

THE IDEA OF AN APOCALYPTIC FIRE ACCORDING TO THE OLD AND MIDDLE IRANIAN SOURCES

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Preliminary Remarks

The history of the religion of ancient Iran is mainly based on three primary sources. The first is the Avesta (first millennium BCE), for the most part ritual texts with a complicated structure and much debated genesis and transmission.¹ Because of the almost complete loss of the Western Iranian literary tradition, this (originally oral) text-corpus from Eastern Iran is our only literary, non-epigraphic witness of ancient Iran. The Pahlavi (Middle Persian) translation of these texts that was probably made in the Sasanian period (third to seventh centuries CE) provided the basis for the second religious text corpus: the theological treatises of Zoroastrian priests in the early Islamic period (ninth century CE). These treatises contain many conceptual elements that are unknown in the Avesta and its translation. An influence from the Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic traditions seems likely. The third text-corpus is the series of Iranian Manichaean texts. The oldest parts of the series are the writings of the founder Mani himself (third century CE). Manichaeism is in some parts closely related to Zoroastrianism, and it was considered, not without some reason, as a heresy by the Zoroastrian priests. However, one has to stress that Manichaeism is an “international” phenomenon that adopted many non-Iranian cultural and religious elements.

1 CANTERA, 2012.

These three text-corpora stand in a horizontal and vertical relation to each other. Vertical (i.e., sequential/diachronical and intra-religious) represents the relationship between the Avestan and the Pahlavi literature. Horizontal represents the relationship of the Pahlavi to the Manichaean literature: both corpora are corpora of Late Antiquity.

| | Zoroastrianism | | Manichaeism | | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|--|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1st mill. BCE | | Avesta (ritual, meta-ritual, exegetical texts) | | *OIr./Mir. influences | Antiquity | |
| | | ↓ | | ↓ | | |
| 3rd c. CE | | Pahlavi translation of + | → | Mani's writings + | | Late Antiquity |
| - 6th c. CE | Greek/Syriac influences | → (?) commentaries to the Avesta (the "Zand") | ↔ (?) | Manichaean literature | | |
| | | ↓ | | ↓ | | |
| 9. c. CE | | → theological literature in Pahlavi | ↔ | | | |

Table 1: Iranian religious literature in Antiquity and Late Antiquity

A reasonable method through which to approach the reconstruction of religious phenomena in Iran would be to view the phenomena involved from this double perspective involving vertical and horizontal relationships. Defining the perennial and the changing elements, kernels and agglomerations, etc., would surely be helpful in this respect. So too would the drawing up of chronologies related to the history of religious ideas in Iran. The idea of an apocalypse – and this idea is, as we shall see, essentially the idea of the end of the world in fire – is a good example upon which to base a historical analysis located in the aforementioned double bipolar field: Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism; Avesta and late antique religious text. The topic would also be a good case study with which to examine the participation of different, but closely related cultures (especially Iranian, Greek, and Judean) in one and the same phenomenon of religious and historical thinking, but it would be beyond the scope of this paper to analyze the tricky cultural interweavings in the detail they would require.

On the Relation of Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism

The relation of Zoroastrianism to Manichaeism differs according to the religious field under observation. The two religions match especially in their fundamental basic settings. Manichaean texts describe Manichaeism as “the religion of the ‘two principles’² (*dō bun/bunṽāh[īg]/buništ*)” or “of the ‘two principles and three times’”.³ The two principles here are the light and the darkness (resp. matter), or the two divine leaders associated with these two antagonistic realms. The three times involved are the period when light and matter were separate; the period when the light was mingled with darkness; the period when the light is liberated from the matter.⁴ The designation “religion of the two principles and three times” could also be used to describe Zoroastrianism. The Zoroastrian structuring of the world time also follows a threefold scheme⁵ (slightly different to Manichaeism, the third Zoroastrian period is the period of a long process of salvation). In the same way as Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism (the Zoroastrianism a) as it appears in the Avesta and in the Pahlavi literature, b) according to the various “schools”⁶) is based on two antagonistic principles, whose varying relation to one another gives the rhythm of the world time: the creation of the two realms, the pollution of matter, and the expulsion of demonic forces. It is, as already stated, not an untenable assertion when Mani is accused of heresy (= deceit) by the

2 The title of Mani’s *Šābuhragān* was *dw bwn ‘g š’ bwhrġ’n* (see the fragments M 475, M 477, M482, M 472); on the title *dw bwn* in the Parthian translation, see SUNDERMANN, 1986, p. 84, note 182; see also the Old Turkic *Iki Yiltiz Nom*, and Chinese *Erh-tsung ching* “book of the two principles” (MIK III 198 [T II D 171]) (see HUTTER, 1992, p. 146; RECK, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sabuhra-gan>). In Zoroastrianism, the *dō bun* terminology is prominent in *Dēnkard* 3 (early ninth century). This most important Pahlavi book is the attempt to define the *dō bun* concept (most of the chapters are structured according to this concept) and to demarcate it against the Manichaean concept.

3 On this formula, see HUTTER, 2015, pp. 478, 481.

4 On the variations of the scheme of the three times see STEIN, 2015.

5 This scheme is differently reworked (see Y 44.3-7; Y 37; Yt 13 [for these three texts see KELLENS, 2008; KELLENS, 2008-2009]; *Vīdēvdād*; Pahlavi sources), and in its latest stage a scheme of a world-time of 12,000 years of four times three millennia was established, a scheme that resembles the Manichaean three times four aeons, the hypostasises of the Father of Greatness.

6 See HAARBRÜCKER, 1850-1851 I, pp. 275-285.

Zoroastrians.⁷ Not only Zoroastrian key terms were borrowed by Mani, especially in the *Šābuhragān* fragments,⁸ but, as it seems, also the fundamental religious concepts, especially the concept of the *dō bun*. Among the twelve Manichaean dogmas (*handarz*) that are quoted and criticized in (the Zoroastrian text) Dk 3.200, the most important dogma is Mani's categorization of *gētīy* "material" as a *buništāg* "principle" (Dk 3.200.7; cf. the position of Ādurbād in Dk 3.199.7),⁹ and, *ipso facto*, its identification with evil. At least on the dogmatic surface, an opposite position is taken by Zoroastrians:¹⁰ only Ohrmazd and Ahreman, good and evil, are seen as principles. Notwithstanding this difference, *evil is a principle* in both religions. The consequence of this perspective is the denial of any possibility of communication and conciliation with evil. The concept of salvation necessarily implies a violent act, the apocalyptic end of the world.

For late antique Iran, these observations lead to two perspectives on, or explanations of, apocalyptic thinking:

- A more synchronic perspective would deal with the apocalyptic thinking of Manichaeism and later Zoroastrianism in the context of the body of thought surrounding the concept of redemption that is typical for Late Antiquity. Iranian apocalyptic thinking is ultimately a consequence of the negative world view of that period.
- A more diachronic perspective would (or at least could) describe Manichaeism and later Zoroastrianism as continuators of an Old Iranian, or even Indo-Iranian or Indo-European, apocalyptic concept (a concept that is not necessarily affiliated with the concept of the evil).

7 See (probably) Dd 71.9; ŠGW 10.58; Dk 3.200 (<*handarz* i> *druz astag Mānī* [B 169.21-171.1]). See also the famous chapter ŠGW 16 (DE MENASCE, 1945; SUNDERMANN, 2001). On the three types of heretics, see AiW 257 (cf. PYt 1.10 [CANTERA, 2004, pp. 189-191]; ZA I, p. 91).

8 COLDITZ, 2005.

9 Cf. Dk 3.150 (B 115.19-116.10; DkM 152.11-17).

10 However, Zoroastrian texts tend to reconstruct a proximity of matter and the Evil (e.g., only matter is infested with Ahreman/demons [however, Ahreman has no material substance, see GNOLI, 1995; SCHMIDT, 1996; PANAINO, 2001]; the earthly [and also the hellish] being is "dangerous", only the "spiritual" being [the paradisiacal being] is "undangerous"), cf. V 7.52, HN 2.16 (= Vyt 62), V 19.31; AWN 11.5, AWN 10.3, MX 2.149), and to give a preference to the immaterial [i.e., the soul] over the material.

Neither perspective is exclusive. Quite the contrary, a blending of both perspectives can bring to light the trivial insight that “the same is not the same”. This insight is unfortunately not generally accepted in the field of Iranian Studies, which remains dominated by the same old “Ur-fixation” and the reconstructive method of the Indo European Studies, with the consequence that history appears as mythology: as a permanent handing over of “original” concepts and ideas.

On Apocalyptic Elements in the Avesta

General Structures

The Avesta preserves in full neither cosmogonic nor apocalyptic accounts, and it is a much-debated question whether such accounts ever existed and acted as the pretext for the cosmogonic and apocalyptic Pahlavi texts. An examination of those Avestan collections/books that have had correspondences in the completely lost so-called Sasanian or Great Avesta,¹¹ the *Nask Vīdēvdād* and the *Yašts* (which probably once formed the *Nask Bayān*) shows that both *Nasks* followed similar overarching structuring principles.

The *Vīdēvdād* was modeled according to the scheme of the three times (the creation; the situation of the world; the expulsion of the evil).¹² The sequence of the *Yašts*¹³ follows the order of the spheres.¹⁴ The collection begins with Ahura Mazda and ends with a praise of the earth (Yt 19). The greater part of Yt 19 is dedicated to the history of Iran whose vanishing point is the age of

11 KELLENS, 1989; 1998.

12 The text collection begins with cosmogonic/pre-historical texts (V1: creation of the 16 best lands; V 2: on Yima), and it ends with a text (V 19) that focusses on Zaratuštra, the individual (V 19.29-30), and universal (V 19.31-42) eschatology and the expulsion of the demons from the world into the hell (V 19.43-47). Divine beings come down after their “being called down” (*ni-zbāia*-*) (V 19.35-42). V 19.40 points to a fiery sacrifice of the apotropaic deity Sraoša (cf. GrBd 34.29). The final chapters, V 20-22, are spells against the demons; V 22 is the account of a cure of the highest god Ahura Mazda.

**ni-zbā*- is used (more or less exclusively) in V 19 (see also Vyt 24; Vd 20). Cf. OI *ni-hū*- (inviting/calling a deity) (see RV 948.8, 691.4, 114.5).

13 The collection of the *Yašts* (the hymns) contained (in the Sasanian Avesta) sixteen texts, the last of them was the *Yašt* that is the nineteenth *Yašt* in the F1 tradition).

14 KÖNIG, 2013.

Zaraθuštra and Vištāspa. The last ten stanzas are concerned with the end of the world and the overcoming of the demons. Thus, the *Vīdēvdād* and the *Yašts* tell the story from a beginning (cosmogony; highest = first deity) to a historical situation (time of Zaraθuštra); both give the prospect of a salvation.

Details I: Younger Avesta

In the already mentioned Yt 19 in particular, but also in other YAv texts, in Ny 5, Yt 13, V 18, and in the already mentioned V 19, we find traces of an apocalyptic mode of thought that was closely related to scenarios of fire:

| | |
|---|--|
| Yt 19 ¹⁵ | The savior (<i>saošiiant</i>) Astuuat.ərəta (Yt 19.88-96; cf. Yt 13.129); born from a daughter of Zaraθuštra (cf. GrBd 33.36, 34.59; Dk 7.10.15, 7.8.55-57) → historical construction; references to the mythic times (Astuuat.ərəta ≈ Θraētaona) |
| | Companions of Astuuat.ərəta (Yt 19.89, 95) |
| | Extinction of the demons (Yt 19.88-96) |
| | Immortality (<i>a-marək-</i>) of the future world; <i>fraša</i> -being of the world; resurrection (Yt 19.93-95, 89) |
| Ny 5.9/Y 62.3 (<i>Ātaš</i> <i>Zōhr/Ātaš</i> <i>Niyāyišn</i> ¹⁶) | Burning (<i>saoc-</i>) of a “house”-fire “for the long time” ¹⁷ up to the strong <i>Frašō.kərəti</i> (“making <i>fraša</i> ”), by means of the strong good (deity?) ¹⁸ <i>Frašō.kərəti</i> . ¹⁹ (<i>darəyəmciṭ. aipi. zruuānəm. upa. sūrəm. frašō.kərətīm. haḍa. suraiiā. vaṅhuiiā. frašō.kərətōiṭ.</i>) → concept of an everlasting fire |

15 According to Boyce, Yt 19 is a link between the *Gāθās* (which represent “Zoroaster’s own apocalyptic vision” around the year 1400 BCE [BOYCE, 1984, p. 74]) and the elaborated apocalyptic concepts in the Pahlavi literature (see BOYCE, 1984, pp. 58f., 66-69).

16 For a new perspective on these text(s), see CANTERA, 2016, p. 166.

17 The phrase *darəyəmciṭ. aipi. zruuānəm.* (cf. Yt 19.26 where the same phrase designates the time of the rulership of Haošiiānha) seems to refer to a time-period which differs from the (eternal) “period” called *zruuan- akarana- zruuan-darəyəḍ.x’adāta-* “the unlimited time, the time of long dominion” (V 19.9, 13; Ny 1.8; Y 72.10).

18 The epithets *sūra-* and *vohu-* are elsewhere the typical epithets of Arəduuī (see Yt 5) and of Aši (Yt 17.6 *ašiš vaṅuhi. sura.*).

19 This is may be an allusion to the stream of fire that will purify the world immediately before the *frašgird* (see GrBd 34.31-32).

V 18.51-52²⁰ Fiery human beings emerge from the earth at the end of time from sperm that was shed²¹ (these human beings have fire-names [*Ātrə.-*°])²² They are of importance in the final period (see Yt 13.17 [Yt 19.22, Y 24.5]: *narqm. azātanqm. frašō.carəθraqm. saošiiantqm.* “of the unborn men, the *fraša*-makers, the *Saošiiants*”). Cf. GrBd 1a13²³: men are made of *ātaxš-tōhmag* “fire-seed”²⁴; cf. also the men in the fiery stream in the apocalypse

Yt 13 is a special case. It includes a cosmogonic account that deviates from the accounts in the Pahlavi.²⁵ While Yt 13 gives a cosmogonic-historical sequence (movement?–)standstill²⁶–movement (+ a catalogue of the blessed ones), the Pahlavi sources draw a different picture of the world-history (structure: standstill–movement–standstill = spiritual existence–material existence–spiritual existence). After passages that stress the key position of *Zaraθuštra* (see Yt 13.85-95) in and for history, the *Yašt* terminates in a necrology. The names in this catalogue are chronologically arranged. The catalogue starts with *Zaraθuštra* and *Maiđiiđi.māṅha* (the first disciple of *Zaraθuštra*), and ends with the savior *Astuuat.ərəta*. The cosmogonical-historical sequence consists of the following elements:

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- 20 The passage is quoted in the *Nīrang-e parhīz kardan šeytān-bāzī* “charm to protect (oneself) against the (bad) consequences of (an) ejaculation” (PāzT 178.9-179.5). For the connex of ejaculation and the final period of the world, see also WZ 35.57-58.
- 21 Cf. RV 1.31.12 (Agni protects the seeds).
- 22 To these men (text: “this man”) *Ārmaiti* should “give a name *Ātrə.dātəm.* or *Ātrə.ciθrəm.* or *Ātrə.zaṅtūm.* or *Ātrə.daxīiūm.* or any *Ātrə.-*name”. It is maybe not only by chance that the inscriptions DNa, DSe, XPh and the text V 18.51f. connect *dā*-words (“create” or “law”), the word for the “(ethnic/genealogical) provenience” (*ciθra = ciça*) and the word for “countrie(s)” (*dahyāva; daxīiu-*).
- 23 Cf. also GrBd 6f8-6f9.
- 24 Cf. WZ 30.23; SOHN, 1996, pp. 13f., 118.
- 25 This tricky problem is discussed in KREYENBROEK, 1992; 1993a; 1993b; 1994; KELLENS, 2008-2009.
- 26 See note 30.

A¹ maintenance (*vī-dāraīia-*) of the realms of nature; the first realm is the heaven that looks like “blazing²⁷ metal” (*aiiaṅhō. kəhrpa. x^vaēnahe.*) (Yt 13.2)

A² immobilization of the realms of nature caused by the devil²⁸

B re-mobilization of the realms of nature caused by Vohu Manah (≈ cow) and Ātar²⁹ (≈ Aša [see Y 37.1]) (Yt 13.77) and then by Zaraθuštra (Yt 13.93)

Despite the unusual sequence of the world “history” in Yt 13 – the text does not refer to a state of non-material being, nor to an act of creation³⁰ and only indirectly to a “time after” – Yt 13 contains an element that will also appear in the Pahlavi accounts. Fire is not only an element that seems to be distinct from the other realms of nature (it is behind the heaven/sky); it appears also as an apotropaic means and has a key position in the world-history: the completion of the demonic standstill.

Details II: Old Avesta

Yt 13 seems to be the oldest consistent Avestan cosmogonical account. It focuses on the elements and how they are connected, the natural powers, the world time. However, already the *Gāθās* give cosmogonical hints (Y 44.3-7) and mention a process of creation (*dā-*) and of “holding” (*dar-*). In particular the *Gāθic* songs Y 51 and Y 53 comprise eschatological/apocalyptic motifs:

27 OAv./YAv. *xvaēna-* < **hvaidna* (see HOFFMANN/FORSSMAN, 1996, p. 97), cf. YAv. *buna-* < **budna-* (OI *budhmá-*).

28 In contrast to Yt 13, standstill is regarded positively by the Pahlavi literature: according to WZ 1.9 time is only created because of the assault of Ahreman; in the final periods of the world the standstills of the sun (see PRDd 48.2, 23, 38; ZWY 9.1; Dk 7.8.58, 7.9.2; 7.9.21, 7.10.2; 7.10.19) anticipate the paradisaical time.

29 If Vohu Manah should be a mask for “cow”, then it seems likely that Yt 13.77 alludes to a cosmic sacrifice (cf. the sacrifice in the/at the end of the last 3000 years of world-history mentioned in the Pahlavi sources).

30 Yt 13 starts with the mentioning of the *vī-dāraīia-* of the elements. There is neither a previous non-material world mentioned nor an act of creation. Cf. Yt 13 *vī-dāraīia-* the verbs *dāēt*. (Y 44.3c) (related to the course of the stars and the sun) and *dərətāē*. (Y 44.4.2b-c) (related to the heaven and earth, water and plants) in the Old Avestan cosmogonical report (Y 44.3-7). It seems likely that the *dar-*verbs, especially causative *dāraīia-*, have a certain dynamic aspect.

a) The Stream of Metal

The *aiiah- x^vaēna-* “blazing metal” mentioned in Yt 13.2 has a parallel in the Old Avestan *Gāθās*. Unfortunately, the context of the parallels in Y 32.7 (*x^vaēnā. aiiāṇhā.*) and Y 30.7 (where only *aiiāṇhā.* is used) is unclear. Traditionally, the “blazing metal” or “molten metal” (*aiiah- xšusta-*) is understood as a “Bezeichnung des glühenden Metallstroms beim letzten Gericht”.³¹ At least Y 51.9 (*aiiah- xšusta-*) seems to point to eschatological events (for further eschatological motifs see Y 51.13; 53.8-9):

| | | |
|-------------------|--|--|
| <p>Y 51.9</p> | <p><i>yqm. xšnūtəm. rānōibiiā. dā. θβā. āθrā. suxrā. mazdā./aiiāṇhā. xšustā. aibī. ahuuāhū. daxštəm. dāuuōi./rāšaiieḥhē. drəguuaṇtəm. sauuaiiō. ašauuanəm.</i></p> | <p>Which satisfaction did you give by/for the two <i>rana</i> through your red fire, o Mazda,/in order to associate through liquid metal the sign (?) in the modes of being (?³²),/in order to let in that way the deceitful waste away, to let prosper the truthful.</p> |
|-------------------|--|--|

In the Pahlavi literature, the word *ayō(x)šust*, a loan from Avestan *aiiah- xšusta-*, is the *terminus technicus* for the apocalyptic stream of metal. While the formula in Y 51.9a points to the ritual fire (cf. Y 31.3; Y 31.19, 43.12, 47.6; Y 34.12a-b), the references to molten metal and the division of the beings hint to a juridical (in the sense of an ordeal) or/and to an apocalyptic-eschatological context.

b) The Three Times

Recent research on the Avesta has tried to demonstrate that the Old Avestan texts (Y 27.13-54.1= *Staota Yesniia*) are structured according to the scheme of

31 AiW 555. Cf. DUCHESNE-GUILLEMIN, 1962, p. 90. Cf. also HUMBACH, 1959 I, p. 152 (cf. HUMBACH, 1991 I, p. 188), who translates as “durch das Ordal mit dem flüssigen Erz”. The *aiiah- xšusta-* (> *ayōxšust*) is of importance in the Zoroastrian cosmogony/mythical anthropology, see GrBd 6F8 (*az ān čiyōn tan ī gayōmard az ayōxšust kard estād* “the body of Gayōmard was made of metal”); GrBd 6F8 (*az tan ī Gayōmard 6/7 ayōxšust ō paydāgīh mad* “six/seven metals came out of the body of Gayōmard”).

32 Differently, AiW 111f.

the three times.³³ These three times are concretized in the YAv “edition”³⁴ of the OAv texts as a sequence of sacrifices:³⁵

| <i>Staota Yesniia (= Y 27.13-54.1)</i> | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| Y 27.13 | cosmic sacrifice (see the exegetical text Y 19) | |
| <i>Yasna Haptaṅhāiti</i> (Y 35-41) | Zaraθuštra’s historical sacrifice | |
| Y 53 | (universal) final sacrifice | leads to Y 54.1: renovation |

Table 2: *The Staota Yesniia and the three times*

This interpretation of the Old Avestan texts was developed in relationship to the analysis of the structure of the *Vīdēvdād* (see above), a text that is ritually intercalated in the *Staota Yesniia*.³⁶ The Old Avestan texts appear according to this analysis as a first sketch of a world-history, a history that has a sacrificial rhythm (a conception that we shall come across again later on).

