Kirdêr's Clairvoyants: Extra-Iranian <- (a outside of Iranian) and Gathic Perspectives

MARTIN SCHWARTZ, Berkeley

I

The high priest Kirdêr's late 3rd century CE Pahlavi text (inscribed in copies at four different sites), which reports a vision of how he will be favorably received in the afterlife, is a unique Sasanian document whose broad interest, though obvious enough from the various studies devoted to it hitherto, is far greater than has been suspected. As I shall show, crucial aspects of the text can be clarified by an abundance of data from cultures other than Iranian. In addition, I shall show that Kirdêr's text illuminates some important passages of the Gathas.

The most recent study of the relevant Kirdêr text is that of F. Grenet (2002). Grenet's article, which builds on the earlier studies by Iranists (for which Grenet supplies the essential bibliography), provides a new translation and commentary containing the following solutions to textual cruxes, from which my own remarks will proceed:

1) Kirdêr did not himself have the vision, but had the role of inducing ("provoquer") others, youngsters, to have the vision for him, while he remained in conversational contact with them during their trance.

2) The inscriptions refer to these children via the word <hysyke> = rōshīg, the equivalent of Book Pahlavi <hysyke> 'boy, page', both forms accounted for by rāṣyaka (Sims-Williams 'of the court'). Grenet confirms the youth of the clairvoyants through their markedly unsophisticated ("naïf"), simple description of what they see, e.g. "(a woman) for the Dēn, "princes" (or "rulers", šabriyār) for the gods, a "bridge" for the eschatological Ćinvad structure, etc.

3) The boys obtain their clairvoyant trance through an <dwyν mḥyr>, which Grenet takes as ēwēn mahr "le mantra" (qui provoque) la vision" (<dwyν> = ēwēn "vision").

1 Grenet 2002, pp. 6 and 17.
2 Grenet 2002, pp. 17-18
4 Middle Persian mahr, Avestan maθra-, cf. Vedic maθra-, i.e. 'formula'.

Contents

AGGI (ed.)
O Emmerick (1937–2001) .......................................................... XIII

AGGI
Of Ronald Eric Emmerick .................................................. XXI

DE BLOIS
Of the Black Sea ................................................................. 1

CANTERA
ative of the i- and u-Stems with a Presuffixal Full
rade ir Avestan ................................................................. 9

CERETI
awabsr of the men [...] agreed to go into the material world":
Cosmogony in the 3rd Chapter of the Greater Bundahišn . 21

CO
-ḥāvānu-prakārena: A Chinese Parallel
Chapter of the Book of Zambastā .................................. 39

GURKIN-MAISTERENST
the Manichaean Turfan Texts ........................................... 59

DÔNE
A Questioning Man? Notes in the Margin
P 33 phanacata- .............................................................. 75

GIGNOUX
ation d'Alexandre le Grand d'après la littérature pehlevie . 87

HET
anica ................................................................. 99

O GCCLI
n šābā-, Middle Persian šahr, Greek švōs .................................. 109

INTZE
Vāžist and the Demon ..................................................... 119
In view of the latter data, it is relevant that Edward Lane provides a highly engaging, detailed personal account of a divination conducted in Cairo in the 1830’s by a Maghreb magician operating through a boy medium to whom he administers magic formulas, with the vision taking place as a reflection on a pool of ink. One detail which recalls the more ancient Egyptian divinatory recipes is the accompaniment of incense.22

An illustration of the global nature of the divinatory practices under discussion is found in the later texts: In the Byzantine and Munich manuscripts, as well as in Lane’s account, the youths are directed to have the spirits bring in a ram or bullock to be slaughtered for their ruler, who then partakes of it. Subsidiary details of this feature overlap in the three bodies of material.23

