A recent article on some Avestan words in *-ita- and *-iti- begins with the following introduction: "Besides the merger of aspirated and unaspirated voiced stops, the retention of voiced sibilants, the change of (simple) s to h, and the genesis of a whole class of spirants, the other most important phonological feature of Old Iranian, differing from Old Indic, is the regular loss of interconsonantal IE. *a---, or, in more modern terms, laryngeals— in non-initial syllables of words" (Insler 1971: 573). These words are here only quoted because they state in clear terms what may be considered a common opinion. The surprising thing is, however, that this view, in spite of its being generally accepted, is not correct and that this has been known ever since Bartholomae (1891: 9f.) dealt with this issue. For references to later literature see Reichelt 1927: 51, Kuiper 1942: 25, Mayrhofer 1959: 82 n.24, 1964: 72 n.1 and Kellens 1971: 7. As far as I know, no one has ever drawn attention to, or has tried to account for, the remarkable fact that some two generations of prominent Indo-Europeanists have wilfully closed their eyes to the evidence of the facts, or explained them away by declaring them 'sans valeur' (Meillet 1908: 65f.).

Still, the reason for their curious behaviour was clear enough. The occurrence of forms with and without i for PIE. *H must have seemed at variance with the 'Ausnahmslosigkeit der Lautgesetze', which had made historical linguistics a real and rigorous 'science'. Admitting the occurrence of a twofold representation would have endangered this recently won scientific character. There was no possibility, indeed, of accounting for the irritating 'exceptions' in terms of paradigmatical ablaut or sandhi. For Bartholomae (1895: 28, 73) and Brugmann (1897: 172f.) the only solution was to assume that a [= *H] always became i and to project all problems back into a period of the Proto-Indo-European prehistory when a was supposed to have disappeared subject to certain conditions (but see Joh. Schmidt 1895: 183 n.1). The modern trend is, on the contrary, to explain away as much as possible the instances with i and to assume that as a rule *a has disappeared in Iranian without leaving a trace.

The complexity of the problem can best be demonstrated by the fact that the IE. word for 'father' (Skt. pitā) is in the oldest Iranian dialect pitā, whereas in Pers. pidar a form with i from *H is preserved. To some extent the laryngeal theory offered a possibility of accounting for the prehistoric development in a way that had been impossible by the theory of the 'schwa indogermanicum'. Since elision of vowels is
completely unknown in the oldest stage of Indo-Iranian, the phoneme that had disappeared in Proto-Iranian can only have been a consonant, representing a PIE consonantal laryngeal *H. This Iranian representative will for the sake of simplicity also be denoted by *H. For those well-known cases as Ved. drávīnas-: Av. draonah- 'wealth', where Indo-Aryan has a vowel /i/ as opposed to zero in Iranian, the only possible conclusion is, then, that Proto-Indo-Iranian *H has secondarily become a vowel in the Indo-Aryan branch, after this had split off from Iranian.

In some cases, however, Old Iranian has an /i/ as the representative of *H. An analysis of the distribution of the stem forms pitar- and fôr- in Later Avestan leads to the conclusion that by the side of consonantal *H there must have been a vocalic *H which is represented by /i/ in Iranian as well as in Indo-Aryan and which has caused the change of a following *s into š. On the one hand this seems to show that the change of *H to i took place in the common Proto-Indo-Iranian period. On the other hand it is, at least in those cases where the distribution of *H and *H can be stated in clear terms, impossible to evade the conclusion that the vocalic *H was not an allophone of the consonantal phoneme *H but represented a different ablaut grade. It cannot be denied that from a general point of view of PIE. apophony this conclusion is unattractive.

The contrast between PIE. *H and *H may account for those cases in Avestan where we find either always i, or always zero. A case in point in the first syllable is GAy. sîš 'teach!' (Vedic ṣiṣṣam) as against GAy. dvâdî (Y. 29.5), if this means 'we induce' (from *dhH-vadhi, cf. Vedic ḍhivahi, not attested). In word-final position cf. [m-adi] in GAv. mōhmaidî 'we consider', etc. (Vedic -mahi, Greek -mevθο) as against the zero representation of *H in such neuter plural forms as: manā [manāḥ] 'thoughts' (Ved. mānāṃsi), dāmaṇ 'places' (Ved. dhāmāṇi), mīžadāvn (from *mīžadvānt) 'having got the pay' (Ved. ghṛtvāṃti), xPHā barāziś 'having their own pillow' (Ved. barhīṃṣi).

II

Although the question as to what conditions determined the interchange of *H and consonantal *H has not satisfactorily been answered, it should be stressed that the existence of two different sets of laryngeals in Proto-Indo-European, a vocalic and a

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1 Since sîš in Y. 28.11 frō mā sîš must belong to sāh- (cf. 45.6 frō mā sāstū and RS. I.31.14 sāstī pā dīśah, prāśis-, Renou 1964: 166 n. 14), and since sīkś- cannot well be a desiderative of sās- because of Av. sīkś and its Iranian cognates (Gershevitch 1959: 257), the traditional interpretation of sīš and sīkoit as representing the zero grade of sāh- must be correct. Against the connection of sīš- with sīkś- (Spiegel, also Humbach, MSS. 2, p. 2 n.3) see Bartholomae, ZDMG. 44 (1888), p. 159.

2 See Andreas-Wackernagel (1931: 321) and Humbach (1959: II, p. 16). But trisyllabic [duvadi], which these authors (like Meillet, JAs. 1920 I, p. 191) consider possible, is excluded in [yat mazda'um dvadi frasā(h)byah].