

## Hubris and Himmelfahrt

### The Narrative Logic of Kay Us' Ascent to Heaven in Pahlavi Literature

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In this paper I will discuss one of three commentaries (*nasks*) on the Old Avesta found in *Dēnkard* Book 9, a Pahlavi exegetical text written down in the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>1</sup> I will specifically discuss a *fragard* of the *Sūdgar Nask*, which incorporates mythoepic narratives from Avestan and Pahlavi sources in its interpretation of the *Vahištōišti Gāthā*. While prior scholarship has largely focused on what the contents of this text can reveal about the Old Avesta, my analysis focuses instead on tracing the exegetical trajectories of these Pahlavi commentaries within the literary structure of *Dēnkard* Book 9. I attempt to answer a basic question: What are these interpreters trying to achieve exegetically? I believe that the *Sūdgar Nask* has a clearly discernable hermeneutic logic and that the Pahlavi interpreters used a wide array of sophisticated literary techniques that have hitherto gone unnoticed.

What makes *Dēnkard* Book 9 unique in the Zoroastrian corpus is that it provides us with an opportunity to study three different interpretations of the Old Avesta. This unparalleled opportunity is, however, offset by a number of difficulties. Besides the fact that we still have no critical edition of this philologically taxing text,<sup>2</sup> the major challenge of working with *Dēnkard* Book 9 is that it appears to be a Pahlavi résumé of Pahlavi translations of “lost” Young Avestan commentaries on the Old Avesta. This means that we are dealing with interpretive literature of the fourth degree and approximately two millennia of primarily oral transmission!

The *Vahištōišti Gāthā* has traditionally been understood as having been composed by Zaratuštra on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter Pourucistā with Jāmāspā, none of whom actually appear in this *fragard*. Instead, it praises

1 See DRESDEN 1966 for the earliest colophon of the *Dēnkard* (Manuscript B from 1020 CE in Baghdad). See ANKLESARIA 1971 for the oldest manuscript (Codex DH from 1577 in Kerman).

2 I am currently working on a critical edition of the *Sūdgar Nask*, see VEVAINA forthcoming.

Dahmān Āfrīn<sup>3</sup> and offers a mythoepic narrative of Kay Us' failed ascension to heaven. Given its seemingly random contents, a few words about the literary-interpretive style of the *Sūdgar Nask* might be helpful. The *fragards* of the *Sūdgar Nask* are especially challenging to analyze given their associative style, mythoepic contents, expansive narratives, and harmonizing of seemingly unrelated Avestan and Pahlavi sources.

The first difficulty facing the scholar is the task of determining what word, phrase, line, strophe, or theme in the Old Avesta is the trigger for these expansive narratives. In the case of the *Vahištōišti Gāθā* the trigger appears to be the title (*incipit*) itself, which is interpreted in the *Sūdgar Nask* as meaning "the best seeking" in *Dēnkard* 9.22.1.<sup>4</sup> We find the phrase: *abar kū xwāhišnān pahlom dēn ī wēh* "about where the best seekings of the good *dēn* (are found)". The Avestan word *išti-* can be etymologically connected with three different verbs. It might derive from the verb *yaza-* "to sacrifice"; or from the verb *išaiia-* "to send off"; or from the verb *isa-* "to search, desire" which is how the *Sūdgar* interprets the title. What follows is an enumeration of the various good deities who seek out their evil counterparts:

*ud abar madan ī hamāg-gēhān xešm har šab ēk .: bušāsp dō jār pad wināhēnīdan ud kābīdan šrōš-ablīy sē .: ud dahmān āfrīn čahār pad frāy-dahišnīh ud wālišn-dahišnīh ...*

"And about Xešm coming to the whole world once every night; Bušāsp (comes) twice and Srōš, the righteous, (comes) thrice in order to ruin and diminish (them); and Dahmān Āfrīn (comes) four times for the sake of producing abundance and growth."

The text then continues by stating: *ud bōxtārtom az yazdān dahmān āfrīn būd* "and the greatest deliverer among the gods was Dahmān Āfrīn". While Dahmān Āfrīn might seem misplaced in a Pahlavi commentary on the *Vahištōišti Gāθā*, it is not without precedence in the Avesta. In *Visperad* 1.4–8, the traditional divisions of the Old Avesta are praised, each of which is associated with a deity in the pantheon. In *Visperad* 1.7 we find the *Vahištōišti Gāθā* associated with "the good *dahmā āfriti*":

*niuuāēdaiēmi haṅkārāiēmi vahištōištoiš gāθaiiā ašaoniā ašabe raθβō niuuāēdaiēmi haṅkārāiēmi dahmaiū vaṅbuiiā āfritōiš dahmahēca narš ašaonō uyrabēca taxmahē dāmōiš upamanahe yazatabe ašaonō ašabe raθβō*

"I announce (and) I arrange (the sacrifice) of the Orderly *Vahištōišti Gāθā*, the Model of Order. I announce (and) I arrange (the sacrifice) of 'the Qualified Good Invitation' and 'the Qualified Man', a follower of Order, and the Orderly, strong, firm one Dāmōiš Upamana, worthy of sacrifice, a Model of Order."<sup>5</sup>

3 See BOYCE 1993 for a detailed discussion of the deity associated with the prayer known as "Praise of the Qualified Ones" (*Yasna* 60.2–7). See also WEST 1892, p. 219, fn. 7.

