

Yasna 45 and the Iranian Calendar

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THE structure of the gâthâs is at first sight far from obvious. It has even been contended that the sequences of stanzas preserved in the Avesta under the titles Yasna 28, 29, etc., were in nearly all cases mere haphazard collections.

Against such a thesis, set forth by Lesný in *Archiv Orientální*, ii, p. 95 sq., several arguments can be produced.

One can, for instance, attempt to bring out an intrinsic coherence between the successive parts of a gâthâ. Such a proof is, however, liable to subjectivism, and Meillet's ironical remark about Bartholomae's "exigences modestes" was not perhaps wholly unjust.

Less coloured with personal bias are the *formal criteria*. I propose to limit myself to these, without attempting to deal here with the whole problem of the structure of the gâthâs. Even as to the formal criteria, I shall be content with briefly enumerating them, except for one group to which I shall draw special attention.

They can be classified as follows :—

(1) *Use of certain definite formulæ*.—This concerns Yasna 30, 43, 44, and 45. H. Schaefer, "Ein Indogermanischer Liedtypus in den Gâthâs," in *ZDMG.*, 1940, p. 404, has satisfactorily proved the traditional character of the formulæ which appear :—

(a) at the beginning of Yasna 30, st. 1 and 2 :

*Now I shall say to those who wish to hear . . .
Listen with your ears. . . .*

(b) At the beginning of every stanza (save the last, concluding one) of Yasna 44 :

Here is what I ask you, O Lord—answer me right. . . .

(c) At the beginning of all the first six stanzas of Yasna 45 :

I shall proclaim ; now listen, etc.

Similar formulæ occur in the *Atharvaveda* and also in the *Edda*.

Now, the repetition of such a formula in a given gâthâ cannot be taken as a proof in itself of that gâthâ's unity ; for one can imagine the stanzas being brought together, by some compiler, in virtue only of that common formal feature. But a decisive fact is that all three gâthâs showing those archaic formulæ deal with a traditional subject (the same in all three cases)—*cosmogony*, which imparts a definite structure to each poem.

A fourth gâthâ also, Yasna 43, shows such a recurring formula. Each of the six groups of two stanzas which make up half the gâthâ is introduced with the line :

I have realized that the Saint, it was Thou, O Wise one. . . .

Moreover, the first of those groups again tells us about the origin of things :

*I have realized that the Saint, it was Thee, O Wise one,
As I saw Thee, when existence was born, at the origin,
Assign a salary for action and for speech.*

(2) This gâthâ, from a purely formal, mechanical standpoint, appears as a *main body*, made up of six groups of two stanzas, preceded by an *introduction* of six stanzas. The same structure—brief introduction, longer main body—can be recognized, though by less obvious signs, in nearly all the other gâthâs. I may refer to my book, *Zoroastre, essai critique avec une traduction commentée des gâthâ*, Paris, 1949 (G.-P. Maisonneuve).

(3) A third formal criterion is the *presence of certain entities*, repeated or enumerated according to definite patterns. On this point I may be permitted to enlarge.

To begin with, it will be remembered that G. Dumézil, in his book, *Naissance d'Archanges*, Paris, 1946 (Gallimard), in order to bring out the main feature of the gâthic doctrine of the entities, based his argument in particular on their *relative frequency of occurrence* in the gâthâs. In this way he was able to delineate, among those entities, a hierarchy corresponding with a hierarchy of social or other "functions".

It has occurred to me that the results of Dumézil's research may, conversely, throw back light on the structure and unity of some gâthâs. This, I hope, will become apparent when we mention a few facts regarding four of these poems :

(a) Each of the six stanzas in Yasna 47 mentions *Spanta Manyu*. Moreover, the first stanza enumerates all the entities.

(b) Each stanza in Yasna 28 mentions the Big Three—I mean *Ahura Mazdah*, *Arta*, and *Vahu Manah*. Each stanza is a prayer to that Triad.

