Avestan is the sacred language of the Zoroastrians in which they perform most of their rituals. It is known only from its use in the rituals of modern Zoroastrians and the manuscripts reproducing these rituals since the 13th century. Although sure dates cannot be provided, it is very likely that the creation of the liturgical corpus extended from the end of the 2nd millennium BCE until the end of the Achaemenid period (4th cent. BCE). This corpus includes texts in at least three linguistic layers (Old, Middle and Young Avestan). The present manual aims to provide a tool for facilitating the teaching of Young Avestan but keeps in mind also the possibility of self-learning since Avestan is not well-represented in the actual academic landscape. It includes a progressive presentation of the complex phonetic evolutions that are very characteristic of the Avestan language as a consequence of the evolution of the recitation until its fixation (6th cent. CE) and also of the Avestan grammar, complemented with exercises including samples of original texts of increasing difficulty. In each lesson, one text is reproduced in a manuscript, introducing the students to the direct work with manuscripts.
An Introduction to Young Avestan:
A Manual for Teaching and Learning
Alberto Cantera, Céline Redard

An Introduction to Young Avestan: A Manual for Teaching and Learning

Translated from French into English by Richard Tahmaseb Nirouman

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INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH VERSION

After we published the French version of our grammar, numerous actual and even more potential users approached us, requesting an English version of the *Introduction à l’avestique récent*. In one meeting with the publisher Harrassowitz, A. Cantera mentioned the existence of the handbook of the Avestan language for students and the repeated requests for publishing it in English. We are grateful to Stephan Specht, director of Harrassowitz, who encouraged the publication in English, warmly welcomed this book in their collection, and took care of the layout. What has been written in the introduction still prevails for this version, which is based on the reimpersion with minor corrections in 2022 of the French version. Furthermore, we seized the opportunity in the English version to make some adjustments without changing the general structure of the book. A few sections have been added, which in our experience while teaching were missing: the passive in -i (§ 7.3.3), more athematic verbs (§ 10.3) or the equivalent usage of genitive and dative (§ 11.6.11). Except for the final version of Lesson 3, the exercises remain the same.

In the French edition, the solutions of the exercises of each lesson were included at the end of the book in order to facilitate the use of the handbook by autodidacts. In the English version, we have decided not to include them in the printed edition since this could hinder its usage in regular teaching. I hope autodidactic users will understand our decision. Since the source of the texts used in the exercises is always indicated, they can consult the standard translations.

We are thankful to Richard Tahmaseb Niroumand who translated the text into English and always provided us with feedback and suggestions to improve our text. Any errors or mistakes are our responsibility.

Strasbourg – Berlin, July 2023

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INTRODUCTION

This introduction to Young Avestan is the fruit of several years’ work in various stages, but always with the same aim: to provide a learning tool for students and anyone interested in Avestan. The didactic concern has always been at the heart of the writing, and explains the division of the lessons, which generally consist of 5 parts: 1. phonetics, 2. nominal and/or verbal morphology, 3. syntax, 4. vocabulary (to memorise and to help with the readings), and finally, 5. exercises. For pedagogical purposes, in some of the nominal and verbal morphology tables, we have ‘reconstructed’ paradigms to help the learner understand the declension and conjugation system to make it easier to learn. To do this, it was not possible to use only attested forms. Where the form is not attested but reconstructed from other terms in the same paradigm, it is not italicised, and an attested form is provided below.

The tables that appear throughout the book are also found at the end of the volume to facilitate an overview, learning and the search for a form to be clarified. They are divided into two main categories: nominal morphology and verbal morphology. The chapter reference and table number are always provided, where more information appears, such as Vedic, Old Persian and Old Avestan correspondences.

To remain within the framework of an introduction and not a specialised scientific work summarising the various theories proposed, we have not made any bibliographical references, except in rare cases. Nevertheless, we provide a bibliography of the main reference works at the beginning of this volume, and again with a view to teaching, we have added to the section headings, where possible, the references of the paragraphs of works dealing with the same subject, using the following abbreviations:


The vocabulary given is divided into two categories: vocabulary to memorise and vocabulary to help with the reading. This distinction has been made to make learning the vocabulary easier and to avoid discouraging the learner. To make it easier to find vocabulary words after a few lessons, we have also provided an Avestan-
English glossary at the end of the volume. The translations given correspond to the exercises and do not represent all the possible translations of a term.

The exercises generally consist of three parts: 1. a test on the knowledge acquired in the lesson, with questions relating only to specific terms or short phrases; 2. sentences to be translated from Avestan into English and exercises on stems for the first few lessons; 3. a final version of a longer text. The texts provided have sometimes had to be adapted to suit the learning level. Where the text has been adapted, this will be noted by means of an ∼ before the reference to the passage covered. Nevertheless, adaptations have always remained minimal. Our concern during the writing of this introduction has always been to use original texts. In order to familiarise oneself from the outset to the handwritten reality, which is often a little different from a typeface, each lesson includes the same extract as the final version according to a manuscript, with the spelling variations that this implies. It will also be up to the learner to find the beginning of the passage in question and its end, since, as one might expect, a sentence does not always begin at the beginning of a line and does not always end at the end of a line either. Students will therefore be able to use the Avestan manuscripts currently online in the Avestan Digital Archive from the outset. The final texts of the first six lessons are given in the original script, and then only in transcription from the 7th lesson onwards, as we consider that at this point the learner is able to read directly from the manuscript in the original script.

To arrive at this result, it was necessary to work over a long period of time. Between 1999–2000, Alberto wrote a 10-lesson course in Spanish. It was designed for online teaching for courses on the language and culture of India and Iran at the University of Salamanca. Over the following years, it was partially adapted for teaching at the University of Salamanca and for intensive language courses (lasting one or two weeks and held at various universities). In 2009, Céline translated the current version into French and adapted it. Céline then added lessons 11 to 17 to cover the missing topics, which were revised by Alberto. In the summer of 2016, we made another thorough revision of the whole to serve as the basis for an English translation that is now used for teaching at the Institute of Iranology at FU Berlin. The close collaboration that followed to improve and update the lessons now makes it impossible to attribute specific parts to one or the other, even if certain themes are more prominent for one or the other. Alberto has focused more on the historical phonetics sections and Céline has written most of the sections concerning syntax that have been added in recent years. Even if those who knew the first versions will see traces of them, they cannot fail to notice the considerable evolution and amplification of the subjects dealt with, particularly due to the renewal of Avestan Studies in recent years.

Alberto’s work with Avestan manuscripts for the Avestan Digital Archive and his subsequent reflections on editorial problems led to the creation of the Corpus Avesticum Berolinense project (https://ada.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/cab/). The aim of this project is to produce a new edition based on new criteria, different from those of Geldner, but also from those of the school of K. Hoffmann. The former’s edition is for the Long Liturgy almost a diplomatic edition of Mihrābān Kayxōsrō’s exegetical manuscripts and deeply inconsistent. The editorial principles of K. Hoffmann, employed in a good number of recent partial editions and in the most recent and im-
important instruments (such as the Hoffmann-Forssmann grammar, the grammatical works of J. Kellens or the book on Avestan vowels by M. de Vaan) try, on the other hand, to reconstruct the state of the Avestan language at the time of the invention of the Avestan script, the so-called “Sassanid archetype”. However, in our opinion, such a reconstruction is not possible for two fundamental reasons:

1. The denial of the occasional nature of phonetic changes in the text after it was first written down.
2. The definite possibility that we do not know the total number of letters created during the invention of the Avestan alphabet and the fact that the value of certain letters is no longer determinable.

Moreover, even if the reconstruction of the state of the language were possible, we are not able to reconstruct the text of the rituals exactly as they were celebrated in the Sassanid period, as the comparison with the Nērangestān shows. Thus, the actual texts of manuscripts edited according to the phonetic principles of the Sassanid era would result in an eminently ahistorical product.

The learner of the Avestan language should be aware that we know of a series of rituals as they were celebrated in Yazd-Kerman as early as the 17th century and in India as early as the 16th century, with some additional information for the 13th and 14th centuries. By this time, the recitation of texts was already different in India and Iran, and there were even local variations in each community. The editor of the Avestan texts had to choose between one of these two variants, the Indian or the Iranian. In the Corpus Avesticum Berolinense, Alberto has chosen the Iranian tradition, as it is more archaic. As a result, the phonetic and handwritten characteristics have also been retained for this introduction, as explained in Chapter 1. The font used to write Avestan was also developed with this in mind. It was developed by Juan-José Marcos and integrated into the Alphabetum font. We are deeply grateful to him for his selfless help.

For the phonetics, we have been able to draw on the considerable work undertaken by Jaime Martínez-Porro in his thesis entitled The orthography and the recitation in the Avestan manuscripts. By describing orthographic conventions according to manuscript type, period and place of writing, he has given us the benefit of his expertise and results. These new advances in Avestan phonetics are evident in the size of the chapters devoted to phonetics. As things stand, it is possible to draw up a certain number of rules and introduce a certain number of standardisations. Despite our best efforts, it has not always been easy to simplify, because simplification would have removed one of the very characteristics of Avestan: its variation. In any case, we believe it is essential to familiarise students with the manuscripts from the outset. The Avestan Digital Archive has transformed the way we work with the Avestan texts, and we wanted to reflect this in the textbook as well.

The work undertaken by the Corpus Avesticum Berolinense has led, among other things, to a change in the numbering of the Avestan texts. It has been impossible to maintain Geldner’s numbering for two fundamental reasons:

1. The fact that many of the texts that appear in the rituals are not included in Geldner’s edition and that others that form part of Geldner’s fixed numbering only appear in certain variants of a given liturgy.
2. Its asystematic character, according to which the same blocks are numbered differently on several occasions, and the fact that he failed to note the divisor function of some texts.

Although we have tried in the Corpus Avesticum Berolinense not to change the numbering of the chapters, this has proved difficult on several occasions. For the manual, we have adopted the numbering introduced by CAB, essentially changing the traditional system for the Yasna and the Visperad. The texts of the Xorda Avesta had not yet been affected and we have therefore kept the traditional system. The Vidēvdād is in an intermediate position since only certain references in V1 have changed, but for the other chapters the numbering has remained identical.

We would like to thank all those who have participated in this adventure, from near or far, and who have made it possible (while noting that any errors or mistakes are our responsibility): the Estudios Iranios y Turanios collection, which welcomed this volume without hesitation, Jean Kellens for his advice and corrections, Jaime Martínez-Porro for his availability to answer our phonetic queries, Juanjo Ferrer-Losilla for his corrections when he used the course to teach and for his editorial help, Juan-José Marcos for the development of the Avestan font, and above all, the students who attended our courses in Salamanca, Paris, Liège and Berlin, and who helped us to improve this introduction to meet their expectations as closely as possible.

We hope that this volume will contribute to a better understanding of Avestan and stimulate interest in this rapidly developing field of research. It should be noted that, as the research is still in progress, we cannot claim to have made definitive decisions and are not immune to changes in the future.

London – Berlin, August 2019
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FUNDAMENTAL TOOLS

Grammar
Kellens, Jean. 1984. Le verbe avestique. Wiesbaden: Dr Ludwig Reichert. (abbreviated VAv)

Dictionary
To be noted that the dictionary is also available online within the Corpus Avesticum Berolinense: https://cab.geschkult.fu-berlin.de

Translations
Bibliography and fundamental tools


Transmission and editorial problems

Avesta

Digital tools
ADA – Avestan Digital Archive: https://ada.geschkult.fu-berlin.de
TITUS – Thesaurus Indogermanischer Text- und Sprachmaterialen http://titus.fkidg1.uni-frankfurt.de/framef.htm?index.htm
For the Avestan texts in particular:
http://titus.fkidg1.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/iran/airan/avesta/avest.html
MUYA – Multimedia Yasna
https://muya.soas.ac.uk
LESSON 1

1.1 WHAT IS THE AVESTAN LANGUAGE?

Avestan is an ancient Iranian language in which the majority of the texts on current Zoroastrian rituals are composed. The most important ritual is a liturgy that includes the pressing of a plant (*haōma*), the juice of which is drank by the officiating priest. It can be performed in several variations, the most frequent being the rituals we call Yasna and Viserad. In ancient times, it also included an animal sacrifice. The central part of this ceremony, the *staōta yesńiia* “the sacrificial praises” (the stanza known as the Ahuna Vairiia and Y28–54.1, except for Y42 and Y52), is written in a different language called Old Avestan (§ 1.1.1). Other parts, notably Y12–Y14 and Y58, attest yet another state of the language: Middle Avestan (§ 1.1.2). The rest of the ceremony and all other rituals are in Young Avestan. The Long Liturgy is the most complex ritual in a system that includes many other rituals of varying complexity.

In addition to the Avestan texts recited in Zoroastrian rituals, there are a few Avestan-language texts that are meta-ritual in nature, that is, they contain technical information about the performance of these rituals and the preparation necessary for their performance: the Hērbadestān, or “Book of Religious Studies,” and the Nērangestān, or “Book of Ritual Indications”.

It is not easy to determine the exact dating and location of the composition of the Avestan texts for the performance of these rituals. It is likely that the final arrangement of the texts in the form we know took place in the Achaemenid period and probably in the region of Fārs, or under the influence of the Achaemenid administration, although most of the texts had been composed in more eastern regions.

It is very important to be aware from the beginning that the phonetic form of the Avestan language as it appears in the manuscripts (the oldest dating from the 14th c.) is not the same as the form the texts had at the time of their writing. For centuries, the texts have been recited during the performance of the rituals, and the recitation has brought about very significant changes. This led to very different recitations in the various regions where Avestan-language rituals were performed. This can be observed in a comparison of the manuscripts’ standard version of the *Ašəm Vohū* (a phrase often repeated in rituals), and a version found in a Sogdian manuscript from the Silk Road.

Ašəm Vohū in the Avestan mss.  Ašəm Vohū from a Dunhuang fragment

\[ašəm \text{ vohū} \ vahiştəm \ astī\]
\[uštā \ astī \ uštā \ aŋnā\]
\[bīaŋ \ ašāi \ vahiştāi \ ašəm\]

[wrt][wrt][wrt]\n\[wštˈwštˈy\]
\[wštˈγmˈytwrtˈy \ \gammaˈwštˈyrtˈ\]
\[/urtāmwa(x) xuštāmīštī uštāyuštī\]
\[uštāhmāy iturtāi Ṓxuštāyirtˈ\]

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The language spoken by priests performing Avestan-language rituals influenced the way they recite the texts. Additionally, Iranian priests have developed instruments for the care and understanding of texts since ancient times. They analysed the texts and even introduced practices such as the repetition of the preverb attached to the verb when it appeared detached (§14.4.1). One of the most important practices has been the reproduction of the word ending by avoiding the phonetic changes that occur through the contact of the end of the word with the beginning of the next. It is a process which has an exact parallel in the Vedic transmission, although the Vedic texts were transmitted in both versions: as they were pronounced in the rituals (samhitā-pāṭha) and with the restoration of the endings (pada-pāṭha). For Avestan, only the version with the restoration of the endings is preserved, although sometimes we find connections between the words.

Towards the end of the Sasanian period, an attempt was made to standardise recitation in all regions, and it is probably for this purpose that the Avestan alphabet was created (§1.2.2). So, the fixed version of the Avestan texts is the one that was recited in western Iran around the 6th century CE and which was very different from the versions recited in other regions and, of course, also from the “original” language. Even after the invention of Avestan writing, oral transmission and recitation without the aid of manuscripts continued to produce changes in the way of reciting the text. Thus, one finds clear differences between Indian and Iranian recitation, which are also reflected in the manuscripts.

Therefore, it is often very difficult to date phonetic changes, and only a relative chronology is possible. For example, the palatalisation of ŋ predates the creation of the Avestan alphabet, because a special letter was created for this sound (§14.1.1.2.2). But in turn, palatalisation comes after the change ŋ → ŋm, because it does not affect the acc. sg. āinīm “other.” The last change does not affect OAv., so the palatalisation of ŋ took place sometime after OAv. and before the creation of the alphabet. Also, the velarisation and palatalisation of yh < s (§15.1.2.5 and 6), although they seem parallel evolutions, occurred at different times: the velarisation predates the metathesis of ŋ → ŋm, but the palatalisation came later. But again, both must predate the invention of the alphabet. On the other hand, we cannot know, for example, if the palatalisation of ŋ before a nasal and after a palatal consonant is prior to the creation of the alphabet or not. In our course, we attempt to record the forms as they appear in Iranian manuscripts which represent the pronunciation of the texts in Yazd and Kerman during the Safavid period, as we consider a definite reconstruction of earlier phases to be impossible. One cannot reconstruct the exact linguistic form of the texts, and we also know that the texts of the rituals underwent changes (despite efforts to avoid them) from the Sasanian period until the time of production of the manuscripts that we have. Therefore, we cannot reconstruct either the linguistic form or the arrangement of the texts as they were in the Sasanian period, although the changes seem to have been limited in both cases.

We also do not know what designation the composers of the texts used to refer to the Avestan language. The designation currently used, “Avestan,” derives from the designation for all the Avestan texts and their Middle Persian translation in Zoroastrian literature in Middle Persian: abastāg ud zand or zand ud abastāg. We know that zand denotes the Middle Persian translation. Moreover, abastāg, used
on its own, designates any text in the Avestan language. There are several tentative etymologies for abastāg. A probable interpretation is “the text which begins with a praise” (<*upa-stāyaka*-*), which would refer to the main liturgy that begins with a praise for haōma, the plant which is pressed during the ceremony. The preceding Drōn Yašt serves as an introduction for minor liturgies.

1.1.1 Old Avestan

As we have seen above, Avestan has three language states: Old Avestan, Middle Avestan and Young Avestan. These three states are found in one text: the Yasna, or “sacrifice,” a text recited during the ceremony of the same name. The corpus of Old Avestan texts is placed at the centre of the liturgy, and some parts are repeated several times in other sections as well as in different rituals of the Yasna. The position in the centre and the frequency of repetition demonstrate the centrality of these texts in the Avestan corpus.

Among the Old Avestan texts, some texts, the Gāϑās, or “Songs,” are written in metre (each Gāϑā has its own metre), while the Yasna Haptaŋhāiti is in prose. We find a similar distribution in the rituals composed in Young Avestan, where a series of litanies corresponds to the Yasna Haptaŋhāiti and metrical texts (such as the Yašt) correspond to the “Songs.” The Old Avestan texts are probably several centuries older than the others, although a precise date cannot be given. A general consensus places the Gāϑās around 1000 BCE.

1.1.1.1 Differences between Old Avestan and Young Avestan

Differences between Old Avestan and Young Avestan are found both phonetically and morphologically. We may summarise them as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Old Avestan</th>
<th>Young Avestan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phonetics</strong></td>
<td>Systematic lengthening of final long vowels ā, ī, ū</td>
<td>Final a, i, u (§ 6.1.2.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>ahurā</em> voc. sg. of <em>ahura</em>- m.</td>
<td><em>ahura</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>anī</em> “I am”</td>
<td><em>anī</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>jamtū</em> “let him come”</td>
<td><em>jamtū</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>mašīaēšu</em> loc. pl. of <em>mašīa</em>- m. “man”</td>
<td><em>mašīaēšu</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preservation of Bartholomae’s law</strong> (§ 10.1.2.3)</td>
<td>Only survives in inherited terms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The process of assimilation that affects voiced aspirated consonants when a voiceless consonant follows them. According to this law, the resulting group has two voiced consonants, and the aspiration passes from the first consonant to the second, e.g., *dʰtʰ*− > *ddʰ*, cf. Ved. *buddhā*− “awake” < *budʰtá*−.
### Persistence of intervocalic voiced plosives

- **drigu**- adj. “poor, needy”
- **pada**- nt. “foot”
- **aibi** prev. “toward”

### Spirantisation of intervocalic voiced plosives ($b, d, j, g > ħ, ẓ, ž, γ$)

- **driγu**
- **paδa**
- **aiβi**

### dm
- **dmāna**- nt. “house”

### nm
- **nm** (§ 13.1.3.2.2)
- **nmāna**-

### r̥š > arš
- **arš.vacah**- “with correct words”
- **arš.uxda**- “which is said correctly”,
- **arṣ̌eji**- “one who lives correctly”

### nǝr̥š
- gen. sg. of **nar**- “man”

### Ablative in -at for all inflections

- **drujαt̰** from **druj**- f. “lie”
- **aŋhaαt̰** from **ahu**- m. “state of existence”
- **garōt̰** from **gairi**- m. “mountain”
- **bār̥smαn** from **bār̥smant** from **bār̥smαn**- nt. “bundle”

### Pronominal Morphology

- **vīspa**- “all,” nominal declension
  - nom. pl. **vīspānḥō**
  - gen. pl. **vīspaṇm**
  - **vīspaέšαm** (Ved. **vīśveṣāṃ**)

### Verbal Morphology

- **parāsā**, **yāsā**, **vaxṣiā**, etc. except **Y44.7 aunaāmī**
- **xšaiā**, **tauuā**, but **Y46.1 aiienī**, **Y44.17 carānī**, **Y28.3 uʃiānī**, **Y46.17 sōngbānī**

---

### LOSS 1
Here is an extract from Y44, a text known for its questions relating to cosmogony from the 2nd Gāϑā.

Y44.3  
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{tat} \, \text{ϑβā} & \, \text{prəsā}, \, \text{arəs} \, \text{mōi} \, \text{vaōcā} \, \text{ahurā} \\
& \, \text{kasnā} \, \text{zaōdā}, \, \text{ptá} \, \text{ašahiiā} \, \text{pouruiiō} \\
& \, \text{kasnā} \, \text{x̌ə̆ŋ}, \, \text{strōmcā} \, \text{dāį} \, \text{aduuānām} \\
& \, \text{kō} \, \text{yā} \, \text{mā}, \, \text{uxšiieii} \, \text{nor̃saitī} \, \text{ϑβať} \\
& \, \text{tācīť} \, \text{mazdā}, \, \text{vasēmī} \, \text{ańiiācā} \, \text{viduiiē}
\end{align*}
\]

I ask you this, tell me correctly, O Lord: Who, then, is the creator and first father of the Order? Who set the path of the sun and stars? And who makes the moon sometimes wax, sometimes wane? These are the things I want to know, O Mazdā, and more.

1.1.2 Middle Avestan

According to K. Hoffmann, these are texts in Young Avestan which have the orthographic appearance of Old Avestan: a systematic lengthening of final vowels and the maintenance of intervocalic sound stops. He calls this state pseudo-Ġāthic. X. Tremblay replaces the notion of pseudo-Ġāthic with Middle Avestan and shows that these are not recent texts, but Middle Avestan texts, i.e., an intermediate stage between Old Avestan and Young Avestan. The Middle Avestan corpus concerns only certain sections, namely:

- A series of formal performative prescriptions, such as the \text{wāz\, giri\'snīh} (\text{ya\d̂ā\ ahū\ vairīō\ yō\ zaōtā\ frā\,mē\ mrūte}...) and the \text{srōs\ bari\'snīh} (\text{səraōšō\ iδā\ astū}...)
- Fраārəiti (Y12–14) with additions from the Visperad
- The Yeįhe Hātā
- Y35.1
- Fšūsō Mą ϑra (Y58)

Regarding the characteristics of Middle Avestan, there are three categories: a. phonetic, b. morphological, and c. literary.

a. Phonetic traits are the most obvious to identify: the lengthening of final vowels and maintenance of intervocalic sound stops.

b. Morphologically, we note the preservation of the ending \text{-bi\v{s}} for the athematic instrumental and the consistent opposition of the present and the aorist.

c. Finally, these texts are an exegesis of older texts. The exegesis proceeds with textual quotations, which have two characteristics: i. Old Avestan quotations from lost texts; ii. citations replaced by a recomposition: instead of quoting the text verbatim, it is recomposed, for example, Y51.23 is recomposed in the Yeįhe Hātā, then simplified in VrS51.6, likewise for Y33.14 in Y12.3, then simplified in Y13.4. Moreover, the composers of the Middle Avestan texts were careful to balance out the allusions to the Yasna Haptahāiti and the Gāϑās.
A known Middle Avestan extract is found in the Frauuarāne of Y12.6:

\[
\text{frauuarānē mazdaiasnō zaraϑuštriš vidaēuuō ahura.}\text{ṣkaēšō staōtā amǝṣ̌anąm spǝṇtanąm yaštā amǝṣ̌anąm spǝṇtanąm ahurāi mazdāi vaŋhauuē vohumaitē vispā vohū cinamī aśāūē raēuuaitē x-warahvīhaitē yā zi cīcā vahīštā yeŋ̱ē gāuš yeŋ̱ē aṣ̌om yeŋ̱ē raōcā yeŋ̱ē raōcēbhīs rōiϑβǝn x-wadvā}
\]

This is what I want to choose: to offer the sacrifice to (Ahura) Mazdā as Zaraϑuštra did, to break with the demons by professing the doctrine of (Ahura) Mazdā, to be the venerator of the Beneficent Immortals, the worshipper of the Beneficent Immortals. Because he is good and bestows good, I believe all good belongs to Ahura Mazdā, who upholds the Arrangement and bestows wealth with the force of abundance. The Cow, (of which Y47.6b’ says) “that which is so good”, belongs to him, the Arrangement belongs to him, the celestial lights belong to him, (the thought that) “well-beings mingle with celestial lights (Y31.7a’) belongs to him (Kellens’ translation).

### 1.2 THE AVESTAN ALPHABET

#### 1.2.1 The creation of the alphabet

The Avestan alphabet is an alphabet created specifically and in an artificial form for writing down the Avestan texts transmitted orally up to that time. The objective was to fix the pronunciation of the Avestan texts, the use of which in the rituals had resulted in significantly disparate pronunciations. To put an end to the changes in recitation and to impose a concrete way of reciting the Avestan texts in ritual celebrations, an alphabet and a written version of the main ceremonies were created.

The basis for the creation of Avestan script is found in the Middle Persian cursive alphabet. We owe the high number of characters to the desire of the creator to faithfully reproduce the exact recitation of the Avestan text in the ritual. He was therefore obliged to create an alphabet in which the smallest phonetic variants could be distinguished.

In order to create about fifty letters from a reduced model, that of the Middle Persian alphabet, which has only 14 letters, three main processes were used:

1. The modification of letters from the Middle Persian alphabet by adding strokes;
2. The combination of two or more letters from the Middle Persian alphabet to represent a single sound;
3. The borrowing of letters from other graphic systems, especially from the Greek alphabet and the alphabet of the Middle Persian Psalter.

The following letters are taken directly from the Middle Persian alphabet:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>MP</th>
<th>Av.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>٠, h</td>
<td>ω  a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y, d, g</td>
<td>ى  i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>١ k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>٣ t</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By means of modification through the addition of diacritics, the following letters were created:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MP</th>
<th>Av.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>y, d, g</td>
<td>٧ ی</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>ئ ی</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>٩ ی</td>
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<tr>
<td>n, r, w, '</td>
<td>٠ ū</td>
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<tr>
<td>s³</td>
<td>٧ ū</td>
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<tr>
<td>'h</td>
<td>٩ ی</td>
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<tr>
<td>'h</td>
<td>٩ ی</td>
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<tr>
<td>c ?</td>
<td>چ ی</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1 Only in heterograms.
2 This letter was created from the Aramaic heterogram ٷج ( ={ MP <OL>}, which was read in Middle Persian as ی. This special form was taken without the initial 'ayn to represent the sound ی.
3 Borrowings from Avestan in Middle Persian use s to reproduce Av. 才干 as in /g's/ گاه of Av. 才干 “song”.
4 In some manuscripts, such as H2 and J9, we find ی without the knot. This knot would be a secondary addition, which bears a resemblance to ی. From this fact, we understand the formation of ی, which simply extends the line to allow the distinction from ی.
5 ی is based on ی, itself based on ی.
With the combination of two or more letters, the following letters were created:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MP</th>
<th>Av.</th>
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<tr>
<td>'yw</td>
<td>ā</td>
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<tr>
<td>hw</td>
<td>x̂</td>
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<tr>
<td>gw</td>
<td>g</td>
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<tr>
<td>yk</td>
<td>ţ̃</td>
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<tr>
<td>ţy</td>
<td>ţ̃</td>
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<tr>
<td>yhr (?</td>
<td>ţ̃</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three letters were borrowed from the Middle Persian Psalter alphabet: ำ γ, d and ง j. Also, the sign for schwa ə was borrowed from the Greek ɛ.

The other letters were created either by modifying the Avestan letters created by this process, or were completely invented starting from forms similar to those existing: for example, ำ ā was created from ā + ə, and ำ n from n.

We do not know the Avestan alphabet as it was created in the Sasanian period, but the way it was used in later centuries. A few letters are lost in certain categories of manuscripts, and it cannot be excluded that some letters which had been designated were lost before the production date of our manuscripts.

### 1.2.2 The Script of the Avestan Language

Avestan is written from right to left, like Middle Persian and many other graphical systems derived from Aramaic.

Traditionally, only one ligature, that of -št- which is written ʂt and not ʂt, is mentioned. But when we consult the manuscripts, we find that a multitude of ligatures exist, especially in the Iranian manuscripts. Among these ligatures, we obviously find ʂt ʂt, but also ab ʂb, ša ʂa, råb, ma, etc., as can be seen in these examples from manuscripts:

---

6 In final position, Middle Persian <‘y> is read as -ā.
7 This group reads ē in Middle Persian <‘yw’> ē(w) “one”.
8 Cf. MP <gwbl> gabra “womb”.
9 څ ş̌ could be a modification of ş if the sound it represents was already a š sound when the script was invented.
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<td>barəsmə</td>
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<td>4010</td>
<td>vahmāica</td>
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<td>B5</td>
<td>vərəγrəynəm</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4060</td>
<td>baēsaza</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>frəuuruaēstrəmahe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hamaspaēmaēdiiehe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>677 (S1)</td>
<td>barəzanənəm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2101</td>
<td>sāuuənəm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of ligatures changes according to scribal traditions. All words are separated by full stops in the manuscripts. The separator full stop is also used to separate the members of the compounds, the preverbs from the verb and sometimes it even separates the stem from the endings.

Here is an example of V19.20, from manuscript 4200 (L1) (folio 209r):
vōhū. m
anō. ʰm.raēϑβaiieiti. vōhū. manō. paiti.ra
cēϑaiieiti. haca. auuaŋhāt. tanuuat. yat
. daēuuō.jaitaiiāt. daēuuua. ʰm.raēϑβa
iaieiti.
Which is:
vohu manō ʰm.raēϑβaiieiti vohu manō paiti.raēϑβaiieiti haca auuaŋhāt
tanuuat yat daēuuō.jaitaiiāt [daēuuua ʰm.raēϑβaiieiti] “he contaminates Vohu Manah directly, he contaminates Vohu Manah indirectly through this body struck by the demons [the demons contaminate directly]”.

The Avestan alphabet and its usage are not identical in all manuscripts from different regions and periods. There are palaeographic and orthographic variations (on the latter, see § 1.2.4).
In the Avestan alphabet, we distinguish between graphemes and allomorphs. The grapheme corresponds to a phonetic unit; therefore, a letter corresponds to a sound. On the other hand, allomorphs are letters that, although they are graphically distinct, represent the same sound, that is, a sound is represented by several letters (two or more). These are simple palaeographic variants. The number of graphemes and allomorphs is not uniform throughout the history of Avestan manuscript transmission. In effect, old graphemes become allomorphs when a small phonetic distinction is lost in oral recitation. Thus, the phonetic distinction between š and Ȝ disappears in the Indian transmission, and therefore, the letters š (.SO) and Ȝ (.DO) become allomorphs. The same thing happens in both Indian and Iranian transmissions with g and ġ. In India, the manuscripts do not distinguish between x̌ and x. Sometimes, between two allomorphs, the Iranian tradition chooses one and the Indian the other: in Iran, ġ (shopping), in India, ġ (shopping) in Iran, y (vowel), in India, y (vowel) etc.
The letter š is originally used to represent the result of the group *ć i̯V- (§ 12.1.6). However, in our manuscripts, this letter is just an allomorph of š and ġ before ii. Nevertheless, š is more resistant to generalisation than š. Thus, we find in older Iranian manuscripts several examples of the retention of š. We therefore maintain in this course the original š before ii (mašīia- “man”, ašīia- “accompanied by the reward, by Ašī”), and not š (saōšiiaṇt—“promised to opulence” instead of the oldest form saōšiiaṇt—, which is not attested in Iranian manuscripts).
Moreover, there are allomorphs which are the result of the appearance of purely formal variants during transmission, for example the two variants for t: ų in the Iranian and some Indian manuscripts (such as 4200 [L1], 4250 [O2]), but ći in Rōstām and Mihrābān as well as in most Indian manuscripts. Another example is provided by the different forms of the letter ʊ. In the oldest Iranian manuscripts, we have the spelling ʊ, then we see that ʊ is represented with a diacritical line below

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10 Here are underlined compounds and verbs with a preverb.
11 In Iranian manuscripts, this letter is used for ə̨, that is, it is a grapheme and not an allomorph of ą.
12 Yet we still find the two letters employed as allomorphs in Iran in a line of transmission from the Vidēvdād (ms. 4162, etc), likewise for Rōstām Mihrābān. In India, many manuscripts show both.
going to the right (to differentiate it from ī). In Indian manuscripts, we see the addition of a vertical line at the right end of the main line, for example (100 [B3]) or (4410). Furthermore, in Iranian manuscripts from the 17th century onwards, we see the confusion of ī and ā, so that a single letter is used for both. This phenomenon, specific to Iranian manuscripts, is due to the pronunciation of the Zoroastrian dārī, where ā is frequently pronounced ī.

Additionally, there are letters that are lost in either tradition. Losses are more frequent in the Indian tradition, where the letters ń, y, ŋv are missing. In Iranian manuscripts, only the letters ǧ and ȳ have almost completely disappeared. 13

1.2.3 The letters of the Avestan alphabet and their transliteration

The letters of the Avestan alphabet, given below, are ordered according to the alphabetical order that appears in some Avestan alphabets found in manuscripts. We employ a conventional Avestan typeface which does not accurately reflect the palaeography of a particular manuscript, but which in most selections follows the form of the Iranian manuscripts, although this is not always the case.

Our transliteration is basically the same as that used in K. Hoffmann and B. Forssman’s grammar, but with a few minor differences. They can be seen in the following table. First, we provide the transcription adopted here (1) and that of K. Hoffmann (2), if there is a difference; then follows the letter used in this course (3) which seeks to imitate the letter of the Iranian scribe Frēdōn Marzbān (4); then follows the letter used by Geldner (5); and finally, the Indian variants (6):

Table 1: Transliteration of the alphabet

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13 But they have rare appearances in the manuscripts of the tradition of ms. 4162.
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Two (and more in some manuscripts) nasalised ą are attested in the manuscripts: ḋ ą and ḡ ą (Hoffmann ą). In Iranian manuscripts one always finds ą, whereas the universal nasal vowel in Indian manuscripts is ą, which originally (and still in Iranian manuscripts) represents the nasalised short schwa. This letter does not appear like this in Iranian manuscripts (except in Rōstām Mihrābān). The Iranian form will be the one used in this book. But under certain conditions, Iranian manuscripts use ą n before n or m, doubtless as a substitution for an older ą ą. In these cases, we

14 Only in Rōstām Mihrābān, otherwise the Indian manuscripts do not attest it at all.
use the letter \( \partial \) in the course, even if it does not exist in Iranian manuscripts. We do so for the preverb \( h\partial m^{15} \) (except before a velar, dental or palatal, where we use \( ha\partial n^{16} \)) and for \( pn\partial n\)– “breath”, etc.

The same goes for \( y \). Indeed, the manuscripts attest two forms: most Iranian manuscripts have \( \varsigma \) for \( y \) while Indian manuscripts (and some Iranian ones from the tradition of ms. 4162, although \( \varsigma \) is rare) have \( \chi \) and \( \varsigma \). Geldner, in his edition, generalised the use of \( \chi \) \( \partial y^{16} \), but again, we will use the Iranian form.

The letters \( \varsigma \) and \( \partial y \) are only used in the initial position. Inside the word, they always appear as \( \varsigma i \) and \( \partial u \).

\( \varsigma \) is found in some manuscripts and represents the group \( bm \). For example, instead of writing \( \varphi \tau e \varsigma \varsigma y \partial m\partial i \) (dat. sg. of the pronoun), one can find \( \varphi \tau e \varsigma \varsigma y \). Since the trend observed in the manuscripts is a progressive abandonment of this letter, in this course we use the oldest form traceable in the Iranian manuscripts, that is, \( \eta \) for \( bm \).

\( \varrho \) \( g \) is a letter occasionally found in some manuscripts of ancient Indian tradition (e.g., ms. 677 [S1]). Its origin is the Middle Persian \( <y\kappa> \) and was presumably originally used before a palatal vowel and/or at the end of a word after a vowel. The Iranian manuscripts from the family of ms. 4162 also attest this, but rarely. Since neither the distribution is recognisable nor the original value completely certain, we will not use this letter at all in the course.

### 1.2.4 Observations on the pronunciation of certain letters

**Vowels**

\( \dot{\alpha} \) represents a velar \( a \)

\( \circ \) is a nasal \( a \), as in French \( enfant, chance \)

**Consonants**

\( x \) is a voiceless guttural fricative, similar to the Spanish \( j \)

\( \dot{x} \) is the palatal variant of the previous letter

\( \chi \) is like \( x \), but labiovelar

\( \gamma \) is a fricative \( g \)

\( c \) is a voiceless affricate, as in Span. \( chico \)

\( j \) is a voiced affricate, similar to English \( John \)

\( \partial \) \( d \) is a voiceless dental fricative

\( t \) is a plosive \( t \)

\( \beta \) is a voiced bilabial fricative

\( \partial \) \( y \) is a velar nasal

---

\( ^{15} \) The Iranian manuscripts show \( h\partial m^{8} \) or (more rarely) \( h\partial m^{c} \).

\( ^{16} \) Alberto Cantera and his school use the transcriptions \( \chi \) \( y \) and \( \varsigma \), but in earlier publications we find the opposite, \( \chi \) \( y \) and \( \varsigma \) \( \dot{y} \).
LESSON 1

is identical to the preceding letter, but palatalised in palatal contexts

is identical to ŋ, but labialised

= n before k, g, c, j, t, d, b

is a voiced s, as in Fr. poison

is a palatalised s like in Fr. chien

is a voiced palatal s, similar to Fr. jardin or Eng. television

is a palatal s more palatal than š

has a phonetic value that is difficult to determine. We know that etymologically it derives from the post-tonic -rt- group. In the 3rd century CE, it was pronounced -hr-, and from the 6th century, it was confused with š. In the Western academic tradition, it is indistinguishable from the pronunciation of š.

1.2.5 Orthographic differences between manuscripts, the standard editions and the transliteration employed in the course

In addition to palaeographic differences between Indian and Iranian manuscripts, there are also differences in the orthographic conventions used. The differences are most often the consequence of the different recitations of the Avestan texts in different places and times. Nevertheless, there are also differences due to specific decisions made by certain scribes, such as that of Mihrābān Kayxōsrō to employ ao for the diphthong aō in order to graphically distinguish it from iiō.

The most important differences appear between the Indian and Iranian manuscripts. A third group is represented by the so-called manuscripts of Mihrābān Kayxōsrō and his uncle Rōstām Mihrābān.

The standard edition by K.F. Geldner basically follows the orthographic conventions of Mihrābān. In our course, we instead follow the conventions of the 17th century Iranian manuscripts. The differences are not dramatic, but they should not be underestimated either. There are some systematic differences between Geldner’s edition and our course. A good number of them are common in specialised works based on the investigations of K. Hoffmann. However, our course shows some systematic differences compared to Hoffmann’s system, such as the use of the diphthong aō and not ao, a different distribution of ň, etc.

1.3 AHURIC AND DAĒVIC VOCABULARY

The dualistic cosmovision of Avestophone speakers has important consequences for Avestan vocabulary. Avestan texts make clear distinctions between the components of material and immaterial reality. The gods are divided between the yazata led by Ahura Mazdā and the daēuua, presided over by Aŋhra Maiiūu. Men are therefore divided between the partisans of either side. This division is deep and has affected the vocabulary. For many of the verbs and nouns, different words are used for ah-
uric and daēvic beings. For example, when a god or a good being shapes something, the verb (frā)-ϑβars- is used, while for a demon it is the verb frā-kart–:

V1.3 paōirīm asan̄haṃ śōiϑran̄mcq vabišt̰m frāϑβǝrǝsǝm azǝm yō aburō mazdā airian̄mcq vaējō vaϑhuiā dāitiiāiā āaṭ ahे paṭiit̰ar̄m frākarant̰at̰ ahurō maṉiiuś pouru.mahrkō azimca yim raōīšt̰m

I, Ahura Mazdā, have fashioned the first of places and the best of countries: the Airiiana Vaējah of the good Dāitīā; then, the Evil Spirit of multiple destructions made its counter-creation: the red serpent and the winter created by the demons.

The same goes for parts of the body, for example, zasta- “hand” is an ahuric term while gav– “filthy hand” is daēvic:

Yt10.96 vazr̄m zastaiia draž̄mnō …
(Miϑra) brandishing a mace in his hand…

Yt10.97 yam ̹ at̰ haca frat̰er̪saiti būš́iiąsta dar̪ēg̪ō. gauua
(Miϑra) before whom Procrastination, with long filthy hands, trembles.

It is not always easy to render this opposition in the translation and a negative qualifying epithet may be required:

Y9.8 yō janat̰ ažīm dahāk̄m ot̰rhizaf̦an̄m ṭrikan̄mrd̳om x̄uuaš. aš̳m hazaŋ̰ra.yaōxšt̰m
(Θraētaōna) who killed Aži Dahāka, with three filthy mouths, with three filthy heads, with a thousand faculties of perception.

where zafar– “filthy mouth” is opposed to āh– “mouth”, kam̄r̪̪a– “filthy head” to vay̪dana– “head”, aśi– “filthy eye” to dōiϑra– “eye”. The ahuric terms are attested elsewhere, for example:

Y28.13 yā āiš aṣ̌ǝm nipāŋ̰hē, manascā vô̲hū yaunaētā̄itē tuṷm mazd̄ ahur̄, frō mā sišā ḍhaŋ̪r̪̪i vaōuc̪hē maṉiiuś hac̪a ōb̪a ̄ār̪̪hā, yaē i̭ a ḍhūs pouruiō buuaṭ
You who, thanks to these (hymns), shelter for eternity the Arrangement and the good Thought, teach me with your mouth, O Ahura Mazdā, to speak to them about your Mind, through which the first state of existence will come into being.

HN2.2 āaṭ mraaṭ ahurō mazd̄ asne vay̪an̄aiti ništ̰h̪d̪aiti ušt̰aunuaitim gāϑ̪m srāunuaiti ušt̰at̰aṭ̰m nimraōmnō
Then Ahura Mazdā replied: “It (the soul) stays close to his head, reciting the Gāϑā which begins with ‘happiness!’, emphasising the verse that says ‘happiness!’.”

Y11 ništ̰h̪aṇ̣iemi bank̪araiiemi … huuarac̪a x̄aēt̪hē auwuuaṭ.asp̪he dōiϑrahe ahuruhe mazd̄a miḍrahe daχiiuṇm daŋ̪hupatōiś
I announce and arrange (the sacrifice) … for the brilliant sun with swift horses which is the eye of Ahura Mazdā and Miϑra, the ruler of the nations.
It should also be noted that ahuric terms can be preceded by the pejorative prefix duš-/duž- and thereby become daēvic terms, as in the example duždōiϑra- “evil eye”, attested in a long list of daēvic terms and which is also the subject of the verb duuar- “to flee”, itself daēvic:

Yt3.8 duždōiϑra apa.duuarata
The evil eye flees.

Sometimes the Avestan text itself clearly indicates two words for a single term, especially for animals such as the rooster:

V18.15 a±t mraϑ ahurō mazdā mɔrayō yō parō.darš n∧ama spitama zaraϑuśtra yím maśliāka anui dužuuacayhō kahrkatās n∧ama aōjaiie
Then Ahura Mazdā replied: “It is the bird named One-who-sees-in-advance, O Spitāma Zaraϑuśtra, which men whose speech is bad call Kahrkatās”.

Two other animals also have a double name: the hedgehog vaŋhāpara- “who traverses through the clothing”/dužaka- “with evil quills” (V13.2) and the turtle zairimiiaŋura- “whose limbs are in the house”/zairimiiāka- (V13.6).

However, there is no double qualification for all the terms. Thus, most terms can be used for both good and demonic beings. For example, hazaŋrā.yaōxštī- “with a thousand faculties of perception,” which we have seen qualify Aži Dahāka, is also attested to qualify Miϑra:

Yt10.35 miϑrǝm vouru.gaōiiaōitīm yazamaide ... hazaŋra.yaōxštīm ...
vispō.viδuuā ̊ŋhǝ m
We offer a sacrifice to Miϑra of vast pastures … with a thousand faculties of perception, … omniscient.

Here is an overview table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ahuric</th>
<th>Daēvic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>verbs</td>
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<tr>
<td>i-, gam-</td>
<td>“to go”</td>
<td>duuar-</td>
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<td>x̱ar-</td>
<td>“to eat”</td>
<td>gab-</td>
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<td>tac-</td>
<td>“to run”</td>
<td>zbar-</td>
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<td>ūβarš-</td>
<td>“to make”</td>
<td>(frā)kart-</td>
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<td>mrū-</td>
<td>“to say”</td>
<td>du-</td>
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<td>riḏ-</td>
<td>“to die”</td>
<td>mar-</td>
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<td>pat-</td>
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<tr>
<td>substatives</td>
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<td>&quot;mouth&quot;</td>
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<td>āh-</td>
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<td>uši-</td>
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<td>&quot;ear&quot;</td>
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<td>gaōša-</td>
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<td>dōiðra-</td>
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<td>&quot;eye&quot;</td>
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<td>nmāna-</td>
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<td>&quot;house&quot;</td>
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<td>puðra-</td>
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<td>&quot;son&quot;</td>
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<td>baōiði-</td>
<td>f.</td>
<td>&quot;smell&quot;</td>
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<td>manaōðri-</td>
<td>f.</td>
<td>&quot;neck&quot;</td>
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<td>vaydana-</td>
<td>nt.</td>
<td>&quot;head&quot;</td>
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<td>uruðban-</td>
<td>nt.</td>
<td>&quot;belly&quot;</td>
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<td>zanga-/pad-</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>&quot;foot&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zasta-</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>&quot;hand&quot;</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1.4 VOCABULARY

Vocabulary will always be given in Avestan alphabetical order: a ā â ă ě ē ő o ō i ī u ū k x Ź x̆ g ɣ j ṭ Š d Ž Ṯ p b ṃ ṇ ñ n ň m ŭ y/i/ii v/uu r s z Ž Ž́ Š h. Both the vocabulary to be memorised and the vocabulary to help with the reading are listed in this order.

1.4.1 Vocabulary to memorise

- ɑŋhra- mainiiu- m. proper noun, “Aŋhra Maińiu, the Evil Spirit”
- aša- nt. “(cosmic and ritual) Order, Arrangement”
- ašauuan- adj. “one who sustains the Order”
- ahura- mazdā- m. name of a divinity, “Ahura Mazdā”
- daēnā- f. “daēnā, the vision-soul; religion”
- mazdaiiasna- adj. “Mazdean, one who sacrifices to Ahura Mazdā”
- mašiia- m. “man, mortal”
- miţra- m. name of a divinity, “Miţra”
- yaz- v. “to sacrifice to, to worship”
  construction: to sacrifice to something (acc.) by means of something (instr.)
- zaraḵuštra- m. proper noun, “Zaraḵuštra”
1.5 EXERCISES

1.5.1 Transcribe the following two excerpts
To get used to the manuscripts from the beginning, each lesson will include an extract according to the usual transcription used and for reference, the same extract according to a manuscript, with any orthographic variations that this entails.
LESSON 1

ms. 15 (37r)
LESSON 2

2.1 MORPHOLOGICAL CATEGORIES

2.1.1 The noun

Avestan, like all Indo-European languages, is an inflected language. Nouns are declined and adopt different inflections according to the function they perform in the sentence. The declension of the term includes all these possibilities. The Avestan declension contains eight distinct cases: nominative, vocative, accusative, genitive, dative, ablative, instrumental and locative. Their most important syntactic functions are as follows:

Nominative: expresses the grammatical subject which usually expresses the agent, e.g., “Zaraϑuštra recited the Ahuna Vairiia”. The nominative answers the question “who?”

Vocative: identifies a person being addressed, for example, “O Ahura Mazdā, who is the most armed among the deities?”

Accusative: expresses the direct object, e.g., “Zaraϑuštra recited the Ahuna Vairiia”. The accusative answers the question “what?” or “whom?”

Genitive: has several functions. It often answers the question “from whom?”. Here are some of its functions: 1. Possessive, e.g., “The house of Pourušaspa”, 2. Subjective, which can express the agent, e.g., “His sacrifice to the gods” (i.e., he sacrificed to the gods), 3. Objective, which can express the object, e.g., “Creator of the bony world” (i.e., he established the bony world);

Dative: expresses the indirect object for which or in whose interest the action is performed, for example, “What does the friend bring to the friend?” The dative answers the question “to whom?” or “for whom?”

Ablative: expresses the origin of an action, for example: “The demons come from the north”. The ablative answers the question “from where?”

Instrumental: expresses the instrument with which an action is performed, for example: “He cooked his meal with a pan”. The instrumental answers the question “with what?” “With whom?” or “by means of what?”

Locative: expresses where an action takes place, for example: “On the head of the demons”. The locative answers the question “where?”

There are three numbers: singular, dual and plural. Finally, the Avestan noun can have three genders: masculine, feminine and neuter.

There are several declensions classified by stems. The stem is what remains when we remove the ending from the noun, for example, aburabe has a stem which ends in
the thematic vowel -a, and its gen. sg. inflection is -he. But it is not always so easy to establish the stem since the union of the stem with the inflectional phrase regularly causes a series of phonetic evolutions which makes the analysis difficult. An example is the nominative singular ahurō, the stem of which is ahura-. The underlying form is expected to be *ahura-s with the nominative singular -s inflection, but *-as evolves into ō in Avestan.

2.1.2 The verb

The verb indicates the time in which the expressed action takes place, the person and the number of subjects performing the action. The verb has many different categories: tense, mood, voice, number and person. All these possibilities for the verb are called the conjugation.

There are three temporal-aspect stems (with distinctive formal characteristics) from which different tenses can be formed:

1. The present stem is the basis for forming the present and imperfect tenses. They are distinguished by the use of primary (present) or secondary (imperfect) inflections. The imperfect often appears without the augment, in which case, we may speak of an injunctive.
2. The aorist stem, on which the aorist is based, which is about to disappear completely in the Young Avestan.
3. The perfect stem is the basis for two tenses: the perfect and the pluperfect.

The Avestan verb has the same moods as the Vedic verb:

- The indicative, which expresses the realisation of a verbal action;
- The subjunctive, which expresses the subject’s will to do or intention to do something in the future;
- The optative, which usually expresses the speaker’s desire for the subject to perform an action;
- The imperative;
- The injunctive, which in Avestan mainly has a past-oriented temporal value. The modal value appears only in prohibitive speech.

The combination of temporal stems, tenses and moods can be represented as follows:
The Avestan verb can appear in three distinct voices:
- the active;
- the middle, which expresses the subject’s interest in the action;
- the passive, whereby the subject is the one who undergoes the action performed by another. It is formed either with the middle forms or with a special present stem, -iia-.  

The Avestan verb has three persons: 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd}. Like the noun, it has three numbers: singular, dual and plural.

### 2.2 DECLENSIONS OF a-STEMS (ALF § 87, IA § 19.1)

Stems ending in -a are always masculine or neuter. This declension is composed of nouns, adjectives, which include middle voice participles in -āna, -mna, verbal adjectives in -ta, gerunds, etc.

Some examples for this declension:
- masculine nouns: aspa- “horse”, ahura- “lord”, daēuua- “demon”, yasna- “sacrifice, religious ceremony”, zasta- “hand”;
- neuter nouns: xšaϑra- “power, reign” nmāna- “house”, vampa- “song of adoration”, šīaōϑna- “gesture, action”;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>Mood</th>
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<td>present</td>
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<td>pluperfect</td>
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The endings are as follows:

### Table 4: Endings of \(-a\)-stems

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<td>N</td>
<td>-a-s &gt; -ō</td>
<td>-a-m &gt;</td>
<td>-a (-ā°)</td>
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<td>(a-s°)</td>
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<td>O.Av. -ā</td>
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<td>Ab</td>
<td>-āt (-āt°) / -ādā with postposition</td>
<td>-aśībāia</td>
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<td>-aśībāia</td>
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Variants of endings appear in brackets following the combination with enclitic particles or with some postpositions:

- The enclitic particle, indicated by means of the sign °, for example -ca “and”, has regularly prevented the evolution of the final position-specific endings. As a result, alongside the nominative aspō “the horse” of the stem aspa-, we can also find the form aspasca “and the horse” (§ 15.1.2.2). Regarding the loc. sg. aspaeca, see § 8.1.1.2. Furthermore, the addition of -ca produces, it seems, a shift of stress to the last syllable of the word, which sometimes has consequences. For example, when we join -ca to the ablative, we get: -āat-ca < *-āt-ca, resulting in yasnāatca.

- The ablative and locative are sometimes followed by the postposition ā, which being abbreviated in the final to -a can lead to phonetic evolutions. In abl. sg. for example, spasāt + ā resulted in spasāda with a shift from ŭ to ū.
After ĵ and ſ, the addition of certain endings produces phonetic evolutions that change the appearance of the declension. Because of this, we distinguish between the standard declension ((Ca-stems) and the declension of stems in -ja or -ya.

### 2.2.1 Stems in -Ca

The declensions of aspa- m. “horse” and šiiāōδna- nt. “gesture, action”¹ were used as models for the standard a-declension. For attested forms, we used aməṣa- adj. “immortal”, ahura- m. “lord”, xšaϑra- nt. “power, reign”, nmāna- nt. “house”, vīra- m. “man”, raōδa- m. “growth”, sata- nt. “hundred”, zasta- m. “hand” and haōma- m. “haōma”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Ca-stems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Singular</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>m.</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>V</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ab</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
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<tr>
<td>L</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

¹ From the genitive form onwards, the declension of neuters is equivalent to that of the masculine, which is why we have not included the forms of the neuter. Indeed, the latter are deducible from the masculine forms, for example, we would have in gen. sg. šiiāōδnahe, dat. sg. šiiāōδnaiš, etc.
nom. m. sg. \(-\ddot{o} < ^{\circledast}-ab < ^{\circledast}-as\) (OA\textit{v.} -\ddot{a} or -\ddot{o}) (§ 5.1.2.7).

OP \textit{Pārsa}, Ved. \textit{āśvah}

voc. m. sg. Ved. \textit{āśva}

acc. m. sg. \(-\ddot{a}m < ^{\circledast}-am\). \(a\) changes to \(\ddot{o}\) before a nasal in final position: \(a \rightarrow \ddot{o}\) when \(aN\#\), as here, \(^{\circledast}\text{aspam} > \text{aspm}\) (§ 5.1.2.1).

OP \textit{Pārsam}, Ved. \textit{āśvam}

gen. sg. \(-\ddot{a}be < ^{\circledast}-ahje < ^{\circledast}-ahja\) (OA\textit{v.} -\ddot{a}h\ddot{ia}i\ddot{a}) < \(^{\circledast}-asja\). On the aspiration of \(s\), see § 12.1.2.1., and on \(^{\circledast}\text{ia} > \e\), see § 5.1.2.4.

We also find an \(-\ddot{a}jh\ddot{e}\) ending mostly (but not only) in pronominal forms (§ 15.1.2.6).

OA\textit{v.} a\ddot{s}h\ddot{a}h\ddot{ii}ā, OP \textit{Pārsahyā}, Ved. \textit{āśvasya}

dat. sg. \(-\ddot{a}i < ^{\circledast}=-\ddot{ai} < ^{\circledast}-\ddot{o}\ddot{j} < ^{\circledast}-\ddot{e}\ddot{i}\)

cf. Ved. \textit{āśvāya}

When the dative is followed by the enclitic \(^{\circledast}\text{ca}\), the ending remains unchanged \(-\ddot{ai}\), for example, in the very frequent formula:

\(\text{yasnā} \text{a} \text{c}a \text{ va} \text{mā} \text{a} \text{c}a \) “and for the sacrifice and for the song of adoration”. However, we also find the variant \(-\ddot{a}w\ddot{0}\), for example, in \(\text{mi} \text{ia} \text{z} \text{d} \text{a} \ddot{e} \ddot{a} \ddot{c}a\) “and for the solid offering”, through the influence of the athematic dat. sg.

abl. sg. \(-\ddot{a}t < ^{\circledast}-\ddot{o}-\ddot{a}(d)\)

Ved. \textit{āśvāt}

To the ending \(-\ddot{a}t\) is sometimes joined the postposition \(\ddot{a}\), which causes the change of \(-t\) to \(-\ddot{o}\): \(x\ddot{s}a\ddot{dr}\ddot{at} - \ddot{a} > x\ddot{s}a\ddot{dr}\ddot{ā}a\).

When we join \(-\ddot{a}c\) to the ablative, we get: \(-\ddot{a}\ddot{a}t - \ddot{a}c < ^{\circledast}-\ddot{a}t - \ddot{a}c\), for example \(\text{yasnā} \ddot{a} \ddot{a}t\ddot{ca}\).

When \(\text{haca}\) follows, there is a shortening of the \(-\ddot{a}\) of the antepenultimate syllable, e.g., \(\text{nm\ddot{a}na} \ddot{ta} \text{ haca}\). Exceptions with \(-\ddot{a}t\) are: \(a\ddot{s}t\ddot{h}a\ddot{c}a\); and in \(-\ddot{u}\ddot{a}t\ddot{h}a\ddot{c}a\): \(\text{bar\ddot{a}}\ddot{r} \ddot{u} \ddot{i} \ddot{a}t\ddot{h}a\ddot{c}a\), \(\text{ya}\ddot{a}\ddot{z}\ddot{d} \ddot{a} \ddot{r} \ddot{i} \ddot{u} \ddot{i} \ddot{a}t\ddot{h}a\ddot{c}a\) and \(\text{huka}\ddot{a}\ddot{r} \ddot{i} \ddot{u} \ddot{i} \ddot{a}t\ddot{h}a\ddot{c}a\).

On these phonetic changes, see § 6.1.2.5.

instr. sg. \(-\ddot{a} < ^{\circledast}=-\ddot{o}\)

OP \textit{kārā}, Ved. \textit{āśvā}

loc. sg. \(-\ddot{e} < ^{\circledast}-\ddot{a}j\) (OA\textit{v.} -\ddot{oi}); on \(\text{aspa}\ddot{e}\), see § 8.1.1.2.

OP \textit{mādaiy}, Ved. \textit{āśvē}; OP \textit{dastayā}

nom.-acc. \(-\ddot{a} < ^{\circledast}=-\ddot{o} < ^{\circledast}-\ddot{o}-\ddot{h}1\)

m. du. Ved. \textit{āśvā}

gen. du. \(-\ddot{a}\ddot{i} \ddot{a} < ^{\circledast}-\ddot{a}\ddot{i} \ddot{a}b < ^{\circledast}-\ddot{a}\ddot{i} \ddot{as}\)

cf. Ved. \textit{āśvāyoh}

dat. instr. The expected form is \(-\ddot{a}\ddot{b}\ddot{ii}a < ^{\circledast}-\ddot{a}-\ddot{b}\ddot{j}ā\) (cf. Ved. \(-\ddot{a}-\ddot{b\ddot{h}yām}\)), but Avestan and Old Persian attest \(^{\circledast}-\ddot{a}j-\ddot{b}\ddot{j}ā\) (Av. \(-\ddot{a}ē\ddot{b}ii\ddot{a}, \text{OP}-\ddot{a}i-\ddot{b}yā\)), \(-\ddot{a}\ddot{b}\ddot{i}a\) is the true ending and the influence of the plural forms explains the ending \(-\ddot{a}\ddot{b}ii\ddot{a}\).

cf. Ved. \textit{āśvābhyām}

abl. du. \(-\ddot{a}\ddot{i} \ddot{ii} < ^{\circledast}-\ddot{a}\ddot{i} \ddot{ii}b < ^{\circledast}-\ddot{a}\ddot{i} \ddot{ias}; \text{cf. Ved. } \textit{āśvāyoh} (!)
nom. m. pl. The form -a < -ā is actually an old form of the collective *eh₂.
Sometimes masculine a-stems have the final -ābhō (< *āsas) which has been hypercharacterised into -ā̊s. This final is the Indo-European form *-o-es > *ōs.

acc. m. pl. -q / -ā < *-aṅhō < *-aṃs (< h between vowels becomes *-ybh [§ 6.1.2.1.]). This final is the Indo-European form *-o-es > *ōs which has been hypercharacterised into *-ō-s-es.

nom.-acc. nt. pl. OP áyadanā

gen. pl. -anām < *-ānām, with a shortening of the first ā (except in māšūānām).

Ved. áśvān

Note the form š́iiaōϑǝnanām which shows an anaptyxis (see § 4.1.1)

dat.-abl. pl. -aēbiiō < *-aibhōs (OAv. -ōibiiō), where we may note the appearance of an i between the thematic -a and the ending which strictly belongs to the pronominal inflection.

Ved. áśvebhyaḥ

instr. pl. -aǐi < *-oǐi

Ved. áśvaiḥ

loc. pl. -aēśu < *-ojsu

Ved. áśveṣu; OP mādaiśuvā

2.2.2 Semivowel stems

When the thematic vowel is preceded by a semivowel, the addition of the endings causes a series of phonetic evolutions which make more difficult to analyse the forms. Below are the declensions of maṣīia- m. “man” and paōiriia- adj. “first” (Table 6), then that of hauruua- adj. “intact, complete” (Table 7). To complete the table, we used asńiia- adj. “of the day”, vərəϑraγńiia- nt. “capability of breaking the obstacle”.

Footnote:
2 Forms which have undergone an additional or different phonetic evolution in relation to the declension in -Ca appear in the shaded cells.
Table 6: ja-stems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>nt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>mašiiō</td>
<td>paōirīm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>mašīm</td>
<td>paōirīm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>mašīm</td>
<td>paōirīm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>mašīebe</td>
<td>mašiiāŋhō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>mašiiāi</td>
<td>mašiiāiębiibio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>mašiiąt</td>
<td>asniiaębiibio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>mašiiąś</td>
<td>mašiiąś</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>mašiiąęšu</td>
<td>vərəϑraŋiiąęšu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- CjiaN in final position becomes -CiN, for example *mašiiam > mašiiom (OAv) > *mašiim > mašim (§ 5.1.2.2).

OP martiyam

The IIr. a becomes Av. e after i and when the following syllable contains i, ii, or é as well as before j: YAv. yeitī “when”, Av. yesńiia- “worthy of sacrifice”, Av. iśiiejāb- “abandonment”. Thus: a → e when jaCi, jaCii or jaCē or jįaj (§ 5.1.2.4). This phonetic law applies here: *mašiiabe > mašiebe.

OP martiyahyā

OP martiyānām

To complete the table, we used daēua- m. “demon”, Žrišuua- nt. “a third”, zarśtuua- nt. “stone”, hauua- adj. “one’s own”.
Table 7: *ya*-stems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th></th>
<th>Dual</th>
<th></th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>m.</td>
<td>nt.</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>nt.</td>
<td>m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>hauruûō</td>
<td>daēuûō</td>
<td>haurum</td>
<td></td>
<td>hauruua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>haurum</td>
<td>pourum</td>
<td>haurum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>hauruuāi</td>
<td>Šrišuuāi</td>
<td>hauuaēibiia</td>
<td>hauuaēibiia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>hauruuahē</td>
<td>daēuuahe</td>
<td>hauruuanām</td>
<td>daēuuanām</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>hauruuāi</td>
<td>Šrišuuāi</td>
<td>hauuaēibiia</td>
<td>hauuaēibiia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>hauruua</td>
<td>Šrišuua</td>
<td>hauuaēiš</td>
<td>daēuuāiš</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>hauruua</td>
<td>Šrišuua</td>
<td>hauuaēiš</td>
<td>daēuuāiš</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>hauruue</td>
<td>zarštûue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

acc. sg. In the acc. sg., a difference in treatment between manuscripts should be noted. Indeed, Indian manuscripts attest an -ūm ending, whereas Iranian manuscripts attest either -um or -ūm. The distribution is as follows (cf. §5.1.2.3): -um after a consonant (*haurûam > *haurûam > *haurûum > *haurum), -ūm after two consonants (*druûam > *druûam > *druûum > drûum “healthy”).

dat. sg. The dat. sg. *hauruue (V13.10, 15.3) takes the ending of the noun it accompanies: sune dat. sg. of span- “dog”.

loc. sg. Forms are attested in Y11.7 šrišuue and V8.10 zarštûue, zâmôštuue “on a clay brick”. The expected forms are *hauruuiē, Šrišuuiē, etc. as in the nom.-acc. nt. du. (§ 8.1.1.2). The Iranian mss. often show *uui with their usual confusion between i/e in final position.

acc. pl. The acc. pl. cell is left empty, as the texts do not attest the expected form, namely *hauruuiû with the evolution *uuaan > *-uuaŋh > *-uuaŋh > *-uuaŋ > -uui. Taking daēuua- “demon” as an example, we find that the expected acc. pl. form *daēuuiû is never attested, as the texts most often show the nom. pl. daēuua functioning in the accusative, or the form daēuûō.

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3 Uncertain form attested only in an obscure passage (P31).