

## The women and children who saved the daēnā

§ There is a gap between the first guides of the daēnā (*paoiryō. tkaēša*) and the Magi (*magu*) such as Huštāna (Ἵστάνης), Gaubaruva (Γαυβρύης), etc., who flourished in Achaemenian Persia. The Magi must already have possessed a canonical form of the Avesta when they prepared standard copies for the Persian kings (*xšāyaθya*).<sup>1</sup> The scribes of the written versions of the *daēnā* –unlike the other Persian scribes who belonged to the third function – seem to have belonged to the priestly class. They used a new script for Avesta, “the Scripture writing”, probably similar to Kharoṣṭhi, and wrote on the tablets on hide. The oral transmission of the *daēnā* as a consecutive condition of the Magi and the written text corpus of the daēnā preserved in the Treasure(s) of the kings and in the Castle(s) of the archives (Library<sup>2</sup>) indicate an intimate relation between the *daēnā* and *xšaθra* in the Perso-Aryan society, reflecting the mythical twins, \*Yimī and Yima.

§ The downfall of the Aryan Xšaça (the Achaemenian kingdom) led to a lot of damage to the daēnā through the plunder and destruction of the palaces and temples and the massacre of the priests who were the repositories and communicators of the sacred wisdom. Alexander earned the titles given him in the Aryan tradition of “the (world) destroyer”<sup>3</sup> and “the murderer of priests” (\**moγu.jan-*)<sup>4</sup>. The widespread slaughter of the Magi caused great harm to Avesta learning –also a small part of India suffered Alexander’s conquest and the killing of Brahmins.<sup>5</sup> Many of the Avesta texts were lost for ever.

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<sup>1</sup> . The Dk iv M 412 indicates the royal patronage of Dārāy son of Dārāy for its production.

<sup>2</sup> . See Gardīzī

«و جای بود که آن را دز نوشت گفتندی یعنی دارالکتب. اندر وی بسیار کتاب بود از علم دین زردشتی و فلسفه و حساب و هندسه و هر علمی.» تاریخ گردیزی (زین الاخبار)، ع. حبیبی، تهران، ۱۳۶۳، ۵۹.

<sup>3</sup> . مجمل التواریخ والقصص، ۴۱۸. Cf. اسکندر ویرانگره.

<sup>4</sup> . Cf. TM 393 (Sogdian) 26-7 rtγw nksynt MLK' ky ZY mwγztw 'kδ' rty.

<sup>5</sup> . See Arrian *Anabasis* 6, 16: « Alexander captured besides another city (Harmatelia), which had at this time revolted, and he put to death all those Brahmins who had instigated the revolt. These Brahmins are the philosophers of the Indians... »

*Bibliotheca Historica* of Diodoros Siculus 17, 84: « He next plundered the kingdom of Sambos, and having enslaved and destroyed most of his cities, put upwards of 80 000 of the barbarians to the sword. The nation called the Brahmanoi were involved in like calamities, but, as the rest sued for mercy, Alexander punished the guiltiest and acquitted the rest of the offences charged against them. King Sambos escaped the danger with which he was menaced by taking flight with thirty elephants into the country beyond the Indus. »

Plutarch’s *Life of Alexander* 59: « The philosophers gave him no less trouble than the mercenaries, because they reviled the princes who declared for him and

From the Ardā-virāz nāmag, 1.5-7:

*ud ēn dēn cōn hamāg abestāg ud zand abar gāv pōstihā ī virāstag  
ud ped āb ī zarr nibištāg andar staxr pābagān ped diz <ī> nibišt ēstād  
ud ōy ... aleksander ... abar āvurd ud bē suxt. ud cand dastvarān ud  
dāyvarān ud hērbedān ud mubedān ud dēnburdārān ud abzārumandān  
ud dAnAgAn ī ērānšahr rāy bē kušt.*

‘This religion, namely all the Avesta and Zand, had been prepared on cowhide and written with golden ink, and deposited in the Fortress of Writings in Staxr Pābagān (/ Persepolis). Alexander took away and burnt (those scriptures); he killed many of the high priests, judges, teaching priests, chief priests, the devout ones (lit. the upholders of the religion), the expert ones, and the wise men of the Aryan kingdom (/ Persia).’