4 See Appendix 1 for the text. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

5 Cf. KELLENS 2006, p. 28.

This association of Dahmān Āfrīn with the *Vahištōišti Gāθā* is also made in Pahlavi. The coming of Dahmān Āfrīn to *this* world is found in both *Sīrōzag* 1.33 and the *Iranian Bundahišn* 26.94:

*dahmān āfrīn har šab 4 bār ō hamāg ox ī astōmand pad pānagīh abar āyēd xwāstag frārōnīh handōzēnd ā-š pānagīh dahmān āfrīn.*

"Every night Dahmān Āfrīn travels four times over the entire material world in order to protect (it); (if) wealth is acquired honestly then its protection (comes from) Dahmān Āfrīn."<sup>6</sup>

*... dahmān āfrīn har rōz ud šab 4 hangām ō tan ī hamāg ōšōmandān ud rēšag ī hamāg urwarān bālist ī kōfān bē rasēd.*

"Four times each day and night Dahmān Āfrīn comes to the bodies of all mortals, and to the roots of plants, and to the peaks of mountains."<sup>7</sup>

These Pahlavi texts, along with *Dēnkard* Book 9, unequivocally state that Dahmān Āfrīn comes to *this* world four times. The Zoroastrian hermeneutic tradition provides a fascinating textual claim regarding the rationale for the number "4" in this context. The thirteenth chapter of the *Supplementary Texts to the Šāyest-nē-Šāyest* (13.42–43) is dedicated to the numerological significance of the various *hāitis* and strophes of the Old Avesta:

*ud ēwag hād ī gāh-ēw 4 gāh 1 wačast bē iθā ī haiθiūā narō čē xwadāy ud dahibed hamē andar gēhān ēwag. (43) ud ān 4 gāh ēd rāy čē paydāg čaθruš hamaiiā xšapō dahmaiūāt parō āfritōiūt har šab 4 bār dahmān āfrīn ud 3 bār srōš ud 2 bār bušāsp ud ēwag bār xēšm ō ox ī astōmand bē rasēnd.*

"And (the *Vahištōišti* is a) *Gāθā* of one *hāiti*, (having) 4 lines to each strophe except *iθā ī haiθiūā narō*,<sup>8</sup> because there is (only) one ruler and lord of the land in the world. (43) And those four lines (of the *hāiti* are) for this reason, because it is manifest (from) *čaθruš hamaiiā xšapō dahmaiūāt parō āfritōiūt* (that) every night, Dahmān Āfrīn comes to the material existence four times, and Srōš thrice, and Bušāsp twice, and Xešm once."<sup>9</sup>

The four lines of each strophe of the *Vahištōišti Hāiti* are associated with the coming of Dahmān Āfrīn to *this* world four times every night. Far from containing a *non sequitor*, the *Sūdgar* alludes to a dense hermeneutic complex of inherited views on both the contents and form of the Gathic text. Perhaps this interpretive complex was demanded by the seemingly arbitrary fifth line in *Yasna* 53.6? As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>10</sup> the hermeneutic tradition in both Avestan and Pahlavi understood the Old Avesta to be a perfect textual collection. Consequently, the Zoroastrian interpreters felt compelled to address this

6 Cf. DHABHAR 1927, p. 175 and DHABHAR 1963, p. 334.

7 Text after PAKZAD 2005, p. 309; cf. ANKLESARIA 1956, p. 175.

8 *Y.* 53.6 has a fifth, unmetrical line for which, see HUMBACH 1991, II, p. 243.

9 Cf. KOTWAL 1969, pp. 52–53.

10 See VEVAINA 2007.

textual “gap”<sup>11</sup> by pointing to the symbolic potency of the number “4” which is the correct number of lines in that *Gāθā*.

Returning to our text, we find an enumeration of the four most perfect visual exemplars in *Dk.* 9.22.2:

*ud ēn-iz kū kirbān a-paytom az nārīgān hōmāy ī āzād-tōhmag ī wištāspān ∴  
ud az aspān asp ī šēd ī wištāspān ∴. ud az gāwān gāw ī gušn ī barmāyūn ∴. ud az  
mēšān mēš ī frašōxtar ī dabr ī spēd-ērwarag ī star-passāxt ud abar-nēmag pad  
pišādag ud zarrēn-pēsīd ud azabar-nēmag zard*

“And this, too, the most visible of shapes of women was the highborn Hōmāy, (daughter) of Wištāsp; of horses the bright horse (was) of Wištāsp; of bulls (it was) the bull Barmāyūn; and of sheep (it was) the sheep Frašōxtar, dark-colored, white-cheeked, star-incrusted, with its upper part \*speckled and gold and the top part yellow ...”

