

## The traditional history of the Zoroastrian Scriptures

There exists a historical statement about the scriptures of the Daēnā which extends till the first centuries of the onset of Islam in the last chapter of the third book of the Dēnkird (ch. 420), written by Ādurbād son of Emēd.

Ādurbād first has traced the history of the transmission of the Avesta and Zand (§§ 1-8), and then has given the history of the last editions of the Dēnkird (§§ 9-13). The latter part “may be accepted as the actual history of the compilation of the work itself, the facts of which may, very possibly, have all been within the personal knowledge of the writer of the statement.”<sup>1</sup> His own work was rather to collect those written documents that fell to pieces and were scattered some time after the awful calamity that happened to Zardušt son of Ādurfarrōbay. Ādurbād called this calamity *škeft* س [ʾlm] *ud vizend* ‘terrible - - and harm’. According to B.T. Anklesaria and M.F. Kanga this makes allusions to the conversion of that son of Ādurfarrōbay to Islam.<sup>2</sup> Tabarī in his account of the trial of Afšīn has reported that the high priest (Mubed) who took part in the trial “was a Magian who was later converted to Islam at the instance of the ‘Abbāsīd Khaliph Mutawakkil and became his boon companion.” At the time of this trial (841 A.D.) the Mubed was yet Mazdayasnian, although Afšīn said that “he was not a staunch believer in his own religion.”<sup>3</sup> Recently, François de Blois has revived Anklesaria’s conjecture in his article about the Persian calendar. To substantiate the claim that Zardušt was the “renegade”

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<sup>1</sup> . E.W. West, Pahlavi Texts, Part IV. Contents of the Nasks, Oxford U.P., 1892, xxx.

<sup>2</sup> . See Behramgore T. Anklesaria, *Vichītakīhā-i Zātsparam*, I, Bombay, 1964, vii; *The Pahlavi Rivāyat of Ātar-farnbag and Farnbag-Srōš*, Bombay, 1969, 21: “... and Zardušt-i Ātar-frenabag having deserted (his) own faith ...”. M.F. Kanga, “The last chapter of Dēnkard Book III apar dēn nipēk dēnkart nipēk”, *Acta Orientalia*, 30/1966, 116-127.

<sup>3</sup> . طبری، تاریخ الرّسل والملوک، de Goeje، ۳، ۱۳۱۰ (ا. پاینده، ۱۳، ۵۹۲۷)

Mubed, he emends the word 𐬨𐬀𐬎𐬌 thus: “If one could countenance the conjecture that it is a scribal error for <’>𐬨𐬀𐬎𐬌<kyḥ>, the phrase could mean something like “as a result of the severe damage of the apostasy which befell Zardušt ī Ādurfarrōbayān, who had been the chief priest.”<sup>4</sup>

If Zardušt had really become a convert to Islam, the Magi would call him *agdēn* ‘of evil religion, infidel’ (Av. *aya.daēnā-*), *guzastag* ‘accursed’, and even *durvand* ‘lieful’ (Av. *drvaṇt-*); the term *ahlemōg* ‘heretic’ (Av. *ašəmaoγa-*) could not be used in referring to a convert to an evil religion. For example, Mazdak was cited as the typical *ahlemōg*<sup>5</sup>, whereas ‘Abdallāh, a convert, appeared as a *guzastag*.<sup>6</sup> The Dēnkird explains the difference between a heretic (*ahlemōg*) who nevertheless belongs to the community of the good religion and the one who is a member of an external cult (that is, *agdēn*).<sup>7</sup> Manušcihr, a high priest who was nearly contemporary of that Zardušt, has only spoken of his innovations, and he has considered the innovations of his brother, Zādspram, more radical.<sup>8</sup> We know that Zādspram was a good Mazdayasnian. It is inconceivable that Manušcihr had compared him with an “infidel”. We notice that de Blois is unfamiliar with the vocabulary of the good religion.

How can we read the word 𐬨𐬀𐬎𐬌?<sup>9</sup>

There is no reason to emend it. 𐬨𐬀𐬎𐬌 /*alam*/ is a loan-word: Arabic ألم /*alam*/ ‘affliction; grief; suffering’, e.g. ألم يسوع المسيح /*alam yasū‘ al-Masīḥ*/ ‘the suffering of Jesus’, أسبوع الآلام /*usbū‘ ul-ālām*/ ‘the week of the suffering of Jesus’. The calamity which

<sup>4</sup> . F. de Blois, « The Persian Calendar », *Iran*, 34/1996, (39-54), 53.

