Did the Āẕar Kaivānīs Know Zoroastrian Middle Persian Sources?

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ABSTRACT The Āẕar Kaivānīs, a syncretistic religious school in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, combined elements from Islam, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Ešrāqī philosophy. The *Dasātīr*, written by the first authority of the group, Āẕar Kaivān (943/1533–1028/1618), is a bilingual text. Its first language is an artificial encrypted language, represented as the language of heaven; the second is a specific form of New Persian, i.e., with few Arabic words. This article argues that *Dasātīr*'s author employed the Zoroastrian *Zand* as a model for the construction of his book. It moreover demonstrates the trace of some Middle Persian lexemes in it. Accordingly, it concludes that the Āẕar Kaivānīs were familiar with the Zoroastrian Middle Persian literature, if perhaps only superficially. The article also scrutinizes where and when contact occurred between Zoroastrianism and the Āẕar Kaivānī school. As a result, it discusses the Zoroastrian concept of secret language and the necessity of its translation and interpretation, which provided the Āẕar Kaivānīs with the possibility to include the notion of a secret book in their own system of thought.

KEYWORDS Āẕar Kaivānī school, Dasātīr, Zoroastrianism, Zand, secrecy, Safavid-Mughal, religious contact

Introduction

Āẕar Kaivānīs is a syncretistic religious school combining elements from Islam, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Ešrāqī philosophy; its major texts were composed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The texts name a certain Kaivān, probably from Estaḵr, near Shiraz, as founder of the school. According to the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb* (*The School of Religious Teachings*),[1] a heresiographical work from the mid-seventeenth century (see below) whose author must have belonged to this school, Kaivān lived from 943/1533 to 1028/1618. He must have left his homeland for India under pressure resulting from the intolerant Safavid religious policy to enjoy the religious freedom of the Mughal empire, and settled in Patna, probably in the year

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1   From the contents of the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb*, Carl Ernst (2017, 440) concludes that the title of the book can alternatively be translated as *The School of Theologies*.

1001/1592–3, or at the end of the sixteenth century.[2] The *Dabestān-e maẕāheb* (Āẕar Sāsānī 2010, 4r) refers to the school by various names: Īzadīyān, Yazdānīyān, Ābādīyān, Sepāsīyān, Āzādān, Sorūšān, Hūšīyān, Anūšagān, Āẕar-hūšangīyān and, last but not least, Āẕarīyān.[3]

The *Dabestān-e maẕāheb* presents a hagiographical biography of Āẕar Kaivān, making it   [2]
difficult to attempt a historical contextualization of the founder's activities. Given the strong syncretism of the Āẕar Kaivānī school, it is difficult not only to identify the origin of its ideas, but also to trace the religious contours of the school, i.e., to demarcate it from its neighboring religious groups and clearly define its ideas. One could even raise the question of whether the representation of the school in the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb* is a heresiographical[4] categorization of the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb*'s author, an idealized depiction of the school, or a historical description. In contrast to their diverse content, Āẕar Kaivān's texts feature a homogeneous form: They are written in Persian, the official language of Safavid Iran and Mughal India, and clearly strive to avoid Arabic words. The texts' preoccupation with a 'pure' Persian language also caught the attention of nineteenth-century philologists;[5] this fascination was short-lived, however, since later research proved that the word formations encountered in these texts are highly artificial and often do not follow Persian morphology. The scholarly disappointment reached its highest point in the investigations into a book which the Āẕar Kaivānīs represent as 'heavenly': the *Dasātīr-e Āsmānī*.

The title *dasātīr-e āsmānī* literally means 'Heavenly Professors.' Given the Āẕar Kaivānīs'   [3]
efforts to avoid Arabic words, it might come across as an accidental irony that the title of their heavenly book, *dasātīr*, is the Arabic plural of the Persian word *dastūr*. The book includes 16 chapters: the first 15 chapters are ascribed to 15 *shats*, or prophets, starting from Mahābād and ending with Zarathustra, Sāsān I. and Āẕar Sāsān. The text does not mention any of the prophets known from the Abrahamic traditions; instead, the prophets' names derive from Iranian mythology, Zoroastrian cosmogony or anthropogony or, in other cases, they remain unknown. A chapter titled *Pand-nāma-ye eskandar* 'Alexander's Book of Advice' is placed after the chapter *Nāma-ye šat zartošt* 'Prophet Zarathustra's Book.' Alexander is not called a prophet in the *Dasātīr*, yet Zarathustra is quoted as saying that "No one can receive the meaning of my words as he [Alexander] did" (D, 222).

The *Dasātīr* is a bilingual text. Its first language is an artificial encrypted language; the   [4]
second is a specific form of New Persian, i.e., one which includes few Arabic words. The *Dabestān-e maẕāheb* represents the pseudo-language of the *Dasātīr* as follows:

[5]   چند مجلد از آن زبانی بود که به هیچ زبانی فرودینیان نمی‌ماند و آن را زبان آسمانی نامیده.

Some volumes of that [*scil.* the *Dasātīr*] are/were in a language which does/did[6]   [6]
not resemble any language of the people of lower religions and that is called 'the Language of Heaven'[7].

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2   Takeshi Aoki (2000, 263) dates Āẕar Kaivān's migration to India in the period between 1573 and 1580.

3   Three names Āzādān, Sorūšān, Hūšīyān are absent in the edition of Keyḫosro (1362), 5f. I quote the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb* after the facsimile publication of its oldest manuscript (Āẕar Sāsānī 2010) as well as its edition (Keyḫosro 1362). An English translation of the book can be found in Shea and Troyer (1843).

4   For a detailed survey on the concept of religion in the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb,* see Ernst (2017, 438–46).

5   Sir William Jones, the British orientalist, was the first to draw attention to this book and consequently to Āẕar Kaivān and this school by praising the *Dasātīr* in 1789 (Jones 2013).

6   Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, 8r); parallel to Keyḫosro (1362, 10). Depending on how the verbs are to read: *bowad* and *na-mī-mānad* or *būd* and *na-mī-mānd*.

7   All translations into English are by the author unless indicated otherwise.

The *Dasātīr* describes itself as a heavenly book sent by God to Mahābād, the first prophet [7]
of the *Dasātīr*. In the first decades after the discovery of the *Dasātīr*, scholars made valiant
efforts to decipher this 'language of Heaven.' Once scholars understood that it was an invented
language, interest in the Āẕar Kaivānī texts waned.

In a recent article, Daniel Sheffield (2014) made the case that the concept of heavenly [8]
language in the Āẕar Kaivānī school is directly connected to older notions of Horūfīya. The
arguments he presents to support this hypothesis can be summarized as follows:

- The Āẕar Kaivānīs belong to the context of Horūfīya and more especially to Noqṭavīya, [9]
  founded by Mahmūd Pasīḫānī (Sheffield 2014, 165–69).
- There were artificial languages in the Ottoman-Safavid-Mughal world, as illustrated
  by the dictionary *Kitāb-e Baleybelen*, assigned to the Hurufist author Mohyī Golšanī
  (Sheffield 2014, 169f.).
- Similar concepts existed in the discussions of celestial language among the Hurufists.
  Also, Sheffield points out the Hurufist distinction between two languages: an absolute,
  limitless and celestial language, which is opposed to unfolded, limited and terrestrial
  language (Sheffield 2014, 171).
- There were similar claims of linguistic miracles in the Āẕar Kaivānī school as well as in
  (other) Hurufists authors, as well as by the poet Fayżī (Sheffield 2014, 171f.).

Whereas Sheffield's hypothesis about the Hurufist influence on the *concept* of celestial lan- [10]
guage is plausible, it cannot, on its own, explain the construction of the *Dasātīr-e Āsmānī* as
a whole. In this article, I would like to argue that the Āẕar Kaivānīs might have used the
general paradigms of Horūfīya and Noqṭavīya, but employed the Zoroastrian *Zand* as a model
for the construction of the *Dasātīr*. We know already that the Āẕar Kaivānīs were aware of the
Zoroastrian New Persian literature, as the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb* explicitly shows. Furthermore,
this article will show that they were familiar with the Zoroastrian Middle Persian literature
as well, if perhaps only superficially. I will also show that the Āẕar Kaivānīs did not use the
concept of secrecy in their encounter with Zoroastrianism in order to draw in-group and out-
group distinctions. On the contrary, I argue that the Zoroastrian concept of secret language
and the necessity of its translation and interpretation provided the Āẕar Kaivānīs with the
possibility to include the notion of a secret book in their own system of thought.

Celestial Language, Translation and Commentary in the *Dasātīr-e Āsmānī*

This investigation begins with a straightforward analysis of the structure of the *Dasātīr*. In [11]
each chapter of the book, a phrase, or often a sentence, is rendered in the celestial language,
followed by a Persian 'translation' of the phrase from the celestial language. Occasionally
some sentences are added to the translation and are offered as the commentary on the original
text. The celestial language is demarcated from its Persian translation by the number of the
passage, which appears at the beginning of the phrase in the celestial language, and by the
letter ت (*t*; for *tarǧoma* 'translation') at the beginning of the translation, as is illustrated, for
instance, in the Haydarabad manuscript of the book. In this manuscript, the beginning of the
commentary is marked with the letter ش (*š*; for *šarḥ* 'commentary'). These signs, moreover,
are written in this manuscript in red ink, whereas the texts in both languages are written

in black.[8] This striking structure did not escape the attention of the first editor of the text, although he regarded the New Persian text as an actual translation of the *Dasātīr* text in its 'heavenly' language. In the epilogue to this edition, Mulla Firuz b. Kaus writes:

[12] باید دانست که زبان اصل صحایف منزله اصلا و قطعا مناسبت بزبان زند و پهلوی و دری بلکه بجمیع السنه مشهوره طوایف مختلفه این زمان ندارد و در عصر خسرو پرویز [...] حضرت ساسان پنجم اینصحف را بزبان فرس در غایت سلامت و فصاحت و بلاغت [...] ترجمه فرموده هر یک از آیات بینات که محتاج بزیادت شرح و بسط است بعد ترجمه الفاظ آیات شرحی واضح مرقوم تا طالبان را دریافت بسهولت میسر گردد (.D., 306).

[13] It should be known that the original language of the revealed books does not resemble the languages Zand, Pahlavi, Dari or even any famous language of the different contemporary people at all. In the era of Ḥosro Parvīz, Majesty Sāsān V. translated these books into Persian with the highest correctness, fluency and eloquence. For each verse that needed a commentary he wrote a clear commentary after its translation so that the students could easily apprehend it.

[14] To provide an example for this text structure I render in the following the paragraphs 40-44 and 47-52 of the chapter *Nāma-ye šat vaḫšūr yāsān* (D, 97-9). To allow better visualization of the text structure, I have rendered the texts in the celestial language red, the translation black, and the optional commentary blue. The sign for the demarcation of the celestial language from the translation is replaced by an asterisk:

[15] (40) زابهاش هروند اسپ و فه هروار دم له چایند ٭ فروزهاش بسیار است و بشمار در نیایند

[16] (41) فر هوشام لی هروار خمیده هزهیشام خر میم بهنام اسپ که سارام اورنگرامان و حمیدگان نوند شکار هواند ٭ فرشتگان بی‌شمار آفریده از ایشان نخستین خرد نخست است که همه خردها و آفریدگان زیردست اویند

[17] (42) نزم مانیستار که فدسمند اسپ ویودسرو نویشرامان است ٭ پس روان سپهر برتر که بس بزرگست و سالار همه روانهاست

[18] (43) تیرسریربد وهو فرسار سروسریرام اسپ ٭ پس تنبد و او سالار همه تنهاست و تن‌بد نام سپهر برترین است

[19] (44) سیامکان و هرنامگان و هرنامگانیان و شاورام و تاو رام سارام خمیده هواند هزهو فستام پم هیشام ٭ آزادان و وارستگان و تنان و تنانیان و گوهرها و ناگوهرها همه آفریده اویند همه آفریده اویند از او آفرین برایشان

[20] [...]

