Avestan

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1. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Avestan is a member of the Indo-European language family. It is the most richly attested ancient member of the Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian subgroup of that family. As such, it is closely related to the Sanskrit language (which represents the most archaic member of the Indic subgroup of Indo-Iranian; see Ch. 2). For those who hold that the centum–satem division (fundamentally an east/west bifurcation in the Indo-European language family) is a matter of subgrouping, Indo-Iranian (and therefore Avestan) is a member of the satem group (indeed, it is the Avestan word for “100,” *satam*, which gives that group its name).

There are uncertainties regarding both the dating and the geographical provenance of the surviving Avestan texts. The oldest manuscript is quite young (manuscript K7a, dating from AD 1278) and therefore of little assistance in resolving these matters. The issue of chronology is usually linked to the problems surrounding the dates of the founder of Zoroastrianism, the prophet Zarathuštra. Current scholarly consensus places his life considerably earlier than the traditional Zoroastrian sources are thought to, favoring a birth date before 1000 BC. Since the Gāthās are recognized as being the work of Zarathuštra, these Old Avestan texts appear to date from around that time. Precise dating of the Young Avestan texts, many of which appear to have a long oral transmission history, is in most cases impossible. Regarding geography, the Avestan language itself is now widely believed to be an Eastern Iranian language, though it cannot be directly connected to any known group of ancient Iranian speakers, thus greater geographical precision is not at this time possible. For the most recent and more coherent consideration of these complex issues, the interested reader is referred to the introduction to the first volume of Humbach *et al.* (1991). The Avestan texts continue to be used in ritual and other hieratic contexts in Zoroastrian communities.

Although Avestan is quite conservative in several crucial respects both phonologically and morphologically, many (though not all) of its archaisms are also found in the better-attested, better-preserved, and generally more widely studied Sanskrit language, leading to a certain degree of neglect of Avestan in Western scholarship. This has been rectified to some extent in the postwar era of Indo-European studies, during which the type of philological problems posed by the Avestan records have captured the attention of many prominent Indo-Europeanists.

It is traditional to refer to the two major dialects of Avestan as *Old (or Gāthic) Avestan* and *Young Avestan*. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the relationship between the two dialects is not strictly a chronological one (i.e., Young Avestan is not a direct descendant of Old Avestan). These labels may accurately reflect the relative chronology of the respective corpora, although the matter is complicated by the fact, noted above, that many of the Young Avestan texts
appear to be originally oral compositions with a potentially long transmission history before becoming fixed canonical texts.

The Avestan language is transmitted almost exclusively through the surviving text of the Avesta, a collection of Zoroastrian religious and legal texts. Unfortunately, the transmission history of these texts involves several serious disruptions, leading to loss of a large number of texts (the contents of which can be in part gleaned from a surviving Pahlavi, i.e., Middle Persian, summary) and challenging philological problems for those texts which do survive. Excluding a number of minor texts, there are three major sections of the surviving Avesta: (i) the Yasnas (Y.), containing prayers, hymns, and liturgical works; (ii) the Yaštš (Yt.), containing invocations of specific holy figures and concepts; (iii) the Vidēvdāt (V.), containing “legal” texts, broadly construed. All of the Old Avestan texts are contained within the Yasnas. These texts include the Gāthās (metrical hymns the composition of which is attributed to the prophet Zarathuštra), the prose liturgy of the Yasn Haptaŋhâiti, and a set of short prayers, the most sacred in Zoroastrianism.

Many of the Yaštš are rather poorly preserved, or were not originally native-speaker compositions. One usually distinguishes between the best-transmitted Yaštš – the so-called Great Yaštš – and the lesser works. The Great Yaštš represent the high points of Young Avestan literature. Included among them are Yt. 5 (in honor of Arāduūī, the personification of a mythic river); Yt. 8 (in honor of Tištīrii, the personification of the star Sirius); Yt. 10 (in honor of Miūra, the personification of the contract); Yt. 13 (in honor of the Frauuašīs – protective spirits of the faithful); Yt. 14 (in honor of Varaðrayna, the personification of victory); Yt. 17 (in honor of Ašī Vaṇuhī, the personification of the reward of the pious); Yt. 19 (in honor of Xa.arānāh, the personification of royal power/glory); and two Yaštš preserved in the Yasna section of the Avesta: Y.9–Y.11.8 (in honor of Haoma, the Avestan cognate of Sanskrit soma, a ritualistic intoxicant) and Y.57 (in honor of Sraoša, the personification of obedience to divine will).

Finally, the Vidēvdāt, while containing some significant mythological material, focuses the bulk of its attention on matters of purity and pollution, of crime and of punishment. It is of great significance for our understanding of the history of Zoroastrian doctrine and practice.

As noted above in the discussion of the chronology of Avestan, the two major dialects are in part chronological and in part almost certainly geographical variants of one another. They are sufficiently distinct – although the bulk of the identified contrasts are in the phonological domain – that I have chosen to focus on the more extensively transmitted variant, that of Young Avestan, in what follows. I will not, however, hesitate to cite Gāthic forms where appropriate or necessary, noting the forms as such. Young Avestan itself does not appear to have been uniform, though the study of its variants faces a number of philological difficulties. The differences between Young Avestan dialects are, at any rate, too minor to be of concern in a survey of this type.

The texts themselves show clear evidence of indigenous scholarly redaction, much like the pada-texts of the Vedic Sanskrit tradition. For example, in the transmitted text of the Avesta, sandhi – phonological variation conditioned by the context in which a word is placed – has been for the most part eliminated through the generalization of a single sandhi variant for each final sequence. Clear evidence of redactorial intervention in the text can be seen in the orthographic repetition, in Gāthic Avestan, of preverbs which are separated from their verbs (i.e., in tesis, much like German separable prefixes) in a position immediately preceding the verb itself. Thus, Yasna 32.14 transmits ni...ni.dadat “they put down,” where the meter assures us that the intended reading is ni...dadat. The doubling of the “preverb” ni before the verb dadat appears to represent an indigenous analytical hypothesis about the syntactic
dependency between the preverb in tmesis (i.e., separated from the verb) and the verb itself. This tells us that the text we have shows the effects of grammatical analysis by an indigenous tradition.

2. WRITING SYSTEM

Avestan is transmitted in an alphabetic writing system specifically designed to preserve relatively low-level phonetic details of hieratic recitation. The writing system itself is based on Pahlavi script, greatly enlarged in inventory by the use of diacritic modifications of the symbols of that orthography. The Pahlavi writing system itself is derived from a greatly simplified cursive version of the Aramaic script. The full set of characters, not all of which are found in all manuscript traditions, can be seen in Table 6.1.