Instead of Zaratūstra and his daughter Pourucistā, here, in the *Sūdgar Nask*, we have Wištāsp and his daughter Hōmāy. The text then suggests:

*ud ēk-iz kē awēšān ō hazār ēk-iz-ēw xwarrah hāwandīh ī dahm mard ī ablaw kē  
dahmān ī wehān āfrīn padīš nē ayābēd*

“... not one of them obtains even 1/1,000th of the Xwarrah equal to the Qualified Man of the Righteous who contains the Āfrīn of the good Qualified Ones.”

This is followed in *Dk.* 9.22.3 by the didactic statement:

*ud ēn-iz and-čand pad mard ud zan wehīh pad mar ud jeh watarīh*

“And this too, there is as much goodness in men and women as there is evil in scoundrels and whores.”

E. W. WEST, in his translation of *Dēnkard* Book 9, suggested that this line is an interpretation of *Pahlavi Yasna* 53.6a<sup>12</sup>:

*ēdōn čiyōn pad ān ī har dō [tis ī mēnōy ud gētīy] āškārag mard zan [pad wehīh  
ēdōn jeh ud mar pad watarīh].*

“Just as in both [*i.e.* the things of the world of thought and the world of the living], a man and woman are evident [in (their) goodness, so are the whore and the scoundrel in (their) wickedness].”

This is one of the typically challenging moves in the *Sūdgar Nask*. Its associative style of interpretation seems far removed from the source text only to return abruptly to pick up a strophe, line, phrase, or word that triggers another seemingly unconnected interpretive narrative. This latter statement about the morality of men and women prompts a mythoepic narrative in *Dk.* 9.22.4–9 about the ascension of Kay Us to the heavens to fight the gods at the instigation

11 A “gap” is any element in a text that is crucial for a coherent reading of the narrative in question. Gaps also serve to mark contradictions, problems, and repetitions in the “perfect” source text that are in need of interpretive resolution. For the concept of the “gap” in Pahlavi hermeneutics, see VEVAINA 2010a.

12 WEST 1892, p. 220, fn. 4.

of the demons. JAMES DARMESTETER, ARTHUR CHRISTENSEN, and GEORGES DUMÉZIL all discussed the ascension motif in terms of its Indo-Iranian background or its connections with the *Šāhnāmeḥ* and other Persian authors such as Dīnawarī and Tha‘ālibī.<sup>13</sup> Each cited and translated sections from *Dēnkard* Book 9, yet none of them explained why this narrative is found in a Pahlavi commentary on the Old Avesta or what its exegetical function might be in the *Sūdgar Nask*.

I would suggest that this mythoepic narrative is a negative counter-example of *vahišta- išti-* “best seeking”. Kay Us’ hubris and subsequent *Himmelfahrt* is used in the *Sūdgar Nask* as precisely the *opposite* of the “best seeking” of Dahmān Āfrīn. Just as the latter comes to earth to fight the demons, Kay Us seeks the throne of the gods in Paradise. This subtle technique of using a counter example to “etymologically” interpret the title of an Old Avestan *hāiti* is also found in other *fragards* of the *Sūdgar Nask*, namely the *Kamnāmaēzā Hāiti* (*Yasna* 46) and the *Vohuxšaθrā Hāiti* (*Yasna* 51).<sup>14</sup> In the latter example, which just precedes the *Vahištōišti*, the *Sūdgar Nask* begins by stating that the *Vohuxšaθrā* is:

*abar sta(h)mbagīhā kard ī dahāg xwadāyīh abar būm ī haft ...*

“about how oppressively Dahāg ruled over the earth of seven (regions) ...”

In that *fragard*, Dahāg’s bad rule contrasts with the good rule of Jam, the prototypical human ruler who ultimately suffers from hubris and is himself associated with Kay Us in Pahlavi literature. *Dk.* 9.22.4 presents Kay Us in the following way:

*ud abar kard ī kay-us xwadāyīh pad čērīh abar būm ī haft pad dēwān ud  
mardōmān rawāgīh ī-š framān*

“And about (how) Kay Us ruled in bravery over the earth of seven (regions), with his commands propagated among demons and men.”

This phrase has an Avestan antecedent in the *Ābān Yašt* (5.45–46) where Kauui Usan asks Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā for her support:

*təm yazata auruoō aš.varəcō kauua usa ərazifiāt paiti garōiṭ \*satō aspanəm  
aršnəm \*hazayrē gauuəm baēnuarə anumaianəm (46) āat hīm jaidiāt auuat  
āiiaptəm dazdi mē vay<sup>h</sup>hi səuuīštē arəduuī sūre anābite yaθa azəm upəmēm  
xšaθram bauuāni vīspanəm daxūiunəm daēuuanəm mašiiānəmca ...*

“The fleet Kauui Usan, of great magic, sacrificed to her on the Eagle mount a hundred stallions, a thousand bulls, ten thousand rams. (46) Thus he asked her: ‘Give me that prize, O good, Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā, you most rich in life-giving strength, that I may become possessed of the highest power over all lands over demons and men ...’<sup>15</sup>