(c) Each of the last six stanzas in Yasna 50 (which contains eleven stanzas in all) mentions the same Big Three, and only them.

(d) Yasna 45 presents the seven entities successively, according to a pattern which, as I shall endeavour to show, is not accidental. To demonstrate this point is the chief aim of this article.

Yasna 45 proves, on another ground, of singular interest. Besides being one of those which use traditional formulæ, as we have seen, to introduce the no less traditional theme of the origin of things, its formula, moreover, has a special character. It contains an allusion to the audience the speaker was addressing :

Listen now and hearken, you who come from far and near to learn. . . .

Of all gâthâs, this is the one which the term "sermon" would best suit. Zoroaster preaches to a crowd that has "come from far and near". Here, if at all, will his concern be to give a summary of the doctrine. Consequently we shall not be surprised if, in presenting the entities in such an expressly didactic poem, he follows a systematic order.

We may tabulate the entities in their order of appearance :

- St. 2 : *Spanta Manyu*.
 St. 3 : *Ahura Mazdâh*.
 St. 4 : *Arta, Vahu Manah, Aramati*.
 St. 5 : *Harvatât, Amrtât*.
 St. 7 : *Xšaθra*.
 St. 10 : All (except *Sp. M.*).

In order to interpret that sequence—remarkable, I think, even at first glance—it will be helpful to reproduce here, from Nyberg's book, *Religionen des alten Iran*, the "Cappadocian" calendar. (It will presently become clear why I start with ΔΑΘΟΥΣΑ, not with ΑΡΤΑΝΑ.)

ΔΑΘΟΥΣΑ	(<i>Daθuš</i> "Creator")
ΟΣΜΑΝΑ	(<i>Vahu Manah</i>)
ΣΟΝΔΑΡΑ	(<i>Spantâ Aramati</i>)
ΑΡΤΑΝΑ	(= <i>artavnâm</i>)
ΑΡΘΥΕ<Σ>ΘΗ	(<i>Arta Vahišta</i>)
ΑΡΟΑΤΑΤΑ/ΤΕΙΡΕΙ/ΑΜΑΡΤΑΤΑ	(<i>Harvatât/Tîra/Amrtât</i>)
ΕΑΘΡΟΦΗ	(<i>Xšaθra Varya</i>)
ΜΙΘΡΗ	(<i>Miθra</i>)
ΑΠΟΜΕΝΑΙΑ	(<i>Apâm Napât</i>)
ΑΘΡΑ	(<i>Âtar</i>)

A "very curious order", Moulton writes in the Excursus about the Calendar, p. 433 sq. of his excellent *Early Zoroastrianism*; "still unexplained", says L. H. Gray, author of an appendix on the Iranian Calendar in A. V. Williams Jackson's *Zoroastrian Studies* (= *Grundriss der Iranischen Philologie*, ii, p. 612 sq.).

H. S. Nyberg, in his *Religionen*, p. 377, and S. H. Taqîzâdeh, in his *Old Iranian Calendars*, 1938, p. 21, have made a first decisive step forward when they observed that the first month must originally have been that "of the Creator" (now the 10th; tabulated here ahead): in the Egyptian calendar, indeed, which was the model of the Zoroastrian, the first month was devoted to the supreme god, Thot; on the other hand, the Old-Persian calendar, which was to be replaced with the Zoroastrian, began with the month *anâmake*, "without a name", which may be interpreted, according to Nyberg, as referring to the supreme god. Moreover, the year began with the Winter Solstice, whereas it now begins at the Spring Equinox.

Consequently, if we want to analyse the order of the Zoroastrian months, we have first to give number 1 to "the Creator".

Starting from there, Nyberg and Taqîzâdeh have sketched explanations of that order, but their attempts may be renewed in the light of Dumézil's recent discoveries about divine hierarchy:

(i) First comes *Daθuš*, the Creator: no doubt *Ahura Mazdâh*, but more precisely *Ahura Mazdâh* in his form of Holy Spirit, through which he creates.

