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BY

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## The Antiquity of the Avesta.

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The general opinion about the extant Avesta literature is, that it is a faithful remnant of the "Grand Avesta" of the Achemenian times. But as Prof. Max Müller says, the late lamented Dr. Darmesteter, whose untimely death has caused a great gap in the foremost rank of Avesta scholars, has, by what he calls the historical solution of the question, thrown a bomb-shell "into the peaceful camp of Oriental scholars."<sup>1</sup> He asserts,<sup>2</sup> that the Avesta, as it has come down to us, is not a faithful reproduction from the "Grand Avesta" of the Achemenian times, but that it has undergone several changes while passing through the hands of the different monarchs of Persia, who undertook to collect its writings.

To support his theory, he dwells upon, what he calls, two kinds of evidence. I.—Firstly, the historical evidence, as collected from the Dinkard and the letter of Tansar, the Dastur of Ardeshir Babegân, to the king of Tabaristan—II.—Secondly, the internal evidence, as presented by the Avesta itself.

On the supposed strength of these two kinds of evidence, he says, that a great part of the Avesta had been re-written in the period of the political religious fermentation, which preceded the advent of the Sassanians; that the greatest and the most important touch and finish were given to it in the reign of Ardeshir Babegân (A. D. 211-241); and that even in the reign of Shapur I (A. D. 241-272), some final changes were made in it. Thus, Dr. Darmesteter brings down the antiquity of the Avesta, which scholars like Haug and his Vedic school had placed in a remote period, preceding even the Achemenian times, to as late as the third century after Christ. The object of this paper,

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Max Müller's article entitled "The Date of the Zend Avesta" in the *Contemporary Review*, Dec. 1893, Vol. XLIV., p. 869.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Zend Avesta* III. pp. 2-40. *The Vendidad*, 2nd Ed., Introduction, pp. xxxvii-li.

is to examine some of the points, which Darmesteter dwells upon, to support his theory. This paper does not pretend to examine in detail, the great question of the Antiquity of the Avesta from all standpoints, but aims to examine it from a few standpoints, suggested by Darmesteter, as facts of historical and internal evidence.

## I.

Firstly, we will enter into the subject of the historical evidence about the later origin of the Avesta. The history of the collection of the Avesta, as given in the Dinkard,<sup>1</sup> is as follows:—

In the times of the Achemenian emperors, one copy of the "Grand Avesta" was deposited in the royal archives of Istakhar (Persepolis), and another in the royal treasury of Shapigân. The one in the royal archives was destroyed by Alexander the Great,<sup>2</sup> during his conquest of Persia. The literature so destroyed, was written, according to Tansar,<sup>3</sup> upon 12,000 ox-hides. It consisted of 1,000 chapters. The other copy in the royal treasury was taken possession of by the Greeks, who carried it away and got it translated into their language. Perhaps, it is this translation, that Pliny<sup>4</sup> refers to, when he says, that Hermippus (3rd century B. C.) had commented upon the two millions of verses of the writings of Zoroaster. During the times of the Parthian dynasty, when there was, to a certain extent, a religious anarchy in Persia, Valkhash (Vologeses I.), with a view to restore the religion, tried to collect the Avesta literature destroyed by Alexander.

But the most successful attempt was made by Ardeshir Babegân, the founder of the Sassanian dynasty. The services rendered by Ardeshir to the cause of the Zoroastrian religion are therefore thus commemorated in the *Âfrin î Rapithavan*: *Hamâzor Farohar-i-Ardeshir Babegân bâd, avâ hamâ Farohar-i-ârâstârân va vinâstârân va vinârtârân-i-din khudâe bad, i. e., "May the guiding spirit of Ardeshir Babegân be one with us, together with the guiding spirits of those, who restore, arrange and look into the religion of God."* Ardeshir was helped in this noble cause by a learned Dastur named Taosar or Tansar. Although, as said above, one attempt was

<sup>1</sup> S. B. E. Vol. XXXVII., West's Dinkard, Introduction, p. xxxi., pp. 413-14.

<sup>2</sup> *Virâf-nâmeh*, 1-8.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal Asiatique*, Neuvième série Tome III. (1894), p. 516. The *Virâf-nâmeh*, refers to ox-hides; but does not give the number (Ch. 17).

<sup>4</sup> Pliny, Bk. XXX., Chap. 2, Bostock and Riley's translation (1856), Vol. V., p. 422.

made by Vologeses I. before Ardeshir, and although two more attempts were made after Ardeshir by Shapur I. and Shapur II., to restore the ancient literature and religion, it is only Ardeshir's more important attempt that is commemorated in the above *Áfrin*. Now, Darmesteter lays great stress upon the abovementioned account of the *Dinkard*, and upon a letter by Tansar to the king of Tabaristan, wherein, he explained, to a certain extent, how he wished to proceed in the work of helping his royal master Ardeshir in the cause of uniting the ancient Persian empire, of reviving the ancient literature, and of restoring the ancient religion. On the strength of these two documents, he says, that the Avesta literature, as it has now come down to us, was, to a certain extent, meddled with, by Tansar. It appears from Maçoudi,<sup>1</sup> that Tansar belonged to the Platonic sect, and so, according to Darmesteter, Tansar had introduced into the Avesta, his Platonic views. Working upon that speculation, he tries to show, that there are several Greek elements in the Avesta. Not only that, but there are several other elements — Budhistic, Brahminical, Jewish, etc., which show, he says, that the Avesta writings, now extant, are not very old.

We will examine the evidence, produced by Darmesteter from the historical documents, and see, how far his conclusion is based on solid ground. He takes his stand upon the general statements of the *Dinkard* and of the letter of Tansar, and boldly draws inferences, which would not be justified by a detail examination of the passages. Let us examine the statements about the three principal different sovereigns of Persia, who collected the Avesta, and who worked, so to speak, to bring about Iránian renaissance.