13 See DARMESTETER 1892–1893, CHRISTENSEN 1931, and DUMÉZIL 1968.

14 See VEVAINA 2010a and SKJÆRVØ 2008.

15 Text and translation after SKJÆRVØ, unpublished.

In the *Sūdgar Nask*, Kay Us binds the demons and makes them work on his behalf to build seven dwellings in the Alburz: one of gold, two of silver, two of steel, and two of crystals. Using his great powers of magic Kay Us is also capable of manipulating age and the inevitable process of aging. This particular motif is one he shares with Jam in Pahlavi literature in general and the *Sūdgar Nask* in particular. We find the two negatively associated in *Pahlavi Videvdad* 2.5:

*jam ud kay-us har dō a-hōš dād ēstād hēnd wināhgārīh ī xwēš rāy ošōmand būd hēnd.*

“Jam and Kay Us were both created undying; due to their own sinfulness they became mortal.”<sup>16</sup>

As I discussed earlier, the preceding *fragard* in the *Sūdgar Nask* is the *Vohuxšaθrā Hāiti*, which is a mythoeic narrative on the aftermath of Jam’s rule, namely the misrule of Až Dahāg and his subsequent defeat and binding by Frēdōn until the end of time when he will break free of his bonds; yet, he will be defeated then once and for all. Jam, Frēdōn, and Kay Us are also found together in two important passages in the *Mēnōy ī Xrad* (8.27–30 and 57.19–21):

*čē paydāg kū ohrmazd jam ud frēdōn ud kay-us a-hōš dād hēnd (28) ud ahrimen ēdōn wardēnēd čiyōn āšnāg. (29) ud ahrimen bēwarasp ud frāsiyāg ud aleksandar ēdōn sabist kū anōšag hēnd (30) ud ohrmazd o meh-sūdīh ēdōn wardēnīd čiyōn ān ī paydāg.*

“For it is revealed, that Ohrmazd made Jam and Frēdōn and Kay Us undying; (28) and Ahrimen turned them, as is known. (29) And so Ahrimen deemed that Bēwarasp and Afrāsiyāb and Alexander be immortal; (30) and Ohrmazd thus turned them for (his) great advantage, as is revealed [in the *dēn*].”<sup>17</sup>

*ud har mardōm kē az xrad bahrwarīh wēš ēg-iš wahišt bahr abērtar. (20) ud wištāsp-iz ud zardu(x)št ud gayōmard ud abārīg awēšān kē az wahišt bahr abērtar wēš aw-iš madārīh ī xrad rāy. (21) ud jam ud frēdōn ud kay-us ud abārīg awēšān xwadāyān kē az yazdān warz ud tagīgīh windād čiyōn wištāsp ud abārīg az dēn bahrwarīh būd ud nē madan ī awēšān o dēn ud pad-iz ān ī ka andar xwēš xwadāy an-espās būd hēnd kem aw-iš madārīh ī xrad rāy.*

“And every person whose endowment from wisdom is great, then his share of Paradise is much greater. (20) And even Wištāsp and Zardu(x)št and Gayōmard and those others whose share of Paradise is much greater, it is due to the coming of wisdom to them. (21) And Jam and Frēdōn and Kay Us and those other rulers who obtained miraculous power and strength from the gods – just as Wištāsp and the others’ endowments were from the *dēn* – and their [i.e. Jam, Frēdōn, and Kay Us] not coming to the *dēn* and with regard to when they became ungrateful towards their own ruler [i.e. Ohrmazd], it was on account of (too) little wisdom coming to them.”<sup>18</sup>

16 Cf. ANKLESARIA 1949, p. 18.

17 Cf. WEST 1885, pp. 34–35.

18 Cf. WEST 1885, p. 102.

All three – Jam, Frēdōn, and Kay Us – are cited as cautionary tales of human arrogance and the danger of not appreciating the ultimate power of Ohrmazd and the good deities.<sup>19</sup> In the first of these two passages, these three flawed figures are opposed by three great villains: Bēwarasp [= Až Dahāg], Afrāsiyāb, and Alexander. In Persian literature, the third member of both triads, i.e. Kay Us and Alexander, share the common motif of the ascent to heaven. They both ultimately fail and this failure symbolizes their flawed aspirations.<sup>20</sup> In *Dēnkard* 9.22.9 the Creator revokes the “Fortune of the Kays” and, as a result, Kay Us and his army fall to earth. The text goes on to add that the messenger of the gods, Nēryōsang, is sent to take revenge on Kay Us for his actions. At this point, the unborn Kay Husrōy intercedes on behalf of his grandfather and entreats Nēryōsang to spare Kay Us so that he may produce Siyāwaxš from whom Kay Husrōy himself may be born. An enumeration of the benefits of this Kayanian lineage from grandfather to grandson is found in *Mēnōy ī Xrad* 27.54–60:

*ud az kay-us sūd ēn būd (55) čiyōn siyāwaxš az tan ī ōy brēhēnīd (56) ud ān-iz was kardagān az-iš raft (57) ud az siyāwaxš sūd ēn būd (58) čiyōn zāyišn ī kay husrōy ud kardan ī kangdiz (59) ud az kay husrōy sūd ēn būd (60) čiyōn ōzadān ī frāsiyāg ...*

“And the benefit from Kay Us was this: (55) namely Siyāwaxš was fashioned from his body. (56) And many acts also proceeded from him. (57) And the benefit from Siyāwaxš was this: (58) namely the birth of Kay Husrōy and the making of Kangdiz. (59) And the benefit from Kay Husrōy was this: (60) namely the killing of Afrāsiyāb.”<sup>21</sup>

The killing of Afrāsiyāb is also referenced as a benefit in *Dk.* 9.22.11:

*kū-š gund ud spāh tabāh bē kunēm kē ān ī tūrān pādoxšāy dūr-tazišn kunēm*  
“... so that I will destroy his troops and army, I who will make the king of Tūrān run far away!”

