



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

Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture
University of California, Irvine
1st Floor Humanities Gateway
Irvine, CA 92697-3370

Editor-in-Chief

Touraj Daryaee (University of California, Irvine)

Editors

Parsa Daneshmand (Oxford University)

Arash Zeini (Freie Universität Berlin)

Shervin Farridnejad (Freie Universität Berlin)

Judith A. Lerner (ISAW NYU)

Book Review Editor

Shervin Farridnejad (Freie Universität Berlin)

Advisory Board

Samra Azarnouche (École pratique des hautes études); Dominic P. Brookshaw (Oxford University); Matthew Canepa (University of Minnesota); Ashk Dahlén (Uppsala University); Peyvand Firouzeh (Cambridge University); Leonardo Gregoratti (Durham University); Frantz Grenet (Collège de France); Wouter F.M. Henkelman (École Pratique des Hautes Études); Rasoul Jafarian (Tehran University); Nasir al-Ka'abi (University of Kufa); Andromache Karanika (UC Irvine); Agnes Korn (CNRS, UMR Mondes Iranien et Indien); Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (University of Edinburgh); Jason Mokhtarin (University of Indiana); Ali Mousavi (UC Irvine); Mahmoud Omidsalar (CSU Los Angeles); Antonio Panaino (University of Bologna); Alka Patel (UC Irvine); Richard Payne (University of Chicago); Khodadad Rezakhani (History, UCLA); Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis (British Museum); M. Rahim Shayegan (UCLA); Rolf Strootman (Utrecht University); Giusto Traina (University of Paris-Sorbonne); Mohsen Zakeri (University of Göttingen)

Logo design by Charles Li

Layout and typesetting by Kourosh Beighpour

Contents

Notes

- 1- Hamid **Bikas Shourkai**: La satrapie de Phrygie hellespontique (Daskyleion): des origines à la chute de l'Empire perse achéménide **1**
- 2- Stanley M. **Burstein**: Ctesias' Sources: A Suggestion **17**
- 3- Kiarash **Gholami**: Some Remarks on the Inscription and Attribution of a Transitional Arab-Sāsānian Dirham from Merv **21**
- 4- John **Hyland**: Hyštaspes, Gobryas, and elite marriage politics in Teispid Persia **30**
- 5- Thomas **Jügel**: The Aramaeogram of the Copula in Zoroastrian Middle Persian and a Note on the 2sg. Optative **36**
- 6- Firoze M. **Kotwal**: Incantations For The Festival Of The Farmers And For The Consecration Of Gravel (nīrang ī jashan ī burzigarān o nīrang ī sang-rēzā yaštan) **42**
- 7- Firoze M. **Kotwal**: Religious Injunction to be Observed when a Zoroastrian Expires During the Gatha Days **48**
- 8- Daniel T. **Potts**: The lands of the Balahute and Lallari **52**
- 9- Daniel T. **Potts**: The Persian Gulf in the Cosmographia of the Anonymous Geographer of Ravenna, c. 700 AD **57**
- 10- Razieh **Tassob**: Language and Legend in Early Kushan Coinage: Progression and Transformation **71**

Book Reviews

- 11- Carlo G. **Cereti**: Review of Foltz, Richard. *Religions of Iran: From Prehistory to the Present*. London: Oneworld Publications, 2013. 314pp. ISBN 978-1-78074. **86**
- 12- Sajad **Amiri Bavandpour**: تذکره آرییل (وقایع نامه آریلا)، متن کهن اثر مؤلف ناشناس، ترجمه محمود فاضلی بیرجندی، تهران، مرکز دایره المعارف بزرگ اسلامی (مرکز پژوهش‌های ایرانی و اسلامی)، ۱۸۵ صص، ۱۳۹۰. **90**
- 13- Adam **Benkato**: Review of Barbati, Chiara. *The Christian Sogdian Gospel Lectionary E5 in Context*. Veröffentlichungen Zur Iranistik 81. Wien: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015.—357pp. **95**
- 14- Yazdan **Safae**: Aliyari Babolghani, Salman, *Tahrīr-e 'ilāmi-ye katibe-ye dāryuš-e bozorg dar bisotūn. pīšgoftār, daštur-e 'ilāmi-ye haḥāmanešī, ḥarfnevisī, tarḡome, moqābele bā tahrīrhāye digar, yāddāsthā va vāže-nāme [The Elamite Version of Darius the Great's Inscription at Bisotun. Introduction, grammar of Achaemenid Elamite, transliteration, Persian translation, comparison with other versions, notes and index]*, Tehran: Našr-e Markaz. 1394š/2015. Pp. 268. ISBN 978-964-213-272-0. **98**

dabj̄r

Digital Archive of Brief notes & Iran Review

No. 5.2018

ISSN: 2470 - 4040

© Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies & Culture
University of California, Irvine