This is known from the whole Yasna 47 ; and also a passage of Yasht 10 gives *daδuš* (= *daθuš*) as a synonym to *spanta manyu* : *yô daδvô spəntô mainiyuš*, "the holy spirit who is (the) creator." Thus, what we find on top of the calendar is an equivalent of *Manyu*, that is, of that entity whose "initial" function has been demonstrated by Dumézil.

(ii) At the end we find *Âtar*, "Fire".

According to Nyberg fire is placed last because it is the instrument of the Last Judgment. On the other hand, Dumézil has brought to light the "final" function of *Âtar* in the enumeration in Yasna 1, 1-2.

Now the rôle of *Âtar* in Zoroastrian eschatology can scarcely be held responsible for that "final" position, since *this is a pre-Zoroastrian fact*. This is proved by the Indian and Latin parallels Dumézil has adduced ; it can be confirmed by yet another parallel, which we find in Iran itself, namely the Old-Persian, pre-Zoroastrian calendar.

All the specialists (Oppert, Justi, Weissbach) have always agreed in placing *Anâmaka* immediately after *A^{ss}iyâdiya* : which sequence is now put beyond doubt by the corresponding Elamite months, the order of which has been elucidated by Arno Poebel, "The names and the order of the Old-Persian and Elamite months during the Achæmenian period", in *Amer. Journ. of Sem. Lang. and Lit.*, 55 (1938), p. 130 sq.¹ Now, since *Anâmaka* started the year, *A^{ss}iyâdiya*, coming immediately before, must have come last in the year. Since *A^{ss}iyâdiya* means something like "with sacrifice to the Fire",² Fire proves to have a "final" function in the calendar.

(iii) The rest of the list is less easy to justify than its beginning and end. However, a few remarks may be interesting : (a) *Xšaθra*, the entity of the second function, comes after those of the third. This is parallel to what occurs in Yasna 45. It is, moreover, not exclusively Iranian, since a few Vedic hymns exhibit the same shifting :

RV, ii, 41 : *Indra* comes (st. 10) after *Násatyâ* . . . *Aśvinâ* (st. 7-9). Cf. Dumézil, *Tarpeia*, Paris, 1947 (Gallimard), p. 48.

RV, iv, 25 (to *Indra*), st. 3 : "Who wishes for himself, to-day, the favour of the gods ? Who invokes the *Âdityas*, *Aditi*, for light (or : for happiness) ? Whose pressed soma do the two *Aśvin*, *Indra*, *Agni* heartily drink, without

¹ For a thorough study of the very intricate questions relating to old-Iranian computus, see Hildegard Lewy, "Le Calendrier perse", in *Orientalia*, 1941, pp. 1-64.

² The etymology **âtr-yâdiya* is rejected by Henning, *J.R.A.S.*, 1944, no. 2, on the ground that this "could appear in O.-Persian only as *ât(a)ryâdiya* : *tr* becomes *ss* in Iranian only where a vowel follows". Now, must the group occlusive + *ry* always vocalize its *r*, never its *y* ? It is true that Old-Iranian, in contrast with Sanskrit, shows a general tendency to do so, as can be judged from several passive forms in *-ya* : av. *kiryeti* (= *kryati*) : skr. *kriyâte* ; av. *miryete* (= **mryatai*) : skr. *mriyâte*. Still, there is at least one exception : in the passive of *star* "to strew", av. *avâstryata*, *ustryamnô* (**-striya-*), the same treatment of *r* and *y* is exhibited as in skr. *striyate*. Our Persian word can readily be explained by exactly the same treatment (*r* is consonant, *y* develops a *i*) : **âtr-yâdiya* > **âtriyâdiya*. O.-P. *amariyata* is ambiguous, as has been seen by Bartholomæ, since it can represent either **amryata* or—with the same *ḡaṇa*-degree as in skr. *smariyâte* — **amaryata*.

reluctance ” ? Cf. Dumézil, *Jupiter-Mars-Quirinus* iv, Paris, 1948 (Presses Universitaires), p. 22.