The cost of Kay Husrōy’s intercession is the loss of his grandfather’s immortality which is alluded to in the Pahlavi version of *Aogāmadaēcā* 60, where Kay Us is unable to escape Astwihād, the demon of death:

*nē kē pad ulīh ul wazēd [kē pad tubīg ī asmān andar šawēd čiyōn kay-us kē ēn and ōz ud xwarrah tuwān kardārīh dāšt az astwihād bōxtan nē tuwanist].*

“Neither he who wafts up in the upward direction [i.e. who goes into the void of the sky like Kay Us, who had this much strength, Xwarrah, and ability, (even) he was not able to be saved from Astwihād].”<sup>22</sup>

19 These three are enumerated one after the other in *Bundahišn* 32.1–3 (on their respective dwellings).

20 In a forthcoming article, I address the relationship between these mythoeic narratives and their counterparts in the *Šāhnāme* and more generally between Persian epic and its Avestan and Pahlavi predecessors.

21 Cf. WEST 1885, pp. 63–64.

22 Cf. JAMASPASA 1982, pp. 38, 70.

The ultimate benefit of his survival, however, is not just royal succession as CHRISTENSEN and DUMÉZIL suggested,<sup>23</sup> but also the ability of Kay Husrōy, himself an immortal in the Zoroastrian eschatological tradition, to aid Sōšāns, the third and last of Zaratuštra's eschatological sons, to finally defeat evil and to renew the world at the end of time. The last *fragard* of the *Sūdgar Nask* is a commentary on the *Ā Airiīōmā Išiiō* prayer in which Kay Husrōy aids Sōšāns to awaken other sleeping heroes at the end of time to renew the world. The events surrounding the survival of Kay Us at the end of the *Vahištōišti fragard* in the *Sūdgar* allow for the eschatological actions of Kay Husrōy, which are recounted in the very next *fragard*. I would argue that the *Sūdgar* presents a teleological narrative spread across a number of Gathic *fragards*, the ultimate goal of which is to allow the preconditions for Kay Husrōy to awaken his fellow immortals and defeat the sorcerer Frāsiyāb, the sovereign of Tūrān, at the end of time.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the grandson, despite the grievous sins of his grandfather, will accomplish his eschatological function and help to fulfill the promise of Zoroastrian theodicy.

It might be helpful at this juncture to briefly summarize the various rhetorical strategies and literary-interpretive moves found in this *fragard*:

- It starts with an etymological interpretation of the title of the *Vahištōišti Gāθā* as being about “where the best seekings of the good *dēn* (are found).”
- This “best seeking” is then connected with the coming of Dahmān Āfrīn to *this* world four times each night, *dahmā āfriti* being associated with the *Vahištōišti Gāθā* in the first chapter of the *Visperad*.
- The commentary (*ud ēn-iz kū* “and this too”<sup>25</sup>) enumerates four visual exemplars: a daughter, a horse, a bull, and a sheep. The daughter and horse are associated with Wištāsp, and the sheep Frašōxtar has a name suspiciously like Fərəšaoštra, who is mentioned with Zaratuštra and Vištāspa in the second strophe of the *Vahištōišti Gāθā*.<sup>26</sup>
- The number “4” is correlated with the four lines per strophe of the *Vahištōišti Gāθā*. This is particularly relevant since *Yasna* 53.6 has an unmetrical fifth line in the manuscripts of the *Pahlavi Yasna*.
- The commentary then returns to *Pahlavi Yasna* 53.6a with a didactic statement about the morality of men and women and the lack of morality of scoundrels and whores in both worlds.

23 Cf. also Sundermann 2008, pp. 162–163. At the time I presented my paper (Sep. 2007) in Vienna, Sundermann's paper was unpublished.

24 See Vevaina 2007.

25 Each narratological transition is marked by the interpreters: 9.22.2 (*ud ēn-iz kū*); 9.22.3 (*ud ēn-iz*); 9.22.4 (*ud abar*); 9.22.10 (*ud ēn-iz gōwēd kū*).

26 This entire narrative – of demons and deities coming to *this* world; the four visual exemplars, Frašōxtar in particular; and Kay Us going to *that* world – may have an astrological foundation. Perhaps this is the mythic reflex of a group of constellations?