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Table 6.1 The Avestan writing system (from Hoffmann and Forssman 1996:41)
The transliteration given in Table 6.1 for each character is now the standard, but differs in some details from prominent earlier work on Avestan (such as Reichelt’s 1909 grammar and Bartholomae’s 1904 dictionary). The principal differences are as follows:

1. å (3) was formerly transliterated á, thus identically to (4)
2. â (6) was formerly transliterated ã, thus identically to (5)
3. š (19) was formerly transliterated Ĥ
4. ğ (22) was formerly transliterated g, thus identically to (21)
5. c (24) was formerly transliterated č
6. j (25) was formerly transliterated ğ
7. β (34) was formerly transliterated w
8. ŋ (37) was generally transliterated ŋ
9. ň (39) and n (40) were formerly transliterated n, thus identically to (38)
10. m (42) was formerly transliterated hm
11. y (43), as well as ií sequences, were formerly transliterated y, thus identically to (44)
12. uu sequences were formerly transliterated v, thus identically to (45)
13. ŝ (51) and § (52) were formerly transliterated š, thus identically to (49)

In many of these cases the underdifferentiation of characters extends to Western books printed in Avestan characters, including Geldner’s (1886–1896) extensive critical edition of the bulk of the Avestan corpus. Character 6 (â), for example, is generally not used in Geldner’s edition, even in the critical apparatus. Moreover, some of these distinctions are lacking in certain Avestan manuscripts or manuscript traditions (for example, the y : ñ contrast is generally, though not universally, absent from Indian manuscripts).

The phonetic value of some of these characters, especially some of the “minor” ones which were earlier not distinguished, is not particularly clear, though there is published speculation on virtually all of them. In general, however, we can be fairly confident about the values assigned to the vast majority of symbols.

## 3. PHONOLOGY

### 3.1 Phonemic status

Determining the precise phonemic inventory of Avestan is problematic, though further research may allow us to resolve some or all of the outstanding issues. The writing system, designed to capture the nuances of hieratic recitation, is closer to the phonetic level. The principal difficulties arise from the fact that some relevant aspects of the sound system of Avestan are not explicitly indicated in the writing system. For example, there are no direct encodings of the position of stress (though some aspects of stress placement can probably be safely inferred), nor of syllable boundaries (which appear to be relevant to the determination of the phonemic status of some segments). In addition, as pointed out above (see §1), the final sandhi variants which were certainly present in the language (as indicated by their rare preservation in fixed phrases, for example) have been for the most part leveled out in the transmitted text.

### 3.2 Consonants

The approximate phonetic values of the consonant symbols are generally not in dispute. The uncontrovertial stops, fricatives, affricates, and nasals of Avestan are presented in Table 6.2.
Table 6.2 Consonantal sounds of Avestan

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<tr>
<th>Manner of articulation</th>
<th>Place of articulation</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>Voiceless</td>
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<td>Voiced</td>
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<td><strong>Nasal</strong></td>
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<td>Voiced</td>
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In addition, it is generally recognized that the symbol ʧ represents an “unreleased” voiceless dental stop – it is extremely limited in distribution, being regularly found only in word-final position and before certain obstruents. The phonetic nature of ɲ is taken by Hoffmann to be a “postuvular nasal” without oral occlusion of any type.

The values of the symbols which represent liquids and glides present only minor difficulties of detail. There appears to be a voicing contrast in the liquids between r and the digraph hr, the latter being voiceless. The symbol ν appears to differ from β by the former being round, the latter not. While the symbol h is uncontroversially held to be a glottal approximant, there is some speculation that the symbol transliterated as y originally represented ẑ, contrasting therefore with the voiced palatal glide (which was represented by the symbol ų). As noted, the contrast is not observed in all manuscripts nor by the earlier Western scholarly tradition. A detailed study of the distribution of these two symbols in manuscripts which use both of them remains a desideratum.

3.3 Vowels

The confidently identified vowel symbols may be approximately distributed in the vowel space as in Figure 6.1:

![Avestan vowels](image)

A macron indicates vowel length; however, it seems likely, and is now generally accepted, that the original length contrast has become a qualitative one, either as well as or instead
of a purely quantitative one. It must be noted in this regard that the manuscripts do not, in general, do a particularly good job of distinguishing length contrasts in the high vowels ĭ and ā. The vowel ā represents nasalized a as well as nasalized ă. In addition to these simple vowels, Avestan has a number of diphthongs, including the so-called short diphthongs aē, ōi, and ao and the long diphthongs āt and āu (see §3.4.9).

One of the most salient differences between Gāthic and Young Avestan concerns vowel quantities in absolute word-final position. In Gāthic Avestan all such vowels are long, whereas in Young Avestan final vowels are long only in monosyllables (discounting a few sandhi forms, on which more below). The fact that monosyllables are treated differently in this regard than polysyllables in Young Avestan allows one to determine certain otherwise somewhat obscure facts about the syllabification of Young Avestan word forms. For example, the instrumental singular of the word for “earth” (ząm-) is transmitted as zāmā, which must, given the rule just stated concerning final vowel quantities, represent a monosyllable. The epenthesis is thus phonologically irrelevant (either postdating the rule regulating final vowel quantities or too low-level phonetic to be of concern, or both). It is, as it turns out, also metrically irrelevant, the phonological facts thus supporting the analysis of the meter nicely. This case can be contrasted with that of the nominative singular of the word for “bowstring,” jīa, Sanskrit jyā, which must be disyllabic in Avestan given its short final vowel, as it originally was in Sanskrit.

3.4 Diachronic developments

3.4.1 Proto-Indo-Iranian

Avestan, being an Indo-Iranian language, shares with Sanskrit the phonological developments of Proto-Indo-Iranian (PIIr.). The most salient of these are (i) the merger of the labiovelar and velar stop series (definitional of satem languages); (ii) the development of the syllabic nasals to PIIr. *a; (iii) the RUKI-inducing backing of PIE *s (in Avestan to š); (iv) the merger of PIE *e, *a, and *o into PIIr. *a, and that of PIE *ē, ā, and *ō into PIIr. ā. In keeping with Brugmann’s Law, short *o in open syllables shows up in Avestan as ā, rather than the expected ā (examples include dāuru “wood” < PIE *doru and srāuuaiia-, the causative stem of sru “to hear” < PIE *kloweye-). The palatalization of the Proto-Indo-European velars (and the Proto-Indo-European labiovelars which had fallen together with this set of stops) before front vowels and *y preceded the merger of the velars.

Avestan provides key evidence for the status of PIE *T*T(< *TT, where T is any dental stop) in Proto-Indo-Iranian: whereas Sanskrit shows TT as the outcome of this sequence (vittā- “found” < PIE *wit tō-, morphologically *vid + *-tō), Avestan has ST (thus visa- “found”). The evidence of these two major branches of Indo-Iranian points to preservation in Proto-Indo-Iranian of PIE *T*T, thus suggesting the reconstruction of an affricate-formation rule for Proto-Indo-European phonology.

3.4.2 Indo-European laryngeals

In the matter of the laryngeals of Proto-Indo-European (see WAL Ch. 17, §2.1.3), Avestan provides only limited direct phonological evidence. In virtually all positions, the laryngeals have disappeared without a trace. There are, however, two exceptions to this statement. First, in Old Avestan the hiatus left by intervocalic laryngeal loss is generally preserved, as indicated by the syllable-counting meter of the Gāthas. Thus, the apparently disyllabic zrazdā, the nominative plural of zrazdā- “having faith,” the second compound member of which comes
from PIE \(^*d^h\)es, scans as a trisyllable in Old Avestan (*d\(^h\)es having become PIIr. *d\(^h\)Has and then pre-Avestan *daas, with two syllables). Unfortunately, our lack of a firm understanding of Young Avestan meter, coupled with, and in part deriving from, the flawed transmission of the relevant metrical texts, does not permit us to determine conclusively whether such scissions were also attested in this language.