The Dēnīg Vizargird refers to the 21 Naska, and, while speaking of the various naska alludes to the devastation at the hands of Alexander.<sup>6</sup> Fol. 8b:

*vāy, nūn agar ēn hamāg nask nē mānd hend, nē tuvān yaštan, hān  
ēd rāy cē guzastag aleksander ī hrōmīg andar hān vīst-ud-ēk nask  
harv cē kē NUJŪM (axtarmārīh) ud bizešk<īh> būd andar uzvān ud  
HURŪF (nišān) ī hrōmīg cand nibišt kird ud anī naskihā bē suxt ...  
pas az vattarīh ī aleksander cand dastvarān az dēn dānāgān būd  
<hend> ham-rasišnīh hamāg abestāg az gyāg gyāg āvurd hambār  
kird.*

‘Alas, if now all these Naska (of the Avesta) have not remained, so that it is not possible to sacrifice (the words of the whole Avesta), that is for this reason, that the accursed Alexander, the Greek, took some transcript, in the Greek language and script, of any among those twenty-one Naska which were about astronomy and medicine, and burnt up the other Naska. ... After the villainy of Alexander, some high-priests, well versed in the Scientia Divina, who were yet alive, met together, and brought and collected all Avesta from various places.’

§ In a short treatise, in Pārsīg, from Drangiana (Sakastāna), it is said that, after Alexander’s onslaught, a few men of priestly class escaped and fled to Drangiana. There was a man, called Sēn-burzmīhr, who had compiled two Liturgies from Avesta books, the Dva.yasna: One, the Yasna and Visprad (the Long Liturgy) and the Yašt and Niyāyišn (the Short Liturgy, the X<sup>v</sup>ardag Abestāg) –Mas‘ūdī tells

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encouraged the free states to revolt from his authority. On this account he hanged many of them. »

<sup>6</sup>. See J.J. Modi, “Alexander and Zoroastrian Literature”, *Oriental Conference Papers*, Bombay, 1932, 5: 74-9. On the possible connection between Pārsīg traditions on the loss of their Avesta and Zand by Alexander, and early traditions on the loss of the Jewish holy writings, see Sh. Pines, “A Parallel between Two Iranian and Jewish Themes”, *Irano-Judaica*, 2, 1990, 43-4.

obscurely how, after the year 300 (i.e., 300 years after the religion), a man in Sakastāna knew all the canonical texts by heart.<sup>7</sup> A few women and young children tried to study and memorize that book. Mazdayasnian women were admitted to full religious rites and consequently to complete educational facilities. The Hērbedestān 5-6 refers to young women pursuing their studies (*aθauruna*) even after marriage –and even without the authority of the husband. Thanks to the women and minor children who pursued the study of the book of the daēnā arranged by Sēn-burzmīhr the religion returned to Drangiana.

Text  
*mādayān*

ped nām ī yazdān

<sup>1</sup> *abdīh ud sahgīh ī zamīg ī sagestān az abārīg šahrīhā ēd rāy abērdar ud veh:*

<sup>2</sup> *ēk ēn kū: rōd ī hēdumand ud var ī frazdān ud zreh ī kānse ud gar ī ušdāštār andar zamīg ī sagestān.*

<sup>3</sup> *zāyišn ud parvarišn ī ušīdar ud ušīdarmāh ud sōšyāns ī zarduštān ī spitāmān, u-š ristāxēz kirdan, <andar ham zamīg>.*<sup>4</sup>

*ēk ēn kū: peyvann ud tōhmag ī kayān dahebedān ī ped ēn kišvar vizend aviš mad.*<sup>5</sup> *az frazendān ī frēdōn salm kē kišvar ī hrōm, ud tūz kē turkestān ped x<sup>v</sup>adāyīh dāšt, ērēz ērān dahebed būd, u-š be ōzad.*<sup>6</sup> *ud az frazendān ī ērēz bē kenīg-ē anī kas bē nē mānd.*<sup>7</sup> *ud pas frēdōn ō var frazdān nīd, ud ped nihān dāšt dā dahum peyvann ka az hān kenīg pus zāyād.*<sup>8</sup> *pas frēdōn ō var frazdān šud, u-š az aredvīsūr anāhīd āyaft x<sup>v</sup>āst, ped abāz ārāstan ī ērān šahr, ud x<sup>v</sup>arrah ī kayān, abārīg yazdān kē andar sagestān gāh mehmānīh abardar. āyaft vindād, abāg manušcihr ud avēšān ērān. āfrīn.*

<sup>9</sup> *ēk ēn kū: vištāsp šāh dēn ped var ī frazdān kird-ravāgīh, fradum ped sagestān, ud pas ped abārīg šahrīhā.*

<sup>10</sup> *ud vištāsp šāh ped ham-pursagīh ī zardušt ud sēn ī ahūmstūdān ī bustīg cōn-iš hāvištān ī zardušt fradum ped sar-hāvištīh (+sad-hāvištīh) ōy būd hend,*<sup>11</sup> *andar sagestān [ō] cāšt ravāg dāštan rāy panzāh ud panzāh ped dūdag ī vehān frāz raft.*

<sup>12</sup> *nask-ē <ī> 𐭠𐭣𐭥𐭩𐭥𐭩𐭥𐭩 /do-yasn-z/ x<sup>v</sup>ānend, cōn sēn-burzmīhr ī zarduštān, ped vīrāstagīh ī hān būd, ī āšnāg.*<sup>13</sup> *ka guzastag aleksander ī hrōmīg ō ērān šahr mad, avēšān kē ped brāh ī muvmardīh raft <hend>, grift <hend> ud ōzad <hend>.*<sup>14</sup> *mard ud rēdak ēcand ō sagestān āmad hend.*<sup>15</sup> *būd ī zanān, būd ī aburnāyag-ē nask ī do-yasn-*

<sup>7</sup> « وقد كانوا يقولون إن رجلاً منهم بسجستان بعد الثلاثمائة مستظهر يحفظ هذا الكتاب على الكمال... » مسعودي، مروج الذهب ومعادن الجوهر، الجزء الأول، بيروت، ١٩٨٦، ٢٣٧.

z x<sup>v</sup>ast ud varm kird ēstād. pez hān rāh, dēn andar sagestān abāz gašt,  
ud ārāst ud vīrāst nōg nōg. bē ped sagestān enyā abārīg gyāg nē varm.

<sup>16</sup> an kē ped hān gyāg, hamāg-dēn-ē yazānd, šādīh guhrīgānīh rāy,  
hādōxt-ē framāyānd yaštan.

frazaft ped drod, šādīh ud rāmišn.

šād ud farrox ud dagrzīvišn ud pērōzgar ud ahlav, kāmaghanzām  
bavād kē nibišt, kē x<sup>v</sup>ēš, ud kē x<sup>v</sup>āned. ašəm.

vizārišn

Translation

The wonders and mirabilia of the land of Sakastāna are much more  
and better than other provinces, for these reasons:

One reason is this, that the river Haētumaṅt<sup>8</sup>, the lake Frazdānu<sup>9</sup>,  
the sea Kašaya<sup>10</sup>, and the mountain Uši.darəna are located in the land  
of Sakastāna.

The birth and fostering of Uxšyaṭ.ərəta, Uxšyaṭ.nəmah and  
Saošyaṅt, the sons of Zaratuštra Spitama, and also the making of the  
resurrection by Saošyaṅt (will happen there).

One reason is this, that the lineage and family of the Kavi-dynasty,  
i.e., the rulers of this country sustained some damage. Of the children  
of Ōraētaona, Salm (\*Sairima) who had the reign of the Roman (/  
western) Empire<sup>11</sup>, Tūz (\*Tūr<sub>a</sub>ca) who had the reign of Turkastāna (/  
eastern) land<sup>12</sup>, killed Erēz (\*Airyaēca) who was the ruler of the Aryan  
(land)<sup>13</sup>. And of the children of Erēz none remained except a daughter.  
Then Ōraētaona conducted (her) to the lake Frazdānu and kept her  
hidden for ten generations, when a son was born from that daughter.  
Then Ōraētaona went to Frazdānu, and he asked for a boon from  
Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā<sup>14</sup> to restore the Aryan kingdom, viz., the Fortune  
of the Kavi<sup>15</sup> and the other, (the Fortune of) the Yazata<sup>16</sup>, that held a

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<sup>8</sup> . Haētumaṅt, identified with the modern Helmand.

<sup>9</sup> . Cf. the river Hrazdan in the Movsēs Khorenat 'si's *History of Armenia*.

<sup>10</sup> . Kašaya, identified with the Hāmūn Lake, from which the three saošyaṅt will  
emerge.

<sup>11</sup> . Cf. Yt 13.143 *sairimanqəm daxyunqəm* 'of the Sairima land'.

<sup>12</sup> . Cf. Yt 13.143 *tūiryanqəm ... daxyunqəm* 'of the Tūirya land'.

<sup>13</sup> . Cf. Yt 13.143 *airyanqəm ... daxyunqəm* 'of the Aryan land'.

<sup>14</sup> . Cf. Yt 5.33-34 ... *vīsō puθrō āθbyānōiš vīsō sūrayā θraētaonō ... āaṭ hīm  
jaiḍyaṭ avatṭ āyaptəm dazdi.mē vaj<sup>v</sup>hi səvište arədvī sūire anāhite* 'Ōraētaona of the  
strong house, the son of the house (= prince) of Āθbya, ... thus he asked her: Give  
me that boon, O good, strongest Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā!'

<sup>15</sup> . *kavaēm x<sup>v</sup>arənō*, the royal fortune/ glory.

higher place in Sakastāna. He obtained the boon, together with Manuṣ.ciθra and the Aryans. Blessing!

One reason is this, that king Vīštāspa celebrated the religion at Lake Frazdānu, propagated it first in Sakastāna, and thereafter in other lands. King Vīštāspa (held) a conference with Zaraθuštra (in Sakastāna).

Saēna son of Ahūm.stūt, of Bust, was the first of Zaraθuštra's disciples (at the head of) a hundred pupils in the family of the good (in Sakastāna).<sup>17</sup>

There was one book (*naska-*) which they call *Dva.yasna* ('Two Liturgies', long and short), in whose preparation Sēn-burzmīhr son of Zardušt was involved –it is well-known.

When the accursed Alexander the Greek came to the Aryan kingdom (/ Persia), he seized and slew those who walked with the appearance of the Magi. Some men and boys came to Sakastāna. There were some women and also some minor children who studied and learnt by heart the book *Dva.yasna*. In that way indeed the religion returned in Sakastāna, and was restored and re-established anew. But except in sakastāna, there was no recollection elsewhere.

I who am of that place, may they perform (for me) the whole-ceremonial-of-Religion (*hamāg-dēn*), and in requital of joy (may) they consecrate the ceremonial Haḍaoxta.

Finished with peace, joy and ease.

May he who wrote (or, will write), who possesses, who reads it, be joyful, fortunate, long-lived, victorious, blessed and successful. Truth!

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<sup>16</sup> . *yazdān x<sup>v</sup>arrāh*, the divine fortune. Cf. KAP 3.11 *yazdān x<sup>v</sup>arrāh ī ērān šahr* ≈ *airyanqm x<sup>v</sup>arēnō*.

<sup>17</sup> . Cf. Yt 13.97 *saēnahe ahūm.stūtō aṣaonō fravašīm yazamaide yō paoiryō satō.aēθryō fraxštata paiti āva zēmā* 'We worship the fravaši of truthful Saēna (son) of Ahūm.stūt who first went forth upon this earth with a hundred students.'