<sup>5</sup> . Cf. Vd 4.49 Z.

<sup>6</sup> . Cf. MGA 1.

<sup>7</sup> . Cf. Dk iii M 201.

<sup>8</sup> . Cf. NM II 1, 13.

<sup>9</sup> . Haug read *āramu*, West ‘displeasure (or defect)’, Nyberg *a-ram* ‘unrest, trouble’.

befell Zardušt was indeed his “suffering” and death. The absence of the idea of “martyr” has led the last compiler of the Dēnkird, Ādurbād, to use a foreign word, *alam*. The *alam* also befell Ādurbād’s son, Spendyād, who was “the leader of the faithful” (*hudēnān pēšubāy*), who was killed by the order of the Khaliph Al-Rāḍī (936 A.D.)<sup>10</sup>.

I will here give the Pārsīg text of Ādurbād’s statement<sup>11</sup> with an English translation.

M405 **abar dēn nibēg, dēnkird nibēg**  
az nigēz ī veh dēn

hād. (1) dēnkird nibēg kird(ag) ast ī az visp-dānāgīh-pēsīd<sup>12</sup> (pixšt) dēn mazdesn pēdāgīh.

(2) naxvist kird(ag) ī az veh dēn pōryōdkēšān, ī vaxšvar yašt-fravahr spitāmān zardušt fradum hāvištān, ped pursišn ud ašnavišn ī az ham yašt-fravahr veh dēn pēdāgīg<sup>13</sup> dānišn <ud> āgāhīh ī abar harv dar, hangōšīdag <ī> rōšnīh ī az bun rōšn. (3) hān bun pursišn vizīr ī dahyubed burzāvand kay-vištāsp nibēgēnīdan bun ud bun ō ganz ī سسوسو /šasabīgān/ abespārdan, peccēn pessazagīhā vistardan framūd. (4) ud az hān pas peccēn ō diz ī nibišt frēstīd(an) ud ānōh-iz dāštan āgāhīh.

(5) andar vizend ī az mar ī dušfarr aleksander ō ērānšahr dēn ud xvadāyīh mad, hān ī ped diz ī nibišt<sup>M406</sup> ō sōzišn, hān ī ped ganz ī šasabīgān ō dast <ī> hrōmāyān mad, u-š ō-z سوسو /yōnāyīg/ uzvān vizārdan ped āgāhīh ī az pēšēnīgān peyvastag<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> . مسعودی، التنبيه والإشراف، بریل، ۱۸۹۳ء ۵-۱۰۴ .

<sup>11</sup> . As preserved in the Manuscripts K (K43, 2r-3r) and T (T 66, 324-325) and published by Madan (M 405-407) and Hoshengji Jamaspji and Haug, *An Old Zand-Pahlavi Glossary*, Bombay, 1867, xxxi-xxxv.

<sup>12</sup> . سسوسو M, سسوسو K, H.

<sup>13</sup> . سسوسو M, K, سسوسو H.

<sup>14</sup> . سسوسو سسوسو سسوسو M, سسوسو سسوسو سسوسو K, سسوسو سسوسو سسوسو H.

(6) ōy bay ardašēr šāhān šāh ī pābagān mad ō abāz-ārāstārīh ī ērān xvadāyīh, ham nibēg az pargandagīh ō ēk-gyāg āvurd. (7) pōryōdkēš ahlav tōsar, ī hērbedān hērbed būd abar mad, ud abāg pēdāgīh ī az abestāg abāz handāxtan, ud az hān pēdāgīh bavandagēnīdan framūd. (8) ud hamgōnag<sup>15</sup> kird, hangōšīdag ī brāh ī az bun rōšn<sup>16</sup>. <bun> ped ganz ī šasabīgān<sup>17</sup> dāštan, ud peccēn pessazagīhā frāxēnīdan framūd āgāhīh.

(9) ud pas az vizend višōbišn ī az tāzīgān ō-z dīvān ud ganz ī kišvar mad, hufravard ādurfarrōbay<sup>18</sup> ī farroxzādān ī hudēnān pēšubāy būd hān peccēn ī kustagīhā pargandag būd nōg-abzār az pargandagīh abāz ō hamīh ud dīvān ī-š dar āvurd andar nigerišn ud handāzišn ī ō veh dēn abestāg ud zand pōryōdkēšān gōbišn, hangōšīdag ī peyrōg ī az hān brāh abāz kird.