It is interesting that in one of the Late Byzantine magical mss.24 five spirit names are invoked in an onychomancy, of which two are of Middle Iranian origin (Awaça = Anahid and Abagashk = Ahiman). A third name, Zayyñ = Zempi, is reminiscent of MPers. zamig, Pers. zami ‘earth’, but this is probably coincidental, with Zayyñ instead being a conflated exoticon whose form is phonically in accord with the preceding magical name Zayyñ = Zempi. Höflinger takes the first two names, along with a late Byzantine magical manuscript illustration of a man wearing a tika who is captioned “Apolloodoros the Persian (Hēgaroς) lecanomantikos” and is shown directing a boy in a vessel divination, as going back to ancient Persian lecanomancy. The latter details more likely represent a Byzantine maintenance of the Late Antique topos of the zāyêg as a Persian sorcerer. This topos would also, in reference to onychomancy, suit the magical attribution to the names Awaça and Abagashk, cliché Persian known to the Byzantines via literary and oral transmission. However, it is not impossible that the Byzantine continuation of the Late Antique topos was refreshed by some actual Byzantine acquaintance with Sassanian divinatory practices involving youths.

As we have seen, Kirdîr’s divinatory procedure matches what is detailed in various ancients, Late Antique, and medieval sources: child mediums, their being ritually seated/installed, and their receiving a special magical formula for their vision. However, these sources also have the vision taking place via the children gazing at a shining or reflective object.25 These global comparative considerations necessitate the question of whether (1) such an object, which has such an important technical function in the production of divinatory visions as per the non-Iranian testimonies, was also part of the otherwise parallel Sassanian procedure, or whether (2) despite the other correlations with the non-Iranian documentation, the Iranian method involved a direct vision by the mediums solely through the impetus of the magic formulas.

No reference to the luminous object has hitherto been detected in the portion of Kirdîr’s text where it would occur. In the relevant place (paragraphs 20–23), Kirdîr stresses at length how much he prayed to the gods to somehow show the validity of the Avestic teachings about individual eschatology and of Zoroastrian practices, and also to provide the justification of his own earthly prestige by their indicating his personal fate after death; note esp. paragraph 22, which I translate thus:

And praying toward the gods, I then established this (as a) sign (ég-īm ēd miân nihâd): If you gods have it in your ability, then show me the means [érang] (of knowing) hell and heaven, as you indicate in the Nasks... The “means” is elaborated in paragraph 24, where Kirdîr states that he produced the <davân mbly>, for the sake of divine service and for his own soul, so that he may know if he will be (appear in the afterlife as) righteous (sâmê) or wicked, and further in paragraph 25, where Kirdîr makes clear that he delivered the <davân mbly> to the boys, and then immediately reports what they say they see. Near none of the three inscriptive attestations of <davân mbly>, is there a lacuna long enough to accommodate an allusion to a bright/reflective object.

The problem calls for a reexamination of <davân>, the epithet that characterizes the <mbly> (mahr ‘formula, mantra’). Grénet’s26 interpretation of <davân> is éven ‘vision’, so that the phrase would mean ‘mantra of the vision’. Grénet further notes “Éven mahr serait le mantra (qui provoque) la vision” (le sens d’éven comme ‘vision’ est enraciné indiscutablement par évén ‘éveiller, miroir’); he adduces the fact that Déhaber IV speaks of a ménag-avênith ‘spiritual vision’ (“se qu’on peut comprendre aussi comme ‘vision de l’aumâna’”), in which he finds a precise echo of the “mantra of the vision”. Grénet goes on to note that the mastery of this vision is attributed in the Déhaber to the “towbëhds of Ohmazd”, it perhaps being significant that after the divination which took place during the reign of Shapur I, Kirdîr was titled “towbëhd of the god” Ohmazd by the next ruler, Ohmazd I. In support of the etymology of <davân>, in <davân mbly>, Grénet27 cites, as Ph. Huyse’s opinion concerning the two homophonous words éven, that “les étymons sont respectivement tāt-davâna- > éven ‘coutume, rite’ et tā-dayana- > éven ‘vision’ (inféré d’après évén ‘miroir’ tā-dayana-ha), dans les deux cas sur la racine dī- ‘voir’.

