Hanns-Peter Schmidt (1930-2017) Gedenkschrift
xšnaošrahe ahurahe mazdā
Detail from above the entrance of Tehran's fire temple, 1286/1917–18. Photo by © Shervin Farridnejad
Contents

Notes
1- Samra Azarnouche: A Third Exegesis of the Avesta? New Observations on the Middle Persian Word ayārdag 1
2- Alberto Cantera: Textual performative variation in the Long Liturgy: the ceremonies of the last ten days of the year 16
3- Touraj Daryaei: Kārasāspa’s Wet Dream 50
4- Stephanie W. Jamison: A Golden Amulet in Vedic and Aveštan 57
5- William W. Malandra: Artaxerxes’ ‘paradise’ 67
6- Antonio Panaino: Temper and self-control in the Persian King’s ideal Portrait 72
7- Antonio Panaino: The Aveštan Priestly College and its Installation 86
8- Daniel T. Potts: Arboriculture in ancient Iran: Walnut (Juglans regia), plane (Platanus orientalis) and the “Radde dicūm” 101
9- Nicholas Sims-Williams: A Newly Identified Sogdian Fragment from the Legend of Saint George 110
10- Martin Schwartz: A Preliterate Acrostic in the Gathas: Crosstextual and Compositional Evidence 116
11- Daštur Firoze M. Kotwal: The Zoroastrian Nīrangdīn Ritual and an Old Pahlavi Text with Transcription 125
12- Michael Witzel: (On) The reimport of Veda traditions to Kashmir in the early 15th century 134
13- Jamsheed K. Choksy and Narges Nematollahi: The Middle Persian Inscription from a Shipwreck in Thailand: Merchants, Containers, and Commodities 144
14- Mahmoud Omidsalar: Of Teeth, Ribs, and Reproduction in Classical Persian 151
15- Velizar Sadovski: Nominalkomposita, Neowurzelbildungen und zugrundeliegende syntaktische Konstruktionen im Veda und dem Avešta 156
Hanns-Peter Schmidt (1930-2017) Gedenkschrift

The 6th volume of DABIR is a Gedenkschrift to honour Hanns-Peter Schmidt (1930-2017), an excellent German scholar of Indo-Iranian studies, who mainly worked on the Vedas and the Gāthās, as well as Indian mythology and the Zoroastrian religion.
This volume of Dabir was supported by Ms. Mary Oloumi in memory of her father, Iraj Oloumi
A long time ago, the great Indologist Louis Renou commented that the Máryas exhibit characteristics which are partly erotic and partly militaristic (Renou 1958: 49; Dumézil 1969: 71). It was, however, Stig Wikander, in his work on the Indo-Iranian Männerbnud, that singled out the hero Karasāspa (MP. Garšāsp / P. Garšāsb) as the ultimate Márya hero in the pre-Zoroastrian world of Iran (Wikander 1938). Wikander touched upon the special relation between this hero and the deity Vayu Yašt XV (Wikander 1941: 162-177: with a differing opinion see Lincoln, 1981: 79, n.134). In this essay, written in memory of my teacher, Hanns-Peter Schmidt, I would like to touch upon the erotic or sexual aspect of Karasāspa, who exhibits the same Männerbnud aspect identified by Wikander, ultimately preventing him from entering the Zoroastrian heaven.

This study explores the sin(s) of Karasāspa, a nebulous hero in the Zoroastrian literature but one who has one of the longest literary vitas in the Iranian world, from the Avesta to the Pahlavi and Persian literature. While several sins are associated with this hero, specifically his extinguishing of the fire in Zoroastrian literature, I would like to suggest that it was Karasāspa's overtly sexual and licentious nature that caused him so much troubles. His sexual affairs, especially with the Iranian nymph Pairīka, was against Zoroastrian mores and values, which makes it difficult for this wily hero of the remote past to be rehabilitated. While

1- I would like to thank Dr. M. Omidsalar and Dr. Sh. Farridnejad for their help and material for writing this article.
his many feats and smiting of dragons, monsters and evil characters partly redeems him, he is made to stay in deep sleep till the end of time. At the time of resurrection, Kərəsāspa will partake in the Zoroastrian eschatological act of Zoroastrian heroics, which allows him to enter the House of Songs.

There are only a few scholarly studies on this all-important Indo-Iranian hero, Kərəsāspa / Krāsva (West 1882; Hussing 1911; Christensen 1931; Molé 1951; Nyberg 1975; Eduljee 1983; Sarkārātī 1378; Skjærvø 2012). In the Indic literature, he is a minor figure and appears only a few times in the Viṣṇu Purāṇas, as well as in the Rāmāyaṇa. There is very little in terms of identifiable aspects between the Iranian Karasasp and Indic Krāsva. The only commonality that one finds is the weapon(s), used by other heroes (Rāma and Rostam) to defeat their enemies. In the Rāmāyaṇa (1.21.13-14), Krāsva’s sons, born of Prajāpati’s daughters, provide Rāma extraordinary weapons (Duémzil 1986: 5), while in the Šāhnāmeh Roštam is said to hold the club of Sām, which was once with Narīmān and first with Karasasp (Molé 1951: 131-132; Duémzil 1986: 6-7).

On the other hand, Karasasp appears in the Avesta in a number of places (Yašt xix.38-44; Hom Yašt ix.10-11; Yašt v.37-38; xiii.61; xv.28; Widēwdād i.9). In Pahlavi literature, he is most prominently discussed in the Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān i Dēnīg (Henceforth PRADD), along with in the 14th Fragard of the Ninth book of the Dēnkard, as well as the Rivāyat of Dārāb Hormazdyār i.61-6 (Nyberg 1975: 379-381). Other minor passages from Pahlavi texts have also been collected by Eduljee (1983), but they do not add much to our knowledge regarding the question that is being studied here.

Kərəsāspa is not really an enigmatic and forgotten hero. If we consider Persian epic material and keep in mind Pahlavi sections mentioning him, we could even say that he is quite well-known (Skjærvø 1998: 162). The Garšāsbnāmeh is a very good reason for accepting the longue durée importance of this hero of the past, who not only does his dragon slaying and killing of villains in Avesta, but continues to exert a larger role on the popular imagination in the medieval period.
The Sins

**Karsāsp**’s sins. In the Avešta Kərəsāspa is mentioned to have done a deed which appears in the Hōm Yašt and the Widēwdād 1.9. The first sin appears as follows (9.11):

\[
yō janat̰ ažīm sruuarəm
yim aspō.garəm nərə.garəm
yim višauuaŋtom zairitəm
yim upairi viš raoδat̰
ārštiiō.barəza zairitəm
yim upairi kərəsāspō
aiiaŋha pitium pačata
ā rapiθbīnəm zruuānəm
tafsat̰ča hō mairiū x′isat̰ča
frąš aiiaŋhō frasparat̰
yaešiiaŋtīm āpom parą̊ ŋ h ā t̰
par̰š tarštō apatacat̰
naire.manā kərəsāspō
\]

(Kərəsāspa) who killed the horny serpent, the horse devouring, man devouring, the poisonous, yellow horned serpent, over whom yellowish poison spurted up to the height of a spear shaft, on whom Kərəsāspa cooked food, in a metal (pot) at noon time, the scoundrel became hot, and began to sweat, he dashed forth from (under) the metal (pot) he cast boiling water about, trembling, he ran off to the side, the manly-minded Kərəsāspa

This passage is curious in that Kərəsāspa, who still carries the epithet of *naire.manā* (manly-minded), fearfully runs off from the top of the dragon for having spilled boiling water! This passage has been connected with the major sin of Kərəsāspa by important scholars (for example Boyce 1976: 103; Williams 160, n. 29). In the Zoroastrian literature, he is not allowed into heaven for having extinguished the fire (spilled the water of some sorts on the fire).

This sin appears in the PRADD and other Zoroastrian Persian texts. The extinguishing of the fire by Kərəsāspa, however, may be related to another tradition. According to the Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz, the sin which Kərəsāspa commits is more meaningful, although late. The interpreter of Yasna 9.11 states:
And as for the dragon which he speaks of having killed, he (himself) was hungry and as the fire fell one moment later upon the fire-wood which he had placed below the post, he smote the fire with a club and scattered it” (Dahbhar 1932/1999: 519).

The second sin of Karasasp, which he committed when being followed by the Pairika Xnqāaitī, a nymph fashioned by the Evil Spirit in the first chapter of the Widēwdād, the land of Vaēkərəta (Wikander 1938: 38; Wikander 194: 204; Christensen 1943: 28-32), is probably the most important and heinous of his misdeeds mentioned in the Widēwdād (1.9). The Pahlavi version provides commentaries that are of interest (1.9):

\[
\text{haftom az gyāgān ud rōstāgan ā-m pahlom frāz brēhēnīd man kē Ohrmazd ham Kābul i duš-sāyag [u-š duš-sāyagīh ēd kū sāyag i draxtān pad tan wad ašt kē ān i kōftan gōwēd] u-š pad ān ā petyāragīh frāz kirrēnīd gannāg mēnōg purr-marg ān ā parīg-kāmagih [ān i uzdēs-paristagih] kē-š abāgēnid Karšāsp [kū-š āh kard awēšān-iz āh kunēd nē pad ād]}
\]

“I, who am Ohrmazd, fashioned forth seventh, as the best of places and settlements, Kābul of the evil shadows its evil shadowiness is that the shade of the trees is bad to the body. There is one who says: “That of the mountains”]. Then, the Evil Spirit, full of death, counter created the witch desire [idol-worship], which followed Karšāsp [he practiced it; they also practice it unlawfully]. (Moazami 2014: 34-35).

The Avestan Widēwdād has Vaēkərəta which is identified with Kābul in the Pahlavi Widēwdād, but the true location is a matter of debate. Grenet suggests Urgūn, in the Tarnak valley, south of Hindukush (Grenet 2005: 39-41; Grenet 2015: 27-28). In earlier scholarship, Vaēkərəta had been identified with Gandhāra (Levi 1915: 67; Henning 1947, pp. 52-53; Gnoli 2011). Most importantly for our purpose it has been suggested that Vaēkereta derived from *vayu-kṛta, “made by Vayu,” connecting the land to the heroic epic cycle of Karasasp (Nyberg, 1933/1966: 300 & 317; Wikander 1941). In the Avestan version, the Evil Spirit creates Pairika Xnqāaitī (pairikąm yäm xnqāaiti), who, in order to harm the hero attaches herself onto (upaŋhacat), or more colloquially, jumps on Karasasp. One should say a few words about the word pairikā / parīg and, more specifically, about Pairikā Xnqāaitī, who appears twice in the Widēwdād (1.9 and 19.5). Janda (2006) argues four possibilities for the etymology and meaning of pairikā. His work is further discussed by Schwartz (2008), regarding this old Iranian female nymph / concubine (Pokorny 1955: 789); Jamison witch (2009: 320), and most convincingly by Schwartz, in taking Pairikā as surrounding female succubus (2008: 5), which may also be called a nymph (for general remarks, see Adhami 1990). I very much agree with Schwartz’s idea of Pairikā being succubus – female demons who have intercourse with men during their sleep – who latches to Karasasp at night, in his dreams. Equally important is Omidsalar’s view, which considers Pairika as the “nymph of sexual gratification” (Omidsalar 2015). As we shall see, this aspect of Pairikā is abundantly attested in Iranian folklore and mythology. In the Zoroaṣṭrian and Persian literary tradition, the Parī is known as being a flirtatious woman who chases men and tricks them (Mazdapour 1381: 204).

Specifically regarding Karasasp, in both the well-known Šahnāmeh (1985: 44-49) and the less-known Šāmnāmeh (1933: 90; Sarkārati 1938: 278-279), the Pari named Ālam-āfrūz, who abducts Sām, or Paridukht, plays the same role as the Pairika Xnqāaitī. Similarly, in the Iskandarnaṁeh, the Pari kidnap their victims in their sleep (Afshar 1343: 361, 383-385, 631 641), which is connected with the Avestan tradition. While in Persian literature the Pari have lost their evil connotations, their hyper-sexuality and desire are made abundantly
clear (Afsharī 1384: 49), often turning into beautiful and desirable women (Raštégārinejad & Bāgheri 1394: 70). Lastly, one should mention the etymology proposed by Güntert (1913: 203), also accepted by Sarkarati (1378: 8), associating xnąθaitī with Greek κνήθω, meaning “to scratch,” or “to itch,” (jucken, kitzeln), i.e., having sexual desire (Güntert 1913: 202; Sarkarati 1378: 8, f.21).

