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Bahram Yasht: Analogues and Origins.

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The Parsis are particularly fond of reciting the Bahram Yasht; and the more one studies that Yasht the stronger becomes the conviction that this preference is well grounded and is guided by a sound instinct; for that Yasht contains an unusually large number of mystical, poetic, and beautiful legends and much symbolism of the same description. These legends and that symbolism are very ancient, since very luckily indeed, the ethicising process has not gone very far in the case of this Yasht. For that and other reasons, the Yasht forms a rich storehouse of old legends and usages and lends itself particularly well to the purposes of a comparative, study of religious legends. In particular, as I am attempting to show here, the legends and symbolism of China approaches very close to those of the Yasht. Indeed, it would not be difficult to write an instructive and useful commentary on the Yasht with the help of the material available in Chinese works or in works on the Chinese religions. The parallelism will be closest where we touch on the bird and tree symbolism in the Yasht; but other portions of the Yasht will also be the better interpreted and understood after such a comparative study. We shall begin our task by examining the very interesting bird and tree symbolism from the Bahram Yasht—supplementing it suitably from other Yashts and from the Pehlevi texts. Other portions of the Yasht will be taken up later; and we shall wind up by considering whether any light is thrown by our study on the important question of the geographical region in which the leading ideas and symbolism of the Yasht originated. Be it noted, however, that the question treated is not one of language but of the basic cultural and religious ideas and of the geographical position and surroundings of the region in which a hymnology of the character of that Yasht could have its origins.

1. THE CULT OF THE CRANE ("Sien-Ho").

The first bird of the Chinese Mythology to which we shall turn is the Sien-Ho or Crane. Pere Doré has given a useful resumé of the old Chinese beliefs regarding the Crane in his encyclopædic work *Recherches sur les Superstitions En Chine* (Part I, Vol. 1, pp. 468-469). It is only a short sketch of the legends about the bird, but it casts a great deal of useful light on the Yasht. Let us begin with one of the most perplex-

ing paragraphs in the Yasht and interpret it in the light of the cult of the Crane. In verse 39 of the Yasht we read that the bird called Varengana "carries the chariot of the lords; he carries the chariots of the lordly ones; the chariots of the sovereigns. He carried the chariot of Kavi 'Usa.'" The paragraph is at first sight unmeaning, for how can a mere bird carry the cars of sovereigns? Let us, however, turn to the following story of the Sien-Ho in a Chinese work, and that verse of the Yasht will have found its interpretation: "The barbarians invaded the territory of the Marquis of Wei I-Kong in 660 B.C. The Marquis gave them battle in the marsh of Yug. He loved to honour the cranes and took with him some of these birds perched on his war chariot. The soldiers who were not well disposed towards him, while putting on their armour, before battle, said jestingly. 'Forward our crane officers! Without you how can we engage in battle?'" Such sceptical and irreverent soldiers were signally defeated, as indeed they deserved to. But the moral and implication of the story is that but for such blasphemy the cranes would have carried the leader's chariot victoriously through the battle. In the light of such beliefs the true meaning of the Yasht verse 39 is clear. We now know the old legend that the mysterious crane could carry the chariots of sovereigns through battles and it is on that ground partly that I shall argue later that "Varengana is to be taken as the equivalent of Persian word 'Kulang' (crane)."

Verse 39 goes on to say that upon the wings of that bird is carried the "male horse, the burden-bearing camel, the boat in the river." Read by itself all this is meaningless. However, in Chinese mythology the crane (Sien-Ho) is represented as the most rapid means of transportation by sea or land. Thus the hero Sentaro was carried by a crane to the islands of the blest and back in one night (Donald A. Mackenzie; *Myths of China and Japan*, pp. 116-117); and in the pictures of the eight famous immortals of China crossing the Sea we find the crane flying with their boat (Werner; *Myths and Legends of China*, p. 302). In another great battle the hero Niu-wo figures triumphantly riding on a crane (Doré; Part 2, Vol. II, p. 1049). So also the famous "white Crane Youth" rides the sacred crane in his great battles. No doubt the origin of this idea about the crane as a sort of genius of locomotion was to be found in the immense extent of the annual migration of the crane which covers countries stretching from India in the South up to the Arctic regions.

The Varengana is also represented in Bahram Yasht verse 36 as a bringer of good luck—one who bears a feather of that bird is "a fortunate man." Further, "it maintains him in his glory." This accords very well with the Chinese legends which make the crane the companion of the gods of honour as well as of good fortune (Doré; *op. cit.*, Part I, Vol. 2, fig. 217).

In some images the angel of good fortune is seen walking with the crane by his side; while in others a banner is borne over him and a picture of the crane is drawn on the banner (*Ibid.*, Part II, Vol. II, p. 946-947).

But if the crane or Sien-Ho corresponds to the bird Varen-gana in s. 14 of the Yasht, it corresponds also to the bird Saena (Merg-sin) in section 15. And here I would emphasise the close similarity of the names of the bird Saen or Sin of Persian and of the "Sien-Ho" of Chinese legends. In China the crane got its name Sien-Ho from its supposed close association with the "Sien" or hermits who have secured total immunity from death by consuming life-conferring vegetable products. "The crane is celebrated throughout China for living hundreds, nay, thousands of years. Authors describe it as a bird accompanying especially the Sien who obtained bodily immortality and serving them for vehicles (De Groot; Vol. IV, pp. 232-233 and 295). Indeed, the association between these majestic birds and the holy saints was so close that sometimes the saint was transformed into the bird and at other times the bird was changed into the saint. These and such other notions account for the legends of the wisdom of the Simurgh to be met with in the Shahnameh, the Dabistan and in the mystic poems of Attar and other Sufis. Very probably they also account for one of the most famous saints and apostles of Zoroastrianism being given (or assuming) the name of "Saeno."

