating the deity’s exploits, such as, for example, Tištrya’s fight both with [Apoša](#), the demon of drought (Yt. 8.13-34) and with the “witches” (*pairikā*), who probably correspond to shooting stars (Yt. 8.39-40), Miθra’s revenge on those who break the contract (Yt. 10.35-43; see [MITHRA i](#)), the role of the Fravašis in cosmology (Yt. 13.1-95), and the abodes of Rašnu in cosmography (Yt. 12.9-37). Themes which several ‘hymnic’ Yašts share include the deity’s desire to be worshipped with a ritual in which the deity’s name is pronounced (*aoxtō.nāmana yasna*, Yt. 10. 53-57, 73-74 and Yt. 8.10-11, 23-25), and the protection for Aryan countries which worship of the deity provides against famine and diseases in Yt. 8.56-61 and Yt. 14.48-53.

‘Minor’ or ‘apotropaic’ Yašts. The remaining nine Yašts are comprised of Yt. 1 (Ohrmazd), 2 (Amahraspand), 3 (see [ARDWAHIŠT YAŠT](#)), 4 (Hordād, see Swennen, 2006), 6 (Xwaršēd), 7 (see [MĀH YAŠT](#)), 18 (see [ĀŠTĀD YAŠT](#)), 20 (see [HŌM YAŠT](#)) and 21 (Wanand). The classification of these hymns as ‘minor’ is based on the conviction that, in comparison to the legendary and hymnic Yašts, they are both shorter and of inferior quality, their content being more repetitive, their poetic form less metrical and their language less grammatical. However, the validity of such value judgements has been rightly questioned (Skjærvø, 1994, pp. 233-40). A more appropriate characterization of these hymns might therefore be ‘apotropaic.’ Yt. 1, for instance, consists of a list of Ahura Mazdā’s names whose apotropaic function it then extols (Yt. 1.1-19, Panaino, 2002; Choksy and Kotwal, 2005, pp. 228-29). It continues in stanza 20 with quotations from the Gathas (Y. 44.16) and holy prayers combined with

homage to various Ahuric beings (*Yt.* 1.21-23), praises the protective and healing powers of the six Amesha Spentas (*Yt.* 1.24-27), who are enumerated individually as dwelling in Ahura Mazda's 'house' (*mana dąmi*, *Yt.* 1.25), and concludes with repeated praises of his ears, mind, and tongue for grasping, memorizing, and pronouncing the Life-giving Formula (*mąθra- spąnta-*, *Yt.* 1.28-33).

Most Yašts of this group recall or quote other texts of the Avesta. The hymn to the star Vanant, *Yt.* 21, for example, which in religious practice is recited as an apotropaic incantation (*nērang*) against obnoxious creatures (Panaino, 1993-94, p. 120), is connected with the *Tištar Yašt* (Panaino 1989). Some sections are identical with texts of the Khorde Avesta. For example, most of *Yt.* 2 coincides with *Sīrōza* 1 and 2 (*Yt.* 2.1-5 = *S.* 1.1- 7, *Yt.* 2.6-10 = *S.* 2.1-7) and the *Xwaršēd* and *Māh Niyāyišn* (*Ny.* 1 and 3) are made up of portions from the hymns to *Xwaršēd* (*Yt.* 6) and *Māh* (*Yt.* 7), respectively, while the *Mihr Niyāyišn* (*Ny.* 2) consists of quotations from the Yašt to *Mihr* (*Yt.* 10), and the *Ābān Niyāyišn* (*Ny.* 4) of those from that to *Ardvīsūr* (*Yt.* 5, Panaino, 2012). Other Yašts of this group have affinity with the *Vidēvdād*. In particular, *Yt.* 4 comprises a magic spell that smites Deceit (*Yt.* 4.5) and describes a ritual which entails making in the ground furrows that recall the layout of the [Barešnum Gāh](#) described in *Fargard* 9 of the *Vidēvdād* (Panaino 2003).

The boundaries between the three groups of Yašts, however, are by no means rigid. The first four and last *Kardes* of the 'legendary' *Ābān Yašt* (*Yt.* 5) are 'hymnic' in character, as are the first two of the *Ard Yašt* (*Yt.* 17.1-22), which also includes the unique story of the encounter between Zarathustra and the goddess *Aši*. There are 'hymnic' passages in virtually all the 'legendary' Yašts and some of the latter share features with the third, 'apotropaic,' group. *Yt.* 15, for example, has the *Karde* structure in the first part of the hymn, but lacks it in the final section, which is comprised of a list of names of Ahura Mazda (*Yt.* 15.42-58, Panaino, 2002). In the same way, some 'hymnic' Yašts contain 'legendary' elements. For instance, in the 'hymnic' *Mihr Yašt* (*Yt.* 10.88), Haoma worships (*yazata*) *Miθra* in the same 'legendary' manner as he worships other deities in the 'legendary' Yašts 9.17 and 17.37, and Ahura Mazda worships *Miθra* in the 'legendary' style (*yazata*) in *Yt.* 10.123, but *Tištrya* in the 'hymnic' style (*yaze*) in *Yt.* 8.25.

Origins of the Yašts. In Avestan studies, the Yašts have traditionally figured in discussions of the chronology of the Avesta and the history of the Zoroastrian religion (see the survey in Panaino, 1989 [1992], pp. 164-73). For instance, [A.](#)



Christensen (1928 and 1931) attempted to distinguish different chronological strata in the Yašts and argued that they represented various pre-Zoroastrian and Zoroastrian layers. By contrast, I. Gershevitch (1959, pp. 16-26) maintained that the Yašts represent a pre-Zoroastrian stratum of religious literature and entered the Avesta after the latter had spread to western Iran under Darius's father *Hystaspes*, there creating the religious phenomenon of Zoroastrianism, which he contrasted with Zarathuštrianism, his name for the religion of the Gathas. Reconstructions of this kind, however, have been found inadequate, as it is impossible to distinguish earlier “pre-Zoroastrian” from later “Zoroastrian” passages in these texts (Panaino, 1989 [1992], p. 172; Kellens, 2006, pp. 260-61).

P. O. Skjærvø (1994, pp. 240-41), who also invokes the involvement of the Achaemenids in consolidating power by the creation of the canon of the Yašts, rightly emphasizes their composition as oral poetry. Like other parts of the Avesta, including Young Avestan sections of the Yasna, Visperad, Vidēvdād, and Khorde Avesta, the Yašts were produced throughout the Old Iranian period in the oral culture of priestly composition, which was alive and productive as long as the priests were able to master the Avestan language. Presumably a much larger body of Yašts, now lost, once existed, their number potentially as unlimited as that of the Yazatas which they praise. The selection and canonization of those that have come down to the present was presumably linked to the development of the *Bagān Yasn* and *Drōn* rituals (on these rituals, see Kreyenbroek, 2008, pp. 89-90), of the Zoroastrian calendar, attested in the Avesta (Hintze, 2009a), and of the correlation of the days of the month with the Yazatas and their respective Yašts.

[Table 1a](#). Yašts and Sīrōza, days 1-8.

[Table 1b](#). Yašts and Sīrōza, days 9-16.

[Table 1c](#). Yašts and Sīrōza, days 17-25.

[Table 1d](#). Yašts and Sīrōza, days 26-30.

For a music sample, see [Bahrām Yašt](#).

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