In view of this suggestion, the name of the daughter of the sovereign of China, who marries Karasaspa in the Sāmnāmeh, makes perfect sense (Afsharī 1384: 50). Parīdukht “Daughter of Parī,” harkens back to the Pairika from this Persian epic in which she steals Karasaspa but is ultimately slain. Also of importance is that Karasaspa was in a deep sleep, which may have been brought by Aveštan Būsyaštā- / Pahlavi Būšāsp, until the time of renovation (Sarkarati 138: 259). The evolution of Būsyaštā needs not be discussed here - suffice to say that she was regarded as the demoness of sleep and shortness of breath (Malandra 1990), a sort of a nightmare. J. Darmesteter links Būsyaštā to Xnθaitī and Jahī (whore), two female storm demons, and explained Būsyaštā’s epithets as reflecting the lightning-flash of Xnθaitī (Darmesteter 1877: 181; Malandra 1990).

Is it then possible that Būsyaštā was able to bring the sleep that allowed the Pairika Xnθaitī to latch onto Karasaspa and copulate with him, hence creating a sinful state? Can one go even further and suggest that the spilling of the water committed by Karasaspa in Yasna I.9, is a metaphor for his semen (Schwartz 2008: 5 & in private correspondence), hence a wet dream? Certainly, in the Zoroastrian religion, Būsyaštā is identified with the delusion and pollution of dreams (Malandra 1990). According to Daštür Borzū, Būsyaštā is specifically associated with nocturnal pollution in the Persian Rivayats (Dhabhar 1932: 390; Malandra 1990). In both Zoroastrian (Malandra 1990) and Islamic tradition in Iran, šeytūnī bāzī is related to having a wet dream, which is also associated with Būsyaštā.

In the Pahlavi version, the Aveštan pairikǎm yṃn xnθaitī is rendered as “witch-desire” (parig-kāmagīh), interpreted as “idol-worship” (uzdēs-paristagīh), and Karasaspa is said to be its first practitioner. This exegesis is cited in the Bundahišn (31.17-18), where the “witch-desire” is said to be the same as Sām’s worship of the dēws, although another Zoroastrian authority states that it referred to the sin of not tying the kustī (wišād-dwārišnīh) (Skjærvø 2011).

I would like to suggest that the Pahlavi version attempts to take the meaning of the Aveštan version towards another direction, i.e. Karasaspa’s paganism, while we can still see that the “real sin” is something else. I take the kustī wišād-dwārišnīh in the sense of having the Kustī, or garment open, i.e. being ready or having partaken in sexual activity, and parig-kāmagīh, literally as Pairika-desire or Parig-lustfulness. I suggest that Karasaspa is seduced in his sleep through the sexual desire of Pairika xnθaitī. As a result of this nocturnal attack, Karasaspa has a wet-dream and commits the sin of copulating with an evil female nymph of the Zoroastrian world. In the Zoroastrian tradition the spilling of semen without the intention of procreation is a sin, and those who engage in any other form of sexual activity have to beg for forgiveness (Daryaee 2002: 103-105).

This act, in a way, is echoed in popular oral tradition, where the offspring of their union came to be known as Narimān-Parī, the product of the union with Roštām, who replaced Karasaspa as the ultimate hero and the daughter of the king of the Parīš at the time of Kay Kavūs (Anjavi Šērāzī 1363: 71). Furthermore, not only Roštām, but also Sām is mentioned as having engaged in sexual intercourse with the Parī Gol-Afrūz (Anjavi Šērāzī 1363: 242). Either way, our hero and his offspring are implicated in an act which, in the Zoroastrian tradition, was considered a serious sin. Somehow, a distant tradition about kings and heroes related to the Pairikas survived in the Persian epic and oral tradition of the Islamic period. However, this story has been made into the reading staple of Medieval Iranian society, while forgetting the sinful aspect of such a tradition.
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