ON THE ARTAY VIRAZ NAMAK

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1. The Pahlavi literature, in spite of its limited scope, has posed many problems for scholars of Iranian studies on account of the enigmatical character of its script and language. Even though the Turfan finds in Chinese Turkestan in the beginning of the present century have been instrumental in solving many a problem, there are still a number of them which defy solution. The most difficult of the Pahlavi texts – the Dēnkart and the Nīrangistān, the Mātiyān i hazār Dātastān and the works of Manuscihr (Dātastān i Dēnīk, Nāmakīhā i Manuscihr), though translated, in parts and in full, need to be improved upon. Besides these, there are other minor texts which though comparatively easy to interpret, have nevertheless their own difficulties.

The text of the Artāy Virāz Namak from which it is proposed to explain a few problems, was first translated into English from the Persian and Gujarati versions as The Arda Viraf Nameh or, The Revelations of Arda Viraf by J. A. Pope in 1816. In 1872, Martin Haug assisted by E. W. West published the revised Pahlavi text prepared by Destur Hoshangji Jamaspji Asa, entitled The Book of Arda Viraf with a complete English translation and notes. An exhaustive glossary to the text was prepared by E. W. West and revised by Martin Haug in 1874. The French translation of the Artāy Virāz Namak ou Livre d’Arda Virāf was published by A. Barthélemy in 1887. In 1892, J. J. Modi published his paper on ‘Dante and Virāf’ showing “striking resemblance” between Dante’s Divine Comedy and the Pahlavi Virāz Namak. In the same year, Friedrich Müller published his Beiträge zur Erklärung des Artāi-Virāf-Nāmak und des Džōšī-i-Frijān, containing a number of observations and emendations. Thirty years after the edition of Haug and West, the text of the Arda Viraf Nameh was re-edited along with the Persian version and a Gujarati translation by K. Jamasp Asa. Two years later, a rendering in prose-verse of The Ardai Viraf Nameh or the Revelations of Arda Viraf, the Persian Saint based
on the translation of Pope was published by Geo. Maddox. A contribution to the *Jackson Memorial Volume* entitled “Some notes on a few important Pahlavi Words and Constructions” was made by R. D. Dastur Meherjirana in 1954, wherein he discusses certain words appearing in the *Artāy Vīrāz Nāmak*. The Pahlavi text has been reproduced, on the basis of the text of Jamasp Asa, under the title *Arda-wirāf-nāma yā bihišt wā dūzah dar āyin-i mazdayasnī* with a translation, commentary and glossary, all in Persian, by R. ‘Afifi in A.H. 1342 (= 1964 A.C.). The same author has also published the *Arda-wirāf-nāma manzūm-i Zartušt Bahram Paždū*, annotated with an introduction, in A.H. 1343 (= 1965 A.C.). In spite of these later editions, the pioneering efforts of Haug and West have remained as standard — a tribute to the literary acumen of these great scholars.


Besides the Pahlavi text, there also exist the Pazand, Sanskrit, Persian and Old Gujarati versions of the *Artāy Vīrāz Nāmak*.

2. The first of the three problems intended to be discussed here occurs in Chap. 12.11-13 (= Jamasp Asa, 12.8-9). We read: *u-m dīt ān i xēētōk-dasān ruvān andar ān i abzār bhrehēnīt rōśnīh ka-š gar bālāy rōśnīh u-š hamē vaxēt u-m burzēnīk sahast. abzār bhrehēnīt rōśnīh has been rendered by Haug and West by “material-fashioned splendor” and “highest light” by Jamasp Asa. ‘Afifi renders it by “afzārī āfrīdeh šude az rōśnī”. But abzār bhrehēnīt rōśnīh is the Pahlavi translation of Avesta sūrō-bêbarštanam raočaghām occurring in Vidēvdāt 19.23 (*AirWb*. 1585, Bartholomae reads āfrīt for bhrehēnīt). In the description of the sky as given in the Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dātastān i Dēnīk (ed. B. N. Dhabhar, p. 128. 1-2) we read: *abzār būt cigōn x‘arāk i ātāxš i pa rōśnīh yi-š hac ān i asar rōśnīh bē bhrehēnīt “There was the substance like the glow of fire, with light, which was created from the Endless Light.” Here abzār has been translated as “radiant-one” by Tavadia (“Middle Persian Evidence for the Avestan Conception of Fire” contributed to *Studia Indo-Iranica, Ehrengabe für Wilhelm Geiger*, edited by Walther Wüst, p. 239ff.) implying Öhrmazd, but as rightly shown by H. K. Mirza (Doctorate dissertation submitted to the University of London in 1940) abzār has

1 [See now also Mary Boyce, *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, IV, 2 (1968), p. 48f.]