On the Relation of the Avestan and Pahlavi Texts

We see that the OAv texts, the kernel of all long YAv liturgies, follow the same historical scheme (cosmogony, history, salvation) as those texts – especially the *Vīdēvdād* – which are intercalated in the celebration of the OAv texts, i.e., in the sacrifice.³⁷ In the Pahlavi texts – texts that are never used in the rituals – this historical scheme is explicitly mentioned (*bun-dahišn*, *gumēzišn*; *frašgird* (?)³⁸). This is probably a qualitative leap. While in the OAv interpretation of the three times (past, present, future), history and ritual are

33 For a milleniaristic interpretation of the *Gāθās*, see KELLENS, 2015.

34 See KELLENS, 2015.

35 CANTERA, 2013.

36 The concept of the three times (past, present, future) is visible in Y 31.14 and perhaps in Y 43.5. Y 31.14 was understood as a hint to the apocalypse by later commentators (see note 39). Y 43.16 uses the phrase “bones-provided *aša*” (*astuuat. ašəm. xiiāi. uštānā. aojōnhuuat.*), which is the basis for the name of *the* (and in the later texts *the last*) *Saošiiant* *Astuuat.ərətā*.

37 This is clearly seen by CANTERA, 2013, especially pp. 106-108, 132-135.

38 The term *frašgird* is used by PANAINO, 2016, p. 93, as a designation of the third time.

inseparably mixed, and while this model still alludes to the exorcistic medical model (sickness → healing), the Pahlavi texts, especially the *Bundahišn*, project the time scheme onto a large scale and fix it by additional arrangements. With the transformation of a magical-ritual scheme into a fully elaborated world-history, the character of evil changes. Evil is now present in the world, and dominates the second period of the world (the *gumēzišn*), and to get rid of evil means nothing else than to change, perhaps even destroy, this world.

The Zoroastrian Apocalypse According to the Pahlavi Sources³⁹

Millenarianism and the Apocalypse

A good number of Pahlavi texts portray the Zoroastrian apocalypse (ZWY; JN; Dk 9.8; Dk 7.1, 7.8-7.11; GrBd 33; PRDd 48; GrBd 34 = IndBd 31; WZ 35). All of these texts are strongly based on *Zand* materials, which means on materials from the Sasanian or even Parthian periods. Nevertheless, it would not be justified – despite the fact that many Avestan texts are lost – to claim that the apocalyptic texts in Pahlavi are nothing else than Avestan texts in Pahlavi. The important step is the blending of a millenarian organized world-history⁴⁰ of 9000 or 12000 years with the scheme of the three times, and with a “material form”, the process of decay and healing.

The history of the salvation of the world starts with Zardušt (Zaraθuštra) in the beginning of the tenth millennium and lasts for the next 3000 years.⁴¹

39 See (in particular for the Pahlavi sources) recently RAEI, 2010. Boyce’s (BOYCE, 1984) attempt to demonstrate that Zaraθuštra was not only a moralistic, but also an apocalyptic “prophet”, is (for more than one reason) unconvincing. To support her assertion, she can only point to the verse line Y 31.14 (*tā. θβā. p̄arāsā. ahurā. yā. zī. āitī. jānghaticā.*), and she follows (for the interpretation of the passage see WEST, 1892, p. 181, note 1) its apocalyptic Pahlavi exegesis (see Dk 9.8 and its parallel in ZWY 1 [see with further literature CERETI, 1995, pp. 170f.]; it is, as far as I see, unclear whether ZWY 1 quotes Y 31.14 [perhaps ZWY 1.7 *awām ast ī rasēd*]).

40 See, e.g., GrBd 36. The concept of “1000 years” is precluded in the Younger Avesta (see Vyt 5 *hazaγrām. yārām.*).

41 The first of these three last millennia, the millennium of Zardušt, is rhythmicized by epochs (four or seven epochs, see CERETI, 1995, pp. 170-172, pp. 180-185;

These three millennia are uniformly organized. From Zarduštra on, the world struggles for a final redemption and renovation (i.e., a transcendent transformation, the *frašgird*). However, within this *crescendo* of salvation there are three collapses (two pre-apocalypses and the final apocalypse), always before the coming of a new savior (a son of Zardušt) at the end of a millennium.

In all these apocalypses, fire and/or light play(s) a decisive role. For example, at the end of the millennium of Zardušt, the everlasting fire will be reinstated (see ZWY 7.22-26, 37; 8.4). This reinstatement refers, on the one hand, to the installation of these fires in the early history of mankind, and, on the other hand, to the sacrificial fires before the *frašgird*.⁴² The millennium of Zardušt is especially interesting because of its internal structure, being divided into four or seven eras. The similarity of this teaching to the narratives of Hesiod (*Ἔργα καὶ ἡμέραι*, *Works and Days*, 106-201) and to the *Book of Daniel* has led to many speculations on intercultural borrowings and on a timetable of the conceptual development of the Zoroastrian apocalypse.

The aforementioned internal structuring of the millennium of Zardušt in the ZWY shows that the composer-editors of the apocalyptic texts tried to structure the abstract millenarian quantification of the world-history in a meaningful way. Single events become meaningful because they have parallels at striking points of the world-history. A system of reflections and correspon-

BOYCE, 1984). These epochs terminate in the Islamic period (see ZWY 1 + 3, Dk 9; cf. the millenaristic scheme in GrBd 36).

- 42 ZWY 7 (cf. GrBd 33.28) is with the mentioned assembly and the sacrifice (see ZWY 7.22, 24), the apocalypse: at the end of Zardušt's millennium Pišōtan (on this figure, see exhaustive discussion in BOYCE, 1984), the son of Wištāsp, will celebrate sacrifices (see ZWY 7.22 *ud <pad> ātaxš +ud ābān frāz yazēnd hādōxt ud bayān yasn* "and they celebrated <with> the <praises/xšnūman (?) for> fire and water the *Hādōxt* and the *Bayān-Yasn*") with his "150 men with black sabres". Together with the three great fires, he will destroy a "great idol-temple" (*uzdēs-zār ī wuzurg*), where he then performs Zoroastrian ceremonies (see ZWY 7.22-26, 37; on the question of a Zoroastrian iconoclasm see [positively] BOYCE, 1975a, and [skeptically] SHENKAR, 2015).

According to ZWY 8.4, the three great fires (*ādur ī farrbay*, *ādur ī gušnasp*, *ādur ī burzēnmīhr*) will be re-established (it seems that the report was written in the Islamic period, when the three fires had fallen into ruin), which leads (see ZWY 8; cf. PRDd 48.95; WZ 35.35) to a powerlessness of Ahreman and the demons (they become *stard ud abē-ōš*). This powerlessness corresponds to Ahreman's *stardh* in the cosmogony (GrBd 1.32, 1A1, 4.1; WZ 1.4; Dk 6.258; *Māh ī Frawardīn Rōz ī Hordad* 36; MX 56.29; Dk 7.4.38).

dences emerges, a system, by the way, that is well known from the structuring of the ritual texts. This system of correspondences is worked out on a large scale (history; world-history), on a small scale (biography), and between the small and the large scale.

We see the same mirror-structuring when we examine the story of the procreation of Zardušt (see Dk 7.2; cf. Šahrastānī’s report on the Zarāduštīya⁴³) – a story that is told according to the scheme of the sacrificial procedure. A transcendent light (the *xwarrah*) goes into the womb of Zardušt’s mother; when the *mard ī rāyōmand* “bright man” (= Zardušt) appears (Dk 7.2.56-58; cf. WZ 5.1-3), the village (*wis*) of Zardušt’s father is full of light. In correspondence to the birth legend of Zardušt, in the classical and NP sources, his death is also portrayed as a fire scenario.⁴⁴

This biographical ring-composition (light/fire of birth and death) corresponds to similar ring-compositions of larger historical scale:

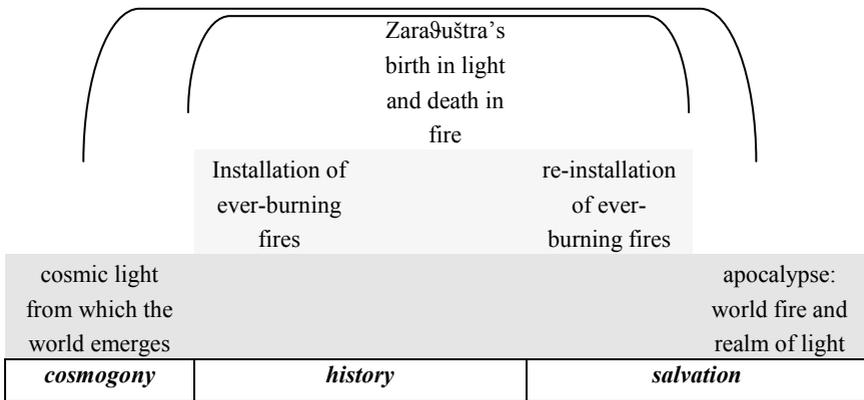


Figure 1: Ring-composition of world-time

43 HAARBRÜCKER, 1850-1851 I, pp. 281f.

44 See JACKSON, 1898. See also CLEMEN, 1920, p. 191; in the *Dabestān*, the Tūr (the murderer of Zardušt according to B 256.10f.; 341.11; GrBd 33.30 [TD 2 218.13f.]; *Šad dar* 9.5) has died in a fire.

The Events of the Last Days (GrBd 34 and its Parallels)

Probably the most important account of the Zoroastrian apocalypse is GrBd 34 (= IndBd 31), a text with parallels in WZ 35 and PRDd 48. However, spatial considerations mean that the text cannot be discussed in detail here. The essential components of the apocalypse in all three texts are the following:

- The appearance of a final (third) savior and his comrades (male and female)
- The final sacrifice of the savior
- The appearance of a stream of molten metal that divides mankind
- The annihilation of demons in a world-fire
- The closing of hell by the molten metal
- The unification of both the *modi* of the world (*mēnōy* “spiritual” and *gētīy* “material”) (earth becomes plane; extension of the paradise; gods are in the world)

Similar apocalyptic images can be found in the description of the end of the millennia after Zardušt, in the pre-apocalypses of the tenth (Pišōtan; Ušēdar) and eleventh (Ušēdarmāh) millennium. Fire represents the key element in all these visions of the last days. Well-known functions of fire are in the background of the apocalyptic images: its ordeal function (for separation of the truthful from the deceitful); its apotropaic function (annihilation/expulsion of the demons); its ritual function and its analogic-transcending force (the transcending/immortalizing of the good).

The Manichaean Apocalypse

Just as in the Zoroastrian cosmology, the Manichaean cosmology is, as has already been stated, based on the idea of two principles that are irreducible to each other: light and darkness.⁴⁵ “History” is the process of the fall of light into

45 Extensive accounts on the Manichaean cosmogony, cosmology and eschatology are contained in: BEESON, 1906, pp. 9-22 (a German translation is to be found in BÖHLIG, 1997 III, pp. 123-130); Theodor bar Kōnī (ed. SCHER), 1981-1982, pp. 313,10-318, 4¹; cf. BÖHLIG, 1997 III, pp. 101-108; an-Nadīm, *Fihrist* (FLÜGEL 1870-1871, pp. 329,1-331, 2) (a translation in BÖHLIG, 1997 III, pp. 144-149); AŠ-

darkness and the complicated process of the re-separation of light and darkness. This process leads to a final world fire, the building of a paradise, and an enclosing of matter in a *bolos*.

What is the relationship between the Zoroastrian and the Manichaean apocalypse? We have seen that the Zoroastrian apocalypse is the end, not only of the earth, but of the entire material world. Nevertheless, the focus of the apocalypse is on mankind. The reason for this accentuation of mankind is the particular importance of the human beings and human history for the progress of the world. In contrast, the Manichaean history of mankind is non-vivid and mechanical. It is not the human being (which is in the Manichaean perspective part of the *hyle*) that is of special interest for Mani, but only the fate of the light (i.e., the history of nature).

And just as in the Zoroastrian cosmogonic myth, the Manichaean cosmogony tells about (partially successful) attacks by the darkness on the realm of light.⁴⁶ Several times (with a certain inversion of the Zoroastrian model) we hear of the enclosing of particles of light in the *hyle*, the darkness. For this reason, the *Kephalaia* call the world-history “the first death”. This death “lasts from the time when the light has fallen into the dark and was mixed with the archons of the dark, up to the time when the light will be dissolved and separated from the dark by means of the great fire”.⁴⁷ After the fall, the Manichaean “history” is a history of (an arduous) salvation. While the Zoroastrians have to expulse the Ahremanic intrusions out of the world, the Manichaeans have to separate the five elements of the light (Ohrmizd’s armor, the *Amāhraspandān*) from their evil counterparts of the *hyle*. The Manichaean process of salvation consists of the liberation of the light and the

Šahrastānī’s account on the Manichaeans (ed. CURETON, 1842, I, pp. 188,11-192,18; German translation HAARBRÜCKER, 1850-1851 I, pp. 285-291 [cf. BÖHLIG, 1997 III, pp. 149-156]).

46 Firstly: the attack of the darkness against the realm of light (BEESON, 1906; cf. BÖHLIG, 1997 III, p. 123; *A Manichaean Psalm-Book* [ALLBERRY, 1938, pp. 9,2-11,32; cf. BÖHLIG, 1997 III, pp. 118-121, 118]; *Auszüge aus einer manichäischen Schrift bei Severus von Antiochia, Kathedralhomilie CXXIII* [BRIÈRE, 1960, pp. 164,10-167,15; cf. BÖHLIG, 1997 III, pp. 135-137, p. 136] (cf. Ahreman’s attack against the heaven and his piercing into the world (IndBd 3.13, 27; GrBd 4.10, 28); secondly: the devouring of the primordial and of his armor of light, the elements (cf. the intrusion of the Evil into the creation in Zoroastrianism).

47 BÖHLIG, 1997 III, p. 166 (translation GK).

prevention of a historical repetition of the fall.⁴⁸ The various Manichaean texts give (more or less consistently) the following information: When the Third messenger appears, the world loses its fixation, and a great fire runs out of control.⁴⁹ This fire burns for 1468 years.⁵⁰ It is perhaps the fire of the hells (see *AcAr* ch. XI⁵¹), or it is the consequence of a problem in the mechanism of the purification of the light (see the *Fihrist*⁵²). This fire represents the means to release the last particles of light from the matter. A “stature” of light appears (the [gr.] *andriás*), and the dark, (nearly) lightless matter is enclosed in/as a *bolos*.⁵³ While the present aeon comes to an end – the so-called *Frašēgird*⁵⁴ – a new aeon emerges. The paradise is construed around the final fire.⁵⁵

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- 48 Both Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism have a teleological concept of world-history; the theory of the *eternal recurrence*, which Nietzsche presents as a teaching of “Zarathustra”, is probably inspired by Theopompus’ assertion that the Mag(o)i teach a circular eternity of the things of the universe (τὰ ὄντα ταῖς αὐτῶν ἐπικλήσεσι διαμενεῖν [Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum*, Prooemium 9]).
- 49 See BEESON, 1906, pp. 9-22; cf. BÖHLIG, 1997 III, p. 129; cf. the *Fihrist* (see BÖHLIG, 1997 III, p. 149). The text points to the holding and carrying of the world by the Light-Adamas and the Atlas.
- 50 See *Šābuhragān* M 470a (MÜLLER, 1904 II, pp. 19-22; MACKENZIE, 1979, pp. 516f.; BOYCE, 1975b, p. 80; HUTTER, 1992, p. 121; BÖHLIG, 1997 III, p. 239); *Fihrist* (FLÜGEL, 1870-71, pp. 329,1-331,2); *Aš-Šahrastānī* (ed. CURETON, 1842 I, pp. 188,11-192,18; HAARBRÜCKER, 1850-1851 I, pp. 285-291, p. 290; BÖHLIG, 1997 III, pp. 154f.).
- 51 *Acta Archelai* VII-XIII (ed. BEESON, 1906, pp. 9-22 [cf. BÖHLIG, 1997 III, pp. 123-130]), XI (BÖHLIG, 1997 III, pp. 128f.).
- 52 The motif of changes of the heavenly lights is also known from Zoroastrian texts. In the millennium of Hušēdar, the sun is in the zenith for ten days/nights (GrBd 33.29), in the millennium of Hušēdarmāh for twenty days/nights (GrBd 33.32), in the time of Sōšāns for thirty days/nights (GrBd 33.33).
- 53 Cf. BÖHLIG, 1997 III, p. 35.
- 54 *Frašēgird* is used as a Zoroastrian loan-word in Middle Iranian Manichaean texts.
- 55 *Šābuhragān* M 470a (MÜLLER, 1904 II, pp. 19-22; MACKENZIE, 1980, pp. 308f.; BOYCE, 1975b, p. 80; BÖHLIG, 1997 III, p. 239).

Similarities between the Zoroastrian and Manichaean Apocalypses

It is, as said in the beginning, my overarching methodical thesis that Iranian religious history is constituted by a diachronic field (Zoroastrian literature) *and* by a synchronic field (Iranian literature of Late Antiquity). A principal characteristic of the second field is its “historical turn”. The conception of an apocalyptic end of the world is a central feature of this turn, and maybe even its productive kernel.

The following general statements on the end-in-fire apocalypses as they occur in late antique Iranian religion can be made: In both religions, Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, the final burning of the world is between two “eras” (between time and eternity), and the transformation of the world is made by fire. In both religions, the realm of light and the (in the end powerless) realm of darkness are sharply separated after the “great fire” (*ātaxš wuzurg*). While Manichaeism interprets this separation as a separation of light and matter, according to the Zoroastrian point of view, matter no longer exists.⁵⁶ And finally, in both religions, the apocalyptic fire is related to cosmogony. As the final act of the purification of light, fire is the reversion of a key element in the Manichaean world-view: the cosmogonic fall of light. In Zoroastrianism, the apocalyptic fire is connected with the final sacrifice (the apocalyptic fire is probably the fire of the sacrifice), a sacrifice that is in correspondence with Ohrmazd’s cosmogonic sacrifice and with the great fires at the beginning of the history of mankind.

The Manichaean texts provide only very few details of the apocalypse. A comparison of these details with the Zoroastrian end-in-fire motif affirms what we have seen in general: both apocalypses are closely related to each other.

56 However, WZ 35.50 takes the position that the elements are purified in the end. Yt 13.11 claims a resurrection of the body.

| Manichaeism | Zoroastrianism |
|--|--|
| arrival of the light “statue” (the <i>andriás</i>) | PRDd 48.99 ⁵⁷ : after the unification of the earth and paradise, a man made of light/fire emerges (probably as a correlate of the sunny first man Gayōmard [see GrBd 7.8f. ⁵⁸]) ⁵⁹ |
| the two holders of the world terminate their service → mixing of the upper with the lower sphere ⁶⁰ | Rise of the earth, lowering of the <i>garōdman</i> (see PRDd 48.98; GrBd 34.33 ⁶¹) |
| <i>Kephalaia</i> 57: decrease of the human lifespan ⁶² | cf. (the inversion of) the motif in GrBd 33.31 ⁶³ |
| world time of 12,000 years ⁶⁴ | world time of 9,000 or 12,000 years |

57 PRDd 48.99 *pas ohrmazd ud amahraspandān ud hamāg yazd ud mardōmān pad ēw gyāg bawēnd ud star-iz ud māh ud xwaršēd ud ātaxš ī wahrām harw-ēk mard-kirb ān ī tagīg ud hamāg mard-ēw kirb be bawēnd ud be ō zamīg āyēnd*
 “Then Ohrmazd and the *amahraspands* and all the *yazads* and mankind will be in one place, and the star too and the moon and the sun and the Victorious Fire will all be in the form of a man who is strong, and they will come to the earth.” (translation: WILLIAMS, 1990 II, p. 87).

58 Cf. the cosmogony of GrBd 4.22, where the creation of Gayōmard’s sleep is described as being in the form of “a fifteen-year-old, light, tall man” (*mard kirb ī 15 sālag ī rōšn ī buland*).

59 Cf. also the designation in Dk 7.2.56-58 of Zardušt as *mard ī rāyōmand*.

60 See the *Fihrist* (see BÖHLIG, 1997 III, p. 149); Šahrastāni (see BÖHLIG, 1997 III, p. 154).

61 On the motif of the cosmogonical growing of the mountains, see GrBd 9.

62 *Kephalaia* (ed. BÖHLIG, 1966, pp. 144,13-147,20 [ch. 57]; cf. BÖHLIG, 1997 III, pp. 176-186, 178).

63 This inversion is a consequence of the central conceptual difference between Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism. While Zoroastrianism seeks to eternalize human beings, Manichaeism wants to dissolve them. The motif of the shortening of the lifespan and of the shrinking of the bodies (according to WZ 35.6 Garšāsp is 500 times taller than Zardušt) is in Zoroastrianism part of the early history of men (see GrBd 36).

64 See *Aš-Šahrastānī* (ed. CURETON, 1842 I, pp. 188,11-192,18; HAARBRÜCKER, 1850-1851 I, pp. 285-291, p. 290f.; BÖHLIG, 1997 III, pp. 149-156, 155f.).

| | |
|--|--|
| standstill of the sun and moon after the final defeat of the Āz and the demons ⁶⁵ | millennium of Hušēdar: sun is for 10 days/night in zenith (GrBd 33.29); millennium of Hušēdarmāh: sun for 20 days/night in zenith (GrBd 33.29); (GrBd 33.32); time of Sōšāns: sun for 30 days/night in zenith (GrBd 33.33) |
| connection of Āz and Ahrmēn; Āz ⁶⁶ and <i>frašēgird</i> ⁶⁷ | struggling of Āz and Ahreman in the time of the <i>frašgird</i> |
| <i>Šābuhragān</i> : apocalyptic fire does not harm the righteous people ⁶⁸ | GrBd 34: the molten metal does not burn the righteous people |
| emergence of a <i>bolos</i> of dark matter | closing of hell |

Table 3: *Apocalypse in Manichaeism and Zoroastrism*

It is likely that Mani, who lived in the third century CE and belonged to the entourage of the Sasanian king (Šābuhr I),⁶⁹ was very familiar with the Zoroastrian texts. The conformity of the apocalyptic details of the Manichaean apocalypse with the Zoroastrian apocalypse demonstrates that the formation of the Zoroastrian apocalypse must have been completed to a large extent before the third century CE. However, Zoroastrian re loans from Manichaeism cannot be excluded.⁷⁰ The chronology of the emergence of the Zoroastrian apocalypse cannot be determined in all its details. It was argued that the centuries after the Macedonian conquest were of crucial importance.⁷¹ However, I am skeptical concerning the validity of one of the core elements on which the argumenta-

65 See M 7984 (= T III 260e I) + M 7982 (= T III 260c) (*MirMan* I, pp. 191-198; BOYCE, 1975b, pp. 71-73; ASMUSSEN, 1975, pp. 127-129; HUTTER, 1992, pp. 81-104; BÖHLIG, 1997 III, p. 113).

66 On the Manichaean and Zoroastrian Āz, see SUNDERMANN, 2003.

67 See M 7984 II (= T III 260e I) + M 7982 (= T III 260c) (*MirMan* I, pp. 191-198; BOYCE, 1975b, pp. 71-73; ASMUSSEN, 1975, pp. 127-129; HUTTER, 1992, pp. 81-104; BÖHLIG, 1997 III, p. 113); M 472 I (MÜLLER, 1904 II, pp. 17-19; MACKENZIE, 1980, pp. 193-213, 217-229; BOYCE, 1975b, p. 80; BÖHLIG, 1997 III, pp. 238f.).

68 See M 470a (MÜLLER, 1904 II, pp. 19-22; MACKENZIE, 1979, pp. 516f.; BOYCE, 1975b, p. 80; BÖHLIG, 1997 III, p. 239).

69 See now GARDNER, 2015.

70 See SUNDERMANN, 2003.

71 See BOYCE, 1984.

tion for such an early date is built on, the concept of a golden era. The idea of a golden era and of three (or more) following (metal) eras does not fit to the historical conception of the Avesta. I think that, not only Hesiod, but also Daniel is older than the Iranian version of the golden era.

The following point seems to be undisputable: Manichaeism and post-Avestan Zoroastrianism focus on one and the same problem: How is it possible to defeat evil forever? The answer in both religions is the apocalypse. We cannot exclude that this crucial question and answer pairing was then the basis for other important questions: Where does evil come from? Why does it exist? And what does the “existence of the evil” mean? There is at least one striking observation. Just as with the apocalypse, the Zoroastrian cosmogony (Bd 1/WZ 1) has no equivalent in the Avestan texts. This means that the apocalypse and the cosmogony are probably both products of the Hellenistic era, if not of the later Parthian era.⁷² Finally, we can also assume that the Zoroastrian interest in a well-shaped world-history – the interest in the historical knowledge of “where we are” and “how long we still have to suffer and to struggle” – was not independent from the new apocalyptic orientation of the post-Avestan Zoroastrianism.

The Three World-Periods and the Sacrifice

I have argued that one of the striking differences between the antique Graeco-Roman religion and the religion(s) of the Iranian Late Antiquity is the “historical turn”, a turn towards a historical mode of thought and a systemized history that is in particular understood as a history of redemption. Nevertheless, the *Bundahišn*, the Zoroastrian world-history, points back to inherited ritualistic thinking. Historical points of articulation are marked by great sacrifices:

72 An early witness is Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 47, 369 F–370 C; whether Aristotle’s δύο ἀρχαί (see Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum*, Prooemium 6.8) can be taken as a proof for a fully elaborated cosmogony is doubtful.

| GrBd 3.23 | GrBd 18.9 (IndBd 17.4) | GrBd 34.22-23 |
|---|--|---|
| cosmogony | history | eschatology/apocalypse |
| Ohrmazd's cosmogonic sacrifice (Yasna Rapiθβin) ⁷³ | installation of ever-burning fires ⁷⁴ | Sōšān's final sacrifice(s) (of cattle), ⁷⁵ the "great fire" of the ritual (WZ 35.15) = the "great fire" (from the Endless Lights) of the apocalypse (WZ 35.40) ⁷⁶ |

73 GrBd 3.23 *Ohrmazd abāg Amahrspandān pad Rapiθwin mēnōy (ī) yazišn frāz sāxt andar yazišn kunišn dām hamāg be dād*

"Ohrmazd performed the spiritual Yazishn ceremony with the Beneficent Immortals in the Rapiθwin Gah. He produced [all the creations] during [the performance of] the Yazishn, [...]" (translation: ANKLESARIA, 1956).

74 The installation of the ever-burning fires (which are manifestations of the *xwarrah*) is a consequence of the fall of the fire into the water during the migration of early mankind on the Srisōg. GrBd 24.22 points to a connection between these prehistorical events and the apocalyptic period: *gāw Hadayās kē Srisōg-iz xwānēnd rāy gōwēd kū pad bundahišn mardōm az kišwar ō kišwar widārd ud pad frašgird anōšagih aziš wirāyēnd.*

"[As regards] the 'Gav Hadhayas,' which they also call Srisok, one says, 'In the beginning of creation (*pad bundahišn*) it transported men from region to region, and at the renovation of the universe (*frašgird*) they will arrange immortality out of it.'" (translation: ANKLESARIA, 1956).

Cf. GrBd 26.27 *ēdōn-iz gāw ī Hadayānš ī Hadaiiqs kē pad frašgird anōš aziš wirāyēnd u-š parwardārth ī dāmān kardan xwēškārth.*

"So too is the Hatayans, that is, 'Hadhayash gav', from whom they prepare the immortal beverage at the renovation (*frašgird*) of the universe. Her allotted work is the nourishment of the creatures." (translation: ANKLESARIA, 1956).

75 GrBd 34.22-23: *Ohrmazd pad ān gāh hangerdēnīd-dām bawēd [kū kār-ēw abar nē abāyēd kardan andar ān ka-šān rist wirāyēd]. yazišn ī pad rist-wirāyēh Sōšāns abāg ayārān kunēnd. gāw ī Hadayanš pad ān yazišn kušēnd az pīh ī ān gāw ud hōm ī spēd anōš wirāyēnd <ud> ō harwisp mardōm dahēnd. mardōm ahōš bawēnd ī tā hamē ud hamē-rawišnīh.*

"Ohrmazd will at that time be the perfecter of the creatures, that is, He need not do any superior work, during the while that they restored the dead. And Soshyant with his associates will perform the rite for the restoration of the dead; and they will slay the 'Hadhayas gav' for that rite; out of the fat of that 'gav' and the white whom they will prepare the immortal beverage, and give it to all men; and all men will become immortal up to eternity and eternal progress." (translation: ANKLESARIA, 1956).

76 WZ 35 gives a detailed description of the sacrifice. The mentioning of seven priests in WZ 35.16+17 refers to the installation of the priests in the *Vīsparad*-ceremonies (Vr 3.1). The number seven and the 1+6 structure are references to a cosmic harmony (see WZ 35.4-7, 14-17; cf. WZ 23). The WZ transcend the sacrifice at the *frašgird*, it

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Sacrifice on <i>Rapihwin</i> (noon): time begins | | WZ 35: five sacrifices on the five times of the day, the last sacrifice on <i>Rapihwin</i> (noon): time ends ⁷⁷ |
|---|--|---|

Table 4: Zoroastrian world-history and historical sacrifices

becomes a cosmic spectacle (see WZ 35.15). It is strongly connected with the term *rōšn* “light” (WZ 35.19-59). WZ 35.40 says: *pas ān gāh ātaxš ī wuzurg az ān ī asar rōšnīh xfrōd* (TD4 plwn) *āyēd pad hamāg zamīg payrōg be abganēd tāg-ēw pad dast dārēd pad homānāgīh ī draxt-ēw kē-š tāgān azabar rēšag ō frōd*.

“Then on each *Gāh* the Great Fire will come down from the Endless Lights and will cast light all over the earth. It has a twig in its hand, it resembles a tree that has twigs upwards, roots downwards.”

This “Great Fire” is probably the *ātaxš wuzurg*, which burns during the cosmic sacrifice described in WZ 35.15. (PRDd 48 refers to a number of sacrifices during the period of the saviors, but only indirectly to the cosmic sacrifice of the *gāw ī Hadayōš*. PRDd 48.103-105 reports on the reunification of the animals in/as the *gāw ī ēkdād* [which is the cosmogonical cow/ox], which immaterially “is mixed into the body of the human being” [*andar ō tan ī mardōmān gumēxtēd*] [PRDd 48.104] where then the taste of meat remains for eternity [see PRDd 48.104-105]). It is not clear whether this cosmic ritual fire is identical with the apocalyptic fire (according to WZ 35.40 its “twigs” – its flames [?] – are distributed among the truthful and the deceitful ones).

- 77 The picture shows the correspondence between cosmogonical and eschatological/apocalyptic fire. The cosmogonical sacrifice is celebrated on *Rapihwin* (noon). According to the description of the apocalyptic sacrificial events in WZ 35, sacrifices for the purpose of the resurrection are celebrated on the five *Gāhs* of the last five days of the year (of the world time), i.e., on the so-called *Gāḡā*-days (cf. PRDd 48.56, according to which five *Yašts* celebrated by the *Sōšāns* will cause a resurrection of all human beings that have ever lived in the world). These sacrifices start on the time (*gāh*) *Uzērīn* and end on the time (*gāh*) *Rapihwin*. They provoke the immortalization of all *rōšn-tōhmagān* “semen of light” (cf. above the fire-names in V 18) and finally, at the time of the *Rapihwin* sacrifice, their belated unification (WZ 35.30 *hamīh ī hanjaman* “unification of <their> assembly”) at the time (*gāh*) *Hāwan*, when “they enjoy each other” (*ēk ōy did rāmēnēd* [WZ 35.29]). The final sacrifice on *Rapihwin* is related to the standstill of the sun in the time of *Sōšāns* and to the fire, a connection that is known from the cosmogony (see the connection of *Rapihwin* and *Ardwahišt* in GrBd 3.22). In GrBd 3.21-22 it is said that the five periods of the day (i.e., the division of time = time) are a consequence of Ahreman’s break-in into the world. Before that event, it is said, it was eternal noon (GrBd 3.22 *tā pēš ka ēbgad mad hamēšag nēmvrōz būd [ast Rapihwin]* “up to the coming of the fiend it was eternal noon [i.e., *Rapihwin*]”). Thus, the sacrifices on the last five days of the year/the world are a kind of final revocation of the creation process in the beginning of the world.

The sacrifices are a kind of stimuli and represent the points of articulation of the world-transformation. They pave the way from timelessness to history and back to timelessness. They transform the Endless Light into fire and finally the fire into the Endless Light.

Over the last three decades, Avestan studies have been undergoing their “ritualistic turn”. Today, the structure of the liturgies is much clearer than it was formerly, and we have begun to understand the content and purposes of the rituals. We have learned, for example, that the scheme of the three times (which is ultimately, I would say, a combination of the magical process of healing and the division of time into past–present–future) or the use of the ring-composition or thinking in correspondences is essential for the structure of the ritual texts. On this basis, I dare say that the whole historical thinking of the *Bundahišn* is a reformulation of older ritualistic thinking. All liturgies start and end with a praise of fire. In the so-called *Long Liturgies*, i.e., the liturgies in which meat/fat is (or was) offered, the central parts of the sacrificial performance (Y 36-58) point to a special consecration/deconsecration of the fire. The fire changes its status. A comparison of this ritual process with the historical scheme in the Pahlavi literature (especially the *Bundahišn*) shows structural similarities:

| | creation/past | history/presence | eschatology/future |
|---|---|---|---|
| Time | creation from Endless Lights (GrBd 1 etc.) | world/humanhistory; installation of ever-burning fires (GrBd 18; cf. WZ 3) | end of time; great fire < Endless Lights (GrBd 34; cf. WZ 35) |
| sacrifices | Ohrmazd’s sacrifice (GrBd 3) | | Sōšān’s sacrifice(s) (GrBd 34; WZ 35; cf. ZWY 8) |
| structure of the sacrifice (Yasna) | Yasna 0 praise to/kindling of the fire | Yasna 36-58 (the sacrifice proper) process of consecration/deconsecration of the fire | Yasna 72 praise to the fire |

Table 5: Zoroastrian world-history and the structure of the Zoroastrian sacrifice

The sacrificial ritual and the world-history are built on the same structural basis. In other words, history (= human history) is a replacement of the sacrifice. The construction of history goes together with an interiorization of the sacrifice, with a “victimization” of the good human beings. However, in one point the historical model differs from the sacrificial one. While the transformation process of the sacrifice is circular (the fire in Y 72 has the same sacrificial level as the fire in Y 0), the historical process includes not only teleological elements; the “spiritual” state of the world after the end of the material world seems to differ – the difference lies in the existence of a paradise – from the first “spiritual” state of the world.

Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|--|
| OAv | Old Avestan |
| YAv | Younger Avestan |
| OI | Old Indian |
| AWN | Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag |
| AiW | Altiranisches Wörterbuch (BARTHOLOMAE, 1904) |
| Bd | Bundahišn |
| Dd | Dādestān ī dēnīg |
| Dk | Dēnkard |
| GrBd | Greater Bundahišn |
| HN | Hadōxt Nask |
| IndBd | Indian Bundahišn |
| JN | Jāmāsp Nāmag |
| M | Manichäisch (Turfān Texts) |
| MX | Mēnōg ī Xrad |
| Ny | Niyāyišn |
| PāzT | Pāzand Texts |
| PRDd | Pahlawi Rewāyat Dādestān ī dēnīg |
| RV | Rig Veda |
| V | Vīdēvdād |
| Vd | Wizirgard ī dēnīg (Vajarkard Dini) |
| Vyt | Vištāsp Yašt |
| WZ | Wizīdagihā ī Zādspram |
| Y | Yasna |

Yt Yašt
 ZA Zend-Avesta
 ZWY Zand ī Wahman Yasn

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