1. Firstly comes Valkhash. The *Dinkard* says of him, that "Valkhash, descendant of Askân, in each district, just as he had come forth, ordered the careful preservation, and making of memoranda for the royal city, of the Avesta and Zand, as it had purely come unto them, and also of whatever instruction, due to it, had remained written about, as well as deliverable by the tongue through a high priest, in a scattered state in the country of Irân, owing to the ravages and devastation of Alexander and the cavalry and infantry of the Arûmans."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Maçoudi Chap. XXIV., Traduction de Barbier de Meynard et Pavet de Courteille (1863), Tome II., p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> S. B. E. XXXVII., *Dinkard*, Bk. IV. 24. West, p. 413.



Ardashir Avesta is a compound of texts anterior to Tansar and texts emanating from Tansar, the whole being an ideal restoration of a primitive Avesta."<sup>1</sup> I beg to submit, that the above passage of the Dinkard does not at all allow of such an inference. How can an unprejudiced reader derive that inference, when the passage very clearly says, that "Tosar . . . appeared with an exposition *recovered from the Avesta* and was ordered to complete the scripture from that exposition?"

Again, we must take into consideration, the character of the two chief actors of this second period of Irânian renaissance, the character of both the king and his Dastur, of Ardeshir and Tansar. Ardeshir, through his grandfather Sassan, belonged to the sacerdotal race. According to Agathias, he "was initiated in the doctrine of the Magi, and could himself celebrate the mysteries."<sup>2</sup> How can such a king, himself versed in the learned lore of his religion, give a free hand to his Dastur, to introduce into the religious scriptures any foreign element that he liked. It could do in the case of a king, not versed in the religious lore, but not, in the case of a king like Ardeshir, who, by birth and education, belonged to the sacerdotal class versed in their religious books. If Tansar had taken any liberty, Ardeshir could have at once stopped him.

But now, let us examine the character of Tansar himself. According to the Dinkard, he was a "Paoiryô-tkaêsha," *i.e.*, one of the old order of faith, and, as such, was naturally averse to any innovations and to the introduction of any new elements in the old religion and in the old scriptures. This is confirmed by the tone he adopts, in his letter to the king of Tabaristân. He expresses his displeasure at the new order of things, subsequent to the religious anarchy in the reign of the preceding dynasty. He says:<sup>3</sup>—"At last, by the corruption of the men of those times, by the disappearance of the law, the love of novelties and apocrypha and the wish for notoriety, even those legends and traditions passed away from the memory of the people." How then can we except a Paoiryôtkaêsha of Tansar's type and views, to introduce into the religion and religious scriptures, notions, foreign to the old faith?

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<sup>1</sup> S. B. E. IV. Darmesteter. Vendidad, 2 Ed. XLV.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. XLI.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. XLIII.

While speaking about the characters of the two principal actors of the second period of Irânian renaissance, it will not be out of place, to examine briefly, a few important parts of Tansar's letter on which Darmesteter rests so much.

(a) Firstly, Darmesteter attaches great importance to that part of the letter, wherein Tansar writes to the king of Tabaristan, that king Ardeshir does away with those customs, which do not suit the necessities of his time. Now, this does not show that Ardeshir, through his Dastur Tansar, meddled with the old religious scriptures. It simply means, that he modified several customs, which, looking to the circumstances of the changed times, acted harshly and unjustly. Again, Tansar's words, <sup>1</sup> این شهنشاه مسلط است بر دین mean, that "the king is the ruler over the religion," i. e., the king is superior in points of religion or is the head of the Church. What Tansar meant, was, that the king was the spiritual and temporal head of the country. It seems, that the translation given by Darmesteter, viz., "the Shahinshah has power over the religion," is beyond the mark. It stretches the meaning too much. When Henry VIII. assumed in England, the power as the spiritual head of the Church, he did not make all possible changes either in the religious observances or the scriptures.

(b) Again, Tansar's words, <sup>2</sup> دین را تا رای بیان نکند قوامی نباشد mean, that, "If the religion is not described (or explained) by reason, it has no steadiness." Darmesteter's rendering of بیان کند, as "enlightened," carries the idea, that Tansar meant addition or modification, but the words merely mean "description." The fact, that this passage of Tansar's letter, does not refer to the additions of any new notions or ideas, is proved by another part of Tansar's letter, quoted above, wherein, he himself expresses his displeasure against the introduction of novelties.

(c) Again, the fact, that Tansar's letter does not refer to any changes or additions in the Avesta scriptures, is more than proved by a cursory examination of some of the rules and laws, referred to by Tansar. Let us see, if some of the points, referred to by Tansar, are found in the present Avesta, with which, he is supposed to have taken great liberty.

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<sup>1</sup> Journal Asiatique, Neuvième Série Tome III. (1894), p. 212, l. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 213, l. 14.

The king of Tabaristân complains of some innovations on the part of Ardeshir. Now, if, according to Darmesteter's theory, Tansar had taken liberty with the Avesta, we should have found those innovations in the Avesta; but, as a matter of fact, we do not find them. For example, the king of Tabaristan objects to Ardeshir's division of the different professions into four classes.<sup>1</sup> The Avesta division of the professions is as follows:—(1) Âthravan (the clergy), (2) Rathaêshtâr (the army), (3) Vâçtrya (the cultivators), and (4) Hutokhsh (the artizans).

Ardeshir's division, according to Tansar's letter, is as follows:—

The king is at the head of all. Then follow<sup>2</sup>:

- (1) Açhâb-i-Din, *i.e.*, the clergy.
- (2) Mukâtel (mardân-i-kârzâr), *i.e.*, the army.
- (3) Kuttâb, *i.e.*, the writers. This class includes clerks, medical men, literary men and scientific men.
- (4) Muhanâ, *i.e.*, the men of the ordinary class of work. This class includes merchants, agriculturists, workmen, &c.