- The ambiguous nature of Kay Us' morality, his sometimes working for good, sometimes for evil,<sup>27</sup> is then showcased in a mythoepic narrative which focuses on his ill-conceived attempt at ascending to heaven, the very inverse of Dahmān Āfrīn coming to *this* world.
- Kay Us' subsequent defeat and loss of immortality are followed by a narrative about the intervention of Kay Husrōy's *frawabr* on behalf of his grandfather. The unborn hero pleads with Nēryōsang to spare Kay Us so that Siyāwaxš may be born and produce Kay Husrōy himself. Only through Kay Us' survival can Kay Husrōy, an undying ruler, accomplish his eschatological function of awakening other undying heroes at the end of time who are lying in occultation, dealt with in the very next *fragard* on the *Ā Airiīōmā Išiiō*.<sup>28</sup> This Kayanian lineage is therefore essential to the grand design of Zoroastrian eschatology.<sup>29</sup>

I have tried to showcase the narratological strategies and literary-interpretive moves made by the Zoroastrian exegetes of the *Sūdgar Nask* as a demonstration of the internal consistency of these commentaries. This naturally begs the question of why mythoepic materials are found in commentaries on the Old Avesta in the first place? I believe the answer is intimately connected with the status of the Old Avesta. As the fountainhead of the Zoroastrian corpus, the Old Avesta was understood as encompassing the *entire* religious tradition. Later interpreters read the *entire* Zoroastrian literary tradition back *into* the Old Avesta, while simultaneously finding textual support *within* the Old Avesta for popular mythoepic narratives circulating in both oral and written forms.

The dominant literary-interpretive strategy of the *Sūdgar Nask* is a harmonizing of the Old Avesta with the *yašts* by weaving together mythoepic tapestries of extant and no longer extant texts that are associatively triggered by particular textual phenomena in the Old Avesta. Since every word of the Old Avesta is understood to be sacred, and therefore in need of interpretation, the traditional exegetes used the title of the *hāiti* itself to begin their commentary on the *Gāθā* in question. This strategy of interpreting the very first words of the source text is just one of the many literary-interpretive techniques mobilized to reinscribe meaning into these ancient, inherited texts. We must read these remarkable literary theorists with the same subtlety that they characteristically employed to interpret and expand the domain of the Avesta to encompass the *entire* Zoroastrian world as it was, as it is, and, as it will be.

27 According to *Bundahišn* 36.7 his lifespan was neatly cleaved by his attempted ascension: *kay kāyus tā šudan ō asmān 75 sāl pas az ān 75 sāl āgenēn 150 sāl* “Kay Kāyus (was) 75 years (old) when he went to the sky, after that (he lived) 75 years, all together 150 years.”

28 See *Dk.* 7.1.40 and VEVAINA 2010a where this text is discussed.

29 For the parable logic of the *Šāhnāme* and a discussion of the theme of grandfathers and grandsons in Firdowsi, see FISCHER 2004, pp. 66–130.

## Appendix

Dēnkard 9.22.1–13<sup>30</sup>:

(1) *wīst ud ēkom fragard wahištōiš<sup>31</sup> .: abar kū xwāhišnān pahlom dēn ī weh .: ud abar madan ī hamāg-gēhān xešm bar šab ēk .: bušāsp dō jār pad wināhēnīdan ud kāhīdan šrōš-abliysē .: ud dahmān āfrīn čahār pad frāy-dahišnīh ud wālišn-dahišnīh ud bōxtārtom az yazdān dahmān āfrīn būd .: (2) ud ēn-iz kū kirbān a-paytom az nārīgān hōmāy ī āzād-tōhmag ī wīštāspān .: ud az aspān asp ī šēd ī wīštāspān .: ud az gāwān gāw ī gušn ī barmāyūn .: ud az mēšān mēš ī frašōxtar ī dabr ī spēd-ērwarag ī star-passāxt ud abar-nēmag pad pišādag ud zarrēn-pēsīd ud azabar-nēmag<sup>32</sup> zard .: ud ēk-iz kē awēsān ō hazār ēk-iz-ēw xwarrah hāwandīh ī dahm mard ī ablaw kē dahmān ī wehān āfrīn padīš nē ayābēd .: (3) ud ēn-iz and-čand pad mard ud zan wehīh pad mar ud jeh wattarīh .: (4) ud abar kard ī kay-us xwadāyīh pad čērīh abar bum ī haft pad dēwān ud mardōmān rawāgīh ī-š framān tēztar az dast \*hwwlī-īšn .: ud kardan ī ān-īš haft mān pad mayānag ī harborz ēk zarrēn ud dō sēmēn ud dō pōlāwadēn ud dō ābgēnagēn ud was dēw ud māzanīg az wināhīdan ī gēhān abāz dāštan ud andar ō kār ī xwēš bastan ud mardōm kē zōr az zarmān tarwēnīdag ud jān nazd ō pazdagīh ī az tan būd ō ān ī ōy mān ayāft tēz pērāmōn ān mān <ud> wāzēnīdan ud zarmān aziš ōsānīhistan u-š zōr ud jrwānīh abāz madan hād framān-īš dād ēstād<sup>33</sup> kū mardōm pad dar abāz ma dārēd pānzdah sālag handēmān kunēd <.:> (5) pas dēwān abar ōš ī kay-us ham-pursīdan ud xešm ān ī ōy ōš padīrēd<sup>34</sup> ud ō kay-us madan .: ud ān-ōwōn wuzurg xwadāyīh<sup>35</sup> ī-š abar haft bum dāšt pad-īš menišn xwārēn kard .: u-š ō xwadāyīh ī} asmān gāh ī amahraspandān arzōgēnīdan .: (6) ud kay-us az wiyābāngarīh ī xešm ud abārīg dēw ī-š ham-kār ō ān a-kārēnīdan ēstād pad-iz pahikārišn ud \*āzišn ī yazdān <.:> (7) u-š nē wašt ud tar harbuz abāg was dēw ud druwand ud mardōm tā \*azēr<sup>36</sup> ī tam<sup>37</sup> ul dwāristan pad ān kanārag <ī> kayān xwarrah \*gar<sup>38</sup> kirb būd <.:> (8) ud kay-us az spāh hamist abar rēzīhistan .: ud pad-iz nōg abarīg pahikārišn ī yazdān abartom az ān dušāgāhīh nē waštan .: (9) ud pas dādār kayān xwarrah abāz ō xwēš xwānd ud spāh ī kay-us az ān burz ō zamīg ōbastan ud kay-us ō zrēh ī frāxkard wāzīdan .: (10) ud ēn-iz gōwēd kū bē ōy az pasīh wāzīd<sup>39</sup> nēryōsang ī frāy-dādār gēhān ud pad wardīšn ī ān ī ōy kas <.:> (11) ud ān ī*