RV, i, 156, st. 4 : “ That efficacious force of his, King Varuṇa and the two Aśvin follow it, of him the chief of the Maruts ” (ibid.).

(b) *Aramati* is classed with the entities of the first function, again as in Yasna 45.

Before adding one less important remark, we may tabulate our results to show how the calendar and Yasna 45 both fit into one “ functional scheme ” :

Zoroastrian Calendar	Yasna 45	Function
<i>Daθuš</i>	<i>Spanta Manyu</i>	“ initial ”
<i>Vahu Manah</i> <i>Aramati</i> ¹ <i>Artavnām</i> <i>Arta</i>	<i>Arta</i> <i>Vahu Manah</i> <i>Aramati</i>	“ first ”
<i>Harvatāt</i> <i>T’ra</i> <i>Amrtāt</i>	<i>Harvatāt</i> <i>Amrtāt</i>	“ third ”
<i>Xšaθra</i> <i>Miθra</i> <i>Apām Napāt</i>	<i>Xšaθra</i>	“ second ”
<i>Ātar</i>	—	“ final ”

(c) About *Xšaθra*, etc. According to Nyberg, here is an enumeration of “ elements ” : metals (*xšaθra*), sun (*miθra*), water (*apām*), fire (*ātar*). But such an order appears rather whimsical ; in any case the presence of the sun makes it heterogeneous. We had better attribute *xšaθra* to the second function, *ātar* to the final one : only *miθra* and *apām napāt* remain to be accounted for.

Why does *Miθra* appear in this place ? Perhaps his double value (as warrior and as god of fecundity) rendered him liable to be inserted between divinities or entities (*xšaθra* and *Apām napāt*) respectively endowed with each of those two values.

As to *Apām napāt*, Moulton has already said it may be considered an equivalent to *Anāhitā*, a goddess whose absence in the calendar is the more conspicuous as *Miθra* appears in it—her regular associate from Artaxerxes II onwards. In fact, *Avân* sometimes appears as a substitute for *Anāhitā* : the very Yasht which usually bears the title *Arδvī Sūr* (= *Anāhît*) is called in some good MSS. after *Avân*.

¹ When the beginning of the year was shifted, *Aramati* fell at the end. Nyberg has rightly observed that the intercalary days, devoted to the dead, inserting themselves at the end of the year, came immediately after *Aramati* ; and the dead give their name to the month which opens the year. Thus, *Aramati* seems to have its Armenian value of “ abode of the dead ” : *sandaramet-k’* “ hell, inferi ”. But, in the primitive numeration, one can only say that *Aramati* ranges in the “ first ” function and the *artāvan* are placed between two terms to which they are etymologically akin : *aramati* and *arta*.

Thus it seems as if the two main pagan divinities adopted by Zoroastrianism, *Miθra* and *Anâhîtâ*, had been inserted as far down in the list as possible.

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To sum up, we hope to have shed light on two main points :

1. The concordance between the enumeration in Yasna I and the Zoroastrian and Old-Persian calendars, as far as the final position of *Âtar* is concerned, proves the common Iranian character of that position, corroborating the Indian and Latin parallels given by Dumézil.

2. The order of the entities in Yasna 45 presents too many coincidences—leaving out *âtar*, which was no entity at all—with both the Zoroastrian calendar and the “ hierarchy of functions ” to be considered fortuitous. It can therefore be adduced as evidence for the intrinsic unity of that *gâthâ*.¹

¹ In writing this note, on the basis of my paper to the XXIst Congress of Orientalists in Paris, I have used suggestions or references by Messrs. Bailey, Barr, Dumézil, and Nyberg, for which I am grateful.