A superficial examination of these two divisions, the one of the Avesta and the other of Tansar, shows, that they widely differ. Now, if Tansar took liberty with the Avesta, why did he not replace the Avesta division which "did not suit the necessities of the present" by the new division? If Tansar's object was to establish the unity of the throne by the unity of the Church, instead of meddling with philosophic subjects like those of the Logos and the Ideas, which the generality of the people did not care for, and which could in no way strengthen the power of Ardeshir, he ought to have first of all handled subjects like this and the following, which had drawn the general attention, and which had, according to the king of Tabaristân, displeased the people. He ought to have introduced them into the Avesta, to give them the stamp of religion. The fact, that Tansar did not do so, and that the extant Avesta gives quite another division, shows, that Tansar had not taken any liberty with the Avesta.

(d) Then, the next important subject, referred to by Tansar in his letter, is the subject of punishments for scepticism and for criminal faults, such as theft and adultery. For example, Ardeshir ordered, that the adulterer must be punished by having his nose

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 517.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.







Avesta, and ordered a copy of each to be preserved in the royal library of Shapigân. The words do not admit of the interpretation of "reunir et incorporer dans l'Avesta les fragments d'un intérêt scientifique," as Darmesteter (*Le Zend Avesta* III., p. xxxiii) understands them.

If, as Darmesteter says, the above passage is an allusion to his theory, that additions were made to the Avesta even in later times, then, as a matter of fact, we must find these writings on medicine, astronomy, and such other scientific subjects in our present Avesta. But we do not find them at all. Therefore, the only inference we can draw, is this, that the passage in the Dinkard, does not at all allude to any subsequent additions to the Avesta itself, but to the Pahlavi works.

In closing this short survey of Darmesteter's conclusion, based on the historical evidence of the Dinkard and of Tansar's letter, we must bear in mind several facts.

(a) In the very passages, where the Dinkard speaks of the restoration of religion, and of the religious scriptures, and on which Darmesteter lays great stress in support of his theory, Alexander, the Greek of Greeks, is spoken of as "the evil-destined villain Alexander," and allusions are made to his ravages and devastations. Again, the very document, on which Darmesteter bases his theory, *viz.*, Ibn al Muqaffa's letter of Tansar, speaks of the harsh conduct of Alexander towards the Persians. He thought of killing the princes and nobles of Irân, so that during his march towards India, they may not rise against him. But the good advice of his tutor Aristotle prevailed, and he divided Irân into petty principalities, so that the rulers may fight among themselves, and not join into an open rebellion against his rule. Again, in the body of the letter itself, Tansar alludes to the fact of Alexander's burning the sacred books.<sup>1</sup>

Now, Darmesteter represents Tansar, as borrowing foreign elements for his Avesta, from these very Greeks, whose hero Alexander, he (Tansar) himself runs down, and so do the Dinkard and other Pahlavi works. How improbable it is, then, that a religious and sacerdotal monarch like Ardeshir, and a Paoiryô-Tkaêsha Dastur like Tansar, should think of introducing, into their scriptures, the notions and beliefs of those very Greeks, who had brought about the ruin of their country and religion—a ruin, the painful memory of which was fresh in their

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<sup>1</sup> "Tu sais qu' Alexandre brûla à Istakhar nos livres sacrés écrits sur douze mille peaux de bœuf." *Journal Asiatique*, Neuvième Série (1894) Tome III., p. 516.

minds, and which continued to remain fresh for some time longer! Nothing can be more improbable than this.

But look to this question from another point of view. What did Valkhash, Ardeshir and Shapur aim at? What was the religious renaissance for? The Greeks had possibly left a slight mark of their invasion on the politics, as well as on the social and religious life of Irân. It was this mark of the Greeks, that had brought about the political, social, and religious anarchy. It was to obliterate these marks, that Valkhash, Ardeshir, and the two Shapurs worked. To obliterate these marks, was the aim of the renaissance of Ardeshir's time. Now, what can be more improbable than to think, that those, who worked hard in that work of renaissance, should, instead of obliterating any marks of Greek influence, perpetuate them, by bodily introducing Greek elements into their very scriptures!

If there be any country, whose religious ideas the Persians would not like to have incorporated into their religious books, it would be Greece or India. Again, if there be anybody, who could be said to have introduced into Zoroastrianism, these so-called Greek and Indian elements, Tansar should be the last person, because, from his very letter to the king of Tabaristân, to which Darmesteter attaches so much importance, we learn, that as a true Zoroastrian, he found the Greeks, Indians and others, wanting in good religious manners and customs (آداب دین). Referring to the country of the Turks, Greece, and India, Tansar says (I give Darmesteter's translation)<sup>1</sup> : "Quant aux bonnes mœurs religieuses et au service du Roi, ce sont des faveurs qu'il (Le Dieu) nous a octroyées et qu'il leur a refusées." Further on, he says: "Toutes les sciences de la terre sont notre lot." Thus, we see, that Tansar believed, that his fatherland of Irân possessed all the sciences of the world, and that his country was favoured by God with all good religious customs, which the other countries were deprived of. Now, how can you expect a man with such a belief, to borrow elements for his scriptures from Greece and from other countries?

(b) Again, what is more probable? That, if, in order to suit new circumstances, he was allowed the liberty to meddle with the Avesta, he should take liberty with those parts, which treat of philosophic subjects, or with those, that treat of the social manners and customs, with which the generality of people had to do?

<sup>1</sup> Journal Asiatique, (1894) Tome III., p. 547.

As a religious reformer, it would be his duty not to add new philosophic ideas, with which, the people, on the whole, had little concern, but to change some of the old social usages, which required a change under the new circumstances. If allowed a free hand, Tansar would have at first changed some of the customs mentioned in the Vendidâd, which clearly point that they belonged to very old times.

For example, it appears from the Vendidâd, that during the olden times, when it was written, the use of metal, as money, was very little known. Animals were the medium of exchange or barter. A medical practitioner was required to be paid, not in coins, but in animals.<sup>1</sup> If he cured the head of a family, he was given a small ox as his professional fee ; if he cured the ruler of a village, a large ox ; if he cured the lady of the house, a she-ass, and so on.

This scale of medical fees, must have existed, a long time before the Achemenian rulers, some of whom had Greek doctors on their staff. Now then, if Tansar had a *carte blanche* from his sovereign to take liberty with the Avesta, and to add, omit, or modify, the first thing, he would have done, would have been to strike off from the Vendidâd, the above system of payment, and to introduce, in its stead, a new system of payment by coins.