The interpretation of <davân> as involving vision is more convincing than the translation as ‘ritual’, since the alternative, ‘ritual (éven) mantra’, is redundant in itself (the mantra in question is by nature a ritual matter) and insufficiently specific as a technical term. The variant interpretation with éven,
'customary mantra', goes against the textual evidence that the procedure under consideration was not a routine matter. However, the term <dawyn> a priori should have a nuance other than that of 'seeing per se, the latter being expressed by M'Pers. wisanin (cf. monek wisanin). The comparative dimensions of the divinatory procedure in Kirdar's text now raises the question of whether the relationship of <dawyn> (<dawyn> to Book Pahlavi 'dawyn' 'mirror') may indicate that the mantra was not only from the fact that it was intimated was seen as a reflection, as in the Western divinations by youthful mediums. The remarks which follow, to the effect that <dawyn >: <dawyn > phonologically represent ayn : aynag rather than awen : awenag, do not much matter for the conclusions drawn from the semantic relationship between the words. I, however, a digression as the pronunciation and the precise etymology of these words will clear the way for a closer assessment of the concomitant issues.

The relevant spellings are Book and Inscriptional Pahl. <dawyn > 'mirror' whose ordinary representation of awen (<dawyn >) has the same meaning; the homograph of the latter, Pahl. <dawyn >, means 'mirror'. The Pahlavi spelling 'daw- for 'aw-' OIr. <daw- > is illustrated by Book Pahl. <daw > 'bride'. For Pahl. <dawyn > 'custom, rite' the pronunciation awenag is proved by Manichean Middle Persian <yowynag >, and a derivation from 'abi-dayana' is supported by Manichean Parthian 'abi-<dawyn > custom', Armenian awenag(<dawyn >) 'custom, law', and now Zartoshtian aynag 'custom'. With these I further compare Khwarzmani <dawyn > 'example, illustrative model' <OIr. <abi-dawyn >-a' <(prop) form, formalism >: 'shape, appearance from OIr. abii nedii 'to look upon, behold, etc.' (Av. pres. stem abi-abi- <(dawyn )-i). In this situation is complicated by the fact that, against Pahl. <dawyn >: awen, custom, rite' in New Persian is ayn, whose expected M'Pers. antecedent ayn is attested as Man. M'Pers. 'yn (and 'yn 'mirror') 'man's' (Durkin-Müstermann 2004, p. 6, thereof transcribed as a 'in (and a'inag ), and Armenian ayn, alongside Pahl. adbii > Arm.  a'is, the Khotanese Saka aynag 'example, illustrative model' points to a basic mg. 'form' < 'appearance, this time from OIr. abii nedii, Av. pres. stem abii <(dawyn )-i 'to look upon, behold, examine, consider carefully'. Thus OIr. abii nedii ('abi-dayana') and a nedii ('<dawyn >) have parallel semantic developments.

Finally, for 'mirror' Pers. has aynag, aynag. Its antecedent, OIr. <ayyana- < ayyana (with < -suffixation), < device for looking, looking-glass (cf. speculum, xotongow, mirror) gives the forms for 'mirror' throughout Iranian: Balochi ayn, Manichean Parthian <ayy>, <ayy>, Sogdian <ayy>, <ayy>, Sogdian <ayy>, <ayy>, Ossetic from ayn, Digorun aynag, and Khotanese ayn (with variants with internal -i and -e-).

Thus what Grenet gives as Huey's opinion is correct as far as the reconstruction 'a-dayana-ka for 'mirror' goes, but is incorrect as concerns this reconstruction for the alleged Pahlavi awenag 'mirror', vs. 'abi-dayana- > awenag 'rite, custom'. From a-dayana-ka only 'ayyag is expected, since 'abi-does not elsewhere give Middle Persian ayy-, ordinarily represented in Pahl. spelling by 'ay-, not 'ay-. Therefore, giving an underlying a-dayana- reflected by Pers. ayn (aayina) and by other New Iranian languages, and by Parth. aynag and parallel forms in the other Middle Iranian languages, it is ayyag (and not awenag) that M'Pers. should have had for 'mirror'. (If Korn 2005, p. 79.)

