

# **Pahlavi version of the *dahmān āfrīn* (Y.60); critical edition, translation and commentary**

## **1. Research questions**

This research aims to study the Pahlavi version of Yasna chapter 60, known as *dahmān āfrīn*, which focuses on the spirit or force within the Avestan benediction called *Dahmān Āfriti*. This benediction offers blessings to the house of the just individual (ašavan) and is part of the Yasna liturgy (Hā 60.2-7). The project's goals include creating a critical edition of this text in digital and printed formats, along with an in-depth commentary, shedding light on the evolution of Zoroastrian sacred texts and rituals over time and across different geographical locations, as well as the various transmission lines associated with them. Additionally, the project will compare this text with the other texts of the āfrīnagān group.

The Yasna constitutes the core ritual of Zoroastrianism, initially transmitted orally but later recorded in an old Iranian language called Avestan during the late Sasanian period (224-651 CE). During the Sasanian and early Islamic periods, Zoroastrian priests also translated and commented on the Yasna in Pahlavi, the Middle Iranian language, used by Zoroastrians well into Islamic times. Manuscripts containing the Avestan recitation text of a ritual and the ritual instructions which may be in Pahlavi, New Persian or Gujarati, are called “*sāde*”, while manuscripts in which the Avestan text of the Yasna is accompanied by its corresponding Pahlavi translation and commentary, are referred to as the “Pahlavi Yasna”.

In addition, codices are divided into Indian and Iranian groups based on their origin. Pahlavi Yasna manuscripts J2 and K5, from the Indian branch, date back to 1323 CE (Hintze 2012: 255), while the extant manuscripts of the Iranian Pahlavi Yasna are from ca. 1780 CE. The most prominent manuscripts in this group are Pt4 and Mf4, but other manuscripts are also included, such as T54, E7, G14, and F2 (Hintze 2012: 253-255).

The questions which this project addresses are the following:

- 1) What are the features of the Indian and Iranian transmission lines of the Pahlavi Yasna manuscripts, beyond the basic differences outlined above?
- 2) Is it possible to reconstruct an archetype for the Pahlavi version?
- 3) What is the best methodological approach for the edition of a text with different lines of transmission and the disputed existence of an archetype?

## **2. Research context**

Many years have passed by since different parts of the Pahlavi version of the Yasna were edited or translated into English, and analyzed by some scholars like Dhabar (1949) who edited the entire Pahlavi version of the Yasna. Since then, after the recent discovery of new manuscripts of the Avestan and the Pahlavi Yasna, which the research on them during the last decades has dramatically changed our knowledge about their written transmission and their role in the Zoroastrian ceremonies, and has also enhanced the importance of this largely forgotten text for the study of Zoroastrianism, in ancient and medieval times (Andrés-Toledo, 2016:1), a new and revised of these texts has been necessary. Therefore, the most obvious reason for the significance of choosing this text as a Postdoc subject is that the lack of a critical edition, commentaries and an English translation. Also, they have not provided a detailed discussion of the philological problems. So, this project could constitute a window showing the permeability between Zoroastrian solemn rituals and so-called outer rituals, such as the *āfrīnagān* ceremony.

A further point is that historical and social contexts in which the manuscripts were created are not taken into consideration in any of these studies. Finally, new methodologies for editing texts, which are absent from these works on the Pahlavi Yasna, are now available. As a PhD. graduate on the ancient Iranian languages and culture, and having worked specifically on the Avestan and Pahlavi texts, I feel that I am in a strong position to undertake a study of the Pahlavi version of Yasna 60. The research aims to provide the first edition of the text based on a complete picture of the manuscript, their possible variations, history, and the relationship between the Pahlavi version and Avestan one. The principle research objectives are to employ innovative editing methodologies to edit the Pahlavi Yasna, and to provide the first-ever text-critical edition of the entire text, with transliteration, transcription, and an in-depth commentary according to MacKenzie's (1971) system.

## **3. Research Methods**

Until the late 20th century, the extant Avesta was believed to represent the remnants of the Sasanian Great Avesta until Kellens (1998) challenged this view. He proposes that our available Avestan texts, like the Yasna, are the recitation texts of rituals rather than direct derivatives of the Sasanian Great Avesta. Consequently, a new edition should be based on re-examining the manuscripts.

This research utilizes the Pt4 manuscript as its base text, classified as "Iranian Pahlavi Yasna" (Hintze, 2012: 253; Geldner, 1886-96: xiii; Zeini, 2020:19).

### 3.1. Manuscript transliteration and transcription

In the final edition, the text will be presented in transliteration with a text-critical apparatus, transcribed using MacKenzie's system and translated as well. This research combines philological and historical comparative linguistics approach. There will be an extended commentary section dealing with various aspects of the text pertaining to its language, meaning, and its relationship with the Avestan version. An Avestan-Pahlavi glossary will visualize lexical connections between the two languages.

The applicant will use the Online/Offline Transcription Editor (OTE) for the production of full-text transliterations of manuscripts and the edited text. The OTE provides a web-based WYSIWYM (what you see is what you mean) work environment with a user-friendly interface, which requires no special XML skills from its users. By isolating the transcriber from manually encoding TEI tags, it ensures TEI compliance and consistent data capture. It is well-documented and employed by a large group of users for transcribing Ancient Greek and Zoroastrian Avestan manuscripts.

I propose to edit the text using electronic editing tools developed by the Multimedia Yasna project at SOAS. This entails whole-text transcriptions from selected manuscripts and automated collation. Since no edition or translation of the Pahlavi version of this text exists, I will be undertaking pioneering work with this important project.

### 4. Impact and academic beneficiaries of the research

This project benefits researchers in text critical studies, Indo-Iranian philology, and religion studies. It uses innovative textual criticism methods for a text transmitted orally and in writing, offering insights into Sanskrit, New Persian versions of the Yasna, based on the Pahlavi version.

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