There are several other old customs in the Vendidâd, which suited the times, when it was written, but in the times of Valkhash or Tansar, were more honoured in their breach than in their observance. So, had Tansar taken liberty with the Avesta, instead of meddling with some philosophic ideas, he would have at once changed some of the customs mentioned in the Vendidâd. But, the very fact, that the Vendidâd has come down to us, as it was written in some pre-Achemenian times, shows, that Tansar could not have taken any liberty with the sacred writings.

(c) The chief point, which should determine the age, when the different writings of Zoroastrian literature were written, is the mention, made therein, of the names of historical personages. The Farvardin Yasht contains a long list of the departed worthies of ancient Irân. It contains the names of eminent men, who lived upto two centuries after Zoroaster, and who did yeoman's service to their country. For example, the name of Saêna Ahum Stuto (Saêna Ahum Studân of Afrin î Rapithavan) who, according to the Pahlavi

<sup>1</sup> Vendidâd VII., 41-43.

Zarthosht-Nameh, died about two hundred years after Zoroaster, is commemorated there (Y. XIII., 97). Now, if according to Darmesteter, the Zoroastrian canon was not closed up to the time of Shâpur, why is it, that we do not find in the Farvardin Yasht, any names of the Parthian or Sassanian dynasties? Those dynasties have produced a number of men, worthy of being commemorated for their services to the cause of their country and religion. Take the case of Valkhash (Vologeses I.), whose services to the cause of Zoroastrian religion are highly spoken of by the Dinkard together with those of Ardeshir. Now, if liberty was taken, as alleged, by Tansar, and his predecessors, with the Avesta, surely, the name of Valkhash would most assuredly have been added to the long list of the worthies of Irân in the Farvardin Yasht. Again, Ardeshir's services to the cause of Zoroastrian religion were really very great. And so, they were commemorated in the later Pâzend prayer, known as the Afrin î Rapithavan, together with those of Zoroaster, King Gushtâsp, Asfandiâr, and others. Now, if the Sassanian princes took liberty with the Avesta, why is it, that the name of Ardeshir Babegân is not included in the list of the Farvardin Yasht. Ardeshir's son Shâpur I., who also is spoken of in the Dinkard, as having had a part in the revival of the religion, could have added the name of his illustrious father in the list of the Farvardin Yasht. The very fact, that Ardeshir's services were remembered in the later Pazend prayer, but not in the Avesta itself, shows, that no liberty was taken with the writings of the Avesta.

## II.

Having examined the historical evidence, now let us examine a few important points of internal evidence, advanced by Darmesteter. He points to several passages in the Avesta, and traces in them, foreign elements, and infers therefrom, that those foreign elements had crept into the Avesta in later times.

(A) We will first speak of, what he calls, the Parthian elements.

1. Professor Darmesteter refers to a name in the Avesta, which, he thinks, points to a later origin of the Avesta. It is that of Alexander. In the Hom Yasht, they say of Haoma that "he overthrew the usurping Kereçâni, who arose longing for sovereignty, and said: "Henceforth, no priest will go at his wish, through the country, to teach the law." Professor Darmesteter says, that the Kereçâni, referred to



Minokherad VIII., 29). He is never spoken of as Kilisyâk. In the Bahman Yasht, the word Kilisyâk is once used, but there, it is used with his original name Akandgar. As we have said above, there, the word is not used alone, but simply as an appellation. Just as in some books (for example, the Virâf-nameh I., 4), he is spoken of as Arumayâk, *i.e.*, the Roman, so in the Bahman Yasht, he is spoken of as Akandgar-i-Kilisyâkih, *i.e.*, Alexander, the Kilisyâk. In all other books, he is spoken of by his own name, written in different ways. Now, if in all these Pahlavi writings, Alexander was spoken of by his own proper name, why should he not have been spoken of by that name, by the Pahlavi commentator of the Hom Yasht, if, at all, he meant to express, that Kereçani was Alexander.

(c) One fact more. In most of the above Pahlavi works, wherever the harm, done by Alexander to the Zoroastrian religion, is spoken of, he is always spoken of, as "Alexander the cursed (Gzashté 𐬀𐬀𐬀𐬀), *i.e.*, an epithet generally applied to Âhriman or the devil. Some such other epithet is often applied to him (Virâf-nameh I., 4; Bahman Yasht<sup>1</sup> II., 19; Dinkard<sup>2</sup> VIII., ch. I., 21). Now, if we take, that, as Darmesteter says, the passage in the Hom Yasht refers to the religious persecution by Alexander, why is it, that we do not find either in the Avesta passage itself, or in its Pahlavi rendering, any such usual expression of hatred with the mention of Alexander's name.

(d) Again, if the Avesta writer wished to make an allusion to the religious persecution by Alexander, why should he have chosen the Haoma Yasht for it? We know nothing of Alexander's special hostility to Haoma. In his invasion, the Greeks generally destroyed some of the Persian fire temples. So, if there was any part of the Avesta, where an appropriate allusion to Alexander's persecution could have been made with propriety, it was the sacred places in honour of fire, and not the Yasht in honour of Haoma. All these considerations lead to show, that it is a mistake to take Kereçâni to be Alexander.

2. Darmesteter points to another name in the Avesta, and connects it with a historical event, and thereby tries to show, that the Avesta,

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<sup>1</sup> S. B. E. V. West, Pahlavi Texts I.

<sup>2</sup> S. B. E. XXXVII., West, Pahlavi Texts IV.



as they have come down to us, have a later origin. It is the name of Azi Dahâka (Zohâk of Firdousi).

