

WAS THERE GEOGRAPHICAL SCIENCE IN SASANIAN IRAN?*

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The study examines the extant Sasanian material relating to geographical knowledge, trying to answer the question whether Iranians of the Late Sasanian period possessed the notion of “geographical science” comparable to that of their Byzantine neighbours or their Islamic heirs. Geographical traditions found in several texts, both in Avestan and Pahlavi, are studied and compared, in order to reach the conclusions, whether the actual geographical knowledge was systematised. It appears that there was much diversity in geographical views in various periods of Sasanian history; the views on geography were generally geopolitically motivated; there was a gap between the learned traditions and real geographical knowledge; Sasanian geographical attitudes were characterised by Iranocentrism and little interest in real geography; Sasanian Iranians did not develop a geographical science, and much of what we are left with is rather geographical mythology.

Key words: Sasanian geography; *Bundahišn*; *Vendīdād*; *Ayādgār-ī Jāmāspīg*; administrative division; Iran and China; Iran and Turks; Iran and India.

Much work has been done in the fields of the historical¹ and mythical² geography of Ancient and Sasanian Iran, but the purpose of this paper is to deal with the question whether Iranians of the Late Sasanian period had what we could designate as “geographical science,” i.e., how did they perceive their own country and the world surrounding it? Sasanian Iranians naturally knew a great deal about their own country and the lands outside Iran.³ The question I want to examine is whether this actual knowledge was systematised and seen as worthy of study, as was the case in the Greek-speaking world, or, later, in the Islamic world.⁴

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¹ See, e.g., Justi (1869); Tomaschek (1883); Geiger (1904); Gnoli (1980).

² On the concept, cf., e.g., Corbin (1977).

³ On such actual geographical knowledge, see Utas (1976); Cereti (1994).

⁴ My own interest in Sasanian geography was motivated by two different reasons: firstly, by my research on the Arabic and Persian geographers who wrote on the Khazars and related topics,

I

We will first turn to three versions of one geographical tradition found in the much-discussed first *fragard* of Vendidad⁵ [= Vd], or Widēwdād, a late Avestan text; this tradition is preserved in the Avestan original and in two Pahlavi versions, namely in Pahlavi Vendidad [= PhlVd] and in Bundahišn [= Bd] 31.⁶

The order of the lands listed in this Avestan text, with their Pahlavi equivalents as listed in the Pahlavi *Zand* of Vd, is as follows:

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| Vd 1 and PhlVd 1: | glosses in PhlVd 1: |
| 1. Airriana Vaējah
Ērān Wēž | <i>cē az kišwar ō kišwar bē pad parwānagīh ī Yazadān šudan nē tuwan,</i>
“for it is impossible to travel from one <i>kišwar</i> to another but by guidance of the <i>Yazatas</i> ; ⁷
<i>hast kē Hetōmandiz rōd gōwēd,</i>
“there is even one who says, it is the River Hetōmand.” ⁸ |
| 2–3. ⁹ Airriana Vaējah Vajuhī Dāitiā
Ērān Wēž Wēh Dāityā | |
| 4. Gauua Sugdō.šaiiana
Gay ī Sūrīg-mānišn | |
| 5. Mōuru
Murw ¹⁰ | |
| 6. Bāxōī
Bahl / Balx | |

cf. Shapira (forthcoming/1), and secondly, by my work on Bundahišn, the Middle Persian compendium of traditional lore.

⁵ See Christensen (1943); Molé (1951); Humbach (1960); Gnoli (1980, *passim*). See now Cantera Glera (1998).

⁶ It is evident that Chapter 31 of the Iranian Bundahišn has the first *fragard* of the Pahlavi Vendidad as its source, cf. Christensen (1943, *passim*); Boyce (1968, p. 19); MacKenzie (1989a, p. 548).

⁷ There is a practically identical text in Bd 8(11).4: *az kišwar ō [kišwar] jud pad parwānagīh ī Yazadān warzāwandīh tā šudan nē šāyēd*, “it is impossible to travel from one *kišwar* to another except by the guidance and miraculous power of the *Yazatas*,” and from the context there we can identify Ērān Wēž, “the Iranian Homeland” in our passage in PhlVd 1.1 with X’anīrah, the central inhabited continent of the Ancient Iranian worldview.

⁸ The River Hētōmand (Hilmend) is said to be in Sagestān. It was connected with the deeds of Frāsyāb (Bd 11.12, 32).

⁹ This and the next passages belong to the “second redaction”, cf. Christensen (1943, p. 23ff.)

¹⁰ Cf. the remarks of Christensen (1943, p. 15); cf. also Shapira (1998, Vol. I, Introduction, p. xlvii, and note 195). It should be noted, however, that the *Zandist* was transcribing the Avestan form, ignoring the existing Middle Persian one. This was how the mistakes arose, necessitating the glossing work of later copyists who had no Avestan original before them.

7. Nisāiia
Nisāy
8. Harōiva
Harēw
9. Vaēkərəta
Wēgard *Kābul*
10. Uruuā
Mēšān
11. Xnənta yim vəhrkānō.šaiiana
*Xnan*¹¹ ī Gurgān mānišn
12. Harax^vaitī
Harahmand¹²
13. Haētumant
Hētōmand *Sīst[*ān?]*
15. Raga
Rag *Ādurbādagān, hast kē Ray gōwēd, "A., some say: R."*
16. Čaxra
Čaxr **Mazūn*¹³
17. Varəna yim čaθru.gaoša
Warn ī čahār-gōš *Padišxwārgar; Daylam / Gēl,*¹⁴ *Kirmān*
18. Hapta Həndu
Haft-Hindūgān
19. Upa aōdaēšu raṅhaiiā [...] taožiiāča
abar pad Ōdāg ī Arwestān¹⁵ ī Hrōm
20. *Pārs.*

As has been observed, the order of enumeration of the lands in this Avestan source is as follows: NE > S > W > N.¹⁶ The work of the *Zandist* made the order of the list chaotic, due to his identifications of some of the Avestan lands with more fa-

¹¹ Written in Avestan characters.

¹² The form is corrupt, cf. Christensen (1943, p. 37).

¹³ Which is Oman, see Marquart (1901, p. 43 and note 4); cf. now Cantera Glera (1998, Vol. II, p. 35). On the form *Mazūn*, cf. de Blois (1989).

¹⁴ See Cantera Glera (1998, Vol. II, p. 38 note 3).

¹⁵ Avestan: "at the source of the Raṅha River;" cf. also Yt 12.18, for which no Pahlavi version exists; most scholars read in PhlVd 1.19 *Arangistān* (*ōdā Y 'Ingysty'n Y hlwm*), where I read (after Marquart (1901, p. 165) and Christensen (1943, p. 58) *Arwestān* (the *w* is from Aramaic, *Bēth 'Arbhāyē*); the text has, actually, سرسجد, while one MS, DDJ, glosses it as *'rst'n Rwm* (عرسجات, *sic!*), cf. Dastoor Hoshang Jamasp (1907, pp. 18–20, note 2). MacKenzie (1989a, pp. 548b–549a) noted that Avestan Raṅha / Pahlavi Arang was identified with Pahlavi Arwand, properly Orontes, but confused with the Tigris. Cf. Shapira (1998, Vol. I, Chapter 2, pp. 66ff.).

