The Sixteen Ślokas are famous in Parsi oral tradition as a supposed missing link to supplement that part of the QS which is concerned with the explication of the Zoroastrian religion to the Hindu rajah Jādi Rāna. Parsi tradition on this matter has been greatly influenced by the prominent studies of several 19th and early 20th century editors, principally those of S.K. Hodiwala. The Sanskrit scholar Hanns-Peter Schmidt has written a definitive study of the sixteen Sanskrit Ślokas in which he reviews Hodiwala’s edition and also other translations and treatments. As Schmidt says at the outset, ‘If the Sixteen Ślokas were genuine they would be one of the most important documents of the history of Zoroastrianism.’ Schmidt’s study is exhaustive and compelling in its arguments and conclusions, but unfortunately it is difficult of access as it was published in an Indian learned journal from the 1960s. I provide below a summary of its contents, which will demonstrate that although the Ślokas are interesting texts in their own right, they cannot be linked to the QS as Parsi tradition would have them.

The 64 lines of the text (each of the sixteen ślokas comprises four lines of 21 syllables) were traditionally believed to have been composed by the Sanjana priest Neryosang Dhaval (fl. late 11th/early 12th cent. C.E.). Neryosang was the Zoroastrian translator of the Yasna and other Avestan texts from Middle Persian translations, and also the Pahlavi Mēnōg ī Xrad and Škand Gumānīg Wizār. He was highly regarded in Parsi tradition and so it is, as Schmidt says, understandable, as Neryosang’s name was the only one kept alive in memory from the olden days as that of a master of Sanskrit, that he should have been believed to have been the author of the Sanskrit Ślokas, and even that he was thought to have been the dastur who negotiated with Jādi Rāna.

1 Schmidt 1960–61.
2 Ibid., 158.
However, Neryosang’s name does not appear in any of the manuscripts of the Ślokas, but rather the name of Ākā Adhyāru is given as the author, and perhaps, even more significantly, he, as a Sanjana priest, is not mentioned by Bahman in the QS.

The Ślokas first appeared in printed English translation in 1808 and in Gujarati in 1826. However, the first edition of the Ślokas based on several Sanskrit manuscripts, ‘mainly supplied by Manekji Rustomji Unwala, one MS. by Jivanji Jamshedji Modi’, was by S.K. Hodiwala. Hodiwala includes a commentary which is in one of the Sanskrit manuscripts, but it ‘has been incompletely reproduced.’ The Sanskrit commentary has Ākā Adhyāru as its author, but Hodiwala explained it as a slip of the pen, and seemed to set no store by the fact that a colophon at the end of the commentary also clearly mentions Ākā Adhyāru as author of the Ślokas and that ‘from a copy of the MS. used by Hodiwala we know that the name of the author of the commentary is Śivarāmā.’ Schmidt says also that

The text constituted by Hodiwala is a contamination, the various readings are given without indicating their sources. Critically the edition is therefore without any value.

Schmidt is similarly critical of Hodiwala’s edition in Paymaster’s version of the QS and in Hodiwala’s own later Gujarati work; he also condemns S.D. Bharucha’s edition as corrupted for the same rea-

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4 The explanation was that Neryosang, as principal dastur of the migrants, had mastered Sanskrit during the years they had lived in Diu.

5 In spite of this fact, and as if further proof were needed that many Western scholars have not troubled to read the QS for themselves, it is worth noting that S.S. Hartman perpetuates this popular fallacy with regard to the QS, in his 1980 publication (11), ‘It is reported that the leader of the Zoroastrians’ exodus was called Neryoseng Dhaval . . . and he led his people to Sanjan, where he was nominated dastür, high priest. He brought along a sacred fire which has been tended since then and never gone out.’

6 Robert Drummond, Illustrations of the Grammatical Parts of the Guzaratee, Mahratta & English Languages (Bombay 1808), s.v. pārāśi tathā pāraśeṇa, also partly translated by James Burgess, Indian Antiquary I (1872), 214–5, cited in Schmidt 1960–61, 158.

7 Cited in Schmidt 1960–61, 158.

8 Schmidt 1960–61, 159.

9 In The Dastur Hoshang Memorial Volume (Bombay 1918), 70–94.

10 Schmidt 1960–61, 159.

11 Ibid., 159.

12 Ibid., 159.

13 Paymaster 1915.

14 Hodiwala 1927.

15 Bharucha 1933.