30 My text is based on all the published manuscripts (DH 279r, 21; K43b 33v, 2; J5 378, 6; MR 182, 10) and takes into account the word divisions of the modern editions: *DkM*. (Madan) 815, 3; *DkS*. (Sanjana-Sanjana) vol. XVII, 58. For a (partial) concordance of the manuscripts of *Dk*. 9, see VEVAINA 2010b. For a full critical apparatus and translation, see VEVAINA 2007, pp. 307–312. Also cf. the translation in WEST 1892, pp. 219–223.

31 All Mss. whštwkyšt.

32 DH, K43b: 'cplnymkl; MR, J5: 'ppltnymkl, *abartar-nēmag*.

33 DH, K43b: YKOYMWN-<sup>2</sup>t; MR, J5: YKOYMWN-<sup>2</sup>yt.

34 MR, J5: MKBLWN-X<sub>1</sub>; DH, K43b: MKBLWN-X<sub>2</sub>.

35 J5 omits the following sequence, essentially jumping from *xwadāyīh* to the next *xwadāyīh*.

36 Mss. cyl for *azēr*?

37 DH: tm; MR: twm.

38 Mss. have TYNA, *gil*.

39 MR and J5 anticipate and provide the sequence: *ā-š ēdōn ō ham ārāst* and then they repeat the sequence: *pasīh wāzīd nēryōsang*.

*a-zād husrōy ā-š ēdōn hu-nām ārāst wāng čiyōn ān ī hazārgānag spāh kū ma ēd zanē nēryōsang ī frāy-dādār gēhān čē agar ēd mard zanē nēryōsang ī frāy-dādār gēhān nē pas pad windīšn windīhēd bē wīsanēnīdār <ī> dastwar ī tūrān čē az ēd mard zāyēd <ī> siyāwaxš ast nām az siyāwaxš an zāyēm kē husrōy<sup>40</sup> hēm kē ān ī ham-wīrdom az tūrān kē gund ud spāh tabāh wēš ā-š ō ahēn-wīrīh bē rasēnēm kū-š gund ud spāh tabāh bē kunēm kē ān ī tūrān pādoxšāy dūr-tazišn kunēm <.:> (12) u-š pad ān gōwīšn rāmēnīd frawahr ī husrōy nēryōsang ī frāy-dādār gēhān u-š ān pad ān gōwīšn frāz hišt ud ān pad ān ōšōmand būd kay-us .: (13) pahlom ābādīh ahlāyīh ast .: .:*

(1) The twenty-first *fragard*, the *Vahištōiš<sup>ti</sup>*, is about where the best seekings of the good *dēn* (are to be found). And about Xešm coming to the whole world once every night, and Bušāsp (coming) twice; and Srōš (comes) three times in order to ruin and diminish (them); and Dahmān Āfrīn (comes) four times for the sake of producing abundance and growth. And the greatest deliverer among the gods was Dahmān Āfrīn. (2) And this, too, the most visible of shapes of women was the highborn Hōmāy, (daughter) of Wīštāsp; of horses the sorrel horse (was) of Wīštāsp; of bulls (it was) the bull Barmāyūn; and of sheep (it was) the sheep Frašōxtar, dark-colored, white-checked, star-incrusted, with its upper part \*speckled<sup>41</sup> and gold and the top part yellow. And not one of them obtains even 1/1,000<sup>th</sup> of the Xwarrah equal to the Qualified Man of the Righteous in whom the Āfrīn of the good Qualified Ones (is recited). (3) And this, too, (that) there is as much goodness in men and women as there is evil in scoundrels and the whores. (4) And about (how) Kay Us ruled in bravery over the earth of seven (regions), with his commands propagated among demons and men faster than a twist of the hand.<sup>42</sup> And how he made those seven dwellings of his in the midst of the Harburz, one of gold, two of silver, two of steel, and two of crystal. And how he restrained many demons and Māzanīgs from ruining the world of the living and binding (them) to work for him. And how people whose strengths were overcome by old age and (whose) life was near to being breathed out of the body managed to come to his dwelling and were swiftly conveyed around that dwelling, and old age was removed from them, and strength and youth came back to them. In brief, he had given a command: 'Do not keep people back at the door, but send them in to me as fifteen-year-olds.' (5) (And) how, afterwards, the demons discussed regarding the death of Kay Us and that Xešm accepted (to take care of) his death and how he came to Kay Us. And (how) he made such a great rule which he (Kay Us) held over the earth of seven (regions) a small matter in his (Kay Us') mind and (instead) made him desire the rule of heaven and the throne of the Amahraspands. (6) And how Kay Us, because Xešm and the other demons who were his assistants led him astray, insisted on undoing him by struggling with the gods. (7) And how he did not return (and rushed up over Harburz with many demons and wicked men up under the dark (sky), on that side where the 'Fortune of the Kays' was in the form of a mountain. (8) And how Kay Us with (his) entire army was scattered over it, but did not turn away from that evil knowledge and again fought on high with the highest gods. (9) And how, afterward, the Creator called the 'Xwarrah of the Kays' back to himself; how the army of Kay Us fell from that height to the ground; and how Kay Us flew to the

40 MR, J5: hwslyw; DH, K43b: slwy.

41 Cf. *Yt*. 14.19: *pišatō upara.naēmāt*.

42 Cf. CHRISTENSEN 1931, p. 74: "... plus vite qu'en un tournois ..."

Frāxkard Sea. (10) And this, too, it says: 'After him flew Nēryōsang, producer of abundance for the world of the living, to turn that one (back). (11) And the cry of the unborn Husrōy – for with such a good name he was adorned – like that of an army of a thousand men: 'Do not strike this one, O Nēryōsang, producer of abundance for the world of the living! For if you strike this man, O Nēryōsang, producer of abundance for the world of the living, afterward, there will be no way of finding a *dastwar* of Tūrān to get rid off. For from this one [Kay Us], a man will be born whose name is Siyāwaxš. From Siyāwaxš, I, Kay Husrōy, will be born, who will make the one from Tūrān \*with most men, whose troops and army cause great destruction, come to iron-manhood, so that I will destroy his troops and army, I who will make the king of Tūrān run far away!' (12) And by these words the *frāwahr* of Husrōy calmed Nēryōsang, producer of abundance for the world of the living, and because of these words, he released him, and due to him, he, Kay Us, became mortal. (13) Righteousness is the Best Prosperity!

### Abbreviations

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <i>Dk.</i>  | <i>Dēnkard</i>                               |
| <i>DkM.</i> | <i>Dēnkard</i> , Madan Edition               |
| <i>DkS.</i> | <i>Dēnkard</i> , Sanjana and Sanjana Edition |

### Sigla

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| *   | conjectural or emended form                        |
| ∴   | divider in the mss.                                |
| < > | emendation of a word or letter in the text         |
| { } | sequence found in some mss. but omitted in others. |
| [ ] | Pahlavi glosses in Avestan texts                   |

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## Preface

The papers in this volume dedicated to Ancient and Middle Iranian Studies were presented in Vienna 2007 on the occasion of the "Sixth European Conference of Iranian Studies" of the Societas Iranologica Europaea (SIE), the largest European independent academic organization of Iranian Studies founded in 1983 by several of the most renowned scholars of the field with the high goal of promoting and supporting this discipline in all its subject areas in European countries and worldwide. Following the previous conferences of the SIE, which have taken place every four years in Turin (1987), Bamberg (1991), Cambridge (1995), Paris (1999), and Ravenna (2003), the sixth conference in 2007 was organized at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna. The number of participants at these large gatherings as well as in the smaller mid-term conferences of the SIE in Copenhagen (2001), Rome (2005) and Salamanca (2009) has increased continually across the years, bearing witness to the impressive scholarly commitment to one of the most original and fruitful ancient civilizations the world has known.

The proceedings of this conference, including papers by distinguished scholars as well as promising younger colleagues from European and non-European countries, reflect this commitment to a large degree, despite the continuous reduction of Iranian Studies, especially in the field of pre-Islamic Iran, over the past decades in different universities worldwide. It is one of the important goals of the SIE to take all possible measures to stop this short-sighted development and to encourage and support Iranian Studies in all the various subject areas of this vast field, encompassing philology and linguistics, literature, history, history of religions, arts, architecture, archeology, philosophy, sociology, geography, human sciences, jurisprudence and many others. This richness of different subject areas is reflected in the contributions presented in this volume dealing with the Ancient and Middle Iranian period (another volume will be dedicated to the papers on subjects from the Islamic period).

Although it has not been possible, for various reasons, to include all the papers held at the conference we hope that the studies presented here will aptly demonstrate the many fascinating facets of a unique civilisation, which in the course of its long history has brought forth a myriad of creative ideas and influenced the cultural development of humankind for many centuries. No matter in which subject matter we specialize, we are always confronted in Iran with a highly original manner of thought, a world of ideas which has set its own cornerstones, has influenced other neighbouring cultures to a high degree and has