¹⁶ Cf. Christensen (1943, p. 53); compare now Gnoli (1989, pp. 45b–46a): if one would map the localities according to Gnoli's identifications, the result will be basically the same. The theory that Vd I conserves the names of some *Western* lands in boustraphedonic order [cf. Nyberg (1938, pp. 324ff.)] has no foundation, see Gnoli (1980, pp. 59ff.), and Gnoli (1989, p. 44a).

miliar – and important – Western lands, such as Syria (instead of Sogdiana¹⁷), Mēšān (instead of Uruuā), Ādurbādagān and Ray (instead of Ragā), Padišxwārgar, Daylam / Gēl[ān], Kirmān (instead of Varəna yim čaθru.gaoša), and Bēth-^cArbhayyē¹⁸ on the Byzantine frontier (instead of Upa aōdaēšu raṅhaiiā); in addition, two localities seem to be identified with their namesakes in the Iranian West (Nisā and Ray). However, the tendency to draw a concentric ring was preserved: it is worth noting that the *Zandist* began from the mythical Iranian homeland and finished in Pārs, the heartland of the Sasanian Empire (thus providing us with the clue enabling to date the *Zand*).

This tendency to draw a concentric ring is even more clear in the second list which represents the order of the lands according to Bd 31 (this list is based on PhIVd, not on the Avestan Vd):

1. Ērān-Wēž
2. Dašt¹⁹ ī Sūrīg-mānišn, ku-š Sūrīg padiš mēnēnd ī hast Baydād ī Bayān-dād²⁰
3. Balx
4. Marw
5. Nisāy ī andarag Marw ud Balx
6. Harēw
7. Kābul [...] ī hast Kābulestān
8. Mēšān
9. Xnan ī Gurgānīg-mānišn
10. *Armān²¹
10. Hēdōmand [...] Sagīstān
11. Rāg [...] ī hast Ādurbādagān
12. Wahār²² [...] kē hast ī Mazūn²³

¹⁷ *ŠahrĒrān* 5 (cf. note 27 below) seems to identify Sogd with Samarqand, see Markwart – Messina (1931, p. 9).

¹⁸ Arbayestān between Bezabde and Nineveh, Nisibis and Pērōz-Šāpūr, cf. note 15 above. MacKenzie (1989a, pp. 548–549): Orontes/Tigris.

¹⁹ Why *Gay* of the version of PhIVd became changed to *dašt*? It may be a scribal error, as in the Pahlavi writing both words have some similarity; it may be translation, as *Gava* in Avestan means *Gau* or *plain* (cf. AiW 509a); the possibility that *dašt* is the *huzwārišn* of an (unattested) Aramæogram, *G[A]Y[TA], compare Hebrew *gʻy*, “valley”, is purely speculative.

²⁰ This is the “a right” etymology, on the popular level. Cf. Shaked (1985).

²¹ Cf. MacKenzie (1989a, p. 548b), cf. Christensen (1943, p. 37). Armenia in the list of Bundahišn was inserted instead of Haraxvaitī, Arachosia [in Pahlavi: Harahmand; the form is corrupt, cf. Christensen (1943)]. Such substitution of Armenia instead of an ancient Eastern-Iranian country implies that in, at least, one Iranian tradition Armenia was seen as part and parcel of Iran, see Shapira (1999–2000, p. 144 and note 14). Cantera Glera (1998, Vol. II, p. 25), read *harmun*.

²² Cf. *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* 7.7, where the reading is, however, highly uncertain: *awē Kay ka sīh sālāg bawēd [hād būd kē āwām guft] pad amar drafš spāh, spāh ī Hindūg ud Čēnīg ul grift drafš hēnd [čē drafš ul gīrēnd], abrāstag drafš hēnd, abrāstag zēn hēnd, pad tāzišn ul tāzēnd tā Wehrōd [hād būd kē Bumē deh guft] tā andarag bār ī bahr ī bahrān, Spitāmān Zardu[x]št!*, “When the Kay will be thirty years of age [there was someone who mentioned the time], the armies with innumerable banners, the Indian and the Chinese armies having up-raised banners [for they will raise the banners aloft], having erect banners, having erect weapons, they will make razziahs upto Wehrōd [there was someone who said it was the Bumē village] upto the interior of the shore of the sea of *Bahrain (?), O Spitāmān Zoroaster!” Cereti (1995) read here *Balx* (**Balx ī būmīg?*).

²³ See note 13 above.

13. War ī cahār-gōš [...] hast ī Dumbāwand
14. Haft Hindūgān
15. *Ōdag Arand [...] hunušak ī Tāzīgān Ōdag [...] Tāzīg abar mānēnd²⁴
16. Pārs

This is basically the same list, but disconnected from its Avestan original – or from its learned Pahlavi rendering, which abounds with glosses – it has become an independent document. First of all, the order: instead of the concentric movement of the Avestan list (though with some deviations in the Pahlavi version), which began from NE (*Ērān Wēž*) and ended in N, we have here the movement *inside* *Ērān Wēž*, which is thus identified with the Iranian Empire, and in a broader sense, with the X^vanirah clime, or continent, at whose centre,²⁵ in Pārs, the list is coming to its end. This was achieved by converting an out-of-hand gloss (Pārs) of PhlVd into an integral part of the new text and by omitting any connection of *Ērān Wēž* with the *Dāitiā River*. Ironically, the pure land of the pre-Avestan Iranians, *Suyda*, became Sasanian Mesopotamia and *Djazira*, *Dašt ī Sūrīg Mānišn*, which was, together with *Mēšān* (also mentioned in the text), the “non-Iran” for the Kings of *Ērān* and non-*Ērān*.²⁶ Moreover, instead of the old Iranian *Čaxra*, Oman (Mazūn) appeared in the list, and finally, the Arabs were introduced, having been begotten by a combination of an untranslated Avestan word (*taōziāča*), similar in sound to the Pahlavi for “Arabs”, and *Arwestān ī Hrōm* (“Roman Arabia”), which is *Bēth-^cArbhayyē* in Northern Mesopotamia. What we have in this list is actually a list of provinces of the Late Sasanian Empire, not geography. This list appears to be close in character to that found in the composition of a post-Sasanian date known, in the extant recension, as *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* [*ŠahrĒrān*].²⁷ Before we turn to the list of *ŠahrĒrān*, I would note that the compiler of the Bd list was tied to identifications of places found in his source, without a possibility to add entirely new items for which his *Zand* had no authority;²⁸ the situation of *ŠahrĒrān* is different – there the author was interested in founding-legends connected with particular towns and localities.

II

The order of the enumeration of the four great vice-royalties in *ŠahrĒrān* is said to be crisscrossed, East > West > South > Ādurbādagān (NW).²⁹

²⁴ “The 16th best created is *Ōdag Arand, *Ōdag being the evil offspring of the Arabs. [...] The Arabs live there,” see Shapira (1998, Vol. I, Chapter 2, pp. 66ff.).

²⁵ Cf. note 7 above. Cf. Gnoli (1989, p. 47).

²⁶ On this term, cf. Gignoux (1987, pp. 30–31); Gnoli (1985); Gnoli (1986), and the bibliography given there.

²⁷ Editions and translations: Markwart – Messina (1931); Markwart (1938, *passim*); Kasumova (1994).

²⁸ The only exception being the reference to Armenia, which could have been caused by a scribal confusion.

²⁹ I give here a partial list.

X^varāsān (Samarkand, *Sugd,³⁰ Baxl, X^vārazm,³¹ Marw, Harāt, Tōs, Nēw-Šāhpuhr, Kāyēn, Gurgān [Šahrestān ī Dahestān], Kōmis, Čōl³²);

X^varbarān (cities built by Husraw I and II, Tēsīfōn, Nešībīn, Urhā,³³ Bābhīl, Hīrat,³⁴ Hamadān, Māy, Padišxwārgar, Dumbāwand, Nihāwand, Wēsūtūn, Dēnabarān, Musarakān, Balōčān, Marinjān, Maušil, Jazīra, Šām, Yaman, [*A]Frīkā, Kūfāh, Makkā, Madīna³⁵);

Nēmrōz (Kābul, Raxwat,³⁶ Bust, Farāh, Zawulestān, Zrang, Kirmān, Weh-Ardašēr, Staxr, Weh-Šāpūr, Dārābgird, Tōbag, Šūš ud Sūstar, Wand<iy>ōg-Šāhpuhr, Nahr Tīrag, Ērān-X^varrah-Kard-Šāhpuhr = Bēlabat, Samrān,³⁷ Āsūr ī šahrestān ī Weh-Ardašēr, Hagar, Gay = Isfāhān, Ērān-Āsān-Kard-Kawād);

Ādurbādagān (Ganzag, Wan, Amūi, Rāy, Baydād³⁸).

First, one notes that the region of Nēmrōz, designated by the word for “South,”³⁹ comprised, in fact, much of Iran, from Madā’in / Maḥōzē (Ctesiphon),⁴⁰ via Isfāhān, Farāh, up to Kābul, down to the Indian Ocean, and then to the Sasanian possessions in Arabia and Yaman. As we can see, this list is arranged on the basis of the quadripartite division of the Iranian Empire, which was made under Husraw I (531–579), but with many post-Sasanian additions and, perhaps, with some errors in the lists of the towns located in the four great vice-royalties.⁴¹ According to Arabic

³⁰ See Kiā (1958); Kiā (1975); Utas (1976, p. 116); Tafazzoli (1990, pp. 47–48).

³¹ *ŠahrĒrān* 10 & 47 are aetiological legends on the density of the Jewish population in X^vārazm (Kat) and Susa, cf. Zand (1988, pp. 8–9) [Hebrew].

³² This place was said to be located on the SE side of the Caspian, cf. Marquart (1903, p. 489). However, the locality with the same name is well known on the *Western* side of the Caspian, near Darband, and it is plausible to suggest that on our list it was displaced.

³³ The list of *ŠahrĒrān* in the West (Urhā- = Edessa, Syria, Yaman, Africa) probably reflects conditions of the early 7th century, cf. Morony (1982, p. 6).

³⁴ Which is al-Hīra on the War ī Tāzīgān (the Persian Gulf, cf. Markwart – Messina (1931, p. 67).

³⁵ On the last names, among them Africa, cf. Markwart – Messina (1931, pp. 82–83). As to Yaman, Kūfāh, Madīna (and, most probably, Makkā), it seems to be a post-Islamic gloss, cf. *Samrān* below. Compare note 33 above.

³⁶ Harax^vaitī, cf. Markwart – Messina (1931, p. 84). Note that here it was *not* identified with Armenia.

³⁷ = Hīmyar, compare Yaman above; see Shapira (forthcoming/2), “Between Hīmyar and Māzandarān: Pahlavi traditions of Husraw Anōšurwān’s Wars”. Markwart – Messina (1931, pp. 101–102) explained the name of the Hīmyarite king appearing in the text under consideration and written *Masūr* as Manšūr; I would guess this could be a corrupt form of *Masrūq.

³⁸ Bagdād, already mentioned in this Western section as Ctesiphon, is out of place in the Northern section; it seems that Baydād, as the capital, finishes the list, similarly to the position of Pārs in earlier Sasanian lists.

³⁹ This administrative meaning of the word should be kept in mind while dealing with some apocalyptic passages, in which the redeemer is said to come from “Nēmrōz”. This vague term can mean “from Pārs”, or “from Kābulestān”, or even “from Arabia”.

⁴⁰ The region of the “West” had a common border with the Nēmrōz-unit in Madā’in / Maḥōzē.

⁴¹ Cf. Gignoux (1984); Gignoux (1992); Gyselen (1989).

authors, Husraw I Anōšurwān (531–578) divided Iran into four big units, not of the same size:⁴² East, North, South, West. Al-Yaqūbī⁴³ and al-Tha^cālibī⁴⁴ listed them as follows: Xurāsān; Kuwar al-Jabal (Media, etc., including Isfāhān); Fārs with Kirmān and Ahwāz; al-^cIrāq up to al-Yaman and the Syrian border⁴⁵ (or Xurāsān; Xurbārān / Maghrib; Nīmrūz / Fārs; Āḍarbijān / Kuwar al-Jibāl).

This order reflects the importance given to the Eastern and Northern borders in the time of Husraw I. No connection to the learned traditions of the *Zandists* could be seen here. Another list, dating from the first third of the 7th century,⁴⁶ is found in the so-called “Armenian Geography”, or *Ašxarhac^coyc^c*,⁴⁷ by Anania of Širak, which is the most comprehensive description of the Late Sasanian Empire. The actual description of Iran divided into four appears only in the Long Version (29).⁴⁸ There the order is against the clock: West, South, East, North (*k^custi *Xorbaran*,⁴⁹ *k^custi Nm^oo*,⁵⁰ *k^custi Xorasan*, *k^custi Kapkoh*⁵¹), and again, this order seems to be based mostly on the political, and not on the geographical considerations.

⁴² In this respect, a note should be made in passing: in Mazdak’s theology, a description of which survives in Šahrastānī’s Arabic, the word *xusraw* appears, with the meaning of “king”, see Shaki (1985, pp. 532–533). This usage looks strange, as Husraw I Anōšurwān was the king who executed Mazdak soon after he rose to power, and one would speculate that this word was perhaps provoked by the phonetically similar word *kursī* appearing in the same sentence. However, the same description of Mazdak’s theology has only one *spāhbed* instead of the four in the Husraw’s times. Should we combine these facts and guess that this piece of Mazdak’s theology was written after Husraw ascended to the throne, but before his break with Mazdak and the establishment of the four *spāhbed-ships*?

⁴³ Kolesnikov (1970, pp. 95ff.); cf. also Kolesnikov (1981) [on *marzbān*, cf. also Gignoux (1985)]; Kolesnikov (1982).

⁴⁴ Zotenberg (1900, p. 609); cf. Brunner (1983, pp. 748ff.).

⁴⁵ al-Tha^cālibī called the four units *rub^c*; the Pahlavi term was *kustag* or *pādgost*. The Middle Persian *pādgost*, “one of the four parts of Ērānšahr after Anōšurwān”, was happily translated as *aqtār al-mamlaka* (**šahr-pādgostān*) in Mas^cūdī’s *Murūj al-Dhahab*, ed. de Meynard and de Courteille (1914, Vol. II, p. 152); the Arabic *aqtār*, Plural of *quṭr*, “region, zone, quarter” [see Wehr (1976, p. 774)] seems to be borrowed from the Latin (*via* Greek and Syriac) for “quarter”; this Arabic word has no Semitic etymology (the Hebrew *qōṭer*, “diameter”, is a medieval borrowing from Arabic). The Arabic of the (spurious) throne speech of Ardashir has [...] *iqāmat al-^cadl wa-idrār al-faṣl wa-tašyīd al-maṭhar wa-^cimārat al-bilād wa-r-raḡa bi-l-^cibād wa ramm aqtār al-mamlaka*, which may be tentatively reconstructed in Pahlavi as follows: **paymān-āxistan ud dād-radēnīdan (rāwēnīdan/rawāgēnīdan?) ud kirbag-pādyāwastan ud šahr-ābādīh ud mardom-xurramīh ud abāz wirāstan ī šahr-pādgostān*.

⁴⁶ Compiled prior to 636, cf. Hewsens (1992, pp. 13–15).

⁴⁷ Marquart (1901); Hewsens (1992).

⁴⁸ Cf. Hewsens (1992, pp. 72–75).

⁴⁹ Including Adiabene, cf. Hewsens (1992, pp. 229–230).

⁵⁰ Including two islands, Ger and Mēšmanxik, in the Persian Gulf, Xužihrestān, and Spahl and Debuḥēl, taken from the Indians. It should be noted that Yaman is absent from this list. In the period when the text was composed, Yaman was not under Sasanian rule.

⁵¹ I.e., the Mountain of Kāf, Caucasus; it included, *i.a.*, Armn, Varjan, Ran, Balasakan, *Sisakan [Siwnik^c, cf. Hewsens (1992, p. 234)].

III

A much earlier list, from the third century, is found in the description of the Sasanian Empire in Šāhpuhr's inscription at Ka^cba-ye-Zardušt [= ŠKZ]:⁵² Fārs, Parθū, Xūzestān, Mēšān, Asūrestān, *Nōrširakān = Adiabene,⁵³ Arabestān = Bēth^c Arb^hāyē, Ādurbadigān, Armēn, Wručan / Wirušān = Iberia, Sēkān,⁵⁴ Alwān/Arrān = Albania,⁵⁵ Bālasagān, *up to in front of (or facing) the Caucasus and the Alanian Gate* (tā frāz ō Kāfkōh ud Ālānān bar)⁵⁶ and all of the Mt. Prišxwar [το Πρεσσοβαρ],⁵⁷ Māh / Mād, Gurgān, Marw, Harēw, *Parthian (^oprhštr, *Abaršahr) provinces: Kirmān, Sagestān, Tūrān, Makurān, Pārtān, Hindūstān, Kušānšahr *up to in front of (or facing) (tā frāz ō)* Paškubar (Pēšāwar?) and Kāš, Suyδ, Čāč, *šahr ī zrēh ī Mazūn (province of the Sea of Oman).

In the inscription[s] of the Zoroastrian “Pope” Kirdēr (§ 14)⁵⁸ belonging to the same period, the list of the lands of “Iran”, as opposed to “non-Iran”, is basically the same, with slight variations in the order: Fārs, Pahlaw, Xūzestān, Asūrestān, Mēšān,⁵⁹ *Nōdširakān, Ādurbadigān, Spāhān, Ray, Kirmān, Sagestān, Gurgān, Marw, Harēw, Abaršahr, Tūrestān, Makurān, Kušānšahr *up to (tā frāz ō)* Paškabūr (Pēšāwar?).

One can see that in these two lists the order is West, North-East, East, South, beginning from Pārs and finishing on the opposite shore of the Persian Gulf; again, the order reflects, in my opinion, the geopolitical conditions of the age; this is at odds with Narsēh's inscription at Paikuli (§ 92–93),⁶⁰ which belongs to a slightly later date, and in which the two lists of *kings and greater rulers* and of *lords and lesser rulers* begin in the East and go westwards.⁶¹

So, we have seen that the Sasanian lists of localities did not represent a uniform tradition and there is nothing that could qualify them as “geography”.

IV

It should be added that there was another geographical tradition current in Sasanian Iran: according to Kramers,⁶² Yāqūt tells that Ardašīr I drew a map of the world, and

⁵² Cf. Henning (1939); Henning (1954); Honigmann and Maricq (1953); Maricq (1958, pp. 306–307, 336–337); Back (1978, pp. 286–287). More bibliography in Cereti (1995–1997, pp. 19ff.).

⁵³ Cf. Hewsen (1992, pp. 229ff.).

⁵⁴ Mingrelia or Siunik^o?; according to Skjærvø (1983, P. 3.2, p. 126, with bibliography), not Mingrelia.

⁵⁵ See Gnoli (1998, p. 164).

⁵⁶ See Gnoli (1998, pp. 164–165).

⁵⁷ Back (1978, p. 287): “die ganze Elburzkette (= Tabārestān und Gēlān).”

⁵⁸ See Back (1978, pp. 420–422); for the texts, see now MacKenzie (1989b, pp. 43, 55, tr. on p. 58), and Gignoux (1991, p. 50, tr. on p. 71). On the list(s), compare Gignoux (1971).

⁵⁹ Note that the order is different than that of the ŠKZ. Note also that Xūzestān, Asūrestān and Mēšān appear on the list of “Iran”, cf. Gignoux (1971, pp. 89–90).

⁶⁰ See Skjærvø (1983, P. 3.1, pp. 70–73).

⁶¹ Skjærvø (1983, P. 3.2, pp. 121–122).

⁶² Kramers (1938, p. 64a).

a similar tradition was told by [Pseudo-]Ṭūsī⁶³ in *‘Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt* about Kubād. In fact, Yāqūt’s text says: “it was told of Ardašīr that he said that the Earth is divided into four parts:⁶⁴ one part is the land of the Turks, and it is located between the West of India up to the East of Byzantium; one part is the West, namely what is between the West of Byzantium up to Egypt [*al-Qibt*] and Barbary (Somali); one part is the land of the Blacks [*al-Sūdān*], and it is located between Barbary (Somali) up to India; one part is the land which belongs to Persia [*al-Fārs*]: what is between the River of Balkh up to the outskirts of Ādharbaydījān and Persarmenia [*al-Armaniyya al-Fārisiyya*], then up to the Euphrates, the Arab Desert up to Oman and Mukrān, then up to Kābul and Ṭakḥarestān [...].”⁶⁵

Here we have a fourfold division of most of the inhabited world (except China and India), with Iran at the centre, which is described in the following order: NE > NW > SW > SE.

V

Now, if we turn to the great Pahlavi compendia of the traditional Zoroastrian lore, namely, the Dēnkard [= Dk] and Bd (Bundahišn), we find out that though much foreign wisdom was translated into Pahlavi and incorporated in the Late Sasanian Avesta (including material on philosophy, astronomy and astrology), nevertheless, geography, Greek or Indian, attracted apparently no attention. There is no Avestan *Nask* summarised in the Dk, about which we could say that it used to contain any geographical knowledge. There are here and there geographical allusions scattered in the Dk, but they are of no value for our subject or reflect the impact of Muslim geography.⁶⁶

The Bd, a large Pahlavi work based mostly on the Pahlavi versions of *Yašts*, contains numerous geographical chapters,⁶⁷ one of them being the already discussed

⁶³ *Gharā’ib al-Mawjūdāt wa’Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt* (ed. Sutūde, 1345/1966), said to have been penned by Aḥmad Ṭūsī, should be attributed correctly to Najīb Hamadānī, see Smirnova (1993, p. 27ff.).

⁶⁴ Many *res gesta* of Anōšurwān were ascribed to Ardašīr, see, e.g., the case of “The Letter of Tansar.”

⁶⁵ *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, see von Wüstenfeld (1866, pp. 16–17); cf. also Dimašqī, ed. Mehren (1866, p. 18); Maqrīzī, Le Caire (1911, Vol. I, p. 33 [17]).

⁶⁶ Like, e.g., DkM 25.15: [...] *ciyōn kēš ī Yēšō ī az Hrōm ud hān ī Mōšē azi-z Xazarān ud hān ī Mānī az-iz Turkistān tagīgīh ud čērīh išan pēš būd bē burd ō wadagīh ud ōbastagīh andar hamahlān abgand han ī Mānī az Hrōm fīlsō[k]fjāyīhiz anāfi*, “[...] like the faith of Jesus from Byzantium, and the faith of Moses from the Khazars, and the faith of Mani from the Uigurs took away the strength and the vigor they had previously possessed, threw them into vileness and decadence amongst their rivals, and the faith of Mani even frustrated the Byzantine philosophy,” cf. de Menasce (1945, pp. 239–240); Molé (1967, p. 237). This passage was seen as reflecting the Uigur Manichæism, cf. de Menasce (1945, p. 240), and as one of the few non-Muslim sources to make note of Khazar Judaism, see Golden (1984, p. 140, note 38); cf. also Shapira (forthcoming/1).

⁶⁷ Bd 8 (11), “On the nature of the lands;” 9 (12), “On the nature of the mountains;” 10 (13), “On the nature of the seas;” 11 (20), “On the nature of the rivers;” 11A (20), “On particular rivers;”

Bd 31. Some geographical information is also found scattered elsewhere, e.g., in Bd 14 and 14B, “On the negroes”, but it is outside of our inquiry here.⁶⁸

Bd 8 (11), “On the nature of the lands,” is the only chapter that provides a short exposition of the traditional Zoroastrian concept of seven *kišwars*, and is not merely a list of names. According to Kramers in his above mentioned classical article in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, the seven climes of the Muslim geography were perhaps influenced by Persian seven *kišwars*, with the map of al-Maʿmūn divided into seven *aqālīm*, six of which surrounding a seventh, the whole being surrounded by the encircling ocean.⁶⁹ This is indeed the world-map described in Bd 8 (11).

Bd 9 (12), “On the nature of the mountains,” also contains mythical information,⁷⁰ with a few later additions, such as the mentions of Pārs (Bd 9.12, 24, 40), Sagestān (Bd 9.18), Hrōm = Byzantium (Bd 9.92), Kābul and China (Bd 9.3, 25, 39), Ādurbādagān (Bd 9.29), Turkestān and Spāhān and Kirmānšāhān (Bd 9.3, 43–44), and Mt. Baqar (the Brazen City) and its stronghold used by Frāsyāb and where *today* (*imrōz*) Šād Rām Pērōz⁷¹ has built a myriad towns (Bd 9.3, 23).

Bd 10, “On the seas,” describes at length the mythical ocean *Frāxʷkard*, quoting an Avestan verse as its authority (Bd 10.6), and enumerates three salt seas (*zrēyihā ī sūr*), and 23 small seas. Of the three principal salt seas, one (*Pūtīg*, the Persian Gulf) is described at length in a mythical vein. Clear identifications are provided for the two others (Bd 10.14–15): *zrēh ī Kamrōd hān ī pad Abāxtar, pad Tabarestān widērēd; hān ī Syāh-bun pad Hrōm*, “the Sea of Kamrōd, which is in the North (the Caspian), is that which passes to Tabarestān; the Sea of *Syāh-bun* (the Black Sea) is in Byzantium.” Here the compiler failed to make any mention of the Mediterranean, of which he naturally knew well; there is, of course, the possibility that he regarded the Black Sea and the Mediterranean as one and the same.⁷² The same chapter makes an explicit mention by name of only one of the 23 smaller salt seas, namely the 20th, *Kyānseh ciyōn pad Sagestān* (Bd 10.16), though large salt lakes are abundant in Iran.

Bd 11, “On the rivers,”⁷³ describes the mythical, so to speak, “flumenology”, providing 4 Avestan quotations (Bd 11.1, 3, 6, 7), and presenting in the end (Bd

11 C (21), “The dissatisfaction of the Arang, Marw and Hilmand rivers;” 12 (22), “On the nature of the lakes;” 29 (29), “On the chieftainship of the continents;” 31, “On particular lands of Ērānšahr, the abode of the *Kays*;” 32, “On the abodes which the *Kays* made with splendor, which are called wonders and marvels.” The translation of the captions is adopted from MacKenzie (1989a).

⁶⁸ See Shapira (forthcoming/3), “Zoroastrian Sources on Black People”.

⁶⁹ Kramers (1938, pp. 63a, 64a). Compare above (notes 62, 65), on the “Ardašīr”’s map, on which Iran is also at the centre.

⁷⁰ Based on Yt 19, of which no *Zand* is extant, cf. MacKenzie (1989a, p. 549a).

⁷¹ Is this Pērōz son of Yazdigird III, who took refuge with the Chinese?; see also Bd 33, cf. Shapira (1998, Vol. I, Chapter 4, pp. 161, 183–186).

⁷² However, the normal Pahlavi name for the Black Sea was *not Syāh-bun*, cf. Frejman (1930). So, was this *Syāh-bun* the Mediterranean? It should be remembered that Greeks, Arabs and Turks called the Mediterranean by the name “White Sea”.

⁷³ Cf. Markwart (1938, pp. 116–117): Bd 11.1–7.

11.8) the list of the 25 (though they are said to be 18) rivers between the Arang and the Weh rivers.⁷⁴

Bd 11A (20) goes in further details of the list, introducing material which cannot be Avestan. Thus, Arang is said to pass through **Sūriā būm kē Šām-iz*⁷⁵ *x'ānēnd ud pad Egiptos būm kē Mišr-iz x'ānēnd bē widerēd u-š ānōh rōd ī tag*⁷⁶ *Spitoiš x'ānēnd*, “the land **Sūriā* (Syria) which is also called *Šām* and it passes in the land Egypt which is also called **Mišr*, and there they call it the swift (< **Nīl*) river Spitoiš (< *Egyptus)” (Bd 1A.1);⁷⁷ the Euphrates and Tigris on the border of Byzantium [...] in *Āsūrestān* (Mesopotamia) [*wimand ī Hrōm pad Āsūrestān*] are mentioned (Bd 1A.3–6), with a pseudo-Avestan quotation praising the Euphrates,⁷⁸ with the Caspian (*Kāšpig*; not Egypt!⁷⁹) mentioned in Bd 11A.26.⁸⁰

The order of the rivers given in Bd 11.8 and Bd 11A are different, with the latter list containing a river not mentioned in the former.

Bd 11 C (21), “The dissatisfaction of the Arang, Marw and Hilmand rivers,” is of mythical character and adds nothing to our study.

Bd 12 (22), “On the nature of the lakes,” where 9 lakes are enumerated; it is said that (Bd 12.3) that Lk. (*war ī*) *Čēčast* is in *Ādurbādagān*.

Bd 29 (29), “On the chieftainship of the continents,” has mythical material interspersed with some later interpolations, such as *Dašt ī Tāzīgān*, *Sagistān*, *Kābulestān*, *Turkestān*, *Čēnestān*, the identifications of *Ērān-Wēž* with *Ādurbādagān*, and with *Yima*'s *vara* said to be located in the middle of *Pārs*.⁸¹

⁷⁴ *Arang rōd, Weh rōd, Diglat rōd ku Dajtar-iz x'ānēnd, Frāt rōd, Dāitī rōd, Dargām rōd, Zan rōd, Harēw rōd, Marw rōd, Hētōmand rōd, Axošēr rōd, Wataēnē rōd, Zišmund rōd, X rōd, X'ajand rōd, Baxl rōd, Mihrān rōd ku Hindūgān rōd-iz x'ānēnd, Spēd rōd, Tord rōd ke Kōr-iz x'ānēnd, X'arēy rōd ke Masragān-iz x'ānēnd, Araz rōd, Turmēd rōd, Wandasīs rōd, Dārājā rōd, Kā-sag rōd, Šēd rōd, Paydāgmehān [rōd] ī Čīhrōmēhan āb Mukrestān rōd.*

⁷⁵ Or: *kē-š Ami-z x'ānēnd*, “which they call Ami”, **Amu*[-*Daryā*].

⁷⁶ **Nīl* (نیل) > *nyw* (نود) > *TB* (نور) > *tk* (نور)?

⁷⁷ This passage can be dated by the period *before* Husrau II; cf. interesting remarks in Shahbazi (1990, p. 214).

⁷⁸ Four quotations at all are found in this chapter.

⁷⁹ Cf. Markwart (1938, p. 5); Monchi-Zadeh (1975, p. 198ff.); Čunakova (1997, p. 295, note 315); compare Ajklesaria (1956, pp. 111–112).

⁸⁰ Using this opportunity, I'd like to suggest, with reservation, two possible identifications of hydronyms appearing in Bd 11A.19–20 that elluded me earlier (see Shapira 1999–2000, p. 144): *Tord rōd kē Kōr-iz x'ānēnd az zrēh Sīrāb bē āyēd ud ō zrēh ī Gurgān rīzēd*. *Zēwāb* (?) *hān rōd ī az Ādurbādagān bē āyēd ud pad Pārs ō zrēh rīzēd* (cf. note 74 above), “the river Tord which they also call Kōr (Kura, Mtkvari), comes from Sīrāb and pours into the Lake of Gurgān (the Caspian). *Zēwāb* (?) is that river which comes from Ādurbādagān and pours in Pārs into the sea.” The name of the Lake of *Sīrāb* does not, apparently, mean “well-watered place”; *sēr* here might mean “tired, disgusted; garlic”, and could rather refer to the salt lake of Van; another possibility is to compare the hydronym to the Turkish name of the lake Çıldır, located near the source of Kura, whose name is connected in Turkish with the notions “to become crazy, disgusted”; or should one emend to **Sūr-āb*, “salt water?” As to the problematic *Zēwāb*, could this be emended to **Zab*?

⁸¹ Of interest is a possible (though problematic) reference to Turks, found in Bd 29.8: *Sām rāy gōwēnd ku: ahōš būd, pad hān ka-š tarr-mēnīd Dēn ī Mazdaēsnañ, Turk ē kē Nāyōn x'ānēnd ka xvafī ēstād, pad tēr bē winast*, “Of Sām they say that he was immortal, at the time when he scorned the Mazda-worshipping Religion, a Turk called *Nāyōn* slew him with an arrow, when he was

Bd 32, “On the abodes which the *Kays* made with splendour, which are called wonders and marvels,” contains only mythical traditions; among these, only one new notion is worth noting, that one of the abodes of Dahāg was in Babylon,⁸² another in Sambarān, i.e., in Hīmyar, and another one in Hindūstān, i.e., in non-Iranian lands, while that of Jam / Yima was in Pārs, i.e., in Iran *par excellence* (Bd 32.4, 7, 8).

To sum up, these “geographical” chapters are, with the exception of Bd 8 (11), merely lists, like Bd 31, and it is plausible to suggest that the format of the list of the Avestan lands derived from the *Zand* of Vd 1 served as the pattern for other lists as well.

VI

Bd 14 does not belong to the “geographical” chapter in the proper sense of the word, but it contains a tradition bearing on our discussion of Sasanian geographical perceptions (Bd 14.36–39): it is said there that nine of the 15 “sorts”, *sardag*, born of Syāmag and his spouse Wašag, crossed the ocean Frāx^vkard from the central *kišwar* X^vanirah, wherein we live, to the other six mythical *kišwars*, borne on the back of the Bull Srisōg; six other *sardags* remained in the *kišwar* X^vanirah; from these sprung the Arabs, Iranians, Māzandarānīs; it is stated that those in Iran and non-Iran, Byzantium (*Salm dah hast ī Hrōm*), Tūr, China (*Sēn dah hast ī Čēnestān*), Dāy-dah, Sind, and even those who are in the other six *kišwars* – all are the descendants of Frawāg son of Syāmag son of Mašyā. All these 15 *sardags*, the descendants of Frawāg living in the seven *kišwars*, and another ten *sardags*, which are fabulous creatures (such as “those with eyes in their breasts, those who have wings like bats, *war-čašm*, *ēwag-pay*, *hān-iz kē dar dārēd ciyōn šabāg*, etc.”), but also monkeys, are said to descend from Gayōmard.

Only later, two new “sorts” sprang, due to the intermixture caused by the Adversary, namely the “Negroes” and another “sort”, designated by the word that some scholars read as “Slavs”.⁸³

sleeping [...]” *Nāyōn* means “prince” in Mongolian, and this word was borrowed by Turkic and Persian (cf. *Burhān-i Qāṭī*: *was turkān milūk-o-salāṭīn rā bi-dān nām x^vānand*, “Turks call by this name their kings and rulers”). Another possibility is to emend *Nāyōn* and to read the Turkic word **tōyīn*, “a Buddhist priest”, cf. Clauson (1972, p. 568a): “a high official;” cf. Doerfer (1963–1975). In both cases, the Bd passage therefore should be of a post-Sasanian date.

⁸² Ajklesaria (1956, pp. 268–269), read its name as *Korēnd Dūsīṭ / Kvirinta Duzita* [TD2 = Anklesaria (1908, p. 209 l. 8): *یرلاصسد*; cf. TD2, Anklesaria (1908, p. 211 l. 3 (Bd 32.15), where the same word is used (*یرلا*), was translated in Ajklesaria (1956) as “was just-like a crane (*kōrēng*)”].

⁸³ The text [Bd 14.39 (TD2, Anklesaria (1908, p. 107 l. 11–13) is as follows: *did pad wahān ī petyārag, gumēzišnīh būd ciyōn Zangīg kē ābīg ud zamīgīg bawēd ud سدرسو kē āb ud zamīg har dō zīwēd*, “again, because of the Adversary, the Mixture occurred, such as *Zangīg* (Black Africans), who are (those) of water and (those) earth, and *سدرسو*, who live in both water and earth.” The word in question could be read as *gilābīg* (“of clay and water”), so Ajklesaria (1956, pp. 134–135), or as *Saglābīg*, so Monchi-Zadeh (1975, pp. 98–99 and note 9). The problem is that though Sasanian Iranians were aware of the Black Africans, it remains highly uncertain whether they could have any knowledge of Slavs, so if the passage under consideration dates to the Sa-

VII

As we have seen, the Bd material provides no stuff which could be seen as something similar to geographical science, even in the loosest sense: all we have is mythology, i.e., the *geographia sacra* of the “Old Country”, with some more recent additions (whose aim was to sanctify the Ērān Wēž / X^vanirah of the day, i.e., Sasanian Iran), and lists of provinces or towns. There is, too, “The Wonders of Sīstān”,⁸⁴ a valuable example of a short collection of local traditions, whose genre is perhaps somehow connected to the Arabic and Persian *madḥ* or *‘ajā‘ib* literature of the later date.

However, it is wrong, in my opinion, to state that the Late Sasanian Iranians knew no geography. In fact, we have a striking example of it in the Pahlavi *Ayādgār ī Jāmāspīg* [= AyJ].⁸⁵ In form, this is a revelation similar in many respects to that found in *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* [ZWY].⁸⁶ It is impossible now to dwell upon the differences of structure and genre, though they are of importance.

I will say only that among the abundant eschatological material found in AyJ, some purely geographical chapters are found, and I think their inclusion into the framework of this particular composition was meant to provide a “scriptural” legitimisation for the geographical science as such.

AyJ 4.41–45 retells the story of the division of X^vanirah among Frēdōn’s three sons, with Ērič getting Iran and India, Tōz getting Turkeštān, and Salm getting Byzantium. This story has numerous parallels, of course, but here we will note only that in our case the date is clearly Sasanian, for in the post-Sasanian versions Arabs are associated either with Salm (because of the words *musulmān*, *Islām*) or with Tōz (because of the word *tāzīgān*), but here are no Arabs yet.⁸⁷

AyJ 5 provides some information about the people who dwell in the six other *kišwars*. They are said to confess the religion of the forefathers, i.e., the religion of Gayōmard and Syāmag, and to sacrifice to Srōš.

sasanian Period, the reading “Slavs” is impossible. But, if this passage dates from the post-Sasanian period, which is plausible, Slavs could be mentioned and the description of their ways of life in places abundant in water, provided by the Zoroastrian compiler, fits well the contemporary descriptions of the Eastern-European tribes, among them Slavs, Rus’ and others, which are found in Arabic geographical works of the 9th–10th centuries. Another relevant passage is found in the Pahlavi *Ayādgār ī Jāmāspīg* [AyJ] 10 [see Messina (1939, pp. 53–54, translation: p. 104); cf. Appendix], where the word looking like *saglābīg* was taken by the editor as referring to Cylon (*Sīlān*); but cf. Monchi-Zadeh (1975, pp. 98–99 and notes 8–9). However, Bd 14B depicts the “Negroes” as descendants of humans and demons and even mentions them in Southern Iran; here I trace a reference to the Zinj revolt of 868–883 in the marshes of Southern Irāq under the guidance of al-Barqū‘ī, “the veiled”, and as such, the passage is clearly of a post-Sasanian date; the same may be deduced also regarding our “Slavic” passage. On a Persian etymology of *saglāb* found in Gardīzī, cf. Martinez (1983, p. 125). As to these “Negroes”, see Shapira (forthcoming/3): Zoroastrian Sources on Black People.

⁸⁴ Cf. West (1916); Utas (1983); cf. also Utas (1976).

⁸⁵ See Messina (1939).

⁸⁶ For *Zand ī Wahman Yasn*, see Cereti (1995).

⁸⁷ As in *Abdīh ī Sīstān* 4.

People of the strange “sorts” already mentioned in the context of Bundahišn are described at some length in AyJ 9. This tradition ultimately goes back to Classical geography, and must be an import from Greek or Syriac sources.

If in AyJ 10 the Pahlavi text spoke of Cylon, as Messina believed, then the source should also be Classical (compare Anania of Širak, where the arrangement of material is similar).

AyJ 12.2–7 depicts the land of Māzandarān; in the Late Sasanian period this country was still non-Iranian and hardly Zoroastrian at all,⁸⁸ the description seems to derive from a lost *Nask* quoted in Dēnkard IX.10, for which our AyJ provides valuable textual variants.⁸⁹

But the most interesting and real-geographical information is found in AyJ 8, which deals with the Turks,⁹⁰ Chinese, Arabs, Berbers, and in AyJ 12.8–16, which treats of the Turks [see Appendix]. Though short, these texts on the Turks and the Chinese read like the descriptions of Muslim geographers (e.g., Gardīzī⁹¹ or Marwazī⁹²) of the same peoples.

We should remember that our knowledge of many aspects of the Sasanian civilisation is, and will remain, limited. Nevertheless, it seems to me safe to state that the Sasanian Iranians did not develop a geographical science which can be compared to that of the Greek- and Arabic-writing authors. It seems that even the actual geographical knowledge of their own country that the Sasanian Iranians possessed was barely systematised, and was rather treated in accordance with geopolitical and/or religious attitudes, characterised by Iranocentrism.

Appendix

AyJ 8.1. *pursīd Wištāsp šāh ku awēšān mardomān ī pad Hindūgān ud Cēnestān ud Turkestān ud Tāzīgān ud Barbarestān jud jud dād ud rawišn cē, u-šān zīwandagīh ud nēwagīh ciyōn, ka mērēnd ō kū abganēnd u-šān ruwān ō kū šawēnd*, “The king Wištāsp asked: ‘those people who are in India, China, Turkestān, Arabia and Berberia, what are their respective religions and behavior, and their ways of life and qualities? Where are they thrown when they die, and where do their souls go?’”

2. *guft-iš Jāmāsp ī bēdaxš ku Hindūgān šahr wuzurg, hast ī sard, hast ī garm, hast ī tarr, hast ī hušk, hast kū dār ud draxt, hast kū dašt ī saxt hast kū wyāb*, “Jāmāsp the vice-roy said to him: ‘India is a vast state. In some places it is cold, in some places it is hot, in some places it is wet, in some places it is dry, there are trees and shrubs, there are heavy deserts where one goes astray.’”

⁸⁸ Cf. Brunner (1983, p. 766).

⁸⁹ See Shapira (forthcoming/2): Between Ḥimyar and Māzandarān: Pahlavi Traditions of Husraw Anōšurwān’s Wars.

⁹⁰ In fact, Turks are dealt with in AyJ 12, cf. below.

⁹¹ Cf. Martinez (1983).

⁹² See Minorsky (1942).

3. *hast kē-šān zīwišnīh az brinj, hast kē az šīr ī gāw, hast kē <az> tohmīhā x^vārēnd*, “There are some whose living is on rice, there are some whose living is on cow-milk, there are some who eat <from> fruits (or, eggs).”

4. *u-šān kēš ud dād ud rawišn was, ud hast ī pad nēmag ī Ōhrmazd, ud hast ī pad nēmag ī Ahriman ud jādūgīh āškārag kunēnd*, “Their faiths and religions and ways of life are multiple. There are some who are in the (half-)lot of Ōhrmazd, there are some who are in the (half-)lot of Ahriman, and they practice witchcraft publicly.”

5. *ud ka mīrēnd, hast kē andar zamīg nigān kunēnd, ud hast kē ō āb abganēnd, ud hast kē pad āta[x]š bē sōzēnd, ud harw kē nē hudēn ō Dušax^v šawēnd*, “When they die, there are some who bury (their dead) in the earth, and there are some who throw (their dead) into water, and there are some who burn (their dead) with fire, and everyone who is not of the Good Religion goes to Hell.”⁹³

6. *ud Cēnestān šahr wuzurg ī was-zarr ud was-mušk ud was-gōhr, mardomān īš andar bawēnd kīrōg ud nēzūmān ud bārīg wēnišn ēstād bawēnd, But paristēnd, ka mērēnd, druwand hēnd*, “The state of China is vast, having much gold, much muscus, much jewels, and the people who live in it are artisan and dextrous and of thin complexion, they worship Buddha, they are unrighteous in their death.”⁹⁴

⁹³ Our text speaks, however, of an ambivalent attitude toward the inhabitants of India, some of whose religious practices were indeed sometimes resembling those of Zoroastrians, due to the common ancestry and the later Iranian impact. But sometimes these were just the opposite of the Zoroastrian cult. It would be interesting to trace the history of Zoroastrian attitudes to Indian religions up to our days [cf. Hinnells (1994)]. It is not necessary to presume that *hudēn* in India meant specifically “Zoroastrian”; the term may refer to the Hinduized Magi of Mithra who settled in India, cf. Humbach (1978). As to the supposed statements about Zoroastrians in India and in Turkeštān, it should be remembered that the Iranian, Median pre-Zoroastrian cult of Mithra *xšaθrapati* was known in Egypt [on a Mythraion used by Persian soldiers at the end of the Achæmenian rule, if not later, see Boyce (1982, pp. 186 & 265)] and the Near East, including Phoenician cities of the mainland, Cyprus and Carthago, and it is quite possible that Alexander used this cult in his propaganda against the Achæmenids, the stubborn Mazdæans [see Bivar (1994, p. 69); cf. Bivar (1975)].

The Indians and Chinese were both held in great esteem by the Iranians of the Late Sasanian period. Indian wisdom was transferred into Iran as part of the project of assembling the dispersed Avesta, and many “secular” works were translated as well, so, *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah*, *Tūfī-Nāmāh*, *Sindbād-Nāmāh* were translated circa 550, i.e., about the time when the Avesta was codified. On Indian motifs penetrating Greece and Syria via Sasanian Iran, cf. Shaked (1984, pp. 49–50); see now de Blois (1990).

⁹⁴ This is a fitting description of pre-T’ang China (except, of course, the idea that the Chinese go to Hell, and therefore have no hope of salvation), since Li Shi-min (the Emperor Tai Tsung, the founder of the T’ang Dynasty, 618–907) opposed Buddhism and promoted the teachings of Confucius, and in 624 the great debate against Buddhism was held at the royal court, recorded by Fu I (555–639). Buddhism became popular in China only after the fall of the Han Dynasty in the 3rd century AD, although the penetration of this religion began as early as the 1st century from Tibet. Later, the Parthian and Kushan Iranians played an important role in bringing the Buddhist gospel to China, a Parthian prince Aršak (An Shih-kaio, An Shi-gao), a Sogdian K’ang Seng-hui and a Parthian merchant An Hsüan (Xuan) among them. In the 4th century Buddhism became the state religion of China. At the end of the same century, Chinese Buddhism penetrated Korea, and about 552, this religion appears in Japan, via Korea. When the Zoroastrians first appeared in China in the early 6th century, their religion was spared from the general persecution of foreign religions (Watson 1983, p. 554). However, in the Huichang (841–846) epoch many sects were suppressed in China. All this perhaps indicates a pre-T’ang date.

7. *Tāzīgān ud Barbarestān šahr garm ud hušk wyābān, nēst bar ud āb tang u-šān x^varišn šīr ud xrafstarān ud mūš ud mār ud gurbag, rōbāh ud kaftār ud abārīg az ēn ēwēn, uzdēs paristēnd u-šān zīwišn az uštr ud cahār-pād, any ciš nēst*, “The land[s] of Arabs and Berbers is a hot and dry desert, it has no fruits and water is scarce, and their food is milk and xrafstras (noxious creatures) and mice and snakes and cats, foxes and hyenas and others of that kind, they worship images/statues and their living is on but camels and quadrupeds, having nothing else.”⁹⁵

AyJ 12.8–9: *Turkestān wuzurg gyāg ud hamāg sard, wēšag bawēd, u-šān draxt ī barwar ud mēwag ī x^varišnīg ud *any ciš nihang. Hast az awēšān kē Māh paristēnd ud hast kē jādūg hēnd, ud hast ī Weh-Dēn hēnd*, “Turkestān is a vast place and all of it is cold, it is forests, they have few fruit-trees and edible fruits and [other edible] things. There are some among them who worship the Moon and there are some who are sorcerers, and there are some who are of the Good Religion.”⁹⁶

AyJ 12. 15: *Warz ī ābādānīh kunēnd. ka mērēnd ō wēšag abganēnd, ud hast ī ō Wahišt ud hast ī ō Dušax^v ud Hamēstagān šawēnd*, “They till the land. When they die, they throw (their dead) in forests, and there are some who go to Paradise, and there are some who go to Hell and the mixed place.”

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⁹⁵ In my opinion, it is fairly clear that this description of Arabia is of pre-Islamic origin; the importance of *uzdēs* (which might indicate both pagan and Christian objects of worship) for this dating is uncertain, but the tone is not hostile. We are told nothing about **dād ī wad ī Tāzīgān*, *‘‘the evil Arab religion’’, which means Islam, and Berberia could have been mentioned only during the short period of the Sasanian occupation of the Western outskirts of Siwah and Fayoum. However, Messina (1939, p. 162, note 1), was of the opinion that by Barbarestān here Eastern Africa (Somaliland) is meant; in the last case, the date could be the last years of the reign of Husrau I and later (577–). For Barbarestān in the East of Iran, compare Monchi-Zadeh (1975, pp. 88–91); cf. Bivar (1985, pp. 25–42).

⁹⁶ According to Boyce (1987, p. 127), it is interesting to note that ‘‘there were Zoroastrians among the Hindus, AyJ 8.4–5, and Turks, AyJ 12.9’’. However, compare Shapira (forthcoming/1).

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