(10) ped škeft سلف /alam/ ud vizend ī ō zardušt ī ādurfarrōbayān ī hudēnān pēšubāy būd jast, hān-z dīvān ō višōbišn, ud hān nibēg <aziš> ō ازیستگ /visistagīh/ (K ازیستگ sistagīh ?/ ud pargandagīh ud aziš ō-z kahvanīh, nastagīh (vinastagīh ?) ud pūdagīh mad.

(11) ud az hān pas, an, ādurbād ī emēdān ī hudēnān pēšubāy, az yazdān نیکواریش /nixvārišn/, dēn mazdesn ayyārīhišnīh<sup>19</sup> nōg-abzār ped xvāyišn ud vizōyišn ud ranz ī vēš im nibišt <ēd> cē az hān<sup>M 407</sup> visāndag ud zruftag ud sūdāg ud xākāmēg dīvān abāz vindīd, ud ēd cē az abāz-griftagīh ud burdagīh ud truftagīh abāz āvurd ; (12) aziš vizīd مومگ /mog/<sup>20</sup>-hampursagīg xrad-ayyārīh ped abāz-handāxtārīh ī ō pōryōdkēšān ī pēšēnīgān gōbišn

<sup>15</sup> . ۱۹۱۳ M, H.

<sup>16</sup> . ۳۰۳ K, ۳۰۳ M, H.

<sup>17</sup> . ۱۳۳ M, H, ۳۳۳ K.

<sup>18</sup> . ۱۳۳ M, H, T.

<sup>19</sup> . Cf. Dk iii M176<sub>1</sub>.

<sup>20</sup> . ۱۳۳ is a graphic variant of مومگ /mog, magūg/. Cf. Dk iii M 308 *handāzag ō pōryōdkēšān dastvarīh ud ۱۳۳ /mog/ dānāg hērbed hamvēnišnīh kirdan, VZ 21.10 kustag ī ۱۳۳ /mogān/.*

ud kirdag<sup>21</sup> ud abestāg pēdāgīh ; (13) ud abzōn ī az veh dēn dānāgīh<sup>22</sup> daragīhā pediš ārāst ud ristagēnīd, <hangōšīdag ī> bām-ē ī az peyrōg ī hān brāh ī az rōšnīh ī bun rōšn ; ud hāmisīhā kird ped veh dēn nimūdārīh ēn ī nāmēnīd ped stūr-mānāgīh<sup>23</sup> <ī> hān vazurg bun dēnkird ī hazār-darag.

(14) ud peyrāst ēsted ped yazdān nirōg-dahišnīh, frēstīd ī ō-z abar-mad ī pahlum dēnburdārān ī andar zamānag, ud madan-z ī ō hudēnān ruvān ayyārīh, ud abāz peyvastan-z ī<sup>24</sup> ō abārīg ērān nigēz ī dēn mazdesn āgāhīh ud hambun abzārdar abāz kirdan ī az-iz hān ī abardum kird hāvištān ī ušīdar ī zarduštān ped abāz-peyvastārīh ī az ušīdar veh dēn (pēdāgīh K).

#### ‘About the Avesta scripture and the book Dēnkird

##### From the exposition of the good religion

(1) The book Dēnkird is a work according to the revelation of the Daēnā Māzdayasni, which is written about all the knowledge.

(2) It was, at first, made by the first teachers of the good religion who were the first disciples of the prophet<sup>25</sup> Spitama Zaraθuštra, of the revered fravaši, through asking and hearing the same (Zaraθuštra) of the revered fravaši the revealed science of the good religion and knowledge on every subject<sup>26</sup>, such a light (that emanates) from an original light.

(3) Kavi Vištāspa, the lord of the land, who was with sublime insight<sup>27</sup>, ordered the original questions and sentences to be recorded in an original book (Avesta), and the original to be deposited in the Royal Treasury, and the copies to be distributed

<sup>21</sup> . Cf. Petit ī Ādurbād 1.3 kirdag ī pōryōdkēšān.

<sup>22</sup> . م م م م م M, H, م م م K.