The spelling of Pahl. <dawyn > 'mirror', which ordinarily would represent awenag (rather than ayyag), may be explained as follows: As demonstrated above, Middle Persian had awen (Pahlavi <dawyn >), awenag (Pahl. <dawyn >), and ayyag (expeciallyy 'ayyag '), all meaning '(form) custom, rite, etc.' In addition, M'Pers. had ayyag 'mirror'. Of these, ayin 'form, etc.' and ayin 'mirror' were etymologically inseparable, whereas the forms awenag (<dawyn >) could be analyzed as a prefix < plus awen, a nominal derivative of the root awen- 'to see', on the analogy of awen (<dawyn >) 'stall, trunk' alongside awen 'tree, stem' and awen (<dawyn >) alongside awen, both 'wood'. In the speech of the earned, awen came to be thought of as more correct than ayin for 'form, custom, rite', so that <dawyn > represented both awen and ayin, particularly under the influence of the constant collocation of ayen with awen (spelled awen- 'to see'. Thereby ayen- of both ayenag 'mirror' and ayin 'form, custom, rite' came to be spelled <dawyn > as a pseudo-anachronism. In competition with awenag, and perhaps with support from its Parthian equivalent ayyen and the M'Pers. cognate ayinag, ayin replaced awenag.

As we have seen, the comparative evidence brings <dawyn > (<dawyn >) into relationship with <dawyn > 'mirror', which amounts to a formal relationship ayen: ayenag. For the absence of <dawyn > in <dawyn >, cf. among other such alternating stems in West Iranian, Balochi ayn and aynag, ayn 'mirror' (Korn 2005, p. 166) in West Iranian the Saka (Khotanese and Ossetic) forms for 'mirror' cited above, as well as Khwarzmi ayn 'mirror' < Mir. a'din.

30 Compare purely orthographic pseudo-anachronisms are Book Pahl. ayyag > ayyag 'scribe' (<OPers. = Elamite <ayyag), cf. Sogd. ayyi, whose spelling was influenced by ayyag (<ayy> <dawyn >) diier. OPers. ayyi, 'having heart, brave' (Kh. <ayy> 'call' 'custom' <OPers. ayyag >, ayyi = Av. bairat-, and epyng (<epyng >) 'message', which replaces <epyn > in order to render the pronunciation ppyynj alternation with ppyyn (bsh > Persian).

31 C.F. Hübischmann 1897, pp. 59 and 51.
spirit realm is also attested, but without the use of an intermediary, in the Pahlavi account of the conversion of Wštāš. These accounts go back to a stage of Iranian society which accepted an expertise in psychopharmacology as a means of knowledge of the divine, a stage no longer current in the Sasanian realm.

II

In most ancient body of data, the Gathas, there are indications of Zarathushtra conducting a direct divination. Taken together, the details, 

grasso modo, have correspondence in Kirdar's text.

For the latter, we may first eliminate from consideration the divinities (reported by the children as 'rulers' or 'princes', šāhīrād) which Gernert identifies as Mihir (Av. Mihrā), Raš (Av. Raín), Jam (Av. Yima) and Wahrām (Av. Varōshraya); these (as opposed to the deities mentioned toward the end of the text in the account of the entrance to Paradise) do not figure in the repertory of Gthic divinities. This leaves us with the following skeletal summary of the séance of Kirdar's inscription, which, I shall endeavor to show, have correlations in the Gathas; the most pertinent Gthic correspondences are in bold type in what follows: A man who is Kirdar's homomorph, mard in Kirdar hangirb (Av. šahrīp- 'body, form'), appears, which is most likely the individual's body in the afterlife. Kirdar's hangirb is met by the Dēv (Av. daēna), who escorts him eastward along a bridged road, rāb (Av. rātā, pyātā-pyātā, əš-əš, and ašuran-), past the pit of hell brimming with noxious creatures, xafāsta (Av. xafāstra), and over the Bridge, pubul (Av. poras- i.e. cinnatā), on to an encounter with Serif (Av. sērēkē, 'Hearkening'), with Wahrman (Av. vohra manas 'Good Mind'), who lends Kirdar's hangirb to the palace, i.e. paradise (Av. gārū domāna-, Mazda's 'House of Song'), where Kirdar's hangirb banquets.