Incantations For The Festival Of The Farmers And For The Consecration Of Gravel (*nīrang ī jashan ī burzigarān o nīrang ī sang-rēzā yaštān*)

Daštūr Firoze M. Kotwal

In priestly parlance the term *Sang-rēzā* is termed ‘*sakanjā*’ by priests in general. In many countries and cultures of the world the effective power of talismāns and various charms and amulets has been used with great faith by people who believe in the spiritual efficacy of such wonderful objects. The Jews as per their tradition write down certain passages from the Torah on pieces of leather or parchment and tie these amulets to their forehead or near the heart centre. This particular form of talisman was known as phylactery¹. The Muslims copy Arabic verses from the Quran, and use these as amulets. In the same manner, Zoroāstrians have certain short, effective prayers which they call *Nīrang*s. *Nīrang* is a *Pahlavi* word which can also be read as *Nērōg*, which means strength, power. The belief that a spiritual power, *Nērōg*, is present within the body of the *Nīrang* is very old. Zoroāstrians also have a tradition of using the cotton thread (Guj. *dōrō*) consecrated during the enactment of the *Vendidād* ritual as a talismān serving as a charmed thread. In order to maintain the purity of this *Vendidād* thread it is kept safely at home in a small metal box.

As a specimen a short *Nīrang* of *Vanant Yašt* along with its translation is given below:

¹- See Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, A Judeo-Persian Amulet, *Irano-Judaica II, Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture Throughout the Ages*, Jerusalem 1990, pp.199-216).

Nīrang

Kul balā dafe shavad, O dīv O daruj O parī O kaftār O seherān, O bād akhtahed akhi darde shekam haft andām, khalale shaitān O khātar parīshān, O khalale demāgh shaitān khātar parīshān bād; O dar nazar barvīzan tā dīdane navasht O mānand hamchunīn balā dafe shavad. Ašaone Ašəm Vohūī

Translation

“All the calamities, the demons, liars, witches, rapacious persons, wizards, foul wind, pain, stomach pain and pain of the seven limbs of the body, evil produced by the Evil Spirit, woes of the heart and sickness of the brain, foul wind producing uneasiness of the mind, evil eye and evil resulted by seeing wicked men, and such other similar calamities may vanish and disappear!”

Jashan ī Burzīgarān

The “Festival of the Farmers” (*Jashan ī Burzīgarān*) is celebrated when *Spendarmad Rōz* and *Spendarmad Māh* coincide on the Zoroāstrian calendar. [fn. When the day and the month coincide in the Zoroāstrian calendar it is called a *Parab/Parabh* in Parsi Gujarati, *Parva* in Skt. and *Guj.*, meaning festival]. *Spendarmad Ameshāspand* is a female *Yazata* who is seen as the guardian of the earth and presides over virtuous women. The prosperity of the world depends on the fertility of the earth and all human beings depend upon the earth for food and shelter. Thus rendering the earth pure and fertile for crops to be planted is regarded as a meritorious act in Zoroāstrianism.

The sanctification of the earth on *Spendarmad Rōz* and *Spendarmad Māh* is a very old Zoroāstrian tradition from the days when there were no pesticides or insecticides to destroy pests attacking the crops. In order that harmful insects, noxious creatures, serpents and worms may not harm the earth and the crops sown, the farmers of ancient Iran showed their reverence to the earth by performing this *Jashan*. On the *Jashan ī Burzīgarān*, the *Pahlavi Nīrang* for destroying vermin called *Nīrang ī Khrafstar Zadan* (Incantation for smiting noxious creatures) is also ceremonially written as a spiritual weapon to destroy insects and pests which attack the crops planted by the Zoroāstrian farmers.

The Ink for Writing the Nīrang

The person preparing the *Nīrang* must have a bath, do the *pādyāb-kusī*, and then prepare the ink for the *Nīrang*, making sure that all the vessels and implements to be used for the purpose are washed and clean. Preferably well-water should be used for the ink. If this is not possible, then cold running water can be used.

This special ink is made from saffron (Guj. *kesar*). Take as much saffron as required for writing the *Nīrang* and pound it into fine powder. Warm the water collected earlier and mix saffron powder gradually in this warm water, making just enough ink required for writing the *Nīrang*. If any ink remains after writing the *Nīrang*, it should be cast away carefully in the garden or under the shade of a plant or tree.