We note that in Bahram Yasht verse 41, the bird Mereg-Sin is said to cover the mountain tops "as clouds cover them." Here also we have a reference to the crossing of mountains by large flocks of cranes in their annual migrations. The range of Paropamisos was called locally "Aparasen" in Avesta age since it was so high that the cranes could not cross them (Cf. Marquart, *Untersuchungen*, p. 75). That phenomenon—the crossing of mountains by cranes—also appealed to the imagination of the Chinese and was embodied in their poetic legends. Thus one of the lofty mountains of China was called "the Mountain of the song of the cranes" (Doré; Part II, Vol. 10, p. 789). We have also the account of a battle fought in the heroic age for the possession of a mountain where the crane by his great powers of flight nearly succeeded in achieving success (Doré; Part II, Vol. 9, p. 653). If the Bahram Yasht rises to poetic heights in describing the flight of the Saena over the mountains, the romantic genius of China could not be said to have lagged very far behind.

In the later Persian legends as narrated in the Shahnameh and the Dabistan, the mystical birds Varen-gana and Mereg-sin are identified and treated as one. While in the Yasht verse 35 it is the feathers of the Varen-gana with which the body is to be rubbed to cure the wounds inflicted by an enemy, in the Shahnameh that virtue is attributed to the feathers

of the Simurgh. "When Rudabah's flank was opened to bring forth Rustam, her wound was healed by rubbing it with the Simurgh's feather; Rustam, wounded to death by Isfendiyar, was cured in the same manner."

We shall later consider the interesting legends about various trees like the pine, the fir and the cypress which were believed by the Chinese to be life-conferring and health-restoring plants (Cf. De Groot; *Religious System of China*, Vol. IV, pp. 294-324). Now, since the cranes were observed to visit old firs there was formed a very ancient association between the cranes and the trees and these birds were supposed to be the souls of these old trees (*Ibid.*, p. 289). Being identified with the spirit of such long-lived trees, the crane (the Sien-Ho) became in its turn the bird of immortality (Doré; Part I, Vol. 2, p. 468-9 and fig. 217). Hence, even down to our own days the crane is to the Chinese a transcendent symbol of immortality. As such an emblem it is painted even on the hearses of the dead to symbolise the transition to immortality. Indeed, it personifies generally the genius of immortality in China (Doré; *Ibid.*, and De Groot; Vol. IV, p. 359).

It is when we find such an ancient and great cult of the Sien-Ho or crane as the symbol of immortality that we can understand how the western Iranians living not very far from China came to believe that its feathers would cure wounds, confer vitality and repel charms (*Bahram Yasht*, s. 35).

It might be noted that the cult of the Crane which was at one time so important in old Iran and China cannot be said to be dead even in our own days. "In certain districts of India, in Japan and among the Kalmuks they are held in reverence." (Cf. Evans, "*Birds*", p. 254—*Cambridge Natural History*). Their wonderful dances and their mighty and seasonal flights have been noticed not only in the religious poetry of China and Persia but by poets like Virgil in the West and like Attar and Rumi in the East. Their long and mysterious flights have been taken by the Sufi poets as worthy types of the soul's flights towards and in the world of spirit; and this mystic poetry has found in the flight of the cranes following their leader a suitable parallel for the seekers after truth following their spiritual guide.

In the Awesta the Varengana is said to carry heroes and their chariots (*Bahram Yasht*, verses 39 and 40). So also in the Shahnameh it carries Rustam in one night to the "Kaz" tree on the Chinese sea. Such beliefs too are not yet dead in parts of Asia. Thus "in 1740 the Tartars of Krasnojarsk and the Assamians assured J. G. Gmelin that when autumn came each Crane took a Corncrake on its back and transported it to a warmer land; while the well known belief of the Egyptian peasant that Cranes and Storks bring a living load was not long since gravely promulgated in this country as a truth" (Newton

and Gadow; *Dictionary of Birds*, p. 550. Gmelin; *Reise durch Sibirien*, Vol. III, pp. 393-394). It is an old belief that the lesser birds get themselves conveyed by Storks and Cranes on their migrations.

2. THE CULT OF THE PHOENIX.

Somewhat less important for the study of Bahram Yasht, but still quite useful in the task of interpretation is the Chinese cult of the Phoenix. Thus in the Yasht verse 21 we read about a mystic bird that "he *grazes* the hidden way of the mountains, he *grazes* the tops of the mountains, he *grazes* the depths of the vales, he *grazes* the summits of the trees, listening to the voices of the birds." All this is very poetical, but its full meaning and poetic significance is brought out only by a comparison with the cult of the phoenix. In Chinese mythology the phoenix bathes in limpid fountain, *passes* over the Kuen Lun mountains and in the evening it retires in the rocky grottoes of Tan. It is *only rarely that it touches the ground* and when it does the other birds at once come to pay it homage (Doré; Part I, Vol. 2, p. 444). We can now see why in the verse quoted from the Yasht, the mystic bird only *grazes* or *passes* over the mountains and depths of vales. For according to Chinese classics the Phoenix is too dignified a bird to touch the ground except momentarily and then only to accept the homage of other birds. So also in Avesta the bird "*grazes the summits of trees*" for there is only one tree, according to the Chinese mythology on which the Phoenix condescends to alight (Doré; *op. cit.*, Part I, Vol. 2, p. 444). The bird does not walk or tread the ground, it either flies or dances as it has only one foot (Groot, II, 575). Interpretation thus assisted brings out the full poetic effect of the Avesta text.

Then again in the Yasht verse 36 "the feathers of that bird brings him the homage of men." This passage is indeed the predecessor of the famous cult of the Homai which was widely spread in mediaeval and modern Persia. According to that cult, the shadow of the bird sufficed to exalt the man on whom it fell to kingship. A very similar belief was held in ancient times in China, and instances are quoted in which the Phoenix built its nest on the roofs of the palaces of various emperors of China. (Doré; Part I, Vol. 2, p. 442).

So high is the spiritual value of the feathers of the Phoenix that one of them was habitually carried about by such a prince of spiritualism as Chang Kuo—one of the eight famous immortals (Werner, p. 295). Well might our Yasht say that such a feather brings to its bearer the homage of men—homage which is, as we see, not only terrestrial but spiritual. It is to be noticed that there were only a dozen of such feathers in the tail of the Phoenix—a number corresponding to the months of the

year. When we obtain the further information from the Chinese writers that this divine bird is the product of the fire and the "sien" (*Ibid.*, p. 444) then we see the rational of the place it occupies in the Bahram Yasht.