[21] (47) فه سام زمرپان وای ٭ بنام مهربان خدای

[22] (48) تشتاریدن رام برج ادهابیغی و سابیغی ٭ پاک شدن دو گونه است امیغی و روایی

[23] (49) هابیغی منا درافه افرکنون له بر تن و همموزیدگیها سجردن ٭ امیغی دل را به بدی نه بستن و

نکوهیدگیها ستردن مانند خشم و کام از دل زدودن

[24] (50) و سابیغی هانچیم دم پرکتار یاج هاسد سلودن ٭ و روایی آنچه در آشکار بد باشد زدودن چون اویژگی و ناپازی آشکاری

[25] (51) وهیم تشتاریدن فه جریفترپامد ٭ و این پاک شدن به آب یفتر باشد و یفتر آبیست که رنگ و بوی و مزه او نگشته بود و بدبوی نشده ورنه گلاب و مانند آن پاک‌ون ستوده جم است

[26] (52) وجرسود دم کاو سمید ٭ و آب کرد در خورد تنه و توش باید دانست که آب کرد آنرا گویند که تن و چیز بدان پاک شود و آن در خورد تن آمده پس در خورد تن پیل رودی و مردم را آنمایه که درو سراپا فرو شود و بهر پشه همینه

[27] It is important to highlight at this point again that the celestial text of the *Dasātīr* is represented as the original text, and was considered as such in the nineteenth century scholarly research as well. As far as the genesis of the book is concerned, however, it is the Persian text, encrypted into an artificial language, which should be considered the original. Interestingly, one can find a reflection on the 'original text' and its translation in the *Dasātīr* itself. The 70th paragraph of Jī-āfrām's Book of the *Dasātīr* reveals the language of the 'original text' and its translation as well as the necessity of translation for the purpose of accessibility:

[28] New Persian 'translation':

[29] سخن خدا و نامه خدا و فرشته خدا و فرسته خدا دانستی

[30] It is worthy knowing the speech of God, the book of God, the angel of God, and the envoy of God.

[31] Commentary:

[32] سخن خدا نه بگلو و کام و زبان است و آن خواستی است و گفتی بی اینهمه که چون پرمود فرشته سالار بهمن بهستی پیوست و زین خامه بدست نیرو جهانرا نگاشت و یزدانی نامه دو است نامه نخستین دو گیتی است و آنرا مهین‌نامه گویند و بزبان فرازآباد فرز دساتیرش نامند که مهین‌نامه یزدان باشد و نامه دیگر دساتیریست که چم آنرا مه‌آباد و دیگر پیغمبران از مه‌آباد تا من یافته‌اند، و آن آرشی است که بر دل تابد نه باد نوا. و این باد نوا آنرا کالبد است بهر شنوانیدن و این را بفرتین نواد دریک دساتیر خوانند که کهین‌نامه یزدان باشد و مهین‌پیغمبرش خرد است [...] و این فرز فرجیشور است بزبان دساتیر که بپارسی دری مهین‌پیغمبر باشد و دوم پیغمبر مردم است و او را انگیخته‌اند تا فرودیانرا بخواند (.D، 68).

[33] "The speech of God exists not by means of the throat, the mouth or the tongue: It is a will and a speech without any of these. For when He commanded, the chief of angels, Bahman, came into existence, and with this pen, he [i.e. Bahman] wrote the world with the hand of might. There are two divine books. The first book is the two worlds, and it is called The Great Book [*mihīnnāma*], and in the language of Farzābād, it is called the *Farz-Dasātīr*, that is, *The Great Book of God*. And there is another *dasātīrī* book, the meaning [*chim*] of which Mahābād and the other prophets from Mahābād down to me have acquired, and it is a signification [*āriš*] which shines on the heart, not [comprehended through] the breath of the voice. This breath of the voice is a mere from [*kālbod*] for it in order to make it

heard [*bahr-i shinavānīdan*]. In the heavenly language [*farātīn navād*], it is called *Darīk Dasātīr,* which is *The Small Book of God* [*kehīnnāma-ye yazdān*]" (Sheffield 2014, 170). Its great convey is knowledge [...]. This is called *Farz-Farğīšvar* in the language of the *Dasātīr.* This means 'Great Envoy' in Dari Persian, and designates the second envoy of people. He has been commissioned to call inferior people."

The text structure of the *Dasātīr,* as shown in the above paragraphs, reveals three distinct [34] components: the revelation to the prophets in a celestial language; the translation of the revelation; and finally, a commentary on the revelation. Both translation and commentary are represented as deriving from ancient times and are hence endowed with more value. As a result, not only the constructed celestial language is important for the composition of the *Dasātīr,* but also the artificial Persian language of the translation—from which words of Arabic origin are expunged.[9] In my opinion, the systematically antiquated language of the translation and commentary are also an aspect of the author's intention to present a 'celestial language.' The celestial message can only be received through prophetic mediation; therefore, divine action is expressed in the celestial text as well as in the translation and commentary of the prophetic figures. The purpose of the 'pure' language of the translation and commentary is not only to suggest their ancient origins, but also to allude to an idealistic past, namely the Sasanian period. In this way, their ancient character also confers authority on them.

Exegetical Traditions in the Āẕar Kaivānīs' Environment

The most influential religious traditions in the Āẕar Kaivānīs' milieu which possessed an ex- [35] egetical tradition include the Vedic tradition, Zoroastrianism and Islam. For the sake of argument, I assume that the author of the *Dasātīr* was familiar with these exegetical traditions and might have used them as models for the construction of his 'heavenly book.'

There is no doubt that the Āẕar Kaivānīs became familiar with the religious books of India [36] after their migration to the subcontinent, if not even earlier; this is proven by the use of Sanskrit words in the *Dasātīr* as well as in other Āẕar Kaivānīs treatises. The following passage of the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb,* moreover, demonstrates the Āẕar Kaivānīs' familiarity with the *Vedas*:

[37]

گویند کلام الهی آن است که هیچ یکی از آخشیجی پیکران بدان لغت متکلم نشوند و قرآن اگرچه کتاب آسمانی است اما تازیان را همان گفتار است و چهار بید که به زعم ایشان نامهٔ سماوی است به لغت سنسکریت است که در هیچ شهری بدان زبان تکلم نکنند و سوای کتب این طایفه یافته نشود و گویند که این کلام فرشتگان است و بید کلام برهماست برای انتظام جهانیان.

They regard the celestial language as a language in which none of the elemental [38] forms have been expressed. Although the Qur'ān is a divine revelation, the Arabs speak in its language. The four Vedas, however, which they consider a heavenly book, are in Sanskrit, a language not spoken in any region and found nowhere other than in the books of this group. They maintain that this [*scil.* celestial language] is the speech of angels, and that the Vedas are the speech of Brahmā for the arrangement of the worldly affairs.[10]

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9   Aoki (2000, 264f.) suggests that the Āẕar Kaivānīs used Arabic words in their works before their emigration to India. According to him, their reservation against the use of Arabic words first arose in India.

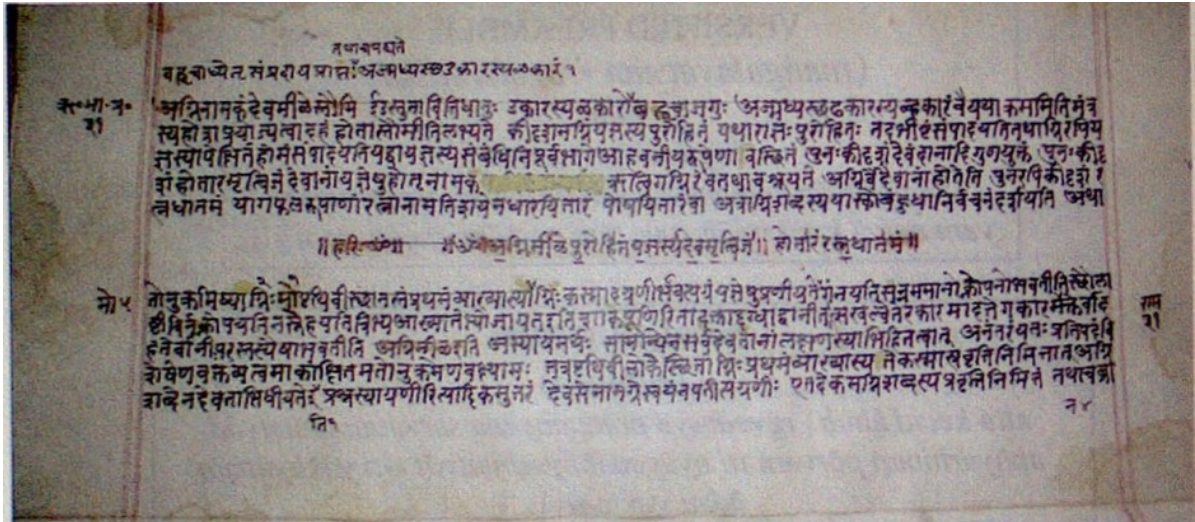10   Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, 104v, ll. 9–15); parallel to Keyḫosro (1362, 113).

Figure 1   Fol. 31v of a Hs of Sāyaṇas Ṛgvedasaṃhitābhāṣyabhūmikā, RV I, 1.1 in center, surrounded by commentary (Galewicz 2009, 296).

This passage might even give the impression that the author of the *Dasātīr* used the *Vedas* as a model for the construction of the celestial language in his heavenly book. It states that the Brahmans regard the *Vedas* as a heavenly book. This claim is justified with the argument that Arabic is the language of some people and therefore a terrestrial language, while Sanskrit, in contrast, is not a spoken language. Considering the existence of a commentary in the *Dasātīr*, a commentary on the *Vedas* could have served the model for the construction of Āẕar Kaivān's heavenly book if Sanskrit had been used as a model for its celestial language. The *Veda* exegeses of Sāyaṇa ācārya, one of the most prominent intellectuals of medieval India,[11] are considered the most important exegeses of the *Vedas*.[12] He authored them at the height of Indian literature in the fourteenth century in the Vijayanagra Empire. Sāyana and his team penned 18 comprehensive exegeses on different Vedic works, which rapidly won authority. Their historical proximity to the *Dasātīr*'s creation, and their widespread reputation in India, allow us to assume that they were not unknown to the author of the *Dasātīr*. If he had aimed to construct his heavenly book modeled on a commentary on Vedic texts, it is logical to assume that he must have chosen a commentary by Sāyana, perhaps specifically the *Ṛgvedasaṃhitābhāṣya*,[13] his commentary to the *Ṛgveda*. It should be noted, however, that this commentary—as virtually every other authoritative commentary on the *Vedas*—is written in Sanskrit. The original text and the commentary are thus written more or less in the same language, even if a speaker of Sanskrit cannot always understand a Vedic passage. Moreover, this commentary evidences a textual structure[14] which definitely differs from one of the *Dasātīr*. In *Ṛgvedasaṃhitābhāṣya* the commentary encloses the commented text,[15] whereas in the *Dasātīr* the commentary follows the original text.[16]

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11   For an overview to Sāyana's life and works see Modak (1992, 3885–86.) and Modak (1995).
12   In the exegetical works assigned to him, his brother, Mādhava, as well as more assistants seem to have been involved. For an elaborated investigation of his commentary project, see Galewicz (2009).
13   For an edition of *Ṛgvedasaṃhitābhāṣya*, see Müller (1849).
14   See Galewicz (2009, 295) and figure 1.
15   This structure can be called ring composition; for this, see the classic work of Mary Douglas (2007).
16   The representation of *Ṛgvedasaṃhitābhāṣya's* structure should, moreover, demonstrate that the linear sequence of original and commentary is not the only possible form for exegetical literature, even if it is the simplest and most manifest.

Commentators writing in the same language as the original text are not unique to the *Vedas*; [40] this was true for some Qurʾān exegeses in Iran as well, where the most important commentaries were often written in Arabic. Commentaries with a Persian translation, however, were not infrequent in Iran. According to Zadeh (2012, 264–66), they linked the original and the translation in two forms: often through an interlinear translation, or by putting the translation at the end of a liturgical unit. The second form was not so current as the first one but common. The Persian translations of the Qurʾan thus incorporate three components similar to the *Dasātīr*: the original sacred text in Arabic, the translation, and the commentary in Persian:

> Yet it is not uncommon for translations to fully envelop the text with the commentarial expansions. In these instances, the original Arabic text of the Qurʾan is not only contained between interlinear translations, above and below, but is also surrounded by marginal commentaries which fill the entire page so that the sacred scripture is visually afloat in a sea of exegetical expansion.[17]
[41]

As a consequence, it cannot be ruled out that Persian exegeses of the Qurʾan served as [42] a model for the construction of the Āẕar Kaivānīs' heavenly book. Nevertheless, there are some decisive differences between the *Dasātīr* and the exegeses of the Qurʾān or *Vedas*: in the commentary on *Vedas*, there are only two textual components, the original and its commentary. The *Dasātīr* has three components, however. In the Qurʾān, the original text is in a real, generally comprehensible human language, whereas in the *Dasātīr*, the original language is an artificial one. The texture constitutes the next major difference: The *Ṛgvedasaṃhitābhāṣya*, for example, exhibits a ring structure not present in the *Dasātīr*. In the case of the Persian commentaries on the Qurʾan, we frequently see an interlinear translation. Even when the translation appears at the end of a liturgical unit, the commentary, however, is often written on the margin. The commentary is thus not an integral part of the text as is the case for the *Dasātīr*. These differences make it improbable that these commentary traditions would have functioned as models for the *Dasātīr*.

The Zoroastrian Exegetical Tradition

In the second millennium CE, Zoroastrians, laity as well as religious specialists, believed that [43] Avestan was a heavenly language. They regarded it as the language in which Zarathustra communicated with Ahura Mazdā. The knowledge that Avestan, as an Old Iranian language, had been spoken by a group of eastern Iranian people was promoted by Iranian philologists in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.[18] Afterwards, Zoroastrians adopted this conclusion as well. Before these philological investigations, the general opinion did not consider Avestan to be a dead language but a language of revelation, not spoken by people on the earth. A thirteenth century Zoroastrian text adopts this perspective on the Avestan language:[19]

[44] و آن بیست و یک نسک اوستا که میگویند اوستا زبان اورمزد است و زند زفان ما و پازند آنکه هر کسی

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17   Zadeh (2012, 266); for some examples of manuscripts, see Zadeh (2012, figs. 2, 10).

18   See Anquetil Duperron's (1771, Ouvrage de Zoroastre, 2:1.1/iii) hint regarding the language of Zend-Avesta as an old language of north Persia, as well as Morgenstierne's (1926, 29–30) contextualization of Avestan in east Iranian languages.

19   We can find the same opinion on Avesta in the older Zoroastrian literature. Identifying a source that is chronologically close to the *Dasātīr* demonstrates that the Āẕar Kaivānīs may have received this opinion from Zoroastrian New Persian literature.

+بداند که چه میگوید.

> About those 21 *nasks* [*scil.* books] of the *Avesta* which they recite: Avestan is Ahura Mazdā's language, Zand is our language and Pāzand is the one of which everybody knows what it [*scil.* Avesta] says.[20]

[45]

In the Zoroastrian tradition, Middle Persian (and its Pahlavi script) thus occupied an intermediate position between Avestan as an ideal language and New Persian (or Gujarati) as a spoken language. On the one hand, Middle Persian made the content of Avestan liturgical texts accessible to Zoroastrian priests; on the other hand, it historically stands at the interface between a language projected back into the mythical past and a living language.

[46]

The quoted passage, moreover, not only claims that Avestan is the language of Ahura Mazdā; it also introduces two other Zoroastrian linguistic components, *Zand* and *Pāzand*, which are relevant for our discussion. As we know, the Avestan texts were translated into Middle Persian and were commented upon.[21] The commented translation written in the Pahlavi script is also known by the technical term *zand*, lit. 'interpretation.'[22] Since the complexity of the Pahlavi script hampers the reading of Pahlavi texts, some of these texts were re-rendered in the more distinctive Avestan script. So, the Middle Persian texts, occasional exegeses of Avestan texts, written in the Avestan script, are called *pāzand*. Therefore, we have to differentiate between the pair translation-commentary and *zand-pāzand*. The definitions of *Zand* and *Pāzand* in the quotation above are consistent with their definitions in Iranian philology (Andrés-Toledo 2015, 524). The quotation defines *zand* as 'our language,' i.e., the Middle Persian language, the literary language of the Zoroastrian priests in the Sasanian and early Islamic period, written in Pahlavi script, which in the period after the eleventh/twelfth century, in particular, Zoroastrian priests were able to read. In contrast, *Pāzand* is represented as a text form "of which everybody knows what it says." The author presumably intends 'everyone' to mean lay Zoroastrians, who must have been able to read the Avestan script.

[47]

To illustrate the overall structure of the *Zand* texts,[23] I will quote two verses of the *Yasna* text, Y. 9.1-2, from the exegetical tradition.[24] These texts comprise, like the *Dasātīr*, three components: the original text, its translation, and the commentary. In the *Zand* texts, the Avestan passages are mainly translated phrase for phrase. In order to do this, first the Avestan original phrase is written (here rendered in red). Secondly, its translation follows (here rendered in black). Thirdly, a short or long commentary is occasionally added after the translation (here rendered in blue). In manuscripts, the original Avestan text is demarcated from the translation by a decorative character (here marked by an asterisk). Moreover, some words, such as *hād*, mark the beginning of the commentary.

[48]

Y.9.1

[49]

hāuuanīm ā ratīm ā haomō upāiṯ zaraθuštrəm * *pad hāwan radīh* [[*pad hāwan gāh*]] *hōm abar raft ō Zardušt*

[50]

* *ātrəm pairi yaoždaθəṇtəm gāθåsca srāuuaiiaṇtəm* * *pad ātaxš-gāh pērāmōn yōǰ-*

[51]

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20   UIbdR, 85; in the original *bidānand* instread of *bidānad*.

21   For an exhaustive study on the Pahlavi translation of the *Avesta*, see (Cantera 2004).

22   The term *zand*, moreover, designates the texts based on the Pahlavi translation of the *Avesta*. This part of Zand literature, however, is not decisive for our discussion here.

23   The meaning of the text is not important for our discussion.

24   The text is transcribed after the ms. T55 (Andrés-Toledo 2012). One folio of this manuscript can be seen in Figure 2.

dahrēnišnīh ka-š [[*ān Ašem-wohū sē*]] *guft* [[*kē Frawarānēy ō pēš*]]

* *ādim pərəsaṯ zaraθuštrō kō narə ahī* * *u-š az ōy pursīd Zardušt kū kē mard hē* [[*hād* [52]
nē pad yašt ī fradom būd az pēš paydāg. u-š dānist kū hōm ōh rasēd ud ka mad būd
ā-š pursīd abāyist mad miθrō upāit zardušt ān paydāg kū-š šnāxt ēd rāy čē ān zamān
abāg yazdān wēš būd ēstād u-š yād āšnāgtar būd hēnd. u-š ēn fragard warm būd u-š
*abāyist rāy abāg hōm ul guft. * ast kē ēdōn gōwēd hād * Ohrmazd guft ēstād kū harw*
dō ōh rasēnd ud ka hōm mad būd ā-š madan šnāsēd.]]

* *yim azəm vīspahe aŋhōuš astuuatō sraēštəm dādarəsa xᵛahe gaiiehe xᵛanuuatō* [53]
aməšahe * *kē man az harwisp axw ī astōmand ā-m nēktar dīd hē čē-t ān ī xwēš ǰān nēk*
kard ēstēd ud amarg [[*hād ā-š pad frārōnīh ā amarg kerd estēd nē ēdōn čiyōn awēšān*
kē gōšt ī ǰam ǰūd u-šān andar tan amarg kerd estād tā bē az tan harw kas-ēw amarg
[...]]]

Y.9.2   [54]

āaṯ mē aēm paitiiaoxta haomō ašauua dūraošō * *ō man ōy passox guft hōm ī ahlaw ī* [55]
dūrōš [[*hād dūrōšīh-iš ēd kū ōš az ruwān ī mardōmān dūr dārēd * rōšn guft ay ahōšīh*
*pad hōm bawēd.*]]

* *azəm ahmi zaraθuštra haomō ašauua dūraošō* * *an ham Zardušt hōm ī ahlaw ī dūrōš*   [56]

* *ā mąm yāsaŋᵛha spitama frā mąm hunuuaŋᵛha xᵛarətə̄e* * *ān ī ān ī man ōh ān xwarišn*   [57]
xwāhēd Spitāmān frāz man hūn ō * xwarišn* [[*xwarišn rāy bē hūn * xwarišn xward*]]

* *aoi mąm staomaine stūiδi yaθa māf aparaciṯ saošiiaṇtō stauuąn* * *abar man pad*   [58]
stāyišn stāy [[*yazišn*]] *čiyōn man pas-iz sūdōmand stāyēnd* [[*ā-š ān ī tō ud tō ud ašmā*
rāy]]

The migration of the Avestan texts from Eastern Iran to Western Iran, as well as some prob-   [59]
able discontinuity in the Zoroastrian textual tradition, led to a situation in which the Zoroas-
trian priests of the post-Achaemenian period were not able to produce new texts in Avestan.
It moreover undermined their competence in understanding the Avestan language. Due to
these circumstances, translation of the Avestan texts became necessary and also increased the
necessity for explanatory exegesis. Therefore, the Avestan original and its translation always
accompany the exegeses. Consequently, *Zand* designates both the translation and the com-
mentary of the Avestan text, although the Zoroastrian priests differentiated between them in
their textual tradition. In the late or post-Sasanian period, the translation and the exegesis
became fixed and acquired an authoritative status, which is partly projected in the Zoroas-
trian tradition on the Middle Persian language and the Pahlavi script. Whereas Avestan was
considered Ahura Mazdā's language, Pahlavi was represented as the language and the script
of its mediators, that is, the Zoroastrian authorities. The 99th chapter of the Zoroastrian book
Saddar-e naṣr (Hundred Chapters in Prose), a Zoroastrian treatise from the fifteenth century
or earlier, illustrates this Zoroastrian perception:

[60]   در نود و نهم. (1) اینکه موبدان و دستوران و ردان و هیربدان را نشاید که همه کس را پهلوی آموزند.
(2) که زردشت از هورمزد پرسید که پهلوی آموختن مر کسان را شاید (3) هورمزد به افزونی جواب داد
که هر که از نسل تو باشد موبد و دستور و هیربدی که خردمند باشد. (4) دیگر هیچ کس را نشاید
جز از اینکه گفته‌ام اگر دیگران را آموزند او را عظیم گناه باشد اگر بسیار کارکرفه کرده باشد فرجام او
را بدوزخ بود (Dhabhar 1909, 66).
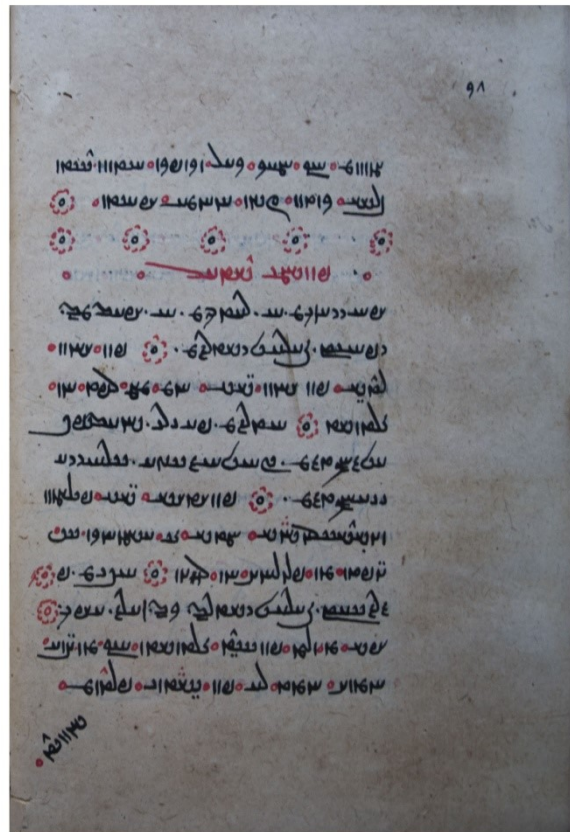
Figure 2   Fol. 57v from Yasna Pahlavi Hs T55 (Andrés-Toledo 2012).

Passage 99: (1) It is not allowed that mūbeds, dastūrs, radān and hīrbeds teach [61]
Pahlavi to everybody. (2) For Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazdā who is allowed
to be taught Pahlavi. (3) Ahura Mazdā answered in detail, whoever is of your
descendants (and) is a wise mūbed or dastūr or hīrbed. (4) Otherwise, nobody is
allowed. If someone teaches someone other than those whom I have mentioned,
s/he commits a huge sin. Even if s/he has many virtues s/he will be finally brought
to hell.

Passage 99 limits instruction in the Pahlavi script and language to the Zoroastrian priests. [62]
It is worth noting that the restriction of teaching to priests refers only to the Pahlavi script
and language. In contrast, Zoroastrians must learn the Avestan script to be able to accomplish
their liturgical tasks, and priests must help them do so, as passage 98 of the same text requires:

[63] در نود و هشتم (1) اینکه بهدینانرا می‌باید که خط اوستا بیاموزند پیش هیربدان و اوستادان تا در خواندن
نیایش و یشت خطا نرود. (2) بیشتر واجب مر هیربدان را و اوستادان را هست که همه بهدینانرا خط
اوستا بیاموزند و اگر هیربد در آموختن ایشان تقصیر نماید او را عظیم گناه باشد. (3) که اورمزد به
افزونی زرتشت را گفت که هر هیربدی و اوستادی در آموختن اوستا بهدینانرا تقصیر کند او را از بهشت
چندان دور کنم که پهنای زمین است.

Passage 98: (1) The Avestan script must be taught to Zoroastrians by hīrbeds and [64]
masters so that there will not be any mistakes in the recitation of prayers and
*Yašt*s. (2) It is more imperative to hīrbeds and masters to teach the Avestan scripts
to all Zoroastrians. If a hīrbed neglects their teaching s/he commits a huge sin. (3)
Ahura Mazdā emphasized to Zarathustra: 'I will take every hīrbed and master who
neglects teaching Avesta to Zoroastrians as far away from Paradise as the breadth
of the earth.'[25]

Both passages attempt to authorize the presented direction through two postulates. The [65]
first postulate refers to the representation of the instruction as a divine provision, which was
revealed to Zarathustra in a dialogue with Ahura Mazdā. The second postulate alludes to the
representation of its violation as a severe sin, which leads the offender to hell even if s/he
has acquired numerous virtues.

It is worth noting that these chapters are paraphrased in chapters 99 and 100 of the [66]
Dabestān-e maẕāheb:

[67] در نود و نهم: بهدین باید که خط استا و ژند بداند.

[68] در صدم: موبد را باید لغت پهلوی غیر را نیاموزاند چه یزدان به زردشت گفته این علم به فرزندان خود
تعلیم کن.

Passage 99: Zoroastrians must know the Avestan and the Zand script. [69]

Passage 100: Mūbeds must not teach Pahlavi words to others, because Yazdān [*scil.* [70]
Ahura Mazdā] has said to Zarathustra: 'Teach this science to your children.'[26]

This demonstrates that this emic perspective on Zoroastrian exegetical literature was known [71]
to the Āẕar Kaivānīs, as the section on the reception of Zoroastrian exegetical tradition below
will attempt to investigate in more detail.

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25   Dhabhar (1909, 66); in the original *vājit* instead of *vājib*.
26   Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, 90v), parallel to Keyḫosro (1362, 111).

Comparing the Structures of Exegetical Texts in Zoroastrianism and in the *Dasātīr*

The evidence presented above allows us to infer that, even if the Āẕar Kaivānīs took over the concept of celestial language from their immediate religious environment (Horūfīya and Noqṭavīya), their construction of the *Dasātīr-e Āsmānī* obviously imitates the Zoroastrian *Zand*. This hypothesis is supported by the following evidence:

[72]

- In both the Zoroastrian tradition and in the *Dasātīr,* the transmission of the divine revelation consists of three components: a) the language of heaven (Avestan or the constructed language in the *Dasātīr)*, b) translation and c) commentary.

[73]

- The celestial language in both the *Dasātīr* and the Zoroastrian *Zand-Avesta* is inaccessible. Although it has been shown that the constructed celestial language of the *Dasātīr* morphologically and syntactically resembles New Persian, and was likely invented using New Persian as a model, it is worth investigating whether the Āẕar Kaivānīs attempted to make this language phonologically similar to Avestan.
- The inaccessibility of the celestial language is compensated for by its translation into an understandable language.
- *Dasātīr*'s celestial text is not translated into the spoken form of a contemporary language, but into an artificially antiquated New Persian. It seems that the author aimed to make the language of the translation and commentary similar to Middle Persian.
- Both in the *Dasātīr* and in the Zoroastrian exegetical tradition, the exegesis depends on the translation and is based upon it.
- Both in the *Dasātīr* and in the Zoroastrian exegetical tradition, the original, the translation and the exegesis immediately follow each other.[27]
- Translation and exegesis of phrases in an invented language must have been put together according to a preexisting model. Otherwise one might expect that the author either translated or commented on the phrases.

If we accept that the author of the *Dasātīr* used the Zoroastrian *Zand* tradition as a model for his book, there would be no doubt that the Zoroastrian exegetical texts were known to the Āẕar Kaivānīs at the latest after their migration to India. Now the question can be posed to what extent these texts were known in the broader context of early Modern Iran and India and how deeply Āẕar Kaivānīs authors were acquainted with them.

[74]

Reception of the Zoroastrian Exegetical Tradition in Early Modern Indo-Iranian Culture and in Āẕar Kaivānī Literature

In Early Modern Indo-Iranian Culture

In the early modern period, Middle Persian was considered the language of the golden age

[75]

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27   This is the case in all Zoroastrian manuscripts of the Pahlavi translation; I did not have the chance to check all manuscripts of the *Dasātīr*. In the case of the *Dasātīr*, however, I do not see a necessity for such a double check because these three components undoubtedly belong together on the conceptual level. If one assumes that the New Persian text constitutes the starting point of the *Dasātīr*, it must remain bound to its conversion into the constructed language. From this perspective it is impossible to present these three components separately in the construction of the *Dasātīr*.

of Iran and was often contrasted with contemporary spoken languages. Its importance was not restricted to Zoroastrianism; it was generally perceived as the language of pre-Islamic heritage. This is the case with philologists such as Ğamāl al-dīn Enğū Šīrāzī, the author of the famous *Farhang-e Ğahāngīrī*, composed between 1595 and 1608.[28] His interest in Pahlavi philology must have been so great that at the end of the sixteenth century, Akbar (1556–1605), the third Mughal emperor, invited Ardašīr, a knowledgeable Zoroastrian priest from Kerman, to his court to help the philologist with his dictionary.[29] As an epilogue to the lemma '*barsam*,' thin branches of tamarix or pomegranate tree, which are used in Zoroastrian rituals, Enğū Šīrāzī writes:

[76]

شرح این لغت را مجوسی که در دین خود بغایت فاضل بود، و اردشیر نام داشت، و او را مجوسان موبد میدانستند و حضرت عرش آستانی محض، بجهت تحقیق لغت فرس مبلغها از برایش فرستاده از کرمان طلبیده بود، تحقیق نموده، نوشت (854/I ,1972 [1351] Enğū Šīrāzī).

[77]

A Zoroastrian who was extremely learned in his religion, named Ardašīr, whom the Zoroastrians considered mūbed, and to whom the Majesty of the absolute empyrean throne sent an enormous sum of money, inviting him from Kerman for philological investigations of Persian, did some research and wrote the explanation of this term.

[78]

Ardašīr seems to be alluded to in the entry *āẕar* as well (Modi 1903, 90–91):

[79]

و فقیر حقیر که راقم این حروفم، پیری از پارسیان را که در دین زرتشت بود دیدم، که جزوی چند از کتاب زند و وستا داشت چون مرا رغبت و شعف تمام، بجمع لغات فرس بود [−] و در فرس از زند و وستا کتابی معتبرتر نیست – بجهت تحقیق لغات با او صحبت میداشتم و اکثر لغاتی که در خاتمهٔ کتاب از زندو وستا نقل شده، تقریر [آن] زرتشتی است (96/I ,1972 [1351] Enğū Šīrāzī).

[80]

I, the little poor (man) who is the writer of these letters, saw a wise man of Persians/Parsis who was Zoroastrian. He had many parts of the book *Zand-Avesta*. As I was very interested in compiling Persian words and there is no more creditable book than the *Zand-Avesta* in Persian, I engaged in conversation with him because of (my) philological investigations. Most of the words that are listed at the end of the book of the *Zand-Avesta* are written by that Zoroastrian.

[81]

For our discussion, it is worth examining how the Zoroastrian terms *zand*, *pāzand*, and *avestā* were perceived in non-Zoroastrian environments in the early modern era. For this, I quote their definitions in the *Farhang-e Ğahāngīrī* and the *Farhang-e Moʾaiyad al-Fożalāʾ*:[30]

[82]

ابستا با اول مفتوح و ثانی مکسور، تفسیر زند باشد. و زند کتاب زرتشت است

[83]

(563/I ,1972 [1351] Enğū Šīrāzī)

[84]

Avesta: [*abestā*] is the commentary on *Zand*, and *Zand* is Zarathustra's book.

[85]

پازند تفسیر زند باشد، و زند کتاب زرتشت است (Enğū Šīrāzī [1351] 1972, I/231)

[86]

Pāzand: is the commentary on *Zand*, and *Zand* is Zarathustra's book.

[87]

زنداستا بالفتح نام کتابی در احکام آتش‌پرستی از مصنفات ابراهیم زرتشت (Dehlavī, n.d., 432)

[88]

Zanda(ve)sta: the name of a book comprising instructions about fire-worshiping, of Ebrāhīm-Zardošt's compositions.

[89]

زند [...] نام کتابی از جمله مصنفات ابراهیم زرتشت در احکام دین باطل آتش‌پرستی که شرح پازندست [...]

[90]

Zanda(ve)sta: the name of one of Ebrāhīm-Zardošt's compositions comprising instructions of the false religion of fire-worshiping. It is the commentary on Pāzand.[31]

[91]

One can distinguish between the emic Zoroastrian definition of the terms Avesta, *zand* and *pāzand*, on the one hand, and their understanding in the broader milieu of early modern Indo-Iranian culture on the other. It appears that the author has mixed Avesta and Zand with each other: he represents Avesta not as the original but as the commentary, and Zand as the original text, whereas in Zoroastrian use it designates the commentary. The distinction between the original text and the commentary, however, is known to the author. The component translation is completely absent.

In Āẕar Kaivānī Literature

[92]

The chapter 'On Some Benefits of Secrets of Zoroastrians' (*dar ẕekr-e baʿẓī az favāyed-e romūz-e zardoštīyān*) in the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb* describes the inaccessibility of revelation, the necessity of commentary and the division of commentary into two types, main and secondary:

[93]

بدان بعضی از یزدانیان گفته‌اند که کتاب ژند بر دو قسم بود: یک قسم آن صریح و بیرمز، که آن را مِهژند نیز میگفتند، و قسم دومِ رمز و اشارات که آن را کِهژند هم میخواندند، و مهژند مشتمل بود بر احیای شریعت حضرت مه‌آباد، چنانکه کتب آذرساسانیان، است، و مهژند از تسلط بیگانگان، چون ترکان، خاصّه رومیان، از میان رفت و کهژند ماند، و بسیاری از کهژند هم در تاختها از میان رفت. خلاصهٔ مضامین مهژند آنکه [...] در مطالب دیگر از علمی و عملی چون حفظ زندبار و قتل تندبار با دساتیر موافق است و در عهد اشکانیان عمل به کهژند کردند، چون اردشیر، مطیع ساسان دوم شد، عمل به دساتیر و مهژند نمود و از قتل زندبار دوری جست، و مهژند نیز جزو دساتیر است، و بعد از آن، دیگران رو به عمل کهژند آوردند، و انوشیروان بنابر اشارهٔ آذرساسان عصر، عمل بر دساتیر و مهژند کرده، از قتل زندبار مبرّا زیست، و باز بعد از او عمل به احکام کهژند کرده، تا ساسان پنجم نفرین در حقّ ایرانیان کردند و ایشان گرفتار فقر و مسکنت گشتند.

Know that some of Yazdānīyān have said that the book *Žand* comprised two sorts [94]
(of *žand*): one sort was unequivocal and without enigma, also called *Meh-žand* [the
Higher *Žand*]; the second one included enigmas and allusions, also called *Keh-žand*
[the Lower *Žand*]. The *Meh-žand*, like the books of the Āẕar-sāsānīds, contained
the law of the holy Mahābād. The *Meh-žand* was lost during foreign conquests,
such as those of the Turks and especially the Greeks. The *Keh-žand*, however, still
remained, but a great part of it was also lost during invasions. In summary, the
Meh-žand's contents are […] In other matters, scientific and practical, e.g., the
protection of harmless animals and killing of harmful ones, it agrees with the
Dasātīr. In the Arsacid period, the people acted according to the *Keh-žand*. Ardašīr,
obeying Sāsān II, acted according to the *Dasātīr* and the *Meh-žand*. Consequently,
he avoided killing harmless animals. The *Meh-žand* is a part of the *Dasātīr*. After
him, others began to adopt the *Keh-žand*, Following the contemporary Āẕar-sāsān's
authority, Anūšīrvān adopted the *Dasātīr* and the *Meh-žand*. Thus, he refused to kill
harmless animals. After him, people again adopted the *Keh-žand*'s precepts until
Sāsān V execrated Iranians and they fell victim to wretchedness and poverty.[32]

This passage illustrates that the Zoroastrian division of the texts into divine revelation, trans- [95]
lation and commentary was not unknown to the Āẕar Kaivānīs. The artificially Persianized
word *žand*, in particular, reveals that the author is working with the Zoroastrian concept of
zand. I do not, however, claim that *Meh-žand* and *Keh-žānd*, as described in the passage, would
coincide with the pair *zand-pāzand* or translation-commentary. Nevertheless, it seems plausi-
ble to assume that the Āẕar Kaivānīs were familiar with the Zoroastrian distinction between
translation and commentary, which are together called *zand*: the author could thus have des-
ignated translation, which may still contain ambiguities, *keh-žand,* and interpretation, which
explains the uncertainties of the translation, *Meh-žand.*

It is well known that the Āẕar Kaivānīs received some New Persian Zoroastrian works.[33] [96]
This can be seen, for example, in the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb*, where the author explains the
belief system of the Zoroastrians:[34] there, some sections from works *Zarādošt nāma*,[35] *Ardā-
vīrāf nāma*,[36] and *Ṣaddar*[37] are paraphrased. This demonstrates that the Āẕar Kaivānīs were
familiar, at the very least, with the New Persian literature of the Zoroastrians. In addition,
the Zoroastrian priests directly participated in the inter-religious discussions at the Akbar
court (see below). This likely added to the reputation of Zoroastrianism in this period, so that
the Āẕar Kaivānīs might have been eager to know more about it after their arrival on the
Indian subcontinent and might have attempted to come into contact with Zoroastrian priests.
The author of the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb,* for example, claims to have been in contact with a
Zoroastrian priest from Navsari:

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28   On this dictionary, see Bayevsky (1999).
29   Modi (1903, 92–93) uses the attestation of a Persian *Revāyat*, a correspondence between Irani and Parsi
      Zoroastrian priests, to show that Ardašīr left India in 1597. Therefore, he must have been located, for an
      unknown period of time until 1597, at Akbar's court.
30   On the significance of this latter dictionary see below.
31   Dehlavi (n.d., 436). This dictionary defines *pāzand* similar to Zandavestā.
32   Keyḵosro (1362, 111–12); this passage is absent in the first recension of the work (Āẕar Sāsānī 2010).
33   See e.g. Grobbel (2007, 99); Sheffield (2018, 457–58).
34   Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, 57v–95v) = Keyḵosro (1362, 72–118).
35   Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, 58r–74v) = Keyḵosro (1362, 72–93).
36   Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, 75v–81r) = Keyḵosro (1362, 94–100).
37   Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, 82r–90v) = Keyḵosro (1362, 101–11).

[97]

در میان مردم مشهور است که زردشت آذربایگانی است، امّا غیر بهدینان گویند و نامه‌نگار از موبد برزو – که نوساری من اعمال گجرات وطن اوست – شنیده که مولد زردشت و آباء نامدارش شهر ری است.

[98]

It is common among the people to believe that Zarathustra comes from Āẕar-bāygān. This however is what non-Zoroastrians say. The author has heard from mūbed Borzū, who is from Navsārī in the province Gujarat, that the birthplace of Zarathustra and his distinguished ancestors is the city of Ray.[38]

[99]

The author of the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb* even sets the religion of Zarathustra and the one of the Āẕar Kaivānīs in an exegetical relationship and claims that the former was adapted to the latter by interpretation, since the words of Zarathustra were mysterious:

[100]

چون این دانسته شد، بدان که کیش آذرهوشنگیان یعنی یزدانیان آن است که اگرچه دین زردشت از گشتاسپ تا یزدگرد رواجی تمام داشت اما تأویل کرده آن را با شریعت آذرهوشنگ یعنی مه‌آباد مطابق می‌ساختند و هیچگونه به قتل زندبار فرمان ندادند و کلمات زردشت را مرموز می‌دانستند جایی که مخالف کیش آذرهوشنگ بود عمل نمی‌کردند و تأویل می‌نمودند. [...] آذرساسانیان جز به راه شت مه‌آباد نمی‌رفتند و کیشی دیگر بی‌تأویل نمی‌پسندیدند و اصلا ملتفت به ظاهر قول زردشت نبودند و ایشان برآنند که عقیدهٔ خسروان خاصه دارا و داراب و بهمن و اسفندیار و گشتاسپ و لهراسپ بر این بوده یعنی کلام زردشت را حق می‌دانستند، اما ظاهر کتاب او را مرموز می‌شمردند.

[101]

Now that you understood these (premises), you should also know that the teaching of the Āẕar-hūšangīyāns, i.e., the Yazdānīyāns, states that although Zarathustra's religion flourished from the time of Goštāsp to that of Yazdegird, they interpreted it and adapted it to the teaching of Āẕar-hūšang, i.e., Mahābād. They never recommended the killing of harmless animals. They considered Zarathustra's words ambiguous and did not follow them when they contradicted Āẕar-hūšang's teaching, instead reinterpreted them. [...] The Āẕar-sāsānīs followed only the way of the prophet Mahābād. They did not accept any other teaching without interpretation, and did not adhere to the external form of Zarathustra's words at all. They moreover believed that this was the opinion of (ancient) kings, especially Dārā, Dārāb, Bahman, Esfandīyār, Goštāsp and Lohrāsp. They accepted Zarathustra's teachings as true but considered the exoteric aspect of his book symbolic [rather than literally true].[39]

[102]

Significantly, the author of the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb* claims that Bahrām b. Farhād Esfandīyār Pārsī, the author of the *Šārestān-e čahār čaman,* who died in 1624, knew Pahlavi:

[103]

فرزانه بهرام بن فرهاد از نژاد گودرز کشواد بوده. چون آذرکیوان به پنته خرامید در باز پسین روزها فرزانه بهرام از شیراز آمده در پنته به ریاضت مشغول شد و او مردی بود مراتب منطقیات و طبیعیات و ریاضیات و الهیات از پارسی و پهلوی و تازی زبان آنچه آنچه نقل افتاده.

[104]

"Farzāna Bahrām the son of Farhād was from the lineage of Gūdarz, the son of

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38   Keyẖosro (1362, 87); this passage is absent in the first recension; see fol. 72r in (Āẕar Sāsānī 2010).

39   Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, 90v, l. 20–91r, l. 15), parallel to Keyẖosro (1362, 112–13).

Kashvād [an ancient hero from the Book of Kings]. When Āẕar Kaivān went to Patna in his later days, Farzāna Bahrām came from Shiraz. He occupied himself with austerities in Patna. He was a man who had obtained the highest degrees and accolades, and he was well read in the sciences of logic (*manṭeqīyāt*), natural sciences (*ṭabīʿīyāt*) and theology (*elāhīyāt*) as transmitted through the Persian, Pahlavi, and Arabic languages."[40]

These passages evince that the Āẕar Kaivānīs were familiar with the general concepts of the Zoroastrian commentary tradition. Moreover, they presumably were in contact with Zoroastrian priests who knew Middle Persian. We can thus search for the linguistic traces of contact with the Zoroastrian Middle Persian in the Āẕar Kaivānī texts, and particularly in the *Dasātīr*.   [105]

Some Pahlavi Terms in the *Dasātīr*

In the previous sections, I investigated the structural analogy of the construct *Dasātīr* and the Zoroastrian *Zand* tradition of the Avestan texts. I tried to demonstrate the *Dasātīr's* structural dependence on the *Zand* tradition. Moreover, I tried to infer from the Āẕar Kaivānī literature that these authors were familiar with the Zoroastrian text tradition and knew *Zand* and its structure. In the following I would like to point out some terms in the *Dasātīr* that must have found their way to the *Dasātīr* from Zoroastrian Middle Persian literature. For this, I will concentrate on terms related to the concept of time. For my conclusions in this part, I formulate two explicit premises: [106]

- Premise 1: The Āẕar Kaivānīs had at their disposal only those Zoroastrian sources that are available to us today. This premise rules out the possibility that the Āẕar Kaivānīs could have received terms from Zoroastrian New Persian texts that are not transmitted to us.   [107]
- Premise 2: The Āẕar Kaivānīs had no access to the Zoroastrian side-traditions from the first millennium CE in non-Iranian languages such as Syrian, Armenian or Greek. This premise rules out the possibility that the Āẕar Kaivānīs could have received terms from non-Zoroastrian texts.[41]

Both premises seem probable enough to be accepted as true and presupposed in the following. The first terms to scrutinize come from the commentary on section 29 of the chapter Šāy Kelīyo in the *Dasātīr*. There, we find two terms representing time which could be revealing for identifying the sources of the *Dasātīr*. The section reads: [108]

[109]   میلاد ور ورد ٭ آفریننده و پیداکننده بیمایه و دمانکش همه باید دانست دمان چندی گردش آسمان بزرگست و خویشی ناپاینده و نادرست بناپاینده و نادرست چون نو پدید امده و تازه شدهای روزانی را خویشی بگردش اسمانها و چرخ سپهران و این را بفراتین نواد زروان گویند (.D، 78).

mīlād var vard * The creator and revealer is completely immaterial and without   [110]

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40   Sheffield (2018, 458); Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, 31r–31v) = Keyḫosro (1362, 36).
41   For the case of Arabic texts, and al-Šahrestānī's heresiography in particular, see below in this section.

duration [*damān-keš*]⁴² It should be known that time [*damān*] is the measure of
the rotations of the great sky, "and the relation of one fleeting and unfixed subject
with another fleeting and unfixed subject; as for example, the relation of new
events and fresh occurrences in the world, with the revolution of the Heavens and
the motion of the spheres."⁴³ In the celestial language [*farātīn-navād*], it is called
zorvān.

Striking in this passage is the word form *damān,* in *damān-keš,* instead of the New Persian   [111]
word *zamān* 'time.' One might think this is a mere spelling mistake, where the letter <z> was
replaced with <d> in the Persian-Arabic script. Although this confusion cannot be ruled out,
it is hardly likely because of its repetition in different parts of the book. Much more likely
is a misreading of a text in the Pahlavi script: In Pahlavi, the word *zamān* is written in two
ways: <zmʼnʼ> or <dmʼnʼ>, where <d> is the corrupted form of the letter <z> (hence
transliterated as <z̲>). It is worth pointing out that before modern philological investigations,
Zoroastrian priests read the word as *damān.* The use of the letter <d/y/g>⁴⁴ instead of <z>
is a well-attested phenomenon in the Pahlavi script, as the following Middle Persian words
demonstrate:

  <z̲myk> as well as <zmyk> for *zamīg* 'earth'

  <z̲mstʼnʼ> as well as <zmstʼnʼ> *zamestān* 'winter'

  <yz̲dʼnʼ> *yazdān* 'gods'

  <ʼwhrmz̲d> *ohrmazd* 'Ohrmazd'

The word form *damān* appears in other passages in the *Dasātīr* as well, where its meaning   [112]
'time' is explicitly confirmed:

[113]   دمانی چیزیرا گویند که هست نتواند شد جز در دمان که چندی گردش برترین سپهرست و هستی
خردان باز بسته بدمان نیست و خرد نخست را کمان بدمان بود کردن چرخه آورد چه دمان برین نیرویش
باز بسته بر سپهر باشد و هستی سپهر باز بسته بر هستی نخستین خرد (.D., 256).

Temporal [*damānī*] is called that which can be created only in time [*damān*], which   [114]
is the measure of the rotations of the greatest firmament. The existence of Intelli-
gences does not depend on time [*damān*]. Making the First Intelligence dependent
on an existence in time [*damān*] produces circular reasoning because time itself de-
pends on the firmament for this (form) of its force, and the existence of firmament
itself depends on the existence of the First Intelligence.

[115]   و هستی نزد دانش او یک‌بار بی دمان و هنگام پیداست و بر او هیچ چیز پوشیده نیست رسا دانایی
که دانش او هنگامی نیست و در فر باره او گذشته و اکنون و آینده نگارش نتوان کرد کشش دمان و
درازی هنگام بانو شدها که پیوسته لختان و لخت‌های اوست یکبار نزد یزدان پدیدار است (D., 3).

And the existence is manifest to His knowledge at once, without time [*damān*]   [116]
and duration [*hengām*]; and nothing is hidden to Him. His knowledge is expressive

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42   The term *damān-keš* occurs in the *Dasātīr* only in the phrase *bīmāye va damān-keš* attributing creator (D.,
      78, 130, 135). We can derive the meaning of these adjectives from the following phrase, D., 149: به یک

because His knowledge does not have duration. It is impossible to ascribe to Him past, present and future. The progress of time [*damān*] and the length of duration, with renovations, which occur in continuous divisions, which are its [*scil.* time's] divisions, are manifest to God at once.

[117] و اخترشناس +خروس است که دمان و هنگام روز و شب نیکو شناسد (D., 213).

The cock is an astronomer who knows time [*damān*] and the duration [*hengām*]   [118]
of the day and night right well.

[119] یکتای بی امید مزد از بخشندگی و نیکویی کردن نخست آزاد و رسته گوهری بی‌پیوند و بند و مایه و
پیکر و دمان و هنگام و تن و تنانی و نیاز و آرزو به تن [...] آفرید (D., 4).

Without hope of return, only for generosity and beneficence, the unique One, first   [120]
of all, created an essence free and unlimited, independent, boundless, immaterial,
formless, timeless [(*bī*)-*damān*], without duration [(*bī*)-*hengām*], without body and
bodiness, without need and wish to body […]

The use of the word form *damān* instead of the New Persian *zamān* in the quoted passages   [121]
from the *Dasātīr* can be explained with one of the following reasons:

- The reproduction is based directly on an original in the Pahlavi script. The author read   [122]
the word in a piece of text in the Pahlavi script.
- The reproduction is based indirectly on an original in the Pahlavi script. The author had
a reproduction, e.g., in the Persian-Arabic script, in which the Middle Persian original
was read as *damān*.
- The author was informed that the word form *damān* was the Middle Persian counter-
part to the New Persian word *zamān*. This information must have also been based on a
reading of the word *zamān* in the Pahlavi script.

Since in the sixteenth century only the Zoroastrian priests had the competence to read the   [123]
Pahlavi script, one is forced to conclude from this word form that either the author belonged
to this circle, which current scholarship does not support, or obtained his information from
Zoroastrian priests. In any case, he must have used a Pahlavi text as a source, directly or
indirectly.

Decisive is likewise the time term used in the celestial language (*farātīn navād*),[45] *zorvān*.   [124]
The word derives from MP *zurwān*, which in turn is a loan word from Avestan *zruuan-* 'time,'
and appears as a New Persian word only in the Zoroastrian literature. In the sixteenth century,
the name could have been derived from a Pahlavi text, an Arabic work of heresiography

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تاب خدا دو جهان اشکارا شد که یکی جهان بیمایه و هنگام و دوم گیتی مایه دار باشد هر دورا هستی از پرتو خورشید گوهر دادار
است. / "A radiance of God originated both worlds. One is the immaterial [*bīmāye*] world without duration
[(*bī*)-*hengām*], the second one is material universe. Both have their existence from a beam of the sun of
creator's essence."

43   D, 52, translated by Mulla Firuz.
44   All three phonemes are represented with the same letter in the Pahlavi script.
45   On this, see this section below.

such as al-Šahrestānī's *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*, its translation into New Persian, or a New Persian Zoroastrian account of the Zurwān myth.[46]

The only New Persian treatises known in the scholarship that deal with the Zurwān myth		[125]
or the Zoroastrian theory of time are *ʿOlamā-ye eslām* (UI), *ʿOlamā-ye eslām be dīgar raveš* (UIbdR) and a short passage quoted below. The word *zorvān*, however, does not appear in these works; to denote profane time, UIbdR uses *zamān, zamān-e derang-ḫodāy* (mp. *zamān ī dagrand-xwadāy*) (UIbdR, 81.13) or *zamāne* (UIbdR, 84.8); for the designation of the sacred time, it uses *zamān* (UIbdR, 81.6-9, 82.16) and *zamāne* (UIbdR, 82.16,18). Similarly, UI uses *zamān, zamāne* and *rūz(e)gār* to denote profane time.[47] In another New Persian passage,[48] which alludes to the Zurwān cosmogony, sacred time is again referred to as *zamāne*. In other New Persian Zoroastrian accounts that the Āẕar Kaivānīs received, such as *Zarātošt-nāme, Ardā vīrāf nāme* and *Ṣaddar,* the word *zorvān*—as far as I discovered—does not occur. Therefore, the word *zorvān* could not have been taken from these New Persian Zoroastrian works in the mentioned section from the *Dasātīr.*

Some Arabic heresiographies deal with the Zurwān myth, especially the al-Šahrestānī's *al-*		[126]
Milal wa-l-niḥal. It is obvious that the Āẕar Kaivānīs knew and received al-Šahrestānī's book. The *Dasātīr* even contains direct quotations from the Arabic original, and not its New Persian translation.[49] Therefore we are tempted, at first glance, to assume that Āẕar Kaivān adopted the word *zorvān* from Šahrestānī's book. A more attentive examination of the text passages in question, however, shows that *zorvān* does not have the meaning 'time' in these passages.[50] There, *zurwān* is only presented as a primordial principle; the word does not represent a concept of time or eternity. This is true also for other Arabic heresiographies that narrate the Zurwān cosmogony.[51] In some descriptions of Zoroastrianism in the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb,* one can recognize Zurvanite traits. None of these sections, nonetheless, indicates that the author used the word *zorvān* or *azorvān* to mean 'time; eternity.' These passages are listed below:

[127]	بهدینان گویند زردشت شاخی از بهشت آورده، بر در کشمیر نشاند و این سَروْ شد و نزد یزدانیان این
سخن اشارت است بدان که نَفْس مجّرد در نبات است و بعضی از یزدانیان گفته‌اند زردشت از ربِّ
سَروْها که آن را ازروان گویند درخواست تا کِشته او را نیکو پرورد و از یکی از حکمای مرتاض نقل
کنند که گفت که من رَبّ سَروْ را دیدم، فرمود که من متوکّل را کُشتن فرمودم، به جُرم بریدن آن.

The Zoroastrians believe that Zarathustra brought a branch from paradise and		[128]
planted it at the gate of Kashmir; this grew up into a cypress. According to

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46	For the history of research on the Zurwān myth in the Iranian Studies, which started two centuries later, see Rezania (2010, 12–43); an interpretation of the myth can be read in Rezania (2010, 169–200).

47	UI, §§21f. = Unvâlâ (1922, 2/75, ll.17–19, 76, 1–4).

48	See manuscript M55, edited by Bartholomae (1915, 113–14).

49	As an example, I can mention the sections about the belief system of the Mazdakites. The text in the *Dābestān-e maẕāheb* (Āẕar Sāsānī 2010, 97r; Keyḫosro 1362, 119) strongly resembles the corresponding passages from al-Šahrestānī's Arabic text (Abolqāsemī 1386, 153–54; Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm. Šahrestānī 1961; Shaked 1994). The New Persian translation of this Arabic book from the sixth century H. (Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm Šahrestānī [1395] 2016, vol. 290, fol. 117r and v), however, differs in some places from both these texts, e.g., in the number of spiritual managers, 13 in contrast to 12, and their order. As broadly discussed, al-Šahrestānī lists here 13 elements but gives their number as 12; the Persian translation corrects their number to 13. It nevertheless enumerates 14 elements because *davande* is repeated twice by mistake; for another citation from al-Šahrestānī in the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb,* see Ernst (2017, 443–44).

50	See passages 14, 20-22 (Abolqāsemī 1386, 135–36).

51	These include al-Isfarāʾinī (1374, 132), al-Baġdādī ([1328] 1910, 347), and even the exhaustive theological discussion of al-Malāḥimī al-Ḫʷārazmī (2012, 638ff.). On this, see Dehghani Farsani and Rezania (2020).

Yazdānīyān, this saying alludes to the fact that the incorporeal soul is vegetable. Some Yazdānīyāns narrate that Zarathustra asked the lord of cypresses, who is called Azarvān, to carefully nourish this (tree) that he had planted. They narrate the following from one of the ascetic savants: "I saw the lord of cypress, and he commanded: 'I ordered that Motevakkel be slain for the crime of cutting that cypress.'"[52]

[129]

اکنون هنگام آن است که لختی از رمز و اشارات شت زرتشت را آورد چه از رمز حکمت محفوظ ماند و به دست نابخرد نیفتد و کامل مطلب ازو برگیرد؛بالجمله پیروان زردشت گویند گیتی را دو صانع است، یزدان و آهرمن یزدان اندیشه بد کرد و گفت که مبادا مرا ضدی پدید شود که دشمن من باشد آهرمن از فکر او پدید آمد و در بعضی جا آمده که ایزد تنها بود آن را وحشتی پیدا شده فکر بد کرد، آهرمن پیدا گشت [...]

It is now time to present some of the enigmas and allusions of the prophet Zarathustra, as enigma guards wisdom from falling into the hands of ignorant, and only perfect ones can benefit from its content. For example, Zarathustra's adherents believe in two creators of the world: Yazdān and Āherman. Yazdān conceived an evil thought and uttered: "Perhaps, an antagonist may arise against me who shall be my enemy." Āherman arose from this thought of him. Otherwise, it is attested in some places that Yazdān was alone, a fear overwhelmed him, he had an evil thought and Āherman arose.[53]

[130]

[131]

بهدینان گویند: «آهرمن از زمان پدید آمد، و فرشته‌ها و آسمانها و ستارگان بودند و باشند، اما پدید آمدهٔ موالیدند، و مدّت ماندن این آفرینش دوازده هزار سال است، پس رستخیز شود و یزدان مردم را برانگیزد و همین جهان آخشیجی را بهشت برین سازد و آهرمن و آهرمنان و دوزخ را به نیستی برد».

The Zoroastrians believe that Āherman arose from time, and that the angels, skies and stars existed and will exist, but are the result of births. The period of this creation is twelve thousand years. Afterwards, the resurrection will occur. Yazdān will resurrect the people and transform this material world into the eternal paradise. He will annihilate Āherman, his adherents and hell.[54]

[132]

The word *zorvān* is not used in the time theory of the Āẕar Kaivānīs as described by the

[133]

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52 Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, 81v, l. 15–82r, l. 1); parallel to Keyḫosro (1362, 100–111). This passage alludes to the Zoroastrian narration recounted by Ferdowsi (1988–2008, 5/81-4). According to the narration of the 'Cypress of Kašmar,' Zarathustra brought a sapling of a noble cypress (*sarv-e āzāda*) from paradise and gave it to Goštāsp, who planted it in front of the first fire temple in Kašmar in Khorasan. In only a few years, it grew into a huge, beautiful cypress, serving as a focal point for pilgrimage. The sources of the Islamic period, e.g., Ṯaʿālibī, report that the caliph al-Mutawakkil wished to see this cypress. As it was not possible for him to travel to Nishapur, he commanded his governor in Khorasan to cut the tree and to send it to Baghdad. The Zoroastrians tried to prevent the inauspicious felling of their cypress by offering the caliph 50,000 dinars, which he rejected. 1300 camels carried the pieces of the cypress to the caliph, who was assassinated just one day before the convoy arrived in his capital; see Aʿlam 1993.

53 Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, 91r, l. 15 – 91v, l. 1); parallel to Keyḫosro (1362, 113).

54 Keyḫosro (1362, 101); this passage is absent in Āẕar-sāsānī (2010).

Dabestān-e maẕāheb,[55] although pseudo-words are artificially constructed to designate different time periods of the multi-period world age. These periods and their relations are shown in the following table:

	zād	vād	ğād	mard	vard	fard	*sāl*	*māh*	*rūz*
world age	100								2.16×10^{26}
zād		2000							
vād			3000						
ğād				1000					
mard					1000				
vard						1000			
fard							106		
sāl ('year')								12	
māh ('month')									30

Consequently, no other literature remains except Zoroastrian Pahlavi literature to serve in the quoted section of the *Dasātīr* as a source for the use of the word *zorvān*. Accordingly, the author of the *Dasātīr* must have taken the two words for time, *damān* and *zorvān*, from the Zoroastrian Middle Persian literature, directly or indirectly through the Zoroastrian priests. The assertion that in the celestial language 'time' means *zorvān* is also decisive for the following reason: it explicitly shows that for Āẕar Kaivān the template for the celestial language was the Avestan language, in which the word *zruuan* means 'time.' *Dasātīr*'s designation of the celestial language, *farātīn-navād*, mentioned in the quotation above, occurs in three places in the book (D., 69, 78 and 263). Besides the passage quoted above, the following passage is significant for identifying the template of the celestial language: [134]

چنانکه همی نموده آمد انرا گوهر خوانند و بفراتین نواد فروهر (D., 263). [135]

As it has been shown, it is called essence, and in the celestial language [*farātīn-navād*] *fravahr/frūhar*. [136]

The author here again uses a Zoroastrian *terminus technicus*, which derives from Avestan (< *frauuaṣ̌i-*), as a celestial term. This usage increases the probability that the *Dasātīr*'s author designed his book after Zoroastrian *Zand* texts, with Avestan in mind as a template for his celestial language. [137]

The 'Where' and 'When' of the Religious Contact

The historical contextualization of Āẕar Kaivān's encounter with Zoroastrianism faces many difficulties, and this is true even for the historical contextualization of the school itself. When did Aẕar Kaivān live? And when did he migrate to Patna? Who authored the *Dasātīr*, and when? Even these most basic questions can be answered only tentatively because we have only late manuscripts of the Āẕar Kaivānī texts at our disposal. The same questions can be [138]

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55 Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, 6v) = Keyḫosro (1362, 8); the first smallest units, day, month and year, are not mentioned in Āẕar-sāsānī (2010).

raised regarding the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb*, a text whose authorship has been the subject of controversial discussion. The discovery of an old *Dabestān* manuscript, however, contributes enormously to answering some of these questions.

Some years ago, the Cultural Center of Iran in New Delhi acquired a *Dabestān* manuscript dated to 8 Shawwāl 1060 H. (1650 A.D.). The colophon of the manuscript reads: [139]

كاتبه العبد فقير حقير محمد شريف ابن شيخ ميان سپاهى زاده بوم ميدك ساكن بنده تبلحور تحريراً [140]
فى التاريخ هشت ماه شوال سنه١٠٦٠. تمت تمام شد، شيطان غلام شد.

Written by poor, abject Muḥammad Šarīf b. Šayḫ Mīyān, soldier, born in the land [141]
Mīdak, resident of Banda-ye Tabalhūr (?), recorded in the date, 8, month Šavvāl,
year 1060 [October 4 1650]. *finitur*, completed, Satan became slave.[56]

This makes it the oldest known Āẕar Kaivān manuscript, 15 years older than the Mashkut [142] manuscript of the *Nāme-ye zardošt* or *Zūre-ye bāstānī*. The most salient feature of this manuscript is that, on the 23 Shawwāl of the same year, a student of the author compared this manuscript with what was apparently the original text of the author and noted the differences on the margin of the manuscript. He records his activity in an epilogue to the manuscript as follows:

بانجام انجاميد مقابله دوازده تعليم از كتاب دبستان كه انشاى مرشد المحققين، امام المدققين، عارف [143]
كامل، صوفى واصل، حكيم حكمت‌كده دريافت حق، شناسنده معارف حضرت وجود مطلق، مؤيّد
بتأييدات سبحانى، اعظم شافى، استاد ميرزا ذوالفقار آذر ساسانى المتخلص بموبد، طول الله عمره،
كه بسنه ١٠٦٠ بسلك تأليف درآمده بود، بقدر طاقت صحت داده و قيد و قيود و بتوان شناخت خود
كرده در كناره ثبت نموده بنشان ميم. اميد كه از خطا در امان خدا باشد. انشاءالله آنچه ديگر تأليف
شود نگاشته گردد.كمين شاگرد مجدالدين محمد، مقابله‌ساز اين نامى‌نامه حضرت استاد است. قد
حرّر فى ٢٣ شوال سنه ١٠٦٠ هجرى.

It has been finished: the comparison of twelve teachings from the book *Dabestān*, [144] composed by the elder of the truth-seekers, the leader of the scrutinizers, perfect mystic, the arrived sufi, the sage of the house of wisdom, where to perceive the truth, the recognizer of the teachings of the honored Absolute Existent, confirmed by praised affirmations, the arch-healer, the master Mirzā Ẕolfaqār Āẕar-sāsānī, with the pen name Mūbed, may God elongate his age, (which) was authored in the year 1060. I corrected it to the limit of my endurance, and I did (this) as much as constraints allowed, and to the extent of my recognition. I noted (the differences) at the margin with the character *mīm*. Hopefully, it will stay in God's safety, away from error. If God wills, may what will be authored later be recorded. The humble student, Maǧd-al-dīn Muḥammad, is the one who compared this magnum opus of the honored master. Redacted on 23 Šawwāl 1060 h. [October 19, 1650].[57]

This epilogue provides a definite answer to the question of the text's authorship. The au- [145] thor was a certain Mīrzā Ẕolfaqār Āẕar Sāsānī, who wrote under the pen name Mūbed.[58] It

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56   Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, 302); see ʿĀbedī (1383, 162) as well.
57   Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, 302); see ʿĀbedī (1383, 162) as well.
58   Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, 13–15).

moreover gives a *terminus ante quem* for authoring the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb* as well as for the other Āẕar Kaivānī treatises mentioned in this book. Hence, the *Dabestān-e* must have been authored before 1060/1650. A *terminus post quem* of 1653 for the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb* has been already inferred from the events mentioned in its edition text (Keyḫosro 1362, 1/122, 2/20): Welcome to the paradox! The inconsistency consists in major differences between the text of this manuscript (Āẕar Sāsānī 2010) and the published text of the *Dabestān* (Keyḫosro 1362, 1362). Comparing the volume of Reżāzāde Malek's edition with this manuscript shows that the text was expanded by ca. 16.4%, or about 23,000 tokens.[59]

[146] In his notes to the edition of the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb*, Reżāzāde Malek lists the dates explicitly mentioned in the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb* (Keyḫosro 1362, 2/10-16). To find the *terminus post quem* for the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb* I went through this list in reverse chronological order and checked for the existence of the passages involving these dates in the manuscript from 1060/1650. The passages consisting of the dates 1063/1653 and 1061/1651, which are attested in the edition, are not present in this manuscript.[60] The migration of Šāh-Badaḫšī to India, his initiation into the Mīr-Qāderī order and his acceptance of Moḥyī-al-dīn Moḥammad as a student, which is the last event in Reżāzāde Malek's list, are absent in the manuscript as well.[61] By this, the latest date mentioned in the manuscript is 1059/1649. The corresponding passage reads:

[147] پیکرپژوه و جهان‌نورد دو تن بودند از پیکری‌کیشان که در جدول‌کشی و تصویر و نقاشی بی‌بدل بودند. نامه‌نگار بسال پنجاه و نهم در گجرات من اعمال پنجاب هر دو را یافت.

[148] Peykarpažūh and Ǧahān-navard were two persons of the group of Peykarī, who were unique in creating rule-borders, illustrating and painting. This author visited both of them in the 59th year [= 1649 M.] in Gujarat from Punjab.[62]

[149] Two other passages in the book give information about the period of its writing:

[150] و اکنون که سنه هزار پنجاه و پنج هجریست پسر مهروان که اوبرجی جانشین اوست [...]

[151] And now, the year 1055 Hiǧrī [= 1645 M.], the son of Mihravān, whom Ūbarǧī (?) succeeds, [...][63]

[152] اکنون که هنگام نبشتن این نامه است و سال هجری بهزار و پنجاه و پنج رسیده [...]

[153] And now that the time of written of this book, the Hiǧrī year 1055 (1645 m.) has come [...][64]

[154] At the beginning of the second chapter of the book in its published edition, which is about

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59   I estimate the number of tokens in the manuscript as approx. 140,000, in the edition around 163,000. The estimation for the first text is based on the count of words of its first 50 folios; for the second text, it relies on the word count of a digital version of the text.

60   The first date is attested in Keyḫosro (1362, 122, ll. 3–8) and is expected on Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, fol. 99r); the second date is attested in Keyḫosro (1362, 18–19, ll. 27–4) and expected on Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, fol. 16r).

61   It is attested in Keyḫosro (1362, 359, ll. 11–19) and expected on Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, fol. 295v).

62   Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, fol. 55v, ll. 8–11), Keyḫosro (1362, 69, ll.9–11).

63   Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, fol. 142r, ll. 8–9), Keyḫosro (1362, 207, l.11).

64   Āẕar-sāsānī (2010, fol. 106r, ll. 12–14), Keyḫosro (1362, 135, ll.7–8).

Hindus, the author adds an editorial note revealing that the author visited a group of Hindus in 1063/1653. This visit led to revision of this chapter of the book specifically. The author writes at the end of this editorial note: "Consequently a difference occurred between the first and second edition [*lit.* order]."[65] Consequently, the manuscript of 1060/1650 should represent the manuscript of the first recension of the book, while later manuscripts represent the latter recension after the year 1063/1653. The author must have worked on the text of the first recension for a period of at least five years, from 1055/1645 to 1060/1650. The differences between the two recensions of the text are not limited to the chapter on Hindus, although this chapter remains the most heavily revised part of the book. The author enlarged this chapter in his second recension by about 10,000 tokens. This means that he added another 13,000 tokens to other parts of his book in its second recension.

The epithet *āẕar* in the name of the probable founder of the school, Āẕar Kaivān, helps to illuminate the interreligious contact between the school with Zoroastrianism. According to the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb* the epithet *āẕar*, 'fire,' was assigned to the names of all of his precedents as well. Moreover, the author of the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb*, another prominent member of the school, also bore the title *āẕar*. One of the names given by the *Dabestān-e maẕāheb* to the school, Āẕarīyān, seems to be connected to this epithet. The epithet in the name of some members of the school, and the importance of fire in religious theories of the school, is emphasized in Āẕar Kaivān's genealogy as well as in the name Āẕarīyān for the school. [155]

On his expedition to Gujarat, Akbar made the acquaintance of Mūbed Meherjī Rānā' and invited him to the courtly discussions of 1578 and 1579. Consequently, he spent 1578–79 in Fathpur as the first representative of a non-Islamic religion in order to participate in the discussions in the ʿebādat ḫāna 'House of Worship' founded by Akbar. In 1581–82, Akbar introduced a form of the Zoroastrian cult of fire to his court. The sojourn of Meherji Rānā at the court was presumably influential in this measure.[66] Afterwards, the compatibility of this cult of fire with Islamic monotheism was intensively discussed at the court. The Zoroastrian theological interpretation of fire as the everlasting symbol of God on earth must have ensured that it took a prominent place in the theological discourse of this period. Consequently, the bearers of the epithet *āẕar* were connected to ancient Iranian cultural assets, as well as endowed with theological prestige. Therefore, I would like to propose the date of Akbar's introduction of the cult of fire at his court as the *terminus post quem* for the authoring of the *Dasātīr*. Accordingly, it can be hypothesized that the *Dasātīr* was written after 1581-82. Because of the influence of Sanskrit on the heavenly language of the *Dasātīr* (Mojtabaʾī 1994), we can assume that it was authored after the migration of Āẕar Kaivān to Patna, assuming Āẕar Kaivān was its author. By assuming that Āẕar Kaivān migrated to Patna in 1001/1593 we can even limit the *terminus post quem* to this date. We can regard the date of the first recension of *Dabestān-e maẕāheb*, 1060/1650, or even the date of death of Āẕar Kaivān, 1028/1618, as the *terminus ante quem* of the *Dasātīr*. Subsequently, the *Dasātīr* must have been authored between 990/1581-2 and 1060/1650, or Āẕar Kaivān must have authored it between 1001/1593 and 1028/1618. The encounter of the *Dasātīr* with Zoroastrian Middle Persian literature, thus, must have occurred in the same period, and likely took place in Patna in India. [156]

Were the *Āẕar Kaivānīs* the first non-Zoroastrian New Persian speakers who detected Middle Persian texts and developed a fascination for it? This was the assumption in the scholarship of the last centuries. Recently, Ali Ashraf Sadeghi (2020) made a significant discovery which [157]

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65   Keyḫosro (1362, 1/122, ll. 7–8): "لاجرم میان ترتیب اول و ثانی مباینتی روی داد."
66   See Modi (1903, esp. 152-58); Hottinger (1998, 116–17, 129–30).

sheds light on the acquaintance of early modern New Persian-speaking literates with Middle Persian literature. Previously, the scholarship assumed that the *Borhān-e Qāṭeʿ* was the oldest dictionary citing '*dasātīrī*' terms. Sadeghi shows that the '*dasātīrī*' terms are actually older than the *Dasātīr*. According to him, the *Farhang-e Moʾaiyad al-foẓalāʾ*, authored by Moḥammad b. Lād Dehlavī in 925/1519, had already cited such words at least 65 years before the *Dasātīr* saw the light of day. Sadeghi shows, moreover, that the *Farhang-e Moʾaiyad al-foẓalāʾ* cites not only '*dasātīrī*,' i.e., artificially antiquated New Persian words famously used in the *Dasātīr*, but also Middle Persian lexemes. He lists, for example, *odardan* 'to pass away' (gained from MP *widardan* <wtltn>)[67], *basrīyā* 'meat' (gained from MP *gōšt* <BSLYA>), *baytā* 'house' (gained from MP *xānag* <BYTA>), *pāteprās* 'punishment' (gained from MP *pādifrāh* <pʾtplʾs>), *čīčast* 'mountain' (gained from MP *čēčast* <čyčst> 'a mythical sea'), and finally *čīnvad* 'bridge to the hereafter' (gained from MP *činwad* (*puhl*) [cynwt] 'bridge to the hereafter'). This evidence asserts that the New Persian speaking literates in India were already acquainted with and fascinated by Middle Persian in the first decades of the sixteenth century. The *Āẕar Kaivānīs* were thus not the initiators of this contact with Zoroastrianism and the Zoroastrian Middle Persian—they were its consumers. As early as 925/1519, there was contact between Muslim literates and Zoroastrian texts in India. The Āẕar Kaivānīs, however, extended this literary contact to a religious one.

Conclusions: the *Dasātīr* and Secrecy

As we saw above, the Avestan texts are represented in younger Zoroastrianism as concealed texts, and Avestan as a celestial language which was spoken only in the communication of Ahura Mazdā and Zarathustra. This perspective, however, was not adopted by older Zoroastrianism when Avestan was still used for text production. Even in the Sasanian and early Islamic periods, the Avestan language was not perceived or represented as a secret language. The Zoroastrian priests were engaged in the translation of, and commentary on, these texts. Because of the reduced competence of the priests in understanding the Avestan language in the first half of the second millennium A.D., perspectives on the Avestan language underwent significant change. Avestan texts came to be perceived as secret texts which were not supposed to be understood by Zoroastrians, and which were accessible only through translations and commentaries. In this way, the Zoroastrians in this period constructed an 'otherworld' by relocating the Avestan language to the transcending divine sphere. They did not use this emerging secrecy to establish an insider-outsider distinction. Rather, they highlighted the inherent potential of a secret language for communication with the divine sphere, modeled upon Zarathustra's communication with Ahura Mazdā and unceasingly re-exemplified in Zoroastrian rituals, i.e., in priests' communication with the divine world. [158]

By adopting the concept of a secret, celestial language from Zoroastrian *Zand* literature, the Āẕar Kaivānīs remained within the Zoroastrian conceptual framework of secrecy. The Āẕar Kaivānīs did not use the secret language to establish an in-group / out-group distinction vis-à-vis other religions, because they did not claim the ability to understand and translate it. Interestingly, they also made clear that the competence to understand and translate the heavenly language was restricted to older prophets; not even Āẕar Kaivān or the author of the *Dasātīr* claimed this competence for himself. The Āẕar Kaivānīs even dispensed with claims of [159]

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67   We should take into consideration that the Pahlavi script often uses the character <l> to represent the phoneme *r*.

access to the heavenly language, which in Zoroastrianism was an intra-religious demarcation parameter between a group of specialists and other Zoroastrians. It is true that, in the early modern period, they did not know that the Zoroastrian priests were able to translate and comment the Avestan texts in the Sasanian period. Nevertheless, they hypothetically could have constructed their *Dasātīr* in such a way as to show that a specific group of their circle would have access to the language of heaven. Hence, we can conclude that the Āẕar Kaivānīs did not use the secrecy of their celestial language for purposes of inter- or intra-religious demarcation or to gain intra-religious authority or inter-religious superiority.

Rather, the Āẕar Kaivānīs' strategy of secrecy seems to be a sort of double coding (Boneberg 2005, 461). Knowledge is encoded on two layers: communicated in translation and commentary as well as encoded in celestial language. The Āẕar Kaivānīs developed a strategy of secrecy rather than distinction. They used secrecy to construct an other-world which cannot be reached directly, but only through the mediation of translation and commentary. This secrecy is not characterized as a mode of exclusion; in contrast, it is extremely inclusive. The constructed other-world applies to all religious traditions in the same way and is or is not available to them to the same degree. Their secrecy is not a concealment of knowledge but a sharing of the concealed. *Dasātīr*'s approach to secrecy is in perfect accord with the religious discourse emerging at the court of Akbar, namely *dīn-e elāhī*. [160]

This investigation shows that the contact with the Zoroastrian Middle Persian texts was established in the early Modern Persian speaking elite circles and outside of the religious field. Presumably, it was the lexicographical interest which first led to the re-discovery of Middle Persian as an antique form of New Persian. To include noble forgotten Persian words in their dictionaries, the lexicographers gained Middle Persian lexemes from the Zoroastrian texts. The Āẕar Kaivānīs presumably became acquainted with the Middle Persian literature through these lexicographical activities in India. They, however, extended this language contact to a religious contact. They created a heavenly language and a heavenly book after the Zoroastrian Zand texts. They avoided Arabic words and created a form of Persian imitating Sasanian Middle Persian. Whereas the form of Zoroastrian literature must have strongly influenced Āẕar Kaivānī literature, their contents do not seem to have been influential for this school. [161]

Abbreviations

- *D. Dasātīr* quotet after (Mulla Firuz b. 1818).

- *UI ʿUlemā-ye islām* quoted after (Aoki 2016).

- *UIbdR ʿUlemā-ye islām be digar raveš* quoted after (Unvâlâ 1922, 2/80-6).

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