37 Gernert 2002, pp. 19–25, who, however, notes a second possibility that this hangirb (Av. hangirb) is merely the childlike reportage of a figure who looks like the Kirdar present in the ceremony. However, for this one would expect hanādēg or hantēdēg 'having the same appearance' rather than hangirb, "having the same body or form); note further that hangirb, with ṵ instead of h, Śhantēdēg, suggests that the form is a technical term.
38 I had derived MPers., bānum 'banquet' from OIr. baum('s), 'to extend', i.e. 'a spread'. parallel to the English suggests (Schwartz 1996, pp. 204–205 (where the Proto-Indo-European *āyom 'arm' should be corrected to *āyarm). to accomodate Vedic ḍhātā- and other cognates of Av. bāzā- 'arm'). I now take bānum as a labially dissimilated reflex of OIr. *pēyāmētā → Khwarzryan bāmazak, Sogd. ḍōčǎt 'guest', and see further the words referring to hospitality which I derived from Indo-Iranian vāzā 'to nourish, to strengthen' in Schwartz 1950, pp. 200–202 (where note on p. 205 the mention of Manichean MPers.

33 See Gyselen 1995, Figs. 43b (type 5.1) with Figs. 11H, 48 (type 8.4) with Figs. 12, Fig. 47 (type 8.5) with Fig. 1, Fig. 49 (type 8.3) with Figs. and V and VI, and Fig. 462a (type 7.2). Note also the important remarks on foreign influences on Sasanian magic, p. 20.
34 Schwartz 1995, with evidence that the name of the magical god on the Sasanian seal-amulets ('Nīservān, Gyselen 1995, pp. 55–59) should be transliterated as Šesēn.
Ohrmazd (Av. abura-mazda-, mazda-abura-) points to him and smiles, and takes him...

In YS.8.5 the focus is on Zarathushtra's desire for a vision of the supreme calm of Righteousness (Axe.< Arv. >), with a pathway, via Vohu Manah and Sraosha, to Ahura Mazdā. A mantra is included to protect against the xrafasna encountered:

YS.8.5

a ātā kūt dāda dorośān: manācār vohu vēdōmān
b gātōmā ahūvā, sāvātā soroṣām mazdāi
  c anā myāvān mā̄jāsi, vārōmātā xrafasnā bihrō

O Righteousness, shall I see Thee, as I attain Good Mind, and a way to the strongest Ahura Mazdā, as well as the greatest Sraosha?

Via the following mantra, with the tongue shall we avert the xrafasna:

The path is illuminated by YS.3.5, in which ‘the all-greatest Sraosha’ (vispā mājāsā soroṣā) is linked to the paths (padā) which are straight in accord with Righteousness, among which Mazdā Ahura dwells.10 In YS.12–15 these paths are clarified in terms of the ‘well-adorned’ road (adēnu) which the daēnās o’

d the benefactors tread. In YS.11–16 the souls/daēnas of Zarathushtra's patrons are described as advancing on the paths to Mazdā Ahura's paradise House of Song (garō domāna-), and the evildoers are said to fall from the path at the Cewātā's bridge (paroṣa-) and be damned forever. This takes us to the second important passage:

YS.11.7

a barōdām mōi sana-vaścārā bhuva-guṇā daēdās: kāh-pam
b daēnālātā sana-vaścārā yam bōi tiṁaṁ dāta
  c xālātā mazdā abhū māvālās daēdās gorōdān

Prashastinshatra the Haungul has thoroughly shown to me his wonderful form for the god daēnā; may the ruler Mazdā Ahura make it animated/invigorated/enlightened for him, that he may reach the walkway of Righteousness.