Secondly, in a few instances interconsonantal laryngeals appear to have “vocalized” to \(i\) in Avestan, much as in Sanskrit. This is particularly clear in the paradigm of “father,” PIE \(^*p\)ter-, which shows laryngeal vocalization in the nominative singular (pitā, Skt. pitā), accusative singular (pitāram, Skt. pitāram), and dative singular (pītre, Skt. pitre). This development must be seen as dialectal, since Avestan also shows forms of this paradigm without traces of the vocalized laryngeal, including Old Avestan nominative singulars pitā and tā, Old Avestan dative singular farō, and the Young Avestan accusative plural farō (the schwas in the last two forms are the result of a late epenthesis process – they do not count for purposes of the meter, and thus were apparently not there at the time of composition; such epenthetic schwas will not be explicitly pointed out in the discussion which follows).

One may also contrast Avestan dṳ̂yād- “daughter” both with Sanskrit duhitār- (where the \(i\) represents the vocalized laryngeal) and with Greek θυγατέρ (where the laryngeal is represented by \(a\)), all three from PIE \(^*d\)ugH\(^2\)ter-. These forms make it impossible to see laryngeal vocalization to \(i\) as a property of Proto-Indo-Iranian itself in spite of the fact that only Sanskrit and, in some instances, Avestan, appear to show such a development within the Indo-European family.

Indirect evidence of the prior presence of the laryngeals is, by contrast, quite easy to come by. The sequence of syllabic nasal + laryngeal yields Avestan ō, giving rise to alternations of the type zan- “give birth” (< PIIr. *jān < PIE *gen\(^H\) -, Skt. jāna- “born”) (< PIIr. *jāta- < PIE *g\(^n\)H\(^1\)to-, Skt. jātā-). More interesting is the divergence between Avestan and Sanskrit in the treatment of pre-laryngeal syllabic liquids (PIE \(^*t\)H and \(^*\)H). Whereas Sanskrit regularly shows \(fr\) from such sequences, the Avestan reflex is ar: for example, darayā- “long” < PIE \(^*d\)H\(^1\)g\(^b\)o- (Skt. dirghá-); starata- “strewn” < PIE \(^*s\)tr\(^H\)\(^2\)to- (cf. Skt. stīnā-), tarō “across” < PIE \(^*t\)r\(^H\)\(^2\)es (Skt. tirāh). The best reconstruction for the Proto-Indo-Iranian reflex of these sequences is not at all clear given the Avestan and Sanskrit developments.

3.4.3 Stops

A number of distinctive phonological developments in the consonant system give Avestan a quite different “look” from that of Sanskrit. Quite salient among these is the development of the Proto-Indo-European palatal stops (\(^*k\), \(^*g\), and \(^*\)g\(^h\)). In the first instance, these stops develop into palatal fricatives in Proto-Indo-Iranian, usually designated \(^*\)č, \(^*\)j, and \(^*\)j\(^h\), respectively (and thus distinguished from the outcome of the palatalization of the Proto-Indo-European plain and rounded velar stops, which became the affricates \(^*\)č, \(^*\)j, and \(^*\)j\(^h\)). The place of articulation of these fricatives then shifts to the dental region, and we find s as the regular reflex of \(^*\)č, and z as the regular outcome of both \(^*\)j and \(^*\)j\(^h\) (with the regular Avestan loss of distinctive aspiration of the voiceless aspirates). Examples include satam “100” < PIIr. *katam < PIE *k\(^n\)tam (Skt. satám); zan- “beget” < PIIr. *jan- < PIE *\(^*g\)\(^n\)H\(^1\) - (Skt. jān-); zari- “yellow” < PIIr. \(^*g\)\(^h\)ali- < PIE \(^*g\)\(^h\)eli- (Skt. hārī-).

The voiceless unaspirated stops of Proto-Indo-Iranian have been generally preserved. However, they have developed into voiceless fricatives preconsonantally (excepting \(^*t\) which remains unchanged): for example, Av. xratu- “insight” < PIIr. *kratu- (Skt. krātu-); Av. friia- “beloved” < PIIr. *priHa (Skt. priyā-). Contrast Av. hapta “seven” < PIIr. *sapta
The voiceless aspirated stops of Proto-Indo-European have become corresponding voiceless fricatives: for example, Av. haxāi ("companion") < PIE *sakʰ āyi- (Skt. sákhāy-); Av. kafā- (< PIE *kapʰ a-) (Skt. kapha-). Avestan preserves better than Sanskrit the paradigmatic internal effects of aspiration arising from an ensuing H₂ in the Proto-Indo-Iranian word for "path," which has the nominative singular paṇṭā < PIEr. *pantaH₂-s (contrast Skt. pānṭhā, with generalized aspiration), genitive singular paṭō < "pṛtH₂-as (Skt. pathā).

The voiced aspirated stops of Indo-European (and Indo-Iranian) have merged, via loss of aspiration, with corresponding simple voiced stops in Avestan (and Iranian generally). The resulting voiced stops are generally preserved as such in Old Avestan, but have lenited (or "weakened") to voiced fricatives in all but a few positions in Young Avestan. They are generally preserved as stops only in word-initial position (except in a few word-initial consonant clusters) and after nasals and fricatives. These developments can be seen in the following examples, sorted by place of articulation:

1. **Iranian *b* (< PIE *b, *bʰ >

   (i) Avestan b: brātā “brother” < PIEr. *bʰrātā (Skt. bhrātā); Avestan xumba- “pot” < PIEr. *kʰumbʰ-a- (cf. Skt. kumbhá-).

   (ii) Avestan ō: aši “toward” (Old Avestan aibī) < PIEr. *abʰ-i (Skt. abhī).

2. **Iranian *d* (< PIE *d, *dʰ >

   (i) Avestan d: pada “ten” < PIEr. *dʰa (Skt. dása); viṇḍānti “they find” < PIEr. *windaH₂nti (Skt. vindānti).

   (ii) Avestan ō: mada- “intoxicating drink” (Old Avestan mada-) < PIEr. *mada- (Skt. mádā-).

3. **Iranian *g* (< PIE unpalatalized *g, *gʰ, *gʷ, *gʰʷ >

   (i) Avestan g: garma- “warm” < PIEr. *gharmʰ-a- (Skt. gharmá-); žanga- “ankle” < PIEr. *fanɡʰ-a- (cf. Skt. žaṅghā- “shin”); mazga- “marrow” (cf. Skt. majjān-).

   (ii) Avestan ſ: darṣa- “long” (Old Avestan darṣa-) < PIEr. *dH₂ghʰ-a- (Skt. dirghā-); ugra- “strong” (Old Avestan ugra-) < PIEr. *ugra- (Skt. ugrā-).

4. **Iranian *j* (PIE palatalized *g, *gʰ, *gʰʷ >

   (i) Avestan j: jani- “woman” < PIEr. *jani- (Skt. jānī-); ræṇja- “move quickly” < PIEr. *raṇjʰ-a- (Skt. raṃha- “run”).

   (ii) Avestan ō: aži- “serpent” < PIEr. *ažʰ-i- (Skt. āhi-); dæṣaiti “he burns” (transitive) < PIEr. *dæṣʰaiti (Skt. dāhati).