<sup>23</sup> . م م م م م م م م م م م K, م م م م م م م M, H, T. Cf. Dk col. M 947 *stūr-mānāg xvēšīh ī xvēš rāy kē nibišt*.

<sup>24</sup> . م م م م م م م M, T, م م م م م H, م م م م م م م K.

<sup>25</sup> . *vaxšvar* ‘who brings word, prophet’.

<sup>26</sup> . *pēdāgīg dānišn* refers to the Avesta, and *āgāhīh* to the Zand.

<sup>27</sup> . *burzāvand* ‘exalted’ rendering Av. *bərəzaiδī-*.

in an appropriate manner. (4) After that, he sent a copy to the Record Fortress, and he kept the knowledge (Zand) also there.

(5) During the damage which came upon the Religion and Kingdom of the Aryan land<sup>28</sup>, from the brigand of evil fortune, Alexander, that (copy) which was in the Record Fortress was burnt, and that (original text) in the Royal Treasury came into the hands of the Greeks who translated it into the Greek language, as knowledge connected with the ancients.

(6) His (late) Majesty Ardašēr, king of kings, son of Pābag, came to restore the Aryan kingdom, and alike he collected the scripture which was in a scattered state. (7) And there appeared an “orthodox”<sup>29</sup> teacher, Saint Tōsar who was a teaching priest. Ardašēr ordered him to collate (the dispersed texts) according to the revelation from the Avesta, and to complete (the scripture) on the basis of the same revelation. (8) He did so accordingly, such splendour emanating from an original light. He (the king) ordered the original to be kept in the Royal Treasury, and copies to be disseminated in an appropriate manner; the Knowledge (Zand) too.

(9) After the damage and devastation which came from the Arabs, even to the archives and treasurers of the region, (a descendant of the blessed Ādurbād), Ādurfarrōbay, son of Farrozzād, who was the responsible to the Khaliph for the Mazdayasnians<sup>30</sup>, brought anew the copies which were scattered on all sides, (thus) bringing (the scripture) from its scattered state back to unification and (depositing it) in the Archives of the Court (his library in Bagdād), after having inspected and collated them with the good religion, (i.e.) the Avesta and Zand and the discourses (/ books) of the first teachers, such a luminosity which was made again from that splendour.

(10) Following the terrible suffering and harm that happened to Zardušt, son of Ādurfarrōbay, who was the leader of the

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<sup>28</sup> . \**airyānaqm xšaθra* = Persia.

<sup>29</sup> . *ahlav* ‘righteous’.

<sup>30</sup> . *hudēnān pēšubāy* lit. ‘leader of those of the good religion’ ≈ Aram. *rēš gālūtā* ‘exilarch’.

people of the good religion, the Archives also came to devastation, and the book (of the Dēnkird) was affected, one part, due to break and dispersion, and another, by obsolescence, deterioration and decay.

(11) And after that, I, Ādurbād, son of Emēd, who am the leader of the people of the good religion, through the prompting of the Yazata, with the help of the Daēnā Māzdayasni, with much research, investigation and toil, wrote anew this (book), from whatever I found from that decomposed, swept, worn out, and dust-covered Archives, or whatever I recovered from snatching, abstracting, and stealing; (12) and, having consulted the Magi, and with the help of wisdom, I collated them with the discourses and works of the ancient teachers and the revelations of the Avesta; (13) and as an increase from the *Scientia Divina*<sup>31</sup> I arranged it into chapters and put them in order, such a beam that emanates from the luminosity of that splendour that emanates from the light of the original light. And I compiled the whole (book) as an exposition of the good religion, and called this, as a substitute successor of that great original (scripture), “Dēnkird of one thousand chapters”.

(14) It was accomplished owing to the strength given by the Yazata; and it was also sent for the decision of the best laymen<sup>32</sup> of the period, and it also came for the assistance of the soul of the people of the good religion, and also for transmitting to the rest of the Aryans the exposition of the knowledge (Zand) of the Daēnā Māzdayasni, and in order to make again, a little more powerfully, from the superior work of the disciples of Uxšyaṭ.ərəta, son of Zaraθuštra, concerning the restoration of the good religion from Uxšyaṭ.ərəta.’

(Raham Asha)

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<sup>31</sup> . *veh dēn dānāgīh* lit. ‘science of the good religion’

<sup>32</sup> . *dēnburdārān* lit. ‘upholders of religion’, cf. AVN 1.7 *mubedān ud dēnburdārān*.