Paper for Writing the Nīrang

Clean white paper should be used. The *Nīrang* is written with the ink prepared from saffron as

described above. Some *Nīrang* are written as amulets and worn around the arm or neck. There are some *Nīrang* where the paper on which the *Nīrang* is written using saffron ink is soaked in pure well-water and when the saffron diffuses in the water, the person for whom the *Nīrang* is written is asked to drink this yellow coloured water infused and made holy by the *Nīrang* written in saffron ink. A small incense burner (Guj. *lobāndān*) is kept burning alongside and as the person drinks the holy water, blessings are sought from the fire to rid the person of affliction and restore good health.

According to the *Persian Rivāyats*, this *Nīrang* should be inscribed on deer leather, or on saffron-coloured paper and placed near the entrance of the house. First a priest knowing Pahlavi does his *pādyāb-kuštī*, recites his obligatory prayers, takes the *Bāj* of *Ardibehesht* (*pa nām-e yazdān...mazdađātānqm yazamaide* as mentioned at the beginning of the *Ardibehesht Yašt*) and with the *padān* (Pers. *panām*, ‘mouth veil’) tied over his mouth, writes the *Nīrang* in Pahlavi silently as he is still within the *Bāj* format. After this, he leaves the *Bāj* of *Ardibehesht* (*Yađā Ahū Vairiō 2. Yasnəmca... Kərfə Mozd* as mentioned at the end of the *Ardibehesht Yašt*).

The scriptures clearly state that the *Bāj* of *Ardibehesht* should be taken, as *Ardibehesht Ameshāspand* is a divine physician who heals spiritual, mental and physical ailments. Just as the *Pahlavi Nīrang* is a formula for removing the power of the evil forces, similarly the *Ardibehesht Yašt* is efficacious in destroying the creatures that bring harm to man. This *Pahlavi Nīrang* to annihilate harmful creatures from one’s house is known as *ruq a-ī kazhdum* ‘written spells against the bite of scorpions and other obnoxious vermin’.

Transcription of the *Pahlavi Nīrang*

Pad nām ī dādār Ohrmazd

*rōz spandarmad az māh spandarmad baštam zofr hamāg khrafštarān dēwān drōzān jādūgān
parīgān sāštārān kīkān karafān wināhgārān duzān gurgān śtahmagān pad nām ī yazd pad
nām ī nēw frēdōn pad nām ī tištar śtārag pad nām ī sadwēs śtārag pad nām ī wanand śtārag
pad nām ī awēšān śtāragān haptoiring. Ašəm vohū vahištəm aštī uštā aštī uštā ahmāi hīiat
ašāi vahištāi ašəm.*

Translation of the *Pahlavi Nīrang*

(I begin) in the name of the Creator Ohrmazd. On the day Spendarmad of the month Spendarmad, I fasten the mouth of all noxious creatures, demons, liars, sorcerers, witches, tyrants, evil rulers and evil preachers, sinners, thieves, wolves and oppressors, in the name of the Adorable One, in the name of the brave Faredun, and in the name of Star Canis Major (Tishtar), Star Canopus (Sadwes), Star Vega (Wanand) and the Constellation called the Great Bear (Haptoiring). Truth is the best good; it is happiness. Happiness is to him who is truthful for the sake of best truth.

In all, 4 stars are mentioned.

1- *Tishtar*, Av. *tishtrya* (from rt. *tish-* ‘to shine’). *Tishtar* is identified as Star Sirius in the constellation Canis Major. He is the Southern leader of the stars. As a *Yazata* he presides over rains and is the opponent of *Apaosha*, the Demon of Drought. He is considered as the chief star acting as supervisor over all stars.

- 2- *Sadwes*, Av. *satavaesa* ‘having a hundred habitations’. He is also the Southern leader of the stars and opponent of the planet Venus. The identity of *Sadwes* is disputed. Some identify this star with Canopus in the constellation Carina and others with Antares in the constellation Scorpions.
- 3- *Wanand*, Av. *vanant* ‘one who smites or destroys’. *Wanand* is identified with Vega in the constellation Lyra. He is the destroyer of evil creatures. He is the Western leader of the stars. He is entrusted with the passes and gates of Mt. Alburz to drive away the demons and demonesses so that they may not cut off the passages of the sun, moon and stars. In Navsari a *jashan* ceremony is performed annually in honour of *Wanand Yazad* on the day *Hormazd* of the month *Frawardin* in *Aiwisruthrem Gāh*, since the star appears in the west at night of that day.
- 4- *Haftoiring*, Av. *haptoiring*. He is the Northern leader of the stars. He is in the constellation of the Great Bear Ursa Major. He is entrusted with the gate and passage of hell for keeping back the demons who are in opposition to the celestial sphere and the constellations of the Zodiac. Formerly a *Drōn* ceremony in honour of *Haftoiring* used to be performed on the day *Tir* of any month, because *Haftoiring* is a co-worker of *Tishtrya*.