Exceptions to the Young Avestan lenition processes evidenced above are attested. While some exceptional forms appear to represent the borrowing of religious vocabulary from the Gāthic dialect, others seem to require the assumption of dialectal developments within Young Avestan itself. Finally, in a number of cases, analogical restructuring appears to be at work. For example, in a reduplicated form such as dadāhā “you give,” built to the verbal root dā, the transparency of the reduplicative morphology has allowed the medial d to avoid lenition (or, more likely, to be remade to d after undergoing lenition). Similarly, in a number of transparent compounds the first member of which ends in a vowel and the second member of which begins with a voiced stop (e.g., hu-baōdi- “having a good fragrance”), lenition of the morpheme-initial voiced stop is lacking. Analogy to the uncompounded form (baōdi- “fragrance”) is clearly at work. Note that, in the example cited, the presence of lenition on the dental stop of hubaōdi- makes a dialectal explanation for the lack of lenition on the labial stop unlikely.
In spite of the general loss of aspiration on voiced stops treated above, Avestan does preserve some morphological traces of the original aspiration through the workings of Bartholomae’s Law. This law states that the direction of voicing assimilation in obstruent clusters (usually regressive) is reversed just in the cases in which the first obstruent is a voiced aspirate. In addition, the aspiration originally present on the first obstruent is shifted to the second. A Sanskrit example will make this clear: when the -ta- participial suffix is added to the verbal root ṭṛdh “grow,” Bartholomae’s Law triggers the following development: ṭṛdh + ṭa- > ṭṛddha- “grown.” The corresponding Avestan form, with the ST treatment of the dental cluster, as expected, is vṛozdha- “grown.” Although the aspiration is no longer present, its earlier existence is reflected in the rightward spread of voicing. The effects of Bartholomae’s Law are well preserved in Old Avestan, but frequently Young Avestan has analogically recreated the forms, applying the much more general regressive voicing assimilation to the cluster created in the remaking. Thus, corresponding to the Old Avestan third singular aogodą “he spoke,” from the verbal root aog (cf. Skt. ohtā) + -ta, the ending of the third singular middle, Young Avestan generally has aoxta.

### 3.4.4 Fricatives

Avestan shares with Greek (though independently, of course) the development of Proto-Indo-European presonorant *s to h. This Proto-Iranian *h underwent a number of conditioned changes in Avestan, of which the principal ones are as follows:

1. *h>*gh between low vowels (Av. aghaiti “he would be” < PIE *asati, Skt. asati) – contrast the preservation of *h before non-low vowels (Av. ahi “you are” < PIE *asi, Skt. asi). Correspondingly, *āhwā > ānhā, *āhyā > ājhā (porosajh ha’ “ask for your own benefit” < *prćšaswa, Skt. prćchasva; vajhō “better” [nom. sg. neut.] < PIE *wasyas, Skt. vásyāḥ)

2. Initial *hw- > x'- (Av. x’afna- “sleep” < PIE *swapna-, Skt. svāpna-).

3. Initial *hm- > m- (Av. mahi “we are” < PIE *smasi, Skt. smasi), contrast preservation of this sequence word-internally (Av. ahmi “I am” < PIE *asmi, Skt. asmi).

4. Final *-ah > ō (-ō nom. sg. masc. ending of thematic nouns < PIE *-as < PIE *-os), compare the Sanskrit sandhi of final -āh > -o before voiced segments.

5. Final *-āh > -ā (m ā nom. sg. masc. “moon” < PIE *maas < PIE *meHys).

An exception to the development of Proto-Indo-Iranian *s to Avestan h is provided by so-called RUKI contexts (i.e., when the *s immediately followed any type of r, ū, ū, velar stop, or palatal affricate). In such a context, PIE *s and *z show up as Avestan š and Ž, respectively. Examples include: viša- “poison” (Skt. viśā-), mīzda- “payment” (Skt. mīdha-). Interestingly, in Avestan (though not in Sanskrit), we find the same development after labials: drafsa-“banner” < PIE *dṛapsa- (Skt. drapsā-), vaβža-ka-“wasp” < PIE *wabzāh- < PIE *wobhask-<. 

### 3.4.5 Liquids

Proto-Indo-European *l and *r have merged as Avestan r, which is generally preserved as such. Interestingly, however, an r following a low vowel in the coda of a stressed syllable is devoiced before a following voiceless stop, the voiceless r being indicated by the digraph <hr>. In the case of p and k, nothing further befalls these segments: thus, vaḥrka- “wolf” < PIE *wjkā- (Skt. vṛka-); kahrpa- “body” < PIE *kīpa- (Skt. kīpa-). When the following voiceless stop was t, however, the sequence hṛt became ṣ: mašiia- “man” < PIE.
*mártiya- (Skt. mártya-); pəšanā- “battle” < PIIr. *pəṭanā- (Skt. pṛṭanā-). Particularly instructive is the pair mərota- “dead” (< PIIr. *mṛṭa-, Skt. mṛṭa-), aməśa- “immortal” (< PIIr. *a-mṛta-, Skt. amṛta-).

### 3.4.6 Nasals

The nasals have developed into ə before stops and affricates: for example, aṇtarə “beside” (Skt. antár); pəṇca “five” (Skt. paṇca). The sequence an becomes ə before fricatives: məṭra- “mantra” < *mantra- (Skt. māntra-). In most other positions PIIr nasals have been preserved.

It is worth pointing out that although in general the syllabic nasals have developed into PIIr. *a, before glides we find instead that PIE *ə > an (Av. jəniət “he would smite” [with an analogical initial palatal] < PIIr. *gθənəyat < PIE *gθwθə-yeH-t, Skt. hənəyət) and PIE *n > am (jəniə “you would go” [also with an analogical palatal] < PIIr. *gəmyəs < PIE *gθən-yeH-s, Skt. gəmyəh).

### 3.4.7 Glides

The glide *w shows a number of conditioned developments in Avestan. After the Proto-Indo-European palatal stops, this glide becomes a labial stop (voiceless after the Proto-Indo-European voiceless palatal stop, voiced after the Proto-Indo-European voiceless stops): for example, aspa- “horse” < PIE *Həkwə- (Skt. āsva-); zβaiə-present stem of “call” < PIIr. Jθwəya- (Skt. həvə-). After the dental stops, it becomes a voiced labial fricative: θβəm “you” (acc. sg.) < PIIr. *twəm (Skt. tvəm); caθβərə < PIE *kθ etwores (Skt. cətvrəh); aθβan- “way” (Skt. ḍəhvan-).

### 3.4.8 Vowels

The vowels of Avestan have in general undergone fewer modifications than the consonants, the exception being the short low vowel a. This vowel shows a number of conditioned changes, some of them apparently dialectal (and thus “sporadic” in our text), some of them quite regular. One of the more significant of the regular changes, because of its interaction with other phonological rules of Avestan, is the raising of ə to ə before word-final nasals (and, dialectically, before word-internal nasals as well). The effects of this process are seen in nearly every line of the Avesta, producing forms such as the accusative singular of a-stems in -əm (thus narəm “man” [acc. sg.], Sanskrit nāram) as well as forms such as satəm “100” (Sanskrit śatām).

This schwa is itself subject to further raising to i under the influence of a preceding palatal (y, c, j, or ʃ). Thus, the accusative singular masculine of the relative pronoun, corresponding precisely to Sanskrit yəm, has undergone the following stages of development: *yam > *yəm > yim. Similarly, the accusative singular of the word for “deceit,” druj-, corresponding to Sanskrit druhəm, is druji < (earlier *drujəm).

Moreover, when the prenasal raising to schwa took place in the environment of a preceding consonant + glide sequence, the development went even further, with -Cyə- sequences becoming -Cʃ-, and -Cwə- sequences becoming -Cθ- (the lack of clarity about high vowel quantity is the result of the general problem of the transmission of quantities in the case of these vowels alluded to above). Examples include haiθəm “truth” < *həṭyəm < *satyaṃ (Skt. satyāṃ) and haurum “whole” < *harwəm < *sarwaṃ (Skt. sārvam).
3.4.9 Diphthongs

The development of the Proto-Indo-Iranian diphthong *ai is dependent upon both position in the word (nonfinal vs. final) and syllable structure (open vs. closed) in Avestan. Turning first to the development of nonfinal *ai, we find development to Avestan aēi in open syllables – aēit “he goes” < PIIr. *aït (Skt. ētī) – but to Avestan ōi in closed syllables: kauuōiš “of the singer” (gen. sg. of kauui- “singer”) < PIIr. *kawaiš (Skt. kaveh).

In word-final position, the usual development of PIIr. *ai is to Young Avestan -ē (the length determined by syllable count, as always in Young Avestan), Old Avestan -ō: for example, naire “man” (dat. sg.) < PIIr. *narai (Skt. nāre, compare Gāthic narōī). After glides, however, the development is different, PIIr. *wat becoming -uiie (aghuiie “life,” dat. sg. of ahu-), < *ahwe, PIIr. *-yai becoming -iie (maiōiī “in the middle,” loc. sg. of maiōīa- < PIIr. *madāyai, Skt. mādhye, yō, nom. pl. of the relative pronoun ya-< *yai, Skt. yē).

Proto-Indo-Iranian *au does not show such a syllable-structure set of developments in Young Avestan, becoming ao in nonfinal position across the board: thus, aōjah- “strength” < PIIr. *auijas- (Skt. ojas); gaoš “of the cow” (gen. sg. of gauu-) < *gauš (Skt. gōḥ).

In final position, PIIr. *au becomes Avestan -uū (compare the -ie development of *ai after glides): for example, huuu “that” < *sau (Old Persian hauv, cf. Sanskrit aśau); asrzzuūō “O righteous one” (voc. sg. of asrza- “straight, correct, righteous”) < *rjvau.

The so-called long diphthongs of Indo-Iranian, *āi and *āu, become Avestan āi and āu, respectively. Examples include the following: the dative singular of Avestan a-stems (PIE o-stems) such as (unattested) aspāi, dative singular of aspa- “horse” < PIE *Hekvōi (compare Greek -oī, but contrast Skt. -aīya); the nominative singular of the word gauu- “cow,” which has the form gauš < PIIr. *gauś (Skt. gāuḥ).

3.4.10 Epenthesis

Avestan shows the effects of a relatively recent process of i-epenthesis. It is important to note that this epenthesis has no metrical effects and thus may postdate the time of the composition of the texts. There are two distinct versions of i-epenthesis – one word-initial, the other word-internal. The word-initial version is quite restricted, affecting only initial *rī- and *θy- (itself from *ty-), as seen in irīštā- “damaged” (Skt. riṣṭa-) and ṛϑiējāh- “abandonment” (Skt. tyājas-). Both of these forms are disyllabic in Avestan. The word-internal version is much more general, occurring before dental and labial stops and fricatives as well as before n, nt, r, and rm if a front vowel or palatal glide follows. The phenomenon is quite common and can be seen in examples such as baraiti “he carries” (Sanskrit bhārati) and aïšī “towards” (Sanskrit abhi).

Interestingly, this epenthesis appears to be an ongoing synchronic process. As such, it tells us something significant about the accentual system of Avestan at the stage during which i-epenthesis took place. The addition of the enclitic conjunction -ca “and” regularly undoes the effects of i-epenthesis in penultimate syllables (i.e., penultimate before the cliticization
of -ca). Thus, we find baēšaziatica “and he heals” for what would appear without -ca as baēšaziaiti, or varādatica “and it increases” next to varādaiti. The standard explanation for such alternations is that the cliticization of -ca gave rise to an accent shift from the original penult to the syllable immediately preceding the -ca. Such shifts are characteristic of stress-based, rather than pitch-accent type accentual systems, indicating that unlike Sanskrit, the Avestan accentual system was of the former type. The -ca induced alternation also indicates that internal i-epenthesis should be expected only in stressed syllables.

Somewhat parallel to i-epenthesis, though much more restricted, is the phenomenon of u-epenthesis. Like i-epenthesis, the latter process is metrically irrelevant and thus would appear to be rather late. The phenomenon of u-epenthesis is essentially restricted to ru and ruu sequences. Standard examples include uruuaata- “duty” (< *rwata-, which shows an Avestan metathesis of the initial cluster when compared to Skt. vratā) and hauruua- “whole” (< PIIr. *sarwa-, Skt. sárva-). Further evidence that this is a late process can be seen from the fact that in cases in which, dialectally, Young Avestan ß has become uu (i.e., /w/) after r, the u-epenthesis is still triggered – thus gouruuaiaia- “seize” (< PIIr. *grbh ōyu-).

4. MORPHOLOGY

4.1 Morphological type

Avestan is a highly inflected language, much like other Indo-European languages of very early attestation, making use of a rich set of derivational suffixes and inflectional endings in both the nominal and verbal systems.

4.2 Nominal morphology

The standard Indo-European cases, genders, and numbers are preserved in Avestan, where they serve to inflect nouns and adjectives, as well as pronouns. There are eight cases (nominative, accusative, instrumental, dative, ablative, genitive, locative, and vocative – generally cited in this order). There are three genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter), distributed in the usual archaic Indo-European manner (i.e., the masculine and neuter differ only in the nominative, vocative, and accusative, which are not distinguished from one another in the neuter). Finally, there are three numbers (singular, dual, and plural). Adjectives agree with their head nouns in case, number, and gender. The nominal inflection system appears quite robust throughout the period of attestation, although some breakdown in the understanding of the case system is evident in very late compositions.

The nominal paradigms may be roughly divided between vocalic stems, the descendants of PIE *-o and *-eH2 stems, and consonant stems, continuing Proto-Indo-European consonant stems (see WAL Ch. 17, §3.5). The latter frequently show ablaut variations in their suffixal (or occasionally root) syllables (on Indo-European ablaut, see WAL Ch. 17, §3.2). For ablauting stems, it is often useful to distinguish between the so-called strong cases (nominative, accusative, locative, and vocative singular; nominative and accusative dual; and nominative plural) – characterized by full- or lengthened-grade ablaut before the ending – and weak cases, which show by contrast zero-grade ablaut. The paradigm of Indo-European thematic (o-stem) nouns, generally masculine or neuter, shows up in Avestan as follows (using *Heḵw- “horse” > Avestan aspa- as an example, unattested cases of this particular lexeme being marked with an asterisk):
Indo-European stems in *-eH₂, generally feminines, inflect like Avestan *daēnā- “religion”:

It is not practical in the present survey to list fully the many variants of consonant-stem inflection attested in Avestan. However, two representative paradigms will be presented: that of the Avestan masculine *r-stem *na-“man” (PIE *H₂ner-)

and that of the Avestan neuter *s-stem *manas- “thought” (PIE *mene/os-):

Readers are referred to the more comprehensive grammars of Avestan (Hoffmann and Forssman 1996 or Reichelt 1909) for more details concerning the many classes of noun inflection.
4.3 Pronominal morphology

4.3.1 Personal pronouns

The personal pronouns have singular, dual, and plural forms, though there are many gaps in attestation. For the accusative and some oblique cases, one must distinguish between tonic and enclitic forms, as elsewhere in Indo-European. The pronouns for the third person are generally supplied by demonstratives (see §4.3.2). Attested Young Avestan forms for the first and second persons are presented in Table 6.3; forms in parenthesis are Gāthic, provided when the Young Avestan form is unattested:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.3 First- and second-person personal pronouns of Avestan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Singular</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nominative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accusative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instrumental</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dative</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ablative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genitive</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Dual** | **First person** | **Second person** |
| **Nominative** | (vā) | | |
| **Accusative** | (əsāuuā) | | |
| **Genitive** | (nā) | yauuākəm |

| **Plural** | **First person** | **Second person** |
| **Nominative** | vaēm | yūzōm |
| **Accusative** | ahma | nō | vō |
| **Instrumental** | (əhmā) | (xūmā) |
| **Dative** | (ahmaibīiā) | (xūsmāouūīa) |
| **Ablative** | (ahmat) | (yūsmat) |
| **Genitive** | ahmākəm nō | yūsmākəm vō |

A special set of enclitic forms of the third-person pronoun is also attested. It does not distinguish between masculine and feminine, but has distinct neuter forms. It is found only for the accusative, except in the singular, where a dative-genitive form is also found:

| (6) | **Masc./Fem.** | **Neuter** |
| **Acc. singular** | ēm, hē, dim | ī, di |
| **Dat./Gen. singular** | hē | hē |
| **Acc. dual** | (i) | |
| **Acc. plural** | hîs, diš | ī, di |

4.3.2 Demonstrative pronouns

An example of the inflection of demonstrative pronouns (usually referred to as the “pronominal inflection”) is presented in Table 6.4; the table shows the forms of Avestan _ta- “this”_.

### Table 6.4 Demonstrative pronouns of Avestan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Neuter</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Singular</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>hō/hā</td>
<td>ṯat</td>
<td>ḥā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>ṭām</td>
<td>ṭā</td>
<td>ṭām</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>tā</td>
<td>tā</td>
<td>aētaiia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dative</td>
<td>aētahmai</td>
<td>aētahmai</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ablative</td>
<td>aētahmat</td>
<td>aētahmat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>aētahhe</td>
<td>aētahhe</td>
<td>aētajha/aētaiia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locative</td>
<td>aētahmi</td>
<td>aētahmi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dual</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nom./Acc.</td>
<td>tā</td>
<td>tē</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>aētaiiā</td>
<td>aētaiiā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Plural</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>tē</td>
<td>tā</td>
<td>tā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>tō/tā</td>
<td>tā</td>
<td>ta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>(tāiš)</td>
<td>(tāiš)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dative</td>
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<td>aētačibiō</td>
<td>aētābiō</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>aētaēšam</td>
<td>aētaēšam</td>
<td>aētāŋham</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locative</td>
<td>aētaēsu</td>
<td>aētaēsu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(fem. tā-), compare Sanskrit tā-. As in Sanskrit, the nominative singular masculine and feminine of this pronoun is formed from PIE *se/o-, rather than *te/o-. For cases in which the relevant form of ta- is not attested, but a form of the similarly inflected pronoun aēta- (likewise “this,” compare Sanskrit etā-) is attested, the aēta- form is provided.

### 4.4 Verbal morphology

The Avestan verbal system, like that of Proto-Indo-European, is built around the verbal root. From such a root may be derived a set of tense-aspect stems (though not all roots are found in all tense categories), including the present stem, the aorist stem, and the perfect stem. To these stems are built the moods of Avestan, which continue more or less directly the like-named Proto-Indo-European mood categories. Not all tense stems form the basis for all moods. The moods include the indicative, the injunctive, the subjunctive, the optative, and the imperative. Finally, the endings are added to the mood-stem. The endings encode person, number, and voice—in addition, they play a role in the encoding of some moods. The Avestan categories indicated by the endings are much like those of Proto-Indo-European itself—person (first, second, third), number (singular, dual, plural), voice (active and middle, perhaps also stative and passive).

The endings themselves fall into four well-defined sets, each used in the expression of one or more tense/aspect categories: (i) primary endings (used in the indicative present, indicative future, and in part in the subjunctive); (ii) secondary endings (used in the indicative imperfect, indicative aorist, indicative pluperfect, injunctive, optative, and in part in the subjunctive); (iii) imperative endings (used in the imperative); and (iv) perfect endings (used in the indicative perfect). In the active, these endings have the forms which are presented in (7) (absence of a form indicates lack of attestation; — indicates that no form is expected):
Using the verb *bar* “carry” as an example of a simple thematic present, the expected forms of the present indicative active would be as follows:

(8) | Singular | Dual | Plural |
---|---|---|---|
First | barām | barāuuahī | barāmahī |
Second | barāhi | baratô | barāθa |
Third | barāti | baratô | barānti |

In Gāthic Avestan, the first singular ending *-mi* is found only with athematic stems. Thematic stems such as *bara-* show the archaic ending *-ā* instead.

The injunctive present active of *bar*, which is identical to the imperfect except for the absence of the so-called *augment* (an *a*-prefix), is presented below

(9) | Singular | Dual | Plural |
---|---|---|---|
First | barānī | — | barāmahī |
Second | barāhi | baratō | barāθa |
Third | barāti / barāṭ | baratô | barāntī / barāṇ |

The subjunctive present active, which shows some variation as to whether or not it takes primary or secondary endings in some persons, is illustrated in (10):

(10) | Singular | Dual | Plural |
---|---|---|---|
First | barānī | — | barāmahī |
Second | barāhi | baratō | barāθa |
Third | barāti / barāṭ | baratô | barāntī / barāṇ |

The optative active present of *bar* is as follows (the duals are not attested):

(11) | Singular | Plural |
---|---|---|
First | — | baraēma |
Second | barōiš | baraēta |
Third | barōiṭ | baraiiăn |

Avestan attests a large number of present stem classes and several different types of aorist and perfect. Again, readers are referred to the standard grammars of Avestan for further details.
Avestan, like Sanskrit, presents well-known difficulties in distinguishing between infinitivals and case forms (usually “datives”) of verbal abstracts. The only infinitival form not directly traceable to a nominal case-form origin is the infinitive in -dii¯ai/-ði¯ai (compare Sanskrit -dhyai), which may be built either to the verbal root (as in Gāthic dərəi̯diâi “to hold” < dar) or to a present tense stem (as in Young Avestan vazadii¯ai “to drive” < vaz, present tense stem vaza-). The bulk of the remaining infinitives of Avestan represent descendants of Proto-Indo-European “directives” in ∗-ay built to a variety of verbal abstracts, including (i) root nouns (buie “to become” < *bh uH2-ai; Skt. bhuv´e), built on the Avestan verbal root b¯u; (ii) t-abstracts (st¯e “to be” < ∗H1s-t-ai, built on the root ah; and (iii) s-abstracts (Gāthic sr¯auuaiie´Åh¯e “to recite,” as if from ∗kloweyes-ai, built on the present causative stem sr¯auuaiia- of sru- “hear.” Infinitives built on other abstracts (men-stems, wen-stems, and ti-stems, for example) are also attested.