There is another verse of our Yasht (verse 19) which the Phoenix legend might help to elucidate. That verse describes the bird as "formidable in its lower parts and aggressively armed in its upper regions." This is paralleled again in the Chinese account of the Phoenix which endows it with the back of the tortoise, the neck of the serpent and the head of a fowl (Doré; Part I, Vol. 2, p. 444). Thus the Phoenix is endowed in its upper and lower parts with formidable means of attack and defence both according to the Chinese and the Persian legends.

(3) THE CULT OF THE RAVEN.

The description of the Varaghna bird (the raven) which we have in verse 19 of the Bahram Yasht corresponds both to the Chinese cults of the Raven and of the Bird of the Morning. In China "the Sun is symbolised by the figure of a raven in a circle" (Werner, *op. cit.*, p. 176, Granet, *Danse et Legendes de la Chine Ancienne*, pp. 372, 375 and 377). The red raven ("le Corbeau Rouge") was the symbol of the Chou race and dynasty. "The Chou ruled by the efficacy of fire," for when their ancestor was marching to gain a throne a flame came down from on high to consume the sacrifice offered by him and the flame then changed itself into a red crow (Granet, p. 387). Consequently the red crow was, like the Phoenix, the symbol both of the Sun and of the sacred fire. Thus the raven was an age-long symbol of the fire and the Sun in Asia, and hence we can understand its place in the Yasht. There was another reason too for the raven's presence in legends; for it was believed to be a "spectre bird" in China, and De Groot quotes from the "commentator of the Classic of Birds" to the effect that its knowledge is great enough to give it an insight into good and bad fortune." Hence from ancient times the Chinese look upon even the crows as "spectres able to foreknow things." (De Groot, Vol. V, p. 638.)

But the Varaghna is not only reminiscent of the raven of the Chinese myths but also of "the bird of dawn." The Varaghna according to our Yasht "flies up joyfully at the first break of dawn, wishing the night to be no more." According to the Chinese accounts too, the bird of dawn has a sonorous voice and majestic bearing. In verse 20 of the Bahram Yasht the Varaghna flies about joyously in early morning wishing the disappearance of the night and the appearance of the morning. In this respect also the analogy of the Varaghna to the Chinese bird of the morning is very clear.

Before we pass on to another subject, it might be permitted to revert to verse 36 of the Yasht. It is there said that "if a man holds a bone of that strong bird....no one can smite or turn to flight that fortunate man." We are not told in the Avesta, however, how the bone is to be used to secure such immunity. But here Chinese mythology comes to our assistance and helps again in the task of interpretation. For we read in Chinese accounts that the emperor Houang-ti encountering a sea-monster subdued him by hitting him with a bone of the "thunder-bird" with such force that the noise of the blows was heard 500 li's away and served to inspire the whole empire with a respectful fear of the hero (Granet, 509-510). Incidentally, an attempt has been made by A. Gruenwedel to identify the "thunder-bird" with the Indian bird "Garuda" (Werner, 200).

II. THE PLANT SYMBOLISM OF THE YASHT.

We now pass from legends about the marvellous bird Saena to those about the tree on which it rests; and here we shall be supplementing the information given by the Bahram Yasht by that afforded by the Rashnu Yasht (verse 17) and by the Minokhirad, LXII, 37. In these accounts we are informed that the resting place of the Saena is a tree "that stands in the middle of the Vouru-Kasha, that is called *the tree of good remedies, the tree of powerful remedies, the tree of all remedies.*" To this description of the tree the Minokhirad adds that the bird rests on the tree which is Jad-besh (opposed to harm) of all seeds."

For the tree rendered so famous alike in the Avesta and in the Pehlevi texts it is not difficult to find close parallels from Chinese mythology. Thus we are told that "the bird of dawn" which "having eaten the active principle of the Sun, has assumed the form of a three-footed bird, which perches on the fu-sang tree (a tree said to grow at the place where the sun rises) *in the middle of the Eastern Sea*" (Werner, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-187). Here we have a complete parallel to the Avesta account of the tree standing in the middle of the Vouru Kasha on which is the resting place of a marvellous bird.

However, we have still to find an analogue for the "tree of powerful remedies, the tree of all remedies" of the Rashnu Yasht. Nor shall we be disappointed, for there is a great cycle of stories about the "Sien" trees growing on the shores and in the islands of the Chinese Sea where the holy men (the "Sien") derive the medicine which confers immortality on them (De Groot, Vol. IV, pp. 294-308, Donald A. Mackenzie, *Myths of China and Japan*, pp. 113-119). On some of these trees is found the crane (the "Sien-ho"). Indeed, these cranes

are to be regarded as the souls of these trees; and further, the souls of old firs are represented sometimes as cranes which may be transformed men (De Groot, IV, 289). Moreover, there is the closest association between the life-lengthening trees, the cranes and the holy men. The holy men are "Sien," the trees are also "sien" trees and the crane is the "Sien-ho."

These trees of the Eastern Ocean *which can give immortality* correspond very well with the white Hom or Gokard—"the healing and the undefiled, growing at the source of the water of ardevisura; every one who eats it becomes immortal" (Bundahish, Chap. XXVII, verse 4). From that tree, the Bundahesh adds further, immortality is prepared (Bundahish, Chap. XVII, verse 1), just as the Chinese "siens" prepared the means of attaining immortality from the trees on the Eastern Ocean or grown in the islands thereof.