(a) From the facts (a) that the Pahlavi Bundelesh draws his descent from one Tâz, a brother of Hoshang, and (b) that the Shah-nâmeh calls him a Tâzi, *i.e.*, an Arab (عمود تازی), and (c) that Bawri, identified with the later Babylon, is spoken of in the Avesta, as the place of Azi-Dahâka, Darmesteter infers, that it is a reference to the settlement of the Arabs along the banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris,—an event which took place in the second half of the Arsacide period. Hence, he infers, that the Avesta, which refers to this historic event, must have been written a long time after Alexander. But, from the mere fact, that Zohâk was descended from one Tâz, who was the founder of the tribe of Tâziks, latterly known as the Arabs, and from the fact of the mention of the name of Bawri, identified with the later Babylon, we have no sufficient grounds to infer, that it is an allusion to the historical event of the occupation of Chaldea by the Arabs in later times. Neither the Avesta, nor the Pahlavi Bundelesh, says, that Zohâk was an Arab. The Bundelesh does not take Zohâk to be an Arab. It simply says, that he was descended from one Tâz. It is only Firdousi, who calls him an Arab; and that is perhaps due to the facts, that Zohâk was descended from Tâz, and that the Tâziks, latterly known as the Arabs, were also descended from Tâz. Thus, then, if the Avesta and the Bundelesh do not recognize Zohâk as an Arab, the inference, drawn from such a recognition is not valid.

(b) Again, even taking it for granted, that Tansar, or the people of his time, knew Azi-dahâk to be an Arab, how could Tansar, or some one else in the latter half of the Arsacide period, (whom Darmesteter supposes to have taken some liberty with the Avesta), have connected the historical event of the occupation of Chaldea by the Arabs with Azi-dahâk. The event, having happened only about one or two centuries before their time, must be fresh in their minds through oral traditions. So, how can either Tansar, an intelligent man, who is represented as having studied the philosophy of adjoining countries, or any other man of his stamp, be supposed to connect a recent historical event with a man of the times of the Peshdâdyan dynasty, a contemporary of Faridun, who lived several hundred years before the event? To suppose, that Tansar or men of his stamp mixed up a historical event, that had recently occurred, and connected it with a man, who lived

several hundred years before the event, is paying a very poor compliment to men of Tansar's intelligence, who are otherwise credited with a knowledge of the philosophies of adjoining countries.

(c) Again Bawri, the name used in the Avesta for Babylon, suggests another consideration. We find from the cuneiform inscriptions, that Babylon was one of the countries conquered by Darius. In the Behistun inscriptions, Babylon is spoken of as Bâbiru (Spiegel's *Die Altpersischen Keilinschriften*, p. 4; Oppert's *Les Inscriptions des Achéménides*, p. 24. Rawlinson *J. R. A. S. X. Part I.*, p. 1.). This word Bâbiru shows, that in the Achaemenian times, the old word Bawri had already begun to assume its later form of Babylon. Bawri is an older form of Bâbiru. Hence, the text, wherein the passage containing the word Bawri occurs, must have been written a long time before the Achaemenians. So, the conclusion of Darmesteter, that "The texts, in which the Arab Azi Dahâka appears as reigning in Babylon, belong to a time when the Arabs were already settled in Mesopotamia" is groundless.<sup>1</sup> Had that been the case, the writers would have used Babiru, or some other later form, for Babylon, and not the older form 'Bawri.'

3. Again, what is said of Zohâk, can be said of one Zainigau, alleged to be a contemporary of Afrâsiâb, whom Darmesteter attempts to connect with an historical event of the later Parthian times.

(a) In the first place, the word Zainigau (*Yasht XIX. Zamyâd*, 93) has up to now been translated both by European and Parsee scholars, and among them, by Darmesteter himself (*Zend Avesta*, Part II., S. B. E. XXIII.), as a common noun. But now, Darmesteter, to support his theory further, finds in Zainigau, an Arab, who was killed by Afrâsiâb, and thinks, that the allusion refers to the subsequent events of the Arab invasions which occurred in the later Parthian times (*Le Zend Avesta III.*) Introduction p. 1. S. B. E. IV., 2nd ed., Introduction p. 1.

(b) Here again, as in the case of Zohâk, we are led to believe, that a learned man like Tansar or others of his stamp were altogether ignorant of history, that they did not know when Afrasiâb lived, and that therefore, they mixed up historical events, which had occurred only a century or two before their times, with some other event which occurred a long time before.

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<sup>1</sup> S. B. E., Vol. IV., *Vendidâd*, 2nd ed., Introduction p. 1.

(c) Again, in connection with this event, Dr. Darmesteter says, on the authority of Tabari,<sup>1</sup> that "the legendary history of Yemen tells of the Tubba'h Abû Kurrub's invasions into Mesopotamia and his struggles with the Turânians of Âdarbaigân."<sup>2</sup> But Tabari makes this Tubbâh, a contemporary of Kings Gushtasp and Bahaman of Persia.<sup>3</sup> If that is the case, then it appears, according to Tabari, that the Arabs had a footing in Mesopotamia in the time of king Gushtâsp, *i.e.*, several centuries before the Parthian rule. Thus, the arguments, based by Darmesteter, (that the texts, in which Zohâk is made to settle at Bawri, and in which Zainigau is represented as being killed by Afrâsiab, are texts written in the latter half of the Arsacide period,) upon the assumption, that "the oldest period known, when the Arabs settled along the Euphrates and the Tigris is the second half of the Arsacide period"<sup>4</sup> fall to the ground.

4. Another point, that Darmesteter dwells upon to support his theory, is this that "the Avesta seems to ignore the existence of an Irânian empire. The highest political unity is the *dahyu*, a name which in the inscriptions of Darius denoted the satrapies, *i.e.*, the provincial kingdoms. . . . The highest political power is the *danhupaiti*, the chief of a *dahyu*."<sup>5</sup> Hence, he infers, that the Avesta was written in the times of the Parthian dynasty, after the fall of the empire, when there were so many provincial kings but no Shahinshah, no emperor.

(a) But here, Darmesteter commits a mistake, in taking a *dahyu*, in the sense of a satrapy, in which it is used in the inscriptions of Darius. We ought to take it in the sense, in which it is used in the Avesta itself. In the Avesta, it is not used in the sense of a provincial kingdom, but in that of an extensive country.