The participle system is quite robustly attested. The present and aorist systems show participles in -n. t-/-at- (added to the tense stem), continuing PIE ∗-ent-/-ont-/-nt- participles. In the perfect system, the suffix is -uuâh- in the strong cases, and -uˇs- in the weak cases (cf. Skt. -vāṣ&s-/-uṣ-).

The PIE ∗-to-participle (and its variant in ∗-no-) is also well attested in Avestan, showing up normally with the zero-grade of the verbal root. It has a “passive” meaning with inherently transitive verbal roots and an active meaning with inherently intransitive ones, thus karata “made” < kar “make” and gata “gone” from gam “go”. Proto-Indo-European ∗-no- is found, for example, in parana- “filled” (i.e., “full”) from ∗ph:no- (with a root vocalism analogical to the nasal-infix present), built on the Avestan root par “fill” (cf. Skt. pûrṇa-).

4.5 Numerals

As in other archaic Indo-European languages, the numerals 1 to 4 are inflected for case and number (1 being invariably singular, 2 invariably dual, 3 and 4 invariably plural), while higher numerals up to 19 are not. The Young Avestan numbers 1–10 are as follows:

(12) 1 a¯euua- 6 xšuuaš
     2 duua- 7 hapta
     3 ṯrai-, tiˇsr- (fem.) 8 ašta
     4 ca¸βar-/ catur-, cataŋra- (fem.) 9 nauua
     5 pañca 10 dasa

For the teens, compounds are used, much as in English. The second element of these compounds is dasa, thus 12 is duua.dasa and 15 is pañca.dasa.

The decades 20 to 90 show a variety of formations and are generally inflected. The Young Avestan decades, with some revealing case forms provided, are presented below (see Hoffmann and Forssman 1996:175):

(13) 20 višas, višaiti 60 xšuuašti-
     30 ṯrisas, ṯrisatəm; ṯrisatənəm 70 hapta̯it-i-
     40 ca¸βarasatəm 80 aštaiti-
     50 pañçaataəm, pañçaataβiš-ca 90 nauuaiti-

Finally, the numerals 100 and 1,000 are inflected as regular a-stems, their stem-forms being: sata- 100 and hazaŋra- 1,000. A noninflecting numeral for 10,000, baēuuara, is also found.
5. SYNTAX

5.1 Word order

The study of word order in Avestan reveals a typical archaic Indo-Iranian system, the “basic” order of which can be clearly determined only by a detailed investigation of a number of technical details. Such an investigation has not been fully undertaken for Avestan at this time. It is apparent that the placement of major nominal arguments of the verb – when they are not clitic pronouns or so-called WH-words (i.e., interogatives and relatives) – is determined by a variety of pragmatic systems (topic, focus), rather than by the role of the argument in the clause (subject, object, etc.). While such systems are sometimes referred to as “free word order,” it would be a mistake to take such a label too literally. Many restrictions on word order do in fact exist, one of the best known of which is Wackernagel’s Law (see §5.2). Another, less well-known restriction, concerns the placement of WH-elements, relative pronouns, and complementizers. These elements always occur either sentence-initially, or with a single focused constituent to their left. The latter construction can be seen in the Old Avestan example (Yasna 28.1):

(14) vaŋhāuš xratūm managhō yā xšnauuišā
gōušcā uruuaŋām
cow-gen.sg.=and soul.acc.sg.
“With which you may satisfy the insight of good thought and the soul of the cow”

In this example the noun phrase vaŋhāuš xratūm managhō “the insight of good thought” has been fronted into sentence-initial position around the relative pronoun (yā) as a focusing process. Such constructions are much more rare in Iranian than in Indic, and are virtually limited, within Avestan, to Old Avestan texts. Nevertheless, their widespread occurrence in a wide variety of archaic Indo-European languages allows us to see these Old Avestan examples as a valuable syntactic archaism.

Given the highly restricted placement possibilities for WH-elements, it seems most profitable to posit that such items always occupy the same position in the clause (the so-called complementizer slot). They sometimes occur after a single focused constituent as a consequence of the fronting of that constituent for emphasis. Thus, like the Wackernagel’s Law clitics, WH-elements are rigidly fixed in place. Word order is thus obviously not “free” in any meaningful sense.

5.2 Clitics

It is necessary to distinguish between three classes of clitic elements in archaic Indo-European languages, including Avestan (Hale 1987a and b). Sentential clitics include sentence-level connectives (the conjunction “and,” Avestan ca, and the disjunction “or,” Avestan vā) and adverbial particles. Emphatic clitics, such as Avestan zi, indicate focus on the element to which they attach. Finally, pronominal clitics are stressless versions of the personal pronouns, usually found in a limited number of case forms. A listing is provided in the discussion of pronominal morphology above. Each of these types of clitics is normally found in so-called second position. The observation that these elements show such a restricted distribution is credited to Bartholomae, who demonstrated the relevant phenomenon using Avestan data in his Arische Forschungen (1886). Wackernagel (1892) expanded the data set used by Bartholomae
to include extensive materials from Sanskrit and Greek. From his study the phenomenon of second-position placement of clitics has come to be called Wackernagel’s Law.

Each of the clitic types identified above occupies second position for rather different reasons and through distinct mechanisms, such that the definition of “second” turns out to vary somewhat with the class of clitic under discussion (Hale 1987b). Wackernagel’s Law is thus the epiphenomenal by-product of a diverse set of processes. Crucial with respect to several of these processes is one overarching principle – that clitic elements, being prosodically deficient through their stresslessness, must not occur at the left edge of a (prosodic) constituent. If the syntax places the clitic in such a position, the prosodic phonology repositions the clitic rightward until it has an appropriately stressed host on its left. We can see the effects of this operation quite clearly in the case of conjunctive clitics like Avestan *ca* “and.” Examine the following conjoined sentences, for example (from *Yašt* 19.51):

(15) A. ā.dim haθra hanθauruuuiat apəm napə auruuaθ.aspō
  preverb.him at once grabbed Apam Napat quick-horsed
  “Quick-horsed Apam Napat grabbed at him at once”
B. tat.ca iziieiti apəm napə auruuaθ.aspō
  it.and desired Apam Napat quick-horsed
  “and quick-horsed Apam Napat desired it”

It is clear that the sentence of (15) represents the conjunction of two clauses, the first one being ā.dim haθra hanθauruuuiat apəm napə auruuaθ.aspō, the second tat iziieiti apəm napə auruuaθ.aspō. The conjunction itself (*ca*) is not part of the content of the second clause, but rather the link between the two (though of course it is related to the second clause, indicating that that clause is conjoined to what precedes). Thus, syntactically, we might identify the basic (i.e., underlying) structure of (15) as being something like the following:

(16) ā.dim haθra hanθauruuuiat apəm napə auruuaθ.aspō [ca [tat iziieiti apəm napə auruuaθ.aspō]]

The syntactic structure gives rise to the following problem: a clause cannot begin with a clitic, which requires a host on its left, yet the second conjunct in (16) is a clause which begins with the clitic *ca*. The clitic thus is shifted phonologically rightward to the first available position which would give it an appropriate host – in this case to the spot immediately after *tat*. The result is the Wackernagel’s Law placement of *ca* seen in (15B). This phonological process has been referred to as a “prosodic flip” (Halpern 1992).

In the case of emphatic clitics in Wackernagel’s Law position, the facts are somewhat different. Avestan, like other archaic Indo-European languages, provides a number of mechanisms for emphasizing a particular constituent of the sentence. These include adding a particle, such as Avestan *ciθ* (Skt. *cit*), to the constituent, as in the following example (from *Yašt* 5.86):

(17) ðθam nara-ciθ yōi taxma jaiðiânte...
  you men-EMPHATIC.PARTICLE rel. bold entreat...
  “Even bold men entreat you...”

The subject (*nara yōi taxma* “bold men”) has been given a degree of emphasis by the addition of the particle *ciθ* (which takes second position within the subject noun phrase by the same “prosodic flip” processes described above). However, in this same sentence the direct object (*ðθam* “you” [acc. sg.]) has also been focused, in this case syntactically, by being fronted into clause-initial position. The pragmatics of the two processes of focusing can be somewhat
distinct, as can be seen from the English translation of (17). However, since both addition of a particle and syntactic fronting encode emphasis, it is not surprising to find that sometimes both forms of emphasis are placed on the same element, which is then both accompanied by an emphatic particle and fronted into sentence-initial position. Indeed, the pragmatic force of some emphatic particles is such that they are only appropriately used when the element to which they attach is fronted. Such is the case with the Avestan emphatic particle zi (cognate with Sanskrit hi). An example of the use of this particle can be seen in the recurrent Avestan formula in (18):

\[(18)\] aëte zi văcō... ahurō mazdā frāmraot zarathustrā
\[\text{these emphatic particle words... Ahura Mazdā spoke to Zarathustra}\]

"Ahura Mazdā spoke these words to Zarathustra"

The placement of an emphatic clitic such as zi works in the same ways as the placement of cīt in (17) – such emphatic clitics take second position within the constituent being emphasized. In the case of the sentence in (18), that constituent is aëte văcō “these words” and second position within that constituent is the position immediately following aëte. When the entire constituent is fronted into clause-initial position, as is appropriate given the type of emphasis indicated by zi, it is clear that the emphatic clitic will end up – accidentally, as it were – in second position in the clause. The emphatic clitics thus appear to occupy the same position as the sentential clitics, when in fact somewhat different processes lie behind their placement.

The precise mechanism whereby pronominal clitics come to occupy second position is again somewhat different, though the details are far too complex and theory-dependent to warrant full treatment in the present discussion (see the essays in Halpern and Zwicky 1996 for interesting speculations on this matter). What is of relevance here, however, is that there are only rarely exceptions to second position placement of such pronominals in Avestan. Just as in Sanskrit, where the number of such exceptions steadily decreases between the earliest Rig-vedic hymns and the later Vedic Prose texts, Old Avestan offers a greater – though still small – number of exceptions to Wackernagel’s Law positioning of pronominal clitics than does Young Avestan. The surviving exceptions in Young Avestan clearly represent archaisms and are themselves systematic – they involve cliticization to the verb, rather than the clause. A formulaic and often cited example, involving the first-person singular dative clitic mē, is given in (19):

\[(19)\] auuat āiiapta dazdi mē
\[\text{this boon grant me}\]

"Grant me this boon!"

Given these exceptions, Avestan will offer very real contributions to the much needed study of the diachronic development of the processes which underlie Wackernagel’s Law in the archaic Indo-European languages. This domain has already proven to be one of the most productive for the study of Indo-European diachronic syntax.

6. LEXICON

One of the more interesting features of the Avestan lexicon is the split in a number of common vocabulary items between daēuic and ahurian terms. The term daēuua- has come
to refer to demonic beings in Avestan, in sharp contrast to the use in Sanskrit of the cognate word *deva-* to refer to the gods. It is of some interest to note in this context that the Sanskrit term *asura-*, clearly the cognate of Avestan *ahura-*, which forms part of the name of Ahura Mazdâ “the Wise Lord,” who is the god of the Zoroastrians, came, during the Vedic period, to refer to a set of demonic enemies of the gods (*deva-*; for a discussion of these interesting inversions, see Humbach 1991:21ff.). Daevaic vocabulary items are used when reference is being made to the properties (usually body parts) or actions of manifestations of evil, the ahurian terms being used when referring to manifestations of good (the creations of Ahura Mazdâ). Examples include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daevaic term</th>
<th>Ahurian term</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>duuar-</td>
<td>i-</td>
<td>“go”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gah-</td>
<td>x’ar-</td>
<td>“eat”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aš(i)-</td>
<td>dōiñra-</td>
<td>“eye”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karōna-</td>
<td>gaoñša-</td>
<td>“ear”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fundamental role of dualism as a guiding principle of Zoroastrian thought is clearly evidenced by such lexical splits.

### 7. READING LIST

The most up-to-date and comprehensive grammar of Avestan is that of Hoffmann and Forssman 1996; the earlier grammar of Reichelt 1909, however, contains a detailed discussion of syntax and other matters not handled by later grammars. Beekes 1988 presents an idiosyncratic “interpretation” of the Old Avestan texts and should be used only by those familiar enough with Avestan philology to appreciate fully the implications of such an approach. All work on Avestan before that of Karl Hoffmann tends to misinterpret linguistically relevant phenomena as a superficial matter of orthographic convention. Hoffmann and Narten 1989 represents the most valuable work on the nature of the textual transmission of the Avesta. The only dictionary making any claim to completeness is Bartholomae 1904. Schlerath 1966, in spite of its name, is not a dictionary, but a set of tools for the study of textual repetitions and parallels, including Vedic parallels, as well as a passage-linked bibliography.

Geldner 1886–1896 is the standard edition of the core Avestan corpus, being based on a large number of valuable manuscripts since gone astray. There are a few texts which were excluded from Geldner’s edition, including the *Aogamaiaëca*, of which JamaspAsa 1982 provides an edition and translation. Translations of the Gañâs include Humbach *et al.* 1991, Insler 1975, and Kellens and Pirart 1988. An excellent overview of the difficulties involved in interpreting the Gañâs can be gained from the detailed treatment by three Iranists of a single hymn, *Yasna* 33, in Schmidt 1985. For Young Avestan texts, Gershevitch 1967 presents one of the Great Yañts (*Yašt* 10). Wolff 1960 presents the translation of the entire corpus which is contained in Bartholomae’s (1904) dictionary – arranged in text order (rather than by keyword). Finally, Reichelt 1911 provides a number of Old and Young Avestan texts, with glossary and notes.

The texts represent the founding documents of Zoroastrianism, and it is therefore of considerable assistance to familiarize oneself with the fundamental doctrines and history of that religion before attempting to tackle them. Boyce 1979 provides a detailed survey of current practices.
Bibliography