That brings us to verse 57 of the Bahram Yasht which is the one place in the Yasht celebrating the virtues of Haoma. The first thing that strikes us is that the virtues of the Haoma as celebrated in the Bahram Yasht are different from those narrated in the Haoma Yasht. In the former it is supposed to "save one's head" and to be "a protector to my body." In fact as Lommel has pointed out the sprig of Homa is to be used only as an amulet in the Bahram Yasht (*Lommel, Die Yashts des Avesta*, p. 134) and is to be carried on the head to protect life in battle. In other words, it prolongs the life of its worshipper. On the other hand, in the Haoma Yasht the functions of Haoma are to exalt intelligence and powers of thought to grant wisdom and wealth and to promote matrimony and the birth of worthy progeny. To the Haoma juice of the Bahram Yasht corresponds that dew of immortality from the lunar trees which was given by the goddess to illustrious heroes like Shen-I to prolong their lives (D. A. Mackenzie, *op cit.*, p. 144). As the author just quoted observes "the moon-water which nourishes plants and trees, and the dew of immortality in the jade cup, appear to be identical with the Indian Soma and the Nectar of the classic gods"—and it might have been added to the life prolonging Haoma of the Bahram Yasht.

III. PARALLELS TO SOME OTHER SECTIONS OF THE BAHRAM YASHT.

The parallelism is the greatest as between the Chinese and Persian legends as regards the tree and bird symbolism. But there are interesting resemblances as regards other legends also. Let us take section 17 of the Bahram Yasht of which the importance has been hitherto overlooked. It is to be emphasised that this section contains rules governing the sacrificial rites in the cases of the angel Bahram; Verse 55 commands that only the dry variety of woods are to feed the fire of Bahram;

Verse 51 informs us of the classes of persons who cannot participate in the sacrifices to the angel. But the most important rule is no doubt that laid down by verse 50 which states the description of cattle which can be offered up to that angel. We are told in that verse that the cattle sacrificed should be of white colour or of black or yellow colour (Cf. Harlez and Darmesteter) but that the cattle should be of one colour only or of the same sort. These rules remind us of the similar sacrificial regulations observed by the ancient Chinese. Thus in the case of sacrifices to the spirit of waters a pure white horse was preferred or a bay one with a black mane (Granet, 476-7).

(1) The Yasht emphasises in verses 7 and 9 the *yellow ears and horns* of the bull and the *yellow ears and caparison* of the horse—both the bull and the horse being “incarnations” of Bahram. That description points to the old Chinese colour symbolism. “In the Buddhist paradise the pure beings have faces bright and *yellowish*, yellow being the sacred colour of the Buddhist, as it is the colour of the chief dragon of China” (D. A. Mackenzie, p. 126). The emperor Hwang Ti (yellow God) was one of the most famous of the legendary emperors (Mackenzie, p. 277). “Yellow is like red reputed to be a vital colour. Lightning is yellow; the flames of wood are yellow—while the embers are red (D. A. Mackenzie, p. 162).

Why again it might be asked does the Bahram Yasht emphasise the colour of the *ears* of the two animals (the horse and the bull) in verses 7 and 9? We would look in vain for the explanation elsewhere in the Avesta. But the Chinese mythology can help us by proving that the ears were a particularly important part of the animals offered for sacrifice and the bull and the horse were pre-eminently sacrificial animals (Granet, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-143). As Granet observes “the animal sacrificed was not killed at once. A beginning was made by offering to the gods a little of the blood and hair and *this hair was taken from the ears*” (*Ibid.*, pp. 137-138). The same authority goes on to say that the blood drawn from the ears was necessary to sanctify both the field of battle and the place of triumph (*Ibid.*, pp. 142-3). We thus account for the importance attached to the ears as well as to the hair on the ears and their colour in sacrifices offered to Mars in the Chinese systems. Nor according to our Yasht is the importance of these factors any the less in the cult of the Persian Mars.

The yellow or golden colour is however sometimes sacred by itself, and in another branch of Chinese mythology, the king of cattle (corresponding to Drawasp in the Avesta) is opposed by a great general riding a horse with golden eyes (Doré, Part II, Vol. 11, p. 1048). Golden eyes as well as golden ears thus mark out a horse as sacred.

(2) In verse 29 of the Yasht we find the mention of the

powerful Kara fish which is to be found in the Rangha and which has a wonderful eye-sight. A fuller description of the fish is to be found in Bundahish, Chap. XVIII, verses 5 and 6; (*S.B.E.*, Vol. V, p. 66) where we have described for us further characteristics of the fish. It is a great fish which can snap in its jaws any animal; it is also said to be very "serpent-like." Very comparable with this is the "Divine Crocodile" or "first crocodile" of the Chinese which resides in the gulf or rather abyss of Tsouei-tchang. This fish has extraordinary power of illumination for when it either enters the abyss or emerges therefrom it produces flashes of light. (Granet, p. 509.) With such powers of illumination and with its human head and eyes, the Chinese alligator too is very keen sighted. The serpentine shape and the powerful jaws of the fish as described in Bundahish certainly suggest a fish of the crocodile type.

In the Bundahish (Ch. XVIII, verse 2) we are also told that the great opponent of the beneficent Kara fish is a lizard formed by the evil spirit, and the task of the ten Kara fishes is to keep away that lizard (*S.B.E.*, Vol. V, p. 65). It is noteworthy, in this connection, that according to a great number of Chinese religious classics the lizard is the spirit of marshes. The spirit of the marshes is called Mien and it possesses the form of a great lizard. The same spirit is to be found in dried up beds of rivers. It is said to be as high as the spoke of a car's wheel and to be as long as the pole of the car (Cf. *De Harlez, Le Livre des Esprits et des Immortels*, pp. 80-81). As in the Avesta and in the Bundahish the Kara fish is the representative inhabitant of fresh flowing waters; while the saurian which infests unhealthy marshes and drying up rivers might well be said to have been formed by the evil spirit.

(3) No Avesta scholar has yet explained the object or significance of the sentence in verse 44 of the Yasht: "Do thou throw four feathers in the way" of an advancing enemy about to engage in action. Several translators (e.g., Darmesteter, *S.B.E.*, Vol. XXIII, p. 243, note 2) have seen that the reference must be to "an arrow feathered with four Varenjana's feathers." And this conjecture is supported by lines in the Shahnameh like نهاده بر او چار پر عقاب

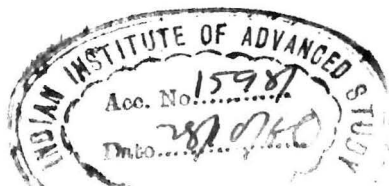
[On that arrow were four feathers of the Eagle.]

It was certainly an arrow with four feathers on it to be thrown at the foe before battle is joined. The reference to Varenjana is a pure conjecture on the part of Darmesteter, for that bird has not been mentioned in a number of preceding verses in the Yasht and the bird mentioned any where near verse 44 is not the Varenjana (which appears in verse 35) but the Saena which figures in verse 41. Nor does the Yasht say anything about fitting the feathers of either of these birds

into the arrows. For the feathers of the Varenjana are used only for rubbing the body with for curing wounds or to "bring homage of men." A good commentary on Varenjana's functions is to be found in Dinkard, Bk. IX, Chap. 23, verse 3, where the Kayan glory stands by the king's side "to rub his bosom" (*S.B.E.*, Vol. XXXVII, p. 227). The feathers of the Varenjana have a similar anointing function in the case of kings and princes as well as a healing function. There is no warrant for assuming with Darmesteter that the Varenjana's feathers which were so precious were to be used to assist the flight of arrows.

What then is the sense of emphasising the throwing of a single arrow at a foe at the beginning of a fight in which thousands of arrows will be soon discharged on both sides? Here again we can obtain useful light from ancient Chinese usages and legends. Arrows were thrown both for sacrificial and ceremonial purposes. When a male child was born four arrows were thrown—one at each cardinal point. Not only were these arrows thrown but others were *offered* to the gods residing in particular directions like the East (Granet, p. 380, note 5; p. 448, note 3 and p. 233, note 2). The arrows thrown in certain directions were "arrows of expulsion" (i.e., thrown to get rid of evil influences), those which were offered were "arrows of oblation." The throwing of an arrow was also a necessary ceremonial for breaking up of an old friendship or alliance and was a necessary part of the ceremony of declaring hostilities. It is in the light of these ancient usages which might have extended far beyond the boundaries of China that verse 44 of our Yasht has to be read and interpreted. That Yasht tells us that victory would incline to the side of the party which was faithful to its plighted word and oath and has thus pleased Rashnu and Mithra (verse 47). It is certainly consistent with such strict notions of rectitude, formally to throw an arrow and thus break off all lien and alliance with the opponent before engaging him in battle. Or it may be that the arrows which was thrown in the way of the enemy was "as arrow of expulsion" of evil influences. It is well worth adding here that, according to the *Dinkard*, in Sassanide times a stick which had been blessed was fired as the first arrow, at the beginning of battles, (Cf. Huart, *Ancient Persia and Iranian Civilization*, p. 151).

(4) It is true that the series of "incarnations" of Bahram to be found in this Yasht has no complete parallel in Chinese mythology. But some of the animals mentioned in the Yasht do form part of the Cortège of Tcheng Hoang—the protector of cities against attacks and a god who was annually worshipped by every city in China with the object of securing victory and peace (Doré, *op. cit.*, part II, Vol. II, pp. 875-892). In fact Tcheng Hoang is a kind of Urban Mars and is considered



to be the guardian of the fortifications, ramparts and trenches of all towns in China. His annual fête and procession are of a military character with soldiers marching with banners and drums. But the most characteristic parts of the procession consists of two "satellites" of the urban Mars—the first with a bull's head and the other wearing a horse's head. The reader will remember that the bull and the horse form the first of the "incarnations" of Bahram in his Yasht.

As regards Tcheng Hoang he receives high honours in China and has been entitled "the king who protects the state" as well as "the king who defends, protects and pacifies the state." His sacrifice is obligatory on all—on kings, princes, magistrates, principalities and indeed on the whole realm. And yet it is significant that he was not known to the oldest legendary system of China. However, his functions have been extended with the progress of time so that Tcheng Hoang has become also a scrutiniser of consciences who reports the good deeds of men to the Lord of Heaven as well as their crimes to the judge of the nether regions; (Cf. de Harlez, *Le Livre des Esprits et des Immortels* in the *Transactions Memoirs of the Academic Royale de Belgique*, Vol. 51, pp. 65-70). This reminds us that in verse 47 of the Bahram Yasht that angel is seen to be collaborating with Mithra and Rashnu (the Rhadamanthus of old Iran) in judging the conduct of people.

IV. PROBLEM OF THE ORIGINS OF THE BAHRAM YASHT.

I have argued in another article that in the exchange of heroic legends between old Persia and China the intervening race of Sakas bore an important part, and indeed, that very likely both countries might have adopted some of the Saka legends. That the Sakas played a similar part in the matter of religious legends seems also probable. In particular, it is interesting to note the close connection of many general ideals and even details of Bahram Yasht with the history and sociology of this virile pastoral race. In fact, the atmosphere of the Yasht is peculiarly adapted to the religious and social requirements of such a race. This appears to be the best explanation of the wonderful parallelism of the bird and tree symbolisms of Persia and China.

(1) The connection is closest in the case of the bird symbolism. Indeed we should have been unable to interpret passages about Meregh Sin and about the bird mentioned in verse 35 of the Yasht unless we had read the accounts of Zal and Rustam, those great representatives of the Saka race, in the *Shahnameh*; the explanation of verse 35 of the Yasht "with that feather thou shalt rub thy own body" is to be found in the Sakaean history: "when Rudabah's flank was opened to bring forth Rustam, her wound was healed by rub-

bing it with a Simurgh's feather; Rustam, wounded to death by Isfendyar, was cured in the same manner." This is the best comment and indeed the only comment made to explain section 14 of the Yasht (*S.B.E.*, Vol. XXIII, p. 240, note 2). The Mereg Saena presided over the fortunes of Zal and Rustam from their rise down to their fall. That bird was indeed the guardian angel—perhaps the totem of the Saka race. The negative argument is also strong; for the mystic bird never appears and is never heard of in the history of any purely Persian dynasty or heroic family. Indeed, by itself this might prove that the Bahram Yasht was composed at a time when and at a place where Saka notions and legends were dominant.

(2) Not only the history but the geography of the Sakas is reminiscent of the Bahram Yasht and of the great bird Saena mentioned in it. We read in the selections Zad-Sparam VII, 7 and also in Bund XII, 9 of the Aparsen mountain in Sagastan (*S.B.E.*, V, p. 175). In a learned disquisition on this topic Marquart shows that "Aparsen" means the mountain which the saena bird itself cannot traverse. He bases his conclusion on the dictum of Hiouen-Thsang that "the falcons themselves cannot fly over the range" and to this the mountain owes its name; he then adds that by "falcon" is here meant the Saena merga (*Untersuchungen*, p. 75) there is the name Para-Uparisaina in Sagastan which is the name of the valleys of Gandhara south of the Uparisaina mountains (Marquart, *Untersuchungen*, p. 76). It is when we have regard to these geographical Sagastan names that we can hit on the true meaning of Bahram Yasht verse 41 where the bird Saena is compared to clouds passing over and covering mountains.

I submit further that the present name of one of the mountains of Seistan—viz. Khoja Amrān—is also to be derived indirectly from the same bird Saena. The Saena became, in later mythology, the Sinamru (*S.B.E.*, Vol. XIII, p. 173, note 1); and it was called Amru for shortness. The word Amrān which is a part of the present name of the mountain is only the plural of the word Amru. The honorific title "Khoja" (lord) was prefixed to the bird on account of its sacred character. For centuries after the fall of the Persian Empire, the Zoroastrian faith and belief lingered on in Seistan; and even now in that region the sites of the old fire temples are honoured by adding the "Shah" after their name. Thus the site of the old fire temple at Karkuyeh is still respectfully called Karkushah (G. P. Tate, *Seistan*, pp. 206-211). Similarly, in the name "Khoja Amrān" the first word is an honorific prefix and, I submit, the whole name forms an additional proof of the dominance of the cult of the Mereg Sin in Seistan. My suggestion is strengthened by the fact that in older times some mountains in Seistan were named after the crane bird—as Apara-saena and Para-aparasaena.

It was only in a region where the cult of the Saena was so strongly marked that it was possible to compare even the angel of war with that bird. The land of Sagastan stretching from Bactria to Gandhara (Marquart, *op. cit.*, p. 242) was in the direct route of the great migration of the Saena cranes, and its inhabitants must have had unusual opportunities of admiring the flight of huge flocks of these birds over the Paropamisos range when they must have appeared to cover the mountains.

(4) If indeed the Yasht had been composed or its main ideas had been put together in Iran proper we could not doubt that its shape and its contents would have been very different. We cannot doubt that there would have appeared in it that magnificent march-past of the great warrior kings and heroes of Iran with which we are so familiar in other Yashts. Old Iran was very rich in martial kings and heroes and it was very proud of them. Even in hymns addressed to peaceful goddesses like Ashi and Aban the warriors take the first places and almost crowd out the other personages. In a hymn to Mars written in Iran proper we would naturally expect to see a culmination of the process and to have another little *Shahnameh* (as in *Zamyad Yasht*) to enrich our knowledge of history.¹ But what do we find instead of that glorious military spectacle? The names of only two or three of the best known Persian kings are brought into a couple of verses (verses 39 and 40), as by a side wind and casually. This is exactly the extent of knowledge of Iranian history which we would expect in the Sakas after they had been "Iranicised" and had settled down. From that race, at an early historical period, we could not in reason expect a glowing sense of pride in the history and traditions of old Iran. Their position was very peculiar and sometimes a doubtful one as regards Iranian race and culture. Indeed, while the Sakas south of the Paropamisus were accepted as allies of Iran, the position of their northern Kinsmen living in Saukavastan was regarded as a very anomalous one. They

¹ It is significant also that the Bahram Yasht does not contain certain beliefs which we have reason to believe were held in Persia proper about the angel Bahram. Tacitus has preserved for us one of these latter beliefs. We are told that "At stated periods, according to an ancient legend, Hercules inspired the dreams of the priests and in a vision, gave his orders, 'That a set of horses, ready for the chase, should be stationed near the temple. The hunters, accordingly, are drawn out, well equipped with quivers and a store of arrows.' Thus caparisoned, they stretch at temple without an arrow left, weary, and at the close of day, return to the appears again, in a midnight vision, and panting for breath. The god forest where he pursued his game. After this information, diligent search is made and a large quantity of game, killed in the chase, is found in the woods." (Tacitus, *Annals*, Book XII, S.13.)

This can refer only and obviously to the warrior angel of Persia - Bahram.

were regarded as allied to the Turanians; their king Agrirath was called the brother of Afrasyab, and the princes of their pastoral tribes were called Gopatshah (Bundehesh, Ch. XXIX, 5 *S.B.E.*, Vol. 37, p. 117). Some manuscripts of the Dinkard Book (IX Ch. 16 verse 14) indeed treat these Northern men of Saukvastan as foreigners. Even Firdausi while he treats the men of Sagistan as the strongest props of the Iranian throne often represents the "Saksâr" as fighting for Afrasyab. Dr. West thus concludes his discourse about the king of the people of Saukavastan: "all these forms of name imply that he was a king or master of oxen, and the Mino Khirad describes him as a Mazda—worshipping minotaur, on the sea-shore, probably the Caspian or the river Oxus" (*S.B.E.*, Vol. 37, p. 202, note 5). Marquart indeed would place the northern boundary of Sakas (Saka Tigrachaudah) even further north on the Jaxartes (Marquart, *Untersuchungen*, p. 140). In his account of the inscription of Darius from Hamadan, Dr. Herzfeld considers that the Sakas inhabited regions to the North of the Caspian, the Aral and Jazartes plains as well (Cf. *Mem. Archaeol. Surv. Ind.*, No. 34, p. 6-7).

(5) So we find that the men of Sagastan were eminently a pastoral race. And in the Bahram Yasht we have strong evidence that the Yasht was written in a pastoral milieu. It is only in such surroundings that in a hymnology to the god of war a passage could be introduced in the praise of the ox—a passage which has otherwise nothing to do with the subject of the Yasht and which interrupts the prayers to Bahram and the general description of his functions. This is verse 61 of the Yasht. The commentators have been so struck by the anomaly of such passages occurring in the Bahram Yasht that they have assumed them to be fragmentary additions (Lommel, *op. cit.*, p. 135).

Historical place names like Parshad Gau and Dazgar Gau to be found in old Seistan are other proofs of the pastoral character of Sagastan (Farvardin Yasht verses 96 and 127). The name Parshad Gau, it deserves to be noted, lingered long in Seistan and has not quite disappeared in our own times. The name of Parshad Gau who according to the Dinkard lived in Sagastan and to whom Zoroasta preached his religion is believed to survive in the name Post-i-Gau given to the very ancient ruins of a town in Seistan which is reputed to date from the time of Rustam (Tate, *Seistan* pp. 187-188).

The name of the great apostle Seno is another great link between the legends in this Yasht and the land of Sagistan; for the name of the great family was no doubt derived from the bird cult of the Yasht. Indeed even if we had not learnt from the "wonders of Sagastan" that Seno was of that land, we could have made sure of that apostles' connection with Sakastan. For, apart from his bearing the name Saeno so well

known in Sagastan, there is indirect evidence of his connection with that land. It is remarkable that in three separate places the names of Parshad Gau of Sagastan and of Saeno are mentioned together in our religious works. This happens twice in Farvardin Yasht (verses 96-97 and 126-127). The third occasion on which this juxtaposition occurs is even more significant. In Dinkard Book IX Ch. 24 verse 17 (*S.B.E.*, Vol. 37, p. 230) the juxtaposition seems deliberate—Seno being placed next to Parshad Gau in defiance of all chronological considerations. In fact, in order to place him next to Parshad Gau his name is placed before those of Vistasp, Frashostar and Gamasp. We must be sure that there existed some strong reason for this repeated juxtaposition even at the obvious sacrifice of chronological considerations. The reason might well have been that Saeno was of the same country as Parshad Gau and that he helped to propagate the faith in Sagastan.

(6) In another paper on "Astronomy and Astrology in Bahram Yasht" I have tried to show that in the first eleven sections of the Bahram Yasht there has been formulated a Zodiacal scheme and that the names of the bull, the horse, etc. are names of star groups and of Zodiacal signs. I have tried to demonstrate the equivalence of the scheme of "incarnations" in the early part of the Bahram Yasht and of our present day Zodiacal scheme as follows:—

Bahram Yasht

The wind
The bull
The horse
The Camel
The boar
The boy
The raven
The ram
The buck
The warrior
The kara fish

Our present scheme

Libra
Taurus
Sagittarius
Leo
virgo
Gemini
scorpio
Aries
capricornus
aquarius
pisces.

We see that the scheme in the Bahram Yasht omits the Lion of our Zodiac and substitutes for it the Camel. That was most probably because the scheme in the Yasht was formed in a region where the Lion was not to be found. For it is the same idea of sovereignty that is sought to be expressed by the Lion and the Camel as Zodiacal symbols. Generally the Lion is accepted as the symbol of royalty; but so is the Camel in Bahram Yasht verse 13 where we read of the camel as standing in the pose of an autocratic ruler.

The inference from this substitution of the camel for lion is that the scheme of the Yasht was formed not in Persia proper (where the lion is well-known) but somewhere farther north

towards Central Asia. The scheme in the Yasht must have been formulated in a region where Persian influences were predominant but where Chinese influences were not absent. It was also a region where the two humped camel was to be found in abundance, since the Yasht gives a detailed description of its habits. Such a region could obviously be found only in the part of Central Asia where the Sakas had settled. The Saka country stretched from Bactria to Gandhar as Marquart has shown. These Sakas had been Iranicised and yet they were near enough to China to have exchange of legends and myths.

(7) I would draw attention to a curious tradition surviving until our own days in Seistan which reminds us strongly of certain injunctions in the Bahram Yasht. In verse 55 the complaint is made that certain people transgress the rules of worship by bringing to the sacred fire "the plant that is called Haperesi, the wood that is called Nemetka." The commentators are agreed that Nemetka (from "nam" moisture) is some sort of wood with much moisture in it and which would not burn well. Such an injunction would be particularly appropriate in the case of a country like Sagastan which contains marshy tracts; since the wood growing in such places would be "Nemetka" and unfit to be used to keep up the sacred fire. Curiously enough the old injunction has survived in Seistan to our own times. Thus Tate in his work on Seistan (p. 244) records a tradition preserved orally in an old family of that country about the kind of wood used in keeping up the fire in the old and historical fire temple of the city of Trakun in Seistan—"The wood of the Tagaz, the variety of the tamarisk which grows and thrives only in the waterless tracts, was alone used for maintaining the sacred fire. Tagaz fuel burns well giving a clear flame with a minimum of smoke and burns into a clean ash which can easily be removed. Other kinds of tamarisk wood, on the other hand have a marked tendency to smoulder, and give forth a great deal of smoke." It is perhaps not a mere coincidence that the only living tradition corresponding to the injunction in the Bahram Yasht which we have quoted above survives in Seistan.¹

(8) But the importance of this verse in indicating the region in which the Yasht originated is even greater than would be *prima facie* supposed. Let us turn to the "Vyambura" Daevas mentioned in the verse and examine their identity.

¹ It is also noteworthy that in another way too the great fire temple of Seistan—that of Karkuyeh was picturesquely reminiscent of the Bahram Yasht. For as Makrizi says "the edifice was surmounted by two domes each topped off by a curving horn." This reminds us of Bahram Yasht, verses 7 and 23, where the bull and the ram—two incarnations of the angel are described as equipped with horns.

Commentators like Darmesteter leave this proper name unexplained and hence it becomes us to walk warily here. As it happens fortunately however in the Pahlavi Bahman Yasht III, 17 (*S.B.E.*, Vol. V, p. 221) we meet the name slightly changed in Pehlevi—"Bambo." The Yasht is describing the march of Vahram the Varjavand from India to conquer Persia. Assisted by the men of Sagastan, Hirat and Khurasan he marches to "Bambo." Dr. West has very judiciously identified the place Bambo with Bamm and Bampur region on the way to Kirman (*S.B.E.*, V, p. 222, note). It might be added in support of West's supposition that a prince marching from India *via* Afghanistan to conquer Persia would have to advance by way of Bamm or Bampur to Kirman.