There is a passage common to all Âfringâns (Westergaard. The Âfringâns, Âfrigân Gahambâr, 14), wherein, the worshipper asks the blessings of God upon all the good reigning sovereigns. Just as, in the Farvardin Yasht (143-4) are invoked the Fravashis of the holy men of all countries, Irân, Turân, Sairima, Sâini (China) and Dahi,

<sup>1</sup> Tabari, traduit par Zotenberg I., p. 504.

<sup>2</sup> S. B. E. IV., 2nd ed., Introduction p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> "Ce roi vivait du temps de Goushtasp et de Bahman." Zotenberg I., p. 505. و این ملک بزمان گشتاسپ بود تا ایام بهمن و ایشان  
ملک عجم داشتندی

(Munshi Naval Kishore's lithographed text of July 1874, p. 211, ll. 15-16.)

<sup>4</sup> S. B. E. IV., 2nd ed., Introduction p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xlix.

so, here are invoked blessings upon all good reigning sovereigns (Khshathrayân danhupaiti). The Avesta praises good order and peaceful rule. It says "down with the tyrant" ("Dush-pâdshâhân âvashân bād," Nirang-kusti. "Dânâ pâdshâh-bâd duzdânâ avashân bad," Afrin), but "may good kings flourish in all parts of the world." Now, if the word 'danhupaiti,' used in this passage, meant a mere provincial chief, the passage would, according to Darmesteter, point to several provincial chiefs. If that is so, it requires an explanation, why Tansar, who is supposed to have taken liberty with the philosophic part of the Avesta, and wanted to bring about the unity of the empire through the unity of the church, did not alter this passage. This is a passage, which was, as now, recited daily in hundreds of fire-temples, and in thousands of houses of Irân, and therein the blessings of God were invoked upon all the ruling provincial chiefs. Ardeshir is represented by Darmesteter, on the authority of Tansar's letter, to have tried to extinguish the sacred fires of the provincial kingdoms, to preserve the unity of the empire by the unity of the royal fire. It is strange then, that he should have allowed to remain this most important passage in the Avesta, which acknowledged the sovereignty of several provincial rulers.

This consideration tends to show, that the word *danhupaiti* does not refer to mere provincial chiefs, and that the argument based on the meaning of this word, is vague.

(b) In his French translation Darmesteter says:—"Vishtâspa lui-même dans les Gâthas n'a point la physionomie d'un Roi des Rois. C'est un prince qui a donné sa protection à Zoroastre contre d'autres princes: rien ne le distingue des *dahyupaitis* ordinaires."<sup>1</sup> What Darmesteter means by this passage is this, that there was no empire even before the Achemenians. There were a number of provincial chiefs. Granted. Then, what grounds have Darmesteter to conclude, that the fact, that the Avesta ignores the existence of an Irânian empire, shows, that it was written in the times of the provincial chiefs of the Parthian dynasty? It may, as well, have been written in the times of the provincial chiefs of the *pre*-Achemenian times.

(c) Let us look to this question from another point of view. If the present Avesta does not speak of an Irânian empire and of a

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<sup>1</sup> Zend Avesta, III., p. xlii.

king of kings, the cuneiform inscriptions do speak of a king of kings ("khsâyathiya khsâyathiyânâm," Behistoun I, 1). Now, if the cuneiform inscriptions recognise an empire and a king of kings, it is clear, that the old writings of the "Grand Avesta" must have also recognised a king of kings. The question then is, Who did away with the mention of this king of kings from the so-called Sassanian Avesta? The answer perhaps would be, that either Valkhash or somebody in the Parthian times, finding the Irânian empire divided into small provincial kingdoms, removed from the Avesta, the passages referring to the king of kings. If that was the case, why did not Tansar, who is represented as taking all possible liberties with the Avesta, re-insert similar passages, which would have been of great use to him in uniting the power and the authority of his new master and emperor Ardeshir. To establish the unity of the empire, he wanted the unity of the church. So, in revising the Avesta, a re-insertion of similar passages ought to have drawn his attention first of all, if he at all took liberty with it by adding to or by modifying the original.

(B) We now come to the subject of the Greek elements or the Greek influence upon the Avesta.

1. To support his post-Alexandrian theory, Darmesteter points to the statement about the millenniums, as an instance of Greek influence upon Zoroastrian schools. He refers to the four periods of three thousand years each, referred to by the ancient Persians, as the period of the duration of the world. The *pre*-Alexandrian doctrine of the Persians, described by Theopompus, as quoted by Plutarch runs thus "That Oromasdes ruled for 3,000 years alone and Areimanios for 3,000 more. After this period of 6,000 years had elapsed they began to wage war against each other, one attempting to destroy the other; but finally Areimanios is to perish, mankind is to enjoy a blessed state of life; men will neither be any more in need of food, nor will they cast shadows; the dead are to rise again, men will be immortal and everything is to exist in consequence of their progress."<sup>1</sup>

The Pahlavi Bundelesh refers to the same doctrine, but, according to Darmesteter it differs in the description of the first two periods. The Bundelesh says: "Aûharmazd through

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<sup>1</sup> Haug's Essays, 2nd ed., pp. 8-9.

omniscience, knew that Aharman exists, and whatever he schemes he infuses with malice and greediness till the end; and because He accomplished the end by many means, He also produced spiritually the creatures which were necessary for those means, and they remained three thousand years in a spiritual state, so that they were unthinking and unmoving, with intangible bodies. The evil spirit, on account of backward knowledge, was not aware of the existence of Aûharmazd; and, afterwards, he arose from the abyss. and came in unto the light which he saw. Desirous of destroying, and because of his malicious nature, he rushed in to destroy that light of Aûharmazd, unassailed by fiends, and he saw its bravery and glory were greater than his own; so he fled back to the gloomy darkness and formed many demons and fiends; and the creatures of the destroyer arose for violence." (S. B. E. V., West's Bundeshesh, Chap. I., 8-10.)