After pasting the *Nīrang* on the wall of the house closest to the front door, according to tradition, the house is fumigated with a combination of storax (*ištarak*), shavings from the horn of a sheep or a goat, frankincense (*bōy*), wild rue (*sipand*), and cotton seeds, which are gently burned on a slow fire. Storax is a gum-like resin that oozes out of trees, and wild rue is an herb found growing in Iran. When these plants are burned the smoke emitted is very strong and acrid. Shakespeare and other classical writers term rue as the “herb of grace” as it has the properties to exorcise evil.

In the *Rivāyats* there is an injunction to colour cattle, goat, sheep and fowl with saffron on this important day. But in the villages of India, on *Bahman Māh*, *Bahman Rōz*, which is celebrated as the *parabh* (festival) of *Bahman* or the ‘feast of cattle’, they are coloured with a vermillion powder (*kanku*).

Nīrang ī Sang-rēzā Yaštan (Nīrang for Consecrating the Gravel)

On *Spendarmad Māh*, *Spendarmad Rōz*, in honour of the earth, the priest prepares the gravel for consecration in the precincts of the *Dar-ī Mihr* or any other place which is purified for the ceremonial purpose. This act of consecration is called *Nīrang ī Sang-rēzā* (Arabic: *sang-reza* ‘gravel’). During this ritual, the priest inserts a knife in the purified sand and takes the *Bāj* of *Spendarmad Ameshāspand*. He then intones the following *Nīrang* and recites it silently:

Māh spendārmad, rōz spendārmad, rōz spendārmad, māh spendārmad, spendārmad māh, spendārmad rōz, baštam zahr va wiš o zoḡr ī hamā xrafaštārān, pa nām ō nīrōē nēw farīdun va ayāriē vanant štarē hōrmazd-dāt, gōāfrangān rawā bād, aēdūn bād, ašem baēšaz bād, zanam ōzanam: gunāh guzārašne kerfe rawān dušāram rāy.

“On the month Spandārmad, day Spandārmad, the day Spandārmad of the month Spandārmad, Spandārmad month and Spandārmad day, I bind the poison and venom (spewing from) the mouth of all noxious creatures, in the name of heroic and brave

Farīdūn and with the help of the Star Vega, created by Hormazd; may it (i.e. the *Nīrang*) be steadfast and current: may it be so; may righteousness be healing. I smite and kill (all noxious creatures). May sins be atoned for with (the increase of) good deeds for the delight of the soul”.

After completing the *Nīrang* the priest recites one *Yaθā Ahū Vairiō* aloud and upon the word *šiiāoθananqm* he turns the gravel up and down with the knife as mentioned in *Pāw-mahal* manuscripts. After repeating this process seven times, he leaves the *Bāj* of *Spendārmad*, and the gravel which is consecrated in this manner is sprinkled in all corners of the house, as well as in the fields, thus ensuring the removal of noxious creatures from the area for the whole year around.

Among the extant *Nīrangs*, there are some in which King Farīdūn is remembered and his assistance is sought. Farīdūn Āthwyān was a spiritual healer who is credited with having found many cures for physical ailments. For this reason, in the Pahlavi text of the *Dādeštān ī Dēnīg*, he is given the title of *Pur-Bēshaz i.e.*, one who is full of remedies. In the present times also, many religious-minded Zoroastrians commission a *Bāj* and *Āfrīnagān* in honour of Farīdūn Āthwyān, in order to be cured of physical ailments and be rid of difficulties. Their confidence in Farīdūn is based on the exaltation of Farīdūn as a proficient medic, in this *Nīrang*.

Some of our co-religionists through doubt and despair, during difficult times, lose sight of the right path and frequent ascetics (*bāwās*), demon-exorcists (*bhuvās*), anchorites (*sādhus*) and mendicants with long hair (*shevdās*) with no gainful result in sight. Instead, if they turn to our glorious religious traditions, they would certainly get miraculous help from the unseen divine powers of our faith.

With deep regret, it has to be stated that barring a few exceptions, these *Nīrangs* are not resorted to as much as they should. *Nīrangs* are precious hidden treasures which can be used with great effect by priests with a high degree of ritual power. The prevalent ignorance about these *Nīrangs* and their usage affects the ability of the community to use the miraculous powers of the *Nīrangs* for their well-being, and for the Parsi community this lapse makes it an even more difficult task to maintain the religious traditions of the faith.

It is hoped that devout Dašturs and Mobeds will make greater use of the above *Nīrang* on the *parabh* of *Spendārmad* and thus contribute towards the prosperity of the world.

