

ALMUT HINTZE

# Avestan

Introduction – Part 2: Avestan texts and ritual practice



**MUYA** —  
**The Multimedia Yasna Project**

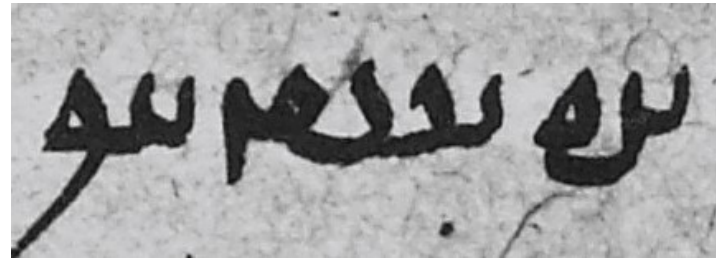


# Roadmap

- The Avestan texts
- Their use in Zoroastrian rituals

## The word “Avesta”

- Middle Persian word  
spelt *'p̄(y)st'k* in Pahlavi script:



Ms. Pt4 fol. 3v9

- *avastāk* in Avestan script (Pāzand):

## The word “Avesta”

- Middle Persian word, spelt *’p̄(y)st’k* in Pahlavi script, *avastāk* in Avestan script (Pāzand).

Explanations:

- 1. < Av. *\*upa-stāyaka-* ‘praise’, from verb *upa-stu* (Bartholomae, Kellens)
- 2. OIr. *\*api-štāka-* ‘admonition’ from verb *api-stā* (Henning, Sundermann):
  - cf. OIr. *\*apištāwan-* in Sogd. *(ə)pštāwan* (*’pšt’w’nh* in Sogd. script, *’pšt’wn* in Manichaean script), cf. OP *ništāwan-* ‘order’
  - Christian Sogdian, *pšt’wn* [paštāwan] translates Syriac *dytq’* = Grk. *διαθήκη* ‘disposition, testament’

## Language stages of Avestan

- Old Avestan
- Young Avestan
- Middle Avestan

## Position of Old Avestan texts in the Yasna

- Occupy chapters 28–54 of the 72-chapter Yasna
- Include 17 hymns grouped into 5 Gathas ‘songs’

## The five Gathas

- Y 27.13 : Yaθā ahū vairiiō prayer
  - Y 28–34 : Ahunavaiti Gatha – 7 hymns
  - Y 43–46 : Uštavaiti Gatha – 4 hymns
  - Y 47–50 : Spentamainyu Gatha – 4 hymns
  - Y 51 : Vohuxšaθra Gatha – 1 hymn
  - Y 53 : Vahištōišti Gatha – 1 hymn
- Y 54.1 : Airiïaman išiia prayer

## The Yasna Haptaṅhāiti and YAv. texts within the Older Avesta

- Y 35.1 : YAv.
- Y 35.2 – 41 Yasna Haptaṅhāiti (YH) : OAv.
- Y 42 YAv. Praises of the YH
- Y 52 YAv.



## Metre

- Gathas
  - Metre: syllable counting
  - Metrical – stichic style
  - Stanzas of isosyllabic verse lines:
    - a fixed number of verse lines
    - fixed number of syllables per verse line
- Yasna Haptanḥāiti
  - Rhythmic pattern
  - Non-metrical, rhythmic style
  - No fixed number of lines

## The composition of the Yasna



## The performance of the Yasna: Y 34.4-7



# The Multimedia Application

## Interactive features



## Film with subtitles



## Filming & watching in Virtual Reality



The chief priest, Adil Bhesania, during the filming



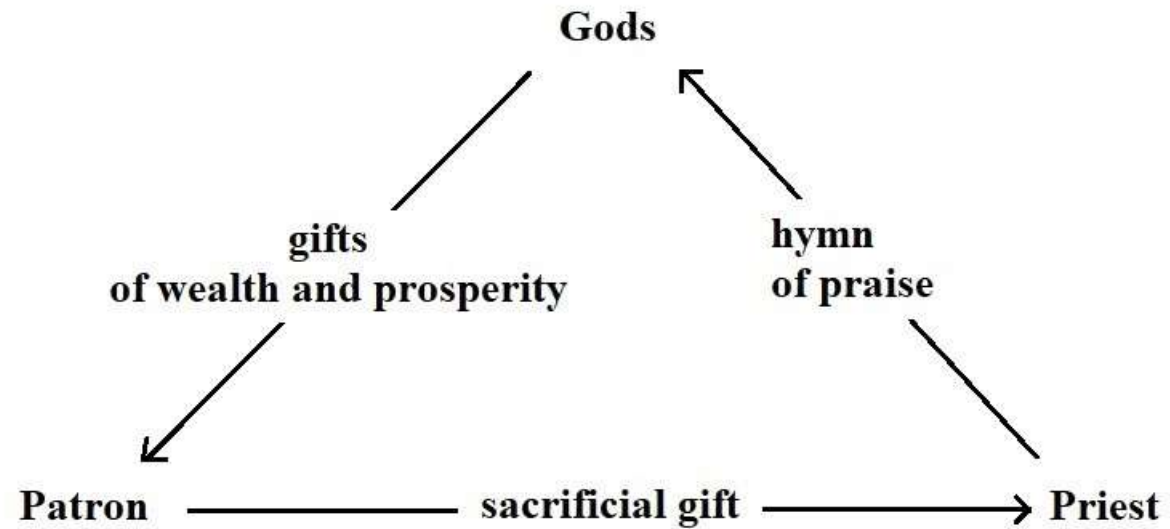
Adil Bhesania and Dr Ramiyar Karanjia, Principal of the Dadar Athornan Institute, Mumbai, and MUYA collaborator

## The Yasna in Virtual Reality



## Indo-Iranian Ritual

Triangular arrangement  
of Sacrificial Parties



## Other ceremonies attested in manuscripts

- Visperad Ceremony
- Vidēvdād Ceremony
- Vištāsp Yašt Ceremony



## The Visperad Ceremony

- Name: Av. *vīspe ratauuo* ‘all ratus’
- Solemn ceremony celebrated at the six seasonal festivals, the Gahambaras
- Textual substitutions for passages of the Yasna
- Additional text passages inserted at certain points
- Most insertions are in into the Staota Yesniia (Y 14–58)

*mā.ciš mē āṅhqm zaoθranqm fraṅ<sup>v</sup>harāt  
yā nōiṭ staōtanqm yesniiānqm  
āmātō vīspe ratauuō*

‘Let no one drink from these libations,  
unless he is apt at (reciting) the Vispe Ratauuo of the Staōta Yesniia.’ Yt 10.122

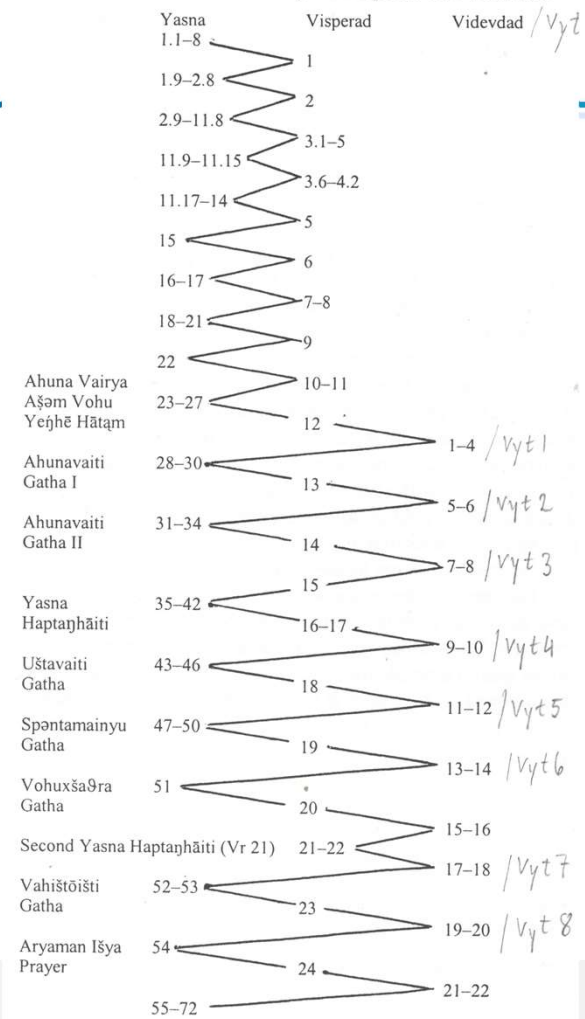
## SUBSTITUTION OF TEXT IN THE DIFFERENT CEREMONIES

Yasna	Rapihwin	Visperad	Vidēvdād	Vištāsp Yašt
Y 0.1	YiR 0.1	Y 0.1	VS 0.1	Vyts 0.1
2 ašdēm vohū (1x)	2 ašēm vohū (1x)	2 ašēm vohū (1x)	2 ašēm vohū (1x)	2 ašēm vohū (1x)
4 ašēm vohū (3x)	4 ašēm vohū (3x)	4 ašēm vohū (3x)	4 ašēm vohū (3x)	4 ašēm vohū (3x)
6 frauuarāne	6 frauuarāne	6 frauuarāne	6 frauuarāne	6 frauuarāne
mazdaiiasnō	mazdaiiasnō	mazdaiiasnō	mazdaiiasnō	mazdaiiasnō
zaraθuštriš	zaraθuštriš	zaraθuštriš	zaraθuštriš	zaraθuštriš
vīdaēuuō	vīdaēuuō	vīdaēuuō	vīdaēuuō	vīdaēuuō
ahura.ṭkaēšō	ahura.ṭkaēšō	ahura.ṭkaēšō	ahura.ṭkaēšō	ahura.ṭkaēšō
<b>8 hāuuanōe</b>	<b>8 rapiθβināi</b>	<b>8 hāuuanōe</b>	<b>8 ušahināi</b>	<b>8 ušahināi</b>
10 ašaōne ašahe	10 ašaōne ašahe	10 ašaōne ašahe	10 ašaōne ašahe	10 ašaōne ašahe
raθβe	raθβe yasnāica	raθβe	raθβe	raθβe
yasnāica	vahmāica	yasnāica	yasnāica vahmāica	yasnāica vahmāica
vahmāica	xšnaōθrāica	vahmāica	xšnaōθrāica	xšnaōθrāica
xšnaōθrāica	frasastaiiaēca	xšnaōθrāica	frasastaiiaēca	frasastaiiaēca
frasastaiiaēca	<b>12 frādaṭ.šauue.</b>	frasastaiiaēca	<b>12 bərəjināi</b>	<b>12 bərəjināi</b>
<b>12 sāuuarḡhōe</b>	<b>zaṅtumāica</b>	<b>12 sāuuarḡhōe</b>	<b>nəmāniiāica</b>	<b>nəmāniiāica</b>
<b>vīsiiāica</b>	14 ašaōne ašahe	<b>vīsiiāica</b>	14 ašaōne ašahe	14 ašaōne ašahe
14 ašaōne ašahe	raθβe yasnāica	14 ašaōne ašahe	raθβe yasnāica	raθβe yasnāica
raθβe yasnāica	vahmāica	raθβe yasnāica	vahmāica	vahmāica
vahmāica	xšnaōθrāica	vahmāica	xšnaōθrāica	xšnaōθrāica
xšnaōθrāica	frasastaiiaēca	xšnaōθrāica	frasastaiiaēca	frasastaiiaēca
frasastaiiaēca		frasastaiiaēca		

# Ceremonies based in the Visperad

Vidēvdād and Vištāsp Yašt portions  
intercalated into the Visperad

The Yasna extended by the Visperad and Videvdad



## Other intercalation ceremonies

- Bayān Yasn: Yašts intercalated into the Visperad
  - One of the ritual functions of the Yašts
  - Ceremony is lost today

## The Yašts

- 21 hymns to a wide range of divine beings
  - with cognates in the Vedic pantheon:
    - Haoma (= Vedic Soma; Y 9–11, 101 Yt 20),
    - Miθra (= Vedic Mitra; Yt 10)
    - Vereθragna (Yt 14; cf. Vedic *vṛtrahán-* ‘breaking resistance’)
  - Iranian only:
    - Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā (Yt 5),
    - Druvāspā (Yt 9)
    - ‘glory’ (*x<sup>v</sup>arənah-*, Yt 18 and 19)

## The Yašts

- Personified Zoroastrian religious concepts:
  - Sraōša ('attentiveness, obedience', Yt 11, Y 56–57)
  - Rašnu ('judgement', Yt 12)
  - Fravašis ('choice', Yt 13)
  - Cistā ('insight', Yt 16 = Dēn Yašt)
  - Aši Vaŋ<sup>h</sup>ī ('good reward', Yt 17)
  
- Main Zoroastrian deities:
  - Ahura Mazdā (Yt 1)
  - Amesha Spentas (Yt 2)
  - Aša (Yt 3)
  - Haurvatat (Yt 4)

## Khorde Avesta ‘Little Avesta’

- Niyāyišns ‘Praises’
- Āfrīnagān ‘Blessings’
- Sīroza ‘thirty days’
- Gāhs ‘watches’
- Patets ‘penitentiary prayers’,
- Nīrangš ‘purification rites’, etc.

Some manuscripts of the Khorde Avesta include all the Yashts, e.g. ms. E1,  
Others include only a selection of them.

Codex F1 (1591 CE): all the Yashts and the Niyāyišn only

## Texts of ritual instructions

- Hērbedestān ‘precepts for priests’
- Nērangestān ‘precepts for rituals’