Now, Darmesteter says, that the latter doctrine of the Bundeshesh is quite mystical. He says: "That period of spiritual ideal existence of the world, preceding its material and sensible apparition, reminds one strikingly of the Platonic ideas, and it can hardly have entered Zoroastrianism before Greek philosophy penetrated the East." (S. B. E. IV., 2nd ed., Introduction p. lv.)

(a) In the first place, Theopompus has made a brief reference to the four periods of the world's duration. He has summed up, in his words, the Zoroastrian doctrine about these periods. So, as long as he has not given any detailed description of these periods, as given by the Bundeshesh, one cannot affirm, that there is a difference between these two statements of the same doctrine. The very fact, that he has tried to describe the last two periods and not the first two, rather shows, that perhaps, he did not clearly understand, what Darmesteter calls, "the mystical spirit of the Zoroastrian doctrine."

(b) As to the Platonic ideas, one must look to the Farvardin Yasht, which speaks at some length of the Fravashis or Farohars, which are, as Dr. West says, the immaterial existences, the prototypes, the spiritual counterparts of the spiritual and material creatures afterwards produced, and which are therefore compared to the 'ideas' of Plato. A comparison of some points in the description of the 'ideas' of Plato with those of the Fravashis of the Avesta, will clearly show, whether it is the Avesta or Plato that has borrowed.

Let us see, "of what things," according to Taylor, the best translator of the Parmenides, there are ideas. He says: "There are ideas only of universal and perfect substances and of whatever contributes to the perfection of these, as, for instance, of man and whatever is perfective of man, such as wisdom and virtue." Thus, according to Plato, all perfect substances in the universe have ideas.

In the Avesta, it is the vegetable and the animal world, that has Fravashis, and not the mineral world. The earth has its Fravashi as the home of animal and vegetable life. It is only the life-bearing creation, that has the Fravashis, not the lifeless. To speak scientifically it is the objects of the organic kingdom that have the Fravashis, and not those of the inorganic kingdom.

Now, what is the case with the 'ideas' of Plato? According to Plato all existing objects have their ideas, whether they belong to the organic kingdom or to the inorganic. The ideas are the realities, and the substances of which they are the ideas or models, are non-realities or mere imitations of the ideas.

Again, according to Plato, whatever contributes to the perfection of perfect substances have 'ideas.' For example, not only has a man an 'idea,' but wisdom and virtue, which contribute to the perfection of man, have ideas. So have justice, and beauty, and goodness. Now, in the Avesta, we have nothing like this. We have no Fravashis of these abstract qualities of justice, beauty, or goodness.

Then, what does this show? Has the Avesta borrowed from Plato or Plato borrowed from the Avesta? The system of the Avesta is simple. All the life-bearing or organic substances only have their Fravashis or spiritual parts. The dead people have their Fravashis, because they had them in their living condition. But Plato, as it were, developed his system from that of the Avesta. He extended the notion, even to the objects of the inorganic world, and to qualities which led to perfection, and again mixed up with the question, the notion of realities and non-realities. Thus, we find, that Plato's system is more intricate than that of the Avesta. What conclusion then is possible? That the more developed and intricate system is later than the simple one; that it has worked out its development or completion from the original simple one. Thus one sees, that the Avesta system is older than that of Plato.

Darmesteter attributes these Platonic ideas in the Avesta to the times of the Neo-Platonists, the school founded by Philo Judæus. But we have seen above, that the Farvardin Yasht, a part of which treats of the Fravashis, must have been written long before the Christian era, because the names of kings like Valkhash, who did yeoman's service to the cause of Zoroastrian religion, do not occur there. Therefore, the notion of Fravashis could not have entered into Zoroastrianism through Neo-Platonism.

2. The other instance of Greek elements in the Avesta, which Darmesteter points to, in support of his theory of the post-Alexandrian origin of the Avesta, is that of Vohumano. He supposes, that the definition of Vohumano (Bahaman) in the Avesta is well-nigh the same as that of the Logos of Philo Judæus. From this alleged similarity, he asserts, that Vohumano is the Avesta adaptation of the Platonic Logos, and that, therefore, the Avesta texts, which treat of Vohumano, are of later origin, *i.e.*, of the post-Alexandrian period. Not only that, but all the Amesha-Spentas, of whom Vohumano is a type, also, are a post-Alexandrian development.

(a) M. Bréal, in one of his learned articles in the "Journal des Savants" (Dec. 1893, Janvier et Mars 1894), very cleverly refutes this line of Darmesteter's reasoning. We learn from Plutarch, that the notion of the Amesha-Spentas is a pre-Alexandrian, and not a post-Alexandrian development of the ancient Iranian religion. Plutarch in his Isis and Osiris (Chs. XLVI. and XLVII.) makes the following statement about the ancient Persians. From the fact, that all along, Plutarch has been quoting Theopompus of Chios (B. C. 300), M. Bréal thinks Theopompus to be his authority. Haug, however, thinks Hermippos of Smyrna (B. C. 250) to be his authority. Whoever his authority may be, whether Hermippos or Theopompus, a period of about 50 years makes very little difference about the antiquity of this statement. Plutarch says, "Oromasdes sprang out of the purest light; among all things perceived by the senses that element most resembles him; Areimanios sprang out of darkness, and is therefore of the same nature with it. Oromasdes, who resides as far beyond the sun, as the sun is far from the earth, created six gods (the six Ameshe-spentas, the 'archangels'): the god of benevolence (Vohumanô); the god of truth (Asha-vahishta); the god of order (Khshathra-vairya); the god of wisdom (Armaiti); and the god of



wealth and delight in beauty (Haurvatât and Ameretât). But to counterbalance him, Areimanios created an equal number of gods counteracting those of Oromasdes. Then Oromasdes decorated heaven with stars, and placed the star Sirius (Tishtrya) at their head as a guardian. Afterwards he created twenty-four other gods (Yazatas) and set them in an egg, but Areimanios forthwith created an equal number of gods, who opened the egg; in consequence of this, evil is always mingled with good." (Haug's Essays, 2nd Edition, pp. 9-10.)