Here Zarathushtra prognosticates his patron's success in the afterlife, and beholds the future kāh-pam which will be in a relationship with the “good daēnā”. This future body is to be animated for its heavenly existence (cf. YS.9.9 at budānās istās daēnās gorōdās gāhaṁ ‘may I be experiencing energization on the walkway of a bringer of benefit', and the next stanza, YS.10.10, in which Zarathushtra links his priestly action to meriting a vision of the paradise of lights).

In summary: We now have textual evidence for divination in Zoroastrianism, in effect spanning the entire pre-Islamic period. Despite the differences in the form, which in YS.11–16 reflects the adoption of a foreign procedure, a venue of content pertaining to visions of the afterlife, remains constant. In addition, the purpose for which the divination was performed, the authentication of the religion, as embodied in priestly authority, also remains constant.41

Adendum

For the transcription Kirdēr (~ Kerde, Kardēr), cf. DURKIN-MESTERKERN 2004, p. 221 qāydr, kāydr, kāydr, where note Seiptic Kerdēl as discussed by W. SUNDERMANN and M. SCHWARTZ. Kirdēr etc. ‘powerful’ < *kerti-born’ ‘efficacious’, cf. dīlīr fn. 32.

The outer stanzas of the proto-poem, YS.3.3 and 12, concentrate via sat- 'esteats'. At YS.3.3 the ‘estates in which Ahura dwells’ is in opposition to ‘the straight paths of (sana-) benefactors’, and YS.12 locates the desired/choice estate in Ahura's Dominion. Thus we have an overall correspondence with YS.3.5–6a, the midlength lines of the proto-poem YS.3.2–10: So the paths straight in accord with Righteousness (~Arzātā ti vānā publicō) in/for which Mazdā Ahura dwells and on the priest straight via Righteousness (~Yah-rahu anāti raśī) jointly yield a phonetic anagram of zarathushtra-.

41 I wish to thank MARIA MAHRUDI, MARK PETTICREW, NICHOLAS SIMS-WILLIAMS, MARSHALL OMIDVAR, and WERNER SUNDERMANN for their kind provision of helpful data.
Bibliography


GruSs, R. 1955: Sceaux magiques en Iran sassanide. Paris (Steir, Cahier 17).


Helmut Humzach
The Indian God of Wine, the Iranian Indra, and the Seventh Amnaq Spona 141

Jean Kellens
Quand Darius parle à Darius 14

Hiroshi KumaMoto
Sino-Hvatanica Petersburgensis: Part II 11

Gilbert Lazard
La vérification en partie et son héritage persan 101

V.A. Livshits
The Leader of the People of Chach in the Sogdian Inscriptions and Coin-Legends 131

Maria Macuch
The Pañala Model Marriage Contract in the Light of Sasanian Family Law 113

Mauro Maggi
Vimalakirtinirdesastāra Quotations in the Khotanese Book of Vimalakīrti 159

Dieter Maas
Tumshukiskjische Misszellen I: Beobachtungen zur Metrik 159

Enrico Morano
A Working Catalogue of the Berlin Sogdian Fragments in Manichaean Script 131

Antonio Panaino
Ahura Mazda and the Darkness: About the Meaning of Y 44, 5b 211

Ludwig Paul
Zur Lage der Göräni-Dialekten in Iran und ihrer Erforschung 285

Elio Provasi
A Song of the Manichaean Living Spirit 197

Christian Rieck
Tage der Barmerzichtigkeit: Nachträge zu den mitteliranischen manîchäischen Montags- und Bemahymnen 117

Adriano V. Rossi
Moro Khotanese Colours 141

Rüdiger Schmitt
Bemerkungen zu den Belegformen des Titels iran. "Shabuhrapat" 165
Iranian Languages and Texts from Iran and Turan

Ronald E. Emmerick
Memorial Volume

Edited by Maria Macuch, Mauro Maggi and Werner Sundermann

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden