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Digital Archive of Brief notes & Iran Review

Vol.01

№.04.2017



JORDAN CENTER
FOR PERSIAN STUDIES

www.dabirjournal.org

ISSN: 2470-4040





xšnaoθrahe ahurahe mazdā

Detail from above the entrance of Tehran's fire temple, 1286š/1917–18. Photo by © Shervin Farridnejad

The Digital Archive of Brief Notes & Iran Review (DABIR)

ISSN: 2470-4040

www.dabirjournal.org

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University of California, Irvine
1st Floor Humanities Gateway
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dabj̄r

Digital Archive of Brief notes & Iran Review

Vol.01

No.04.2017

ISSN: 2470 - 4040

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University of California, Irvine

The End of the Yasna Between Philological and Theological Problems

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The conclusion of the standard ritual session¹ of the *Yasna* has been the object of a study by Céline Redard and Jean Kellens entitled *La liquidation du sacrifice* (Y 62 à 72).² It must be noted that the closing sequence of Y. 72, 6-9 corresponds to the opening one, usually numbered as Y. 0 in former editions of the *Avesta*.³ This fact is another evidence of the reorganization of the ritual that includes patent correspondences between opening and closing formulas. In a previous study on Zoroastrian liturgies, I have emphasized the importance of recursive patterns,⁴ in which we can find a refrain or mirroring series of rituals, such as seen, for example, in ceremonies of “dis-engagement” enacted by

1- A shorter version of this study has been presented during the Conference ‘Editing Avestan Texts in the 21st century: Problems and Perspectives 23-24 March 2017’, organized by Professor Alberto Cantera at the Freie Universität Berlin. This article appeared at the same time in another format in *Sasanika*.

2- Redard and Kellens (2013: 62 à 72). See also Kellens (2010b).

3- Cantera (2015: 83-ff; 2016: 148, 182).

4- Panaino (2017).

the ritual college involved in the solemn version of the Mazdean ceremonies in *Y. 58* (the *Fšūšō Maθra*).⁵ Other examples include those listed and discussed by Velizar Sadovski (2017), who rightly insisted on the recursive structure of the whole Long Liturgy. In the case of *Y. 72*, the opening and concluding formulas show compelling similarities underlined by Cantera who noted the importance of the dialogue between *Zaraθuštra* and *Frašāōštra*.⁶

The liturgy closes with a *yazamaide* section introduced as a *frašna* between *Zaraθuštra* and *Frašāōštra* that confirms, as the final apotheosis of the sacrifice, the fulfilment of the cosmogonic promise: the communion between man and god in being *ašauuan* and attaining immortality (EAM 5: 46). After a short exorcism (*Y72.1–5*), the liturgy closes like all the other Zoroastrian rituals.

In this article, my analysis will primarily focus on *Y. 72*. Yet I would like to start with *Y. 71*, or the so-called *Wišp Yašt bun*,⁷ which presents some very relevant features that have never been properly discussed. Cantera, Redard and Kellens have already underlined the theological importance of the dialogue between *Zaraθuštra* and *Frašāōštra* (*Y. 71, 1–12*), in which the second protagonist asks question to the first who answers by means of a long liturgy in *yazamaide*. Here, I would like to draw attention to an additional element: *Frašāōštra*, the brother of *Jāmāspa* (Pahl. *Jāmāsp*), was not only a person of high rank in the Gāthic framework around the *kauui- Vištāspa*, he also assumed a great symbolic function. In fact, according to the Pahlavi version of *Wištāsp Yašt* 1, 3, the benediction by *Frašōstar*⁸ is considered most important as it is an exaltation of the ideal son, the perfect one in a series of ten. The tenth son mentioned in that text corresponds to be a recast person, who, like *Jāmāspa*, was believed to perfectly embody the characteristics of a priest, a warrior and a husbandman, (cf. also *Āfrīn ī Zardušt* 5).⁹ This special son would be born at the end of a series of three triads of good sons belonging to the three basic functions of the Avestan society. *Mutatis mutandis*, this son would be like a *Sōšāns*. In this light, the presence of *Frašāōštra* in the first stanza of *Y. 71* (in his quality of chosen interlocutor of *Zaraθuštra*) can be considered as an inspiring source for other traditions such as the Pahlavi version of *Wyt. 1, 3*. The mythological biography of *Frašāōštra* is not known in detail, but if this man was really considered the father of *Huuōuuī*, the third wife of Zoroaster, he inevitably assumed an important place in the apocalyptic genealogy of the three *Saōšiiants* generated by the semen of Zoroaster with the collaboration of *Huuōuuī*. According to this tradition, it was whilst approaching *Huuōuuī* that *Zaraθuštra* released sperm. His semen fell on the ground and was stored in the waters of the *Vourukaša* or of the *Kašaoiia*.¹⁰ *Huuōuuī*, whilst not the “biological” mother of the future *Saōšiiants* (but the reference to a

5- Panaino (2017).

6- Cantera (2016: 168).

7- Redard and Kellens 2013: 45.

8- Panaino (forthcoming).

9- Panaino (forthcoming).

10- See *Yt. 13, 59* and in general *Yašt* 19 and *Widēwdād* 19; see also *Bundahišn*, ch. 34, 43–44 (Pakzad 2005: 372–373).

“biological” dimension remains a meaningless concept in the Avestan framework), played a crucial role in the impregnation of their future mothers (Sruta.fəδrī, Vahu.fəδrī and Ǝrədaṭ.fəδrī)). It was her who *transferred* the seeds of her husband, one after the other, in the course of the three following millennia.¹¹

This mythological scenario raises a number of questions: the presence of Frašaōštra was not accidental. He should not be considered as the father of a sterile woman, but of Zoroaster’s chosen wife (the third), who performed with him a series of hierogamic (?) rituals that cannot be simply interpreted as *coitus interruptus* (the irregular emission of semen was in general considered as a contaminating accident, which invalidates, for instance, the *Baršnūm-gāh* ceremony). Rather, I have good reasons to believe that the release of Zoroaster’s sperm out of Huuōuuī’s womb was considered as a deliberate sacred performance full of eschatological and millenarian implications, and, consequently, that it was part of a mythical background, which should have been in full formation during the elaboration of the ritual synthesis of the whole *Yasna* ceremony. Such hypothesis implies the existence of a *ritual copulation* during which the semen needed to create the posthumous generation of the three Saōšiiants would be specifically produced. The mythical protagonists of this ceremony would be involved in the performance of a sacred action of delayed generation-making. The sperm¹² of Zaratuštra, from which the three Saōšiiants originate, cannot be considered as produced by masturbation, but as the result of a ritual hierogamy, whose generative target was simply postponed according to a chiliadic scheme. Therefore, it is highly probable that the exchange between Zaratuštra and his father-in-law, at the end of the *Yasna*, refers to Frašaōštra’s posthumous lineage with his own daughter, Huuōuuī. After all, she was the female protagonist who helped to produce the semen. In other words, the dialogue of *Y.* 71 is more complex than anticipated. It not only makes reference to the immortality of the sacrificer (acquired as a success and a prize), but it also explains the esoteric function of the second part of *Y.* 71, i.e. chapters 13-16, which, as stated by Redard and Kellens,¹³ “entérine comme apothéose du sacrifice la réalisation de la promesse cosmogonique”, as well as the third one (*Y.* 71, 17-31), where natural and temporal prototypes assume a crucial importance. In sum, I suggest that the choice of Frašaōštra as interlocutor of Zaratuštra, marks the presence of an eschatological implication hidden behind the litany of the long prophet’s answer. The conclusion of the ritual is, in fact, a warranty of success, not only individual, but eschatological. If the sacrificer can expect a strong lineage, so can the whole humanity. Frašaōštra, in this respect, is a model, because he belongs to the most restricted Gāthic circle, attesting to a continuity and orthodoxy of the religious message. However, like Zoroaster, he is part of a “superhuman” gener-

11- See *Yašt* 13, 142; cf. *Yt.* 19, 92 and *V.* 190, 5. See also Redard (2017a: 246). On this event, Pirart (2010a: 89-92) makes important remarks emphasizing the relevance of the sacrifice performed by Huuōuuī in the *Dēn Yašt* 14-15, where she appears as the stimulator of Zaratuštra’s obedience to the Good Religion. See also Pirart (2008: 64-67). Furthermore, Pirart (2010a: 84-92) tries to compare the emission of Zaratuštra’s sperm on the ground and its preservation by Nairiō. saṅha, with an episode in Greek mythology in which Athena throws Hephaistos’ semen on the ground, impregnating it with Erichthonios whom she gives to the three virgin daughters of Kekrops. Although there exist common points (the semen falling on the ground and the three virgins) between the two stories, the Avestan myth remains different as the union of Zoroaster and his third wife cannot be associated with rape. The emission of semen on the ground by Dyaus Pitar in front of the goddess Ušas in *RV* 10, 61, 7ab is yet another story that is very similar to the Zoroastrian myth. Possible relationships between mythologies deserve further investigations.

12- Gnoli (1962) focused on the complex phenomenological relation between semen, light and fire.

13- Redard and Kellens (2013: 46).

ation of human beings, who not only established the rituals, but also laid the foundations for their eschatological success. Around him, a more complex genealogical speculation was developed, involving his daughter and her intriguing role. Together, they belong to the innermost circle that oversaw the creation of primordial rituals and the determination of human destiny. This confirms that millenarian tradition was well rooted in the *Yasna* liturgy and in the Later Avestan theological and ritual synthesis.

Equally intriguing is the structure of *Y. 72*. As stated earlier, this chapter shares some commonalities with the opening one (*Y. 0*). Cantera is right to point out that, whilst a double conclusion occurs in *Y. 72*, 6–9 with *yasnəmca vahməmca aojasca zauuarəca āfrīnāmi* + dedicatory in chapter 6 and in chapter 8, the sequence is not the exact mirror of *Y. 0* liturgy. Rather, it represents its inverted paradigm. He writes:¹⁴

Kellens did not include chapter *Yo*, which is the exact correspondence of *Y72.6–9*, in the first volume. In doing so, he avoided recognising and showing the framing of the Long Liturgy. In fact, in *Y72.6–9* we find just a double ending with *yasnəmca ... āfrīnāmi* + dedicatory corresponding to the double beginning of the liturgy in *Y.0*, first as a minor liturgy dedicated to the Fire, and then as the Long Liturgy itself with a variable dedicatory (Cantera 2015: 83ff.).

While in *Y. 0*, 1–2 the liturgy opens with the symbolic of the Fire¹⁵, in *Y. 72*, 6 the same formula is dedicated to Ahura Mazda, etc. Inversely, in *Y. 0*, 7–8, the formula dedicated to Ahura Mazda, marking the Long Liturgy, is mirrored by *Y. 72*, 8, which contains the formula dedicated to the Fire. Again, *Y. 72*, 8 concludes with two *yasnəmca* [...] *āfrīnāmi* formulas, one to Ahura Mazda and one to the Fire. This inverted structure can be explained by the fact that the Long Liturgies represent an amplification of the standard ritual. The evidence that both the beginning and the conclusion belong to the minor ceremony is not eccentric. On the contrary, such a datum can be considered as another positive evidence for this statement. As Cantera¹⁶ has noted in his work on the *Liturgie Longue*, whilst the ceremonies of the *Yasna* and of the *Wisperad* do not make distinctions between *Y. 0*, 1 and 0, 7, the *Widēwdād* and the *Wištāšp Yašt* do by means of a formula with *haḍa* in *Y. 0*, 7. It is also important to underline that in *Y. 0*, 7, the mss introduces numerous dedications such as that to the *Gāhānbārs*, *Srōš* and *Ardāfraward*.¹⁷

Another very interesting aspect concerning similarities between *Y. 0* and *Y. 72* can be found in the prominent role played by *Y. 22*, 23–27, which almost corresponds to *Y. 0*, 8–12. *Y. 22*, 24–27 is reproduced in *Y. 72*, 7 and *Y. 72*, 6 can be found in *Y. 22*, 23 and *Y. 8*, 8. The importance of *Y. 22*, 24 is also visible in

14- Cantera (2016: 168).

15- The compositional structure of *Y. 0*, 2 is analysed in detail by Kellens (1996: 47) who puts in evidence the relations with *Y. 1*, 12, *Y. 4*, 23, *Y. 22*, 26. In particular, he shows how the syntax of *puθra* is defective.

16- Cantera (2014: 233).

17- Canyera (2016: 223–224).

Y. 72, 10, where dedication to Vaiiu, the Indo-Iranian god of the Wind and Atmosphere,¹⁸ is taken again from this stanza, although these lines are absent in the section encapsulated in Y. o, 12. Yet it remains that the sequence attested in Y. 22 was probably created earlier than those embedded in the opening and closing rituals. Kellens addresses this issue in detail in an article published in the *Journal Asiatique* 284,1 (1996),¹⁹ and again in volume 3 of his *Études avestiques et mazdéennes* (2010).²⁰ In his analysis of the ritual of the *Hōmāst*, he²¹ remarked that the most original segments of Y. 22 can be found again in Y. o, as well as in Y. 72. The importance attributed to Y. 22 is connected to its current function as a text (Y. 22, 23, but see also Y. 22, 1-3 and 28) that contains dedications to Sraōša in the *Widēwdād*.²² Cantera²³ clearly showed that Y. o, 8-12, Y. 22, 23-37, Y. 24, 28-32, Y. 25, 4-8 (*yazamaide*), Y. 66, 17-22 and Y. 72, 6-8, contain the necessary dedications (in *xšnūmaine* with the only exception of Y. 25). Therefore, it is not surprising to find inter-textual connections or duplications of these formulas. Similarly, the name of Vaiiu which appears for the first time in 22, 24, was already cited twice (*vaiiāōš uparō.kairiiehe [...] aētat*

18- As demonstrated in earlier studies (Mayrhofer [KEWA III] 1976: 190-191, and 1999 [EWA II] 542, 544; cf. also Lubotsky 1992: 264), Ved. *vāyú-*, m., Av. *vaiiu-*, “wind, air”, derive from **H₂ueH₁-ju-*, the same root as *H₂uejH₁-* > Ilr. **H₂uajH₁-* “to blow” (Rix 2001: 287; Cheung 2007: 203), from which other names for “wind” derive: *H₂ueH₁ntó-* > Ilr. **H₂uāHata-* > Ved. *vā₄ata-*. This can be seen in Vedic trisyllabic verse. Cf. Balles 2012: 18, n. 4, 23-24, n. 16); cf. also Lat. *ventus* < (cf. de Vaan 2008: 662-663; here **ŋ* > *n* after the loss of the laryngeal. Recently, Pirart (2003) has criticized this reconstruction, suggesting that *Vāyú* became a god of the Wind only in the later Vedic tradition when he assumed a role apparently closer to that of *Vāta*. For this reason, *Vāyú* should be carefully distinguished from the ancient god of the Wind, because he was a God of the Void and the Atmosphere. Pirart also insists on the fact that *Vaiiu* and *Vāta* have been never confused in the Avestan sources and are even connected with two different days of the month in the Mazdean calendar: *Vaiiu* with the day of *Rāman x^aaštra* and *Zruuan* (number 21) and *Vāta* with the name to the following day (number 22). This is clearly visible in the text of the Avestan and Pahlavi *Sih-rōzag* 1, 21; 2, 21 (*Vaiiu*) and 1, 22; 2, 22 (*Vāta*); cf. Raffaelli (2013: 107-109, 136-137). From an etymological point of view, Pirart (2007: 104, n. 446; 2010a: 129) demonstrated that the name of Av. *vaiiu-* (and consequently of Ved. *vāyú-*), whilst connected in the framework of an Avestan etymological speculation (attested in *Yt.* 15, 43) with the verbal root **vi* (pres. *vaē-/vi-* “to pursue”; Kellens (1995: 54); cf. the IE. root **uejH₁-* “to direct one’s attention, to seek” and Ilr. **uajH₁-* “to hunt, chase, to run”; Rix (2001: 668-669); Cheung (2007: 411-412); Panaino (2002: 73); Mayrhofer (1996 [EWA II]: 509-510)), should be derived from the root of Ved. *vāyati* “to be void, to disappear” < IE. root **ueh₂-* (cf. also Av. *frāuuaiia-* “to make disappear”; Lat. *vānus* “hollow, devoid”; de Vaan 2008: 653). Pirart emphasized the fact that the name of *Vaiiu* was glossed in Pahlavi with *tuhigih* “the void”, an evidence which would support this new etymology. On the other hand, I must observe that the presence of this Pahlavi gloss is not *per se* compelling, but it simply insists on a meaning, that of Void, which is not incompatible with the description of a space full of wind. In reality, the two divinities, *Vayu* and *Vāta*, represent two different aspects of the wind, the first one in its personified, stronger, divine manifestation (with the suffix *-yu-*), and who assumed the role of a primordial active figure (cf. Av. *mainyu-*, Ved. *manyú-*) dominant in the space and the void where the wind blows, while the latter, as a derivative of an original participle, described the powerful wind in its more naturalistic aspect, especially if we consider that its basic meaning was that of “which is coming from the blowing one.” See Tichy (2006: 30). Thus, I do not see any reason to abandon the old derivation from an Indo-European stem like **H₂ueH₁-*, plus the suffix *-ju-* that works perfectly well if we consider that this suffix had an agentive value.

19- Kellens (1996: 46-47).

20- Kellens (2010: 77-78).

21- Kellens (2010a: 76).

22- Cantera (2014: 224).

23- Cantera (2014: 222).

tē vaiiō [...]) in *Y.* 0, 9. The authority of this text is reinforced in the conclusion of *Y.* 72.

Whilst the fragments taken from *Y.* 23, 23 (3a-b) and 22, 24 (3-7) include *Rāman* and *Vaiiu*, other rare divine beings in Avestan literature are mentioned: *Θβāša x^vaḍāta*, *Zruuan Akarana*, *Zruuan darəγō*. *x^vaḍāta*. As underlined by Redard and Kellens, this order is only present in one line of the mss and ritual tradition. Many other variants were possible. I will first consider the version of the text edited by Geldner, very different from the one chosen by Darmesteter. In my opinion, it emphasizes the presence of a certain ritual and theological speculation. The conclusive role attributed to the three divinities connected with the celestial vault (*Θβāša x^vaḍāta*), and to the two manifestations of the Infinite and limited Time,²⁴ represent a cosmological interpretation of the ceremony. I want to underline the replicated function of this occurrence and its connection with the following stanza (*Y.* 72, 11). As underlined by many others, the conclusion of the *Yasna* – in the form in which it appears in the *Avesta Ausgabe* – belongs to a colophon only preserved in the core of certain mss.²⁵ Céline Redard is absolutely right when, in an unpublished article,²⁶ she states that this textual portion, *in se*, cannot be considered as the standard conclusion of the ritual.²⁷ On the other hand, as I will explain in more detail later, this part should be presented as a separate text (together with other quotations) in future editions with different standard numeration. To a certain extent, if it represents a genuine line of the tradition, we must note that this segment – with its reference to the “path of *aša*” in opposition to those of *Aṅra Mainiuš* – contains a strong warning against irregular sacrifices and demoniac rituals. In itself, this formula – probably a prayer only recited in certain occasions – was a sort of malediction or curse. Its place, at the very end of the liturgy, is therefore not surprising at all. Further investigations should help us to understand whether this textual fragment, embedded in some colophons, belongs to any particular ritual or ceremony celebrated at certain moment of the day or month.

Let's now turn to the final sequence of *Y.* 72, 10 and observe that the order

Θβāša x^vaḍāta
Zruuan Akarana
Zruuan darəγō.x^vaḍāta

has textual validity (although it does not represent the only possibility). It can be considered as a reflection on sacrifice and its cosmogonic and chiliadic function and confirms that during the Later Avestan rituals, speculation on time and the distinction between eternal and limited time existed. The cosmological role of time was connected to the idea of ‘the turning of the heaven’ and ‘the passing of the constellations’. It is important to note that, in *Y.* 72, 10, the triad is preceded by *Vərəθraγna*, *Rāman* and *Vaiiu* which corresponds to the first two basic levels of the world: the earth and the intermediate space.²⁸ Upon all of them, the Firmament, the Infinite and the Finite Time rule and approve on the

24- On the importance of “time” and “timing” in the Vedic tradition see Deshpande (2016).

25- Geldner (1886: 239).

26- Redard (in press).

27- Redard and Kellens (2013: 60-63).

28- Pirart (2010b: 249-250); Lecoq (2016: 86, 96, 252-253).

victory of Ahura Mazdā. Another relevant element of comparison between rituals lies in *Widēwdād* 19 when a series of Mazdean divinities are asked to approach the sacrifice (Redard recently commented on the presence of *ni + zu* “to invite / to approach [the sacrifice]”):²⁹ Θβāša, Zruuan Akarana, Vaiiu uparō. kairiia and Vata taxma. These divinities are listed together and venerated twice in *Vd.* 19, 13 and 16, towards the end of the sequence. This order, slightly different from that occurring in *Yasna* 71, confirms the strong link existing among these gods. It did influence some later developments in the Sasanian cosmology, in particular the connection between two manifestations of divinities: one from the “Space whose activities are in the upper region”, as Vaiiu uparō.kairiia, and the latter from the Powerful Wind, as Vata taxma. In a context where celestial dimension and time are important, this cannot be separated from the model of the Kingdoms of Light and Darkness, two worlds divided by the primordial atmospheric beings, Way ī Weh and Way ī Wattar, the Good Space and the Bad one³⁰ (although, in this case, it was Avestan Vaiiu who became split up in two antagonist³¹ primordial identities).³² In this example, it is hard to decide if the liturgical sequence influenced the cosmic model, or if the cosmic model followed the pattern of ritual invocations.

It is to be noted that *Y.* 72, 9 incorporates *Y.* 68, 11 and 15. In the second passage, the reference to all remedies existing between the earth and the heaven (*aṅtarə zqm asmanəmca*) is clearly stated.³³ The relation between the final part of *Y.* 72, 9 and the beginning of 10, including the sequence of the chapters 20 and 21 of the *Sih-rōzag*, is clear.³⁴ Also, the presence, in *Y.* 72, of a special *xšnūman* dedicated to the *Gāhānbārs* (e.g., in K8 and G18b) among many other documented possibilities (*Sraōša*, Ahura Mazdā, Nairiio.sarha, or other series containing mixed reference to these already mentioned divinities),³⁵ shows the importance of time in the organization of the ritual chain.

The existence of an alternative tradition, collected by Tehmuras Dinshaw Anklesaria,³⁶ and followed by Darmesteter,³⁷ needs to be mentioned. In lieu of the text translated by Geldner in *Y.* 72, 10, the tradition concludes with a final invocation to Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā. This addition is supplemented by a veneration of the Sun and the Moon – the two luminaries, which bring light during daytime and night

29- Redard (2017b).

30- See in particular the first chapter of the *Bundahišn*, pars. 5, 44-46, 54. MacKenzie and Cereti (2003: 33, 38-39, 41; Pakzad 2005: 6, 19, 23); the two antagonist Way are opposed in *Bd.* 26, 33. Pakzad (2005: 299). See also Zaehner (1972: 80-91, 336-338).

31- The presence of ambiguous or fearful aspects in the personality of the god Vaiiu are visible in his quality of psychopomp divinity, especially when he was indicated as the “pitiless” or “merciless” one (*Av. anāmarždika -*), as it systematically happens in *Aogəmadaēcā* 77-81. JamaspAsa (1982: 42-45; 74-77); Pirart (2003: 153); Lecoq (2016: 1149-1150).

32- The denomination of the Good Way as *dagrand-xwadāy* “of the long dominion”, i.e. *Av. darəγō.x’adāta-* “who follows his own rule since long (time)”, clearly implies a close association with the second aspect of the god Zruuan, but also with Θβāša. See Pirart (2003: 152-153); Rezania (2010: 78-81). All these connections need again a specific analysis.

33- Redard and Kellens (2013: 38).

34- Raffaelli (2014: 107-108). The final part of *Y.* 72, 9, must be also connected with *Y.* 1, 6. Kellens (2006: 27), as carefully underlined by Redard and Kellens (2013: 61).

35- See the catalogue by Redard and Kellens (2013: 60) that contains very useful references to some mss.

36- Anklesaria (1888: 242).

37- Darmesteter (1892, I: 441-442).

time –, once again, underlining the cosmological aspects of the ceremony.

The new approach taken to analyse mss traditions and their variants not only shows the remarkable richness of the Mazdean liturgical corpus, it also emphasizes the impact that such tradition had on the study of the theological and ritual speculations developed by the Zoroastrian priestly elites over time. That is why I believe that the calling into question of this new approach is irrelevant, as it is not concerned with philological criticism, but the meaning of a ceremonial lore and its history. From a more technical perspective, the analysis of the final sections of the *Yasna* opens new perspectives on what should be done in future. The simple conspectus of the alternative texts composing the second part of *Y. 72* is *per se* amazing. It suggests that further work on the different codices, especially the Persian ones, has the potential to shed new light on the articulations of and differences between ceremonial alternatives. It also demonstrates that, like the editions of Spiegel (1853-58) and Westergaard (1852-54), Geldner's translation is no longer sufficient. This situation was already clear at the time when Darmesteter wrote his French translation of the *Avesta*. The text of the translation, as proposed by Darmesteter, is based on a strong alternative version. Paradoxically, the version of Anklesaria, which followed Westergaard's text with the inclusion of the *nērangs* and some additional variants, had its own intrinsic interest and represented a textual tradition with its own dignity and ritual importance. Nowadays, electronic technology and the use of hyper-textual edition allows us to edit more than a single version of a text, including variants or alternatives. Whilst one version might be chosen as a more acceptable one, all variants should be footnoted for question of historical and philological clarity. This means that all of the *xnūmans* and their variants should be carefully edited (together with the ritual directions, if attested) *in extenso*, because only a full comparable conspectus of the different versions will shed light on parallel different liturgical variants. This effort is essential in order to retrace the evolution of the Mazdean ritual, as well as the liturgical ramifications of their alternative ceremonies. In addition, it is also important to work on a new edition that includes the most important variants. This work will probably necessitate several re-editions of the same chapters. This is the case of stanza 11, which belongs to both the colophon of K5 and the colophon of *Wisperad* in K7a, Mb6 and other few mss (at least, in a short form till the word *apañtqm*, but that existed also in a third, even shorter form in K20 and in the colophons of Mf2, Jp1, J11, as carefully reported by Geldner).³⁸ The relationship between the colophons of the *Yasna* and the colophons of the *Wisperad* is another intriguing matter, but for the moment the presentation of the pertinent colophons containing this intriguing formula by Redard offers a clearer conspectus of the textual data.

If *recentiores* are not always *deteriores*, as Giorgio Pasquali argues, the final part of the liturgy invites us to consider the prospects of a philological work strictly connected with a study of the ceremonies and of their meaning. I also hope that the project endorsed by Almut Hintze concerning the interconnections between actions and words might be of pertinent relevance in the evaluation of the inter-textual parallels.³⁹ For instance, in the case of the already quoted similar parts recited in *Y. 0*, *Y. 22* and *Y. 72*,

38- Geldner (1886: 239).

39- In particular, the project entitled 'The Multimedia Yasna' (MUYA) "will film a performance of the Yasna ritual, transcribe the words which the priests recite, and examine their meaning and how they relate to the ritual actions and to the tradition of the manuscripts", as explicitly stated in the web site of the School of Oriental and African Studies (London): <https://www.soas.ac.uk/news/newsitem11924.html>.

are the postures, the movements of the hands, the ritual actions, etc., similar in coincidence with the same mantras? I cannot be sure that everything will be meaningful, but even if “meaningless” (without to accept compellingly the theory of the meaningless of the rituals, à la Frits Staal),⁴⁰ we will be able to reconstruct a sort of grammar of the symbolic gestures connected with certain types of stanzas, and this result might be *per se* important. For instance, it could be useful in order to detect a sort of over-segmental line above the recited text, as the performance of a music conductor with respect to a given musical score. We are entering a new ocean, and it is important that we try to observe all the points of orientation at our disposal.

Lastly, I would like to draw attention to a more general methodological problem concerning the most intrinsic aspects of our approach to textual criticism. Too often, the editors of the Avestan texts have emphasized, with more or less conviction, its connection with the *Ṛgveda*. In reality, the Avestan liturgies, as they appear in the manuscript tradition, do not properly correspond to the *Ṛgveda* which is a collection of liturgical poetic texts arranged according to formal criteria and divided after the various schools of composition, to be used in different kinds of rituals. In this respect, we can also observe that the configuration of the *Gāthās*, whilst following some metric and compositional criteria, respect a disposition which was considered necessary for a correct ritual performance. In other words, the collection of the four *Vedas*, together with some Brāhmaṇic works, seem to be closer to the description of the Sasanian *Avestā* of 21 *nasks*, a text that contained liturgical material of different nature – exegetic texts, manuals of instructions, laws codices, etc. – while the rationale of our Avestan manuscripts represents liturgies comparable to rituals of the *Agnicayana*-type⁴¹ (sometimes with other more complex performances of the *Agniṣṭoma*⁴² category) or even with similar, perhaps shorter, ceremonial variants (like those preserved in the *Khilas*) as recently emphasized by Sadovski⁴³ This qualitative difference should be taken into account if we want to avoid any errors of perspective in the evaluation of the textual complexity of Avestan sources.

40- Staal (1979; 1989; 1990).

41- The more direct comparison between these Indo-Iranian rituals started by Tremblay (2008; 2016) is, for instance, strongly suggestive and full of new perspectives. See also Swennen (2016).

42- Caland and Henry (1906-07).

43- As underlined by Sadovski (2017) in the patent case of the correspondences between the liturgical formulas of the *RVKh.* 5,4 (*nivid-*) and *Y.* 1-6, or between *RVKh.* 5,7 (*nivid-*) and *Y.* 14. For the *Khilas* and the ritual texts there preserved, see Scheftelowitz (1906; 1919); Kellens (1996) and Swennen (2015).

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