I wonder, why Darmesteter has not given any explanation of this statement of Plutarch, based on the authority of either Theopompus (B. C. 300), or Hermippos (B. C. 250), which clearly destroys the theory of the post-Alexandrian development and of the Neo-Platonic origin of the notion of the Amesha-Spentas. The passage very clearly shows, that the ancient Persians before the time of the Neo-Platonists had the notion, not only of the Amesha-Spentas, but also of the counteracting demons.

(b) Again, in considering this subject, we must bear in mind, that the notion of the Amesha-Spentas is a part and parcel of the notion of the two spirits or of the so-called Dualistic theory. Now, this notion of the two spirits, the Spenta Mainyu and the Angra Mainyu, is specially Zoroastrian and pre-Alexandrian. Prof. Darmesteter himself admits this (S. B. E. IV., The Vendidad, 2nd ed., p. lxi.). Therefore the notion of the celestial council of the Amesha-Spentas, which is a part and parcel of the original notion of the two spirits, must be primarily Zoroastrian.

(c) There is one other consideration. If the Avesta has borrowed the notion of Vohumano and the Amesha-Spentas from the Greeks, which part of the Avesta it is, that has done so? Prof. Darmesteter does not say, that the whole of the Avesta was written afresh in post-Alexandrian times, but he says that only foreign elements were added. Now, we find the Amesha-Spentas spoken of in a number of passages, in almost the whole of the Avesta. So, if the Amesha-Spentas are a foreign element, then the whole of the Avesta is post-Alexandrian, a conclusion which Darmesteter himself does not admit.

For an explanation, why the Neo-Platonism has some of its notions resembling those of the Zoroastrians, one must look to what the Neo-Platonism was based upon. "Taking the sublimer doctrines of Plato as a basis, this school endeavoured to form a new philosophy, which should not only establish an agreement between Plato and

Aristotle on all leading points of speculation, but also harmonize the Grecian and Oriental modes of thought . . . Neo-Platonism sought to blend in one grand system all systems of philosophy, all systems of religion . . . The value of Neo-Platonism consisted in its endeavour to preserve the whole treasure of every system of philosophy; since it is, in truth, an advance of philosophy, to have gained a large store of different ideas, and a wide review of the different directions of philosophical thought." (*Beeton.*)

"Du III<sup>e</sup> siècle de l'ère chrétienne jusqu'à VI<sup>e</sup> les Neo-Platoniciens entreprirent de fondre la philosophie orientale avec la philosophie grecque. Des tentatives analogues avaient été faites précédemment par des philosophes juifs d'Alexandrie, par Aristote peut être et certainement par Philon dans le I<sup>er</sup> siècle." Herein lies, then, the key why some of the notions of the Avesta resemble those of the Neo-Platonists. It was the Neo-Platonists, who took some of their notions from the Persian religion and philosophy as from other religions and philosophies. Darmesteter has just missed the key-note, and so has tried in vain to find reasons for the similarity of notions in the Avesta and in Neo-Platonism.

(C) Now we come to the question of the so-called Indian elements in the Avesta. The above considerations, and the above-quoted statement from Plutarch, destroy the theory, based by Darmesteter, upon the names of the three demons, *viz.*, Indra, Saurva, and Naunghaithya, opposed to the three Amesha-Spentas, Asha Vahissta, Khshathra Vairya and Spenta Armaiti.

(a) From the fact, that the names of the three demons are also found in Brahminical works, he thinks that they represent foreign Brahminical element, borrowed by the Avesta in later times. He says "it appears clear thereby that their present character is not the result of a prolonged evolution in the inner circle of Zoroastrianism."<sup>1</sup> The above statement from Plutarch contradicts this *in toto*, and clearly points out that the notion of the Amesha-Spentas and of their counteracting opponents, the "daevas," is specially Zoroastrian and pre-Alexandrian.

(b) Again, Darmesteter points to two passages of the Avesta, wherein, he supposes, there are references to Gaotama Buddha and to his religion. Firstly, the word Buity (Vend. XI., 9 (Bundhi); XIX., 43), which he thinks to be the same as Baodha, is a word which

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<sup>1</sup> S. B. E. IV., Vendidad, 2nd edition, Introduction, p. liii.

refers to one of the evil forces of the soul. The word occurs among other similar words which speak of moral vices. This shows, that it is not a proper noun.

(c) Again, Darmesteter points to the word Gaotama in the Farvardin Yasht (Yt. XIII., 16), and says that it is a reference to Gaotama Buddha. As it was "under the Indo-Greeks (first century before Christ) that it (Buddhism) spread widely in the eastern provinces of Irân, "and as "in the first century of our era Kanishka's coins present, in an instructive eclectism, all the deities of the Indo-Scythian empire, Greek gods, Brahmanical devas, Buddha, and the principal Yazatas of Mazdeism,"<sup>1</sup> he concludes that "if the alleged allusions to Buddhism are accepted, the Avesta passages, where they occur, cannot have been written earlier than the second century before our era." But then the question is, if the Farvardin Yasht, wherein these passages occur, were written so late as the second century after Christ, why is it that we do not find therein the names of men like Valkhash who had done, according to the Dinkard, important services to the cause of the Zoroastrian religion? The list of the historical personages in the Farvardin Yasht was closed long before the Christian era.

(D) Then Darmesteter speaks at some length about what he calls the Jewish elements in the Avesta. This part of the question has been very ably handled lately by learned scholars like Dr. Mills and Dr. Cheyne, who have tried to show that the Jewish scriptures owe a good deal to Zoroastrian scriptures. I will allude to one point only, and close. That is the subject of the Deluge. Darmesteter sees, like others, in the second chapter of the Vendidad, a description of the Deluge. I have shown elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> that though there are several points which are similar in the Hebrew sketch of Noah, and the Avesta sketch of Yama or Jamshed, the second chapter of the Vendidad refers not to the Deluge, but to the founding and building of the city of Airyana-Vaêja.

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<sup>1</sup> S. B. E. IV., Vendidad, 2nd edition, Introduction, p. liv.

<sup>2</sup> Vide my Jamshed, Hom and Âtash.