Now the inhabitants of Bamm or "Bampur" (the Vyamburas of Bahram Yasht, verse 55) would be well known to Sagastan people as being close neighbours. Certainly they were backward in civilisation in the age of the Yasht—they are so even now—and just as the backward inhabitants of Mazenderan and Varen in the north were called Daevas by their more civilised neighbours so the comparatively backward people of Bamm or Bampur (Vyamburas) were also looked down upon by the men of Sagastan. It was to be expected that the Saka inhabitants of Seistan were at feud with the Semi-Balochi inhabitants of the region of Bamm and Bampur. The hostility shown in the Bahram Yasht to the Vyamburas was obviously not dispelled with time, and even so late as the 18th century Seistan experienced raids from the Biloch tribes of Bamm and Bampur (see Tate, *Seistan* pp. 93-94). During that century there has been a "great influx of the Biloch tribes into Seistan." The epithet "Daeva" applied by the Yasht to the men of "Bampur" (Vyambura) is to some extent justified by the marauding habits of the Baloch tribes; and the bloodshed caused by their turbulence is referred to in the Yasht where the Vyambura are said to "make the blood flow and to spill it like water" (verse 54). Geographical names like "Duzdab" (the river infested by robbers) which are still to be met with in the region to which the Yashta refers as "Vyambura" remind us of the description of skulking marauders described in verse 56: the daevas "bow their backs, bend their waists, arrange all their limbs, they think they will smite."

I have shown in this paper the close analogy between a number of legends in the Bahram Yasht and old Chinese legends. I have further suggested the probability of the basic ideas of that Yasht having originated in old Sagastan. It is not irrelevant to this line of thought to point out the survival in modern Seistan of a very old Chinese legend. The men of Seistan account for the destruction of their ancient city of Sar-o-Tar by narrating a story which has close affinities with a famous Chinese myth. "All of a sudden, 1072 years ago, for no as-

signed reason an animal of the size of a fox made its appearance in the country. This animal had a tail, many yards in length, and wherever it went the crops were destroyed and the inhabitants lost their lives. The evil spirit who was responsible for this destruction of property took up its abode in Sar-o-Tar, and for forty years that place was rendered uninhabitable" (Tate, *Seistan* p. 232).

Now in China the fox is regarded as a demoniac animal and the vehicle of evil spirits. It can transform itself into a human being in order to torment mankind; it is also credited with the power of producing fire by striking the earth with its tail. Those who wish to study specimens of the extensive fox-myths of China can consult the works of De Groot or De Harlez's *le Livre des Esprits et des Immortels*. But what is more, there was the famous "male fox with nine tails" which had extraordinary powers of wasting lands and which was at last killed by the "Divine Archer" called Yi (Granet; *Danses et Legendes*, pp. 342 and 378). The analogy of this wide-wasting fox of nine tails with the long-tailed fox which devastated Seistan from Sar-o-Tar is obvious. I would add that in an earlier paper on "Some Shahnameh Legends and their Chinese Parallels," I have shown the close resemblance between the exploits of Kereshasp the great hero of Sagastan and of the "Divine Archer" of Chinese legends. Among other similarities in the careers of the two heroes it might be mentioned that the destruction of the wolf Kapod by Kereshasp was an exploit very analogous to the achievement of the "Divine Archer" in killing the fox with nine tails. It is interesting in connection with the comparison to find legends of the maleficent and devastating fox still surviving in Seistan—the land of Kereshasp. It is a living instance of the connection of the old legends of China with those of Sagastan and Iran which has been my thesis in several papers which I have published.

No student of the religious legends of Sagastan can but help pay tribute to the work of Mr. Tate in the valuable memoir on Seistan. If his work is carried on further by archæologists it might help to solve important problems in the religious history of Iran.

Astronomy and Astrology in the Bahram Yasht.

By SIR J. C. COYAJEE.

In the present thesis an attempt will be made to interpret the Bahram Yasht in the light of Astronomy as well as of Astrology. As the result of the analysis and the interpretation of the Yasht with the help of astronomical and astrological concepts, it will appear that the first half of the Yasht contains a complete Zodiacal scheme of which the individual elements are expressed in terms suitable for and appropriate to the followers of the cult of Bahram (or Mars). In the second place, we shall find that the marvellous gifts attributed by the Yasht to Bahram are also in strict accordance with the dicta of astrological authorities. In the third place, additional arguments will be brought forward in favour of the view which I have already expounded before the Asiatic Society of Bengal to the effect that the "radiated figure" in a well-known sculpture on the Tak-i-Bostan is that of Bahram.

THE METHOD OF STUDY ADOPTED.

No doubt in the eyes of the vast majority of the *savants* to whom this discourse is submitted Astrology is a science of blunders—not of wonders, and is to be condemned at sight. But when interpreting ancient documents we have to pay due regard to views which were widely spread in former days and were regarded as true and fundamental by the ancients. It is particularly important to apply this method to a Yasht like Bahram Yasht which yet retains to a great extent its original astronomical aspect and has not been "ethicised" like so many other Yashts. It is submitted that, on account of this process, the method proposed to be adopted here is hardly likely to succeed with the other Yashts, but its application will be most fruitful in the case of Bahram Yasht. That in ancient Persia, Astrology was applied to the task of interpreting the Yashts is obvious from a passage in Bundehesh VII, 4 where we read that "Tishtar was converted into three forms, the form of a ram and the form of a horse and the form of a bull... As the astrologers say that every constellation has three forms." Here we have the old priesthood emphasizing the necessity of using astrological concepts in interpreting the Yashts—an example and warrant for our procedure. Nor are other indications wanting of the interest taken in the astrological aspects of the planet Mars. Thus, in the Epistles of Manuschihar, Ch. 2, s. 9, we

read that Mars in the direction of Padramgosh sends much good (*S.B.E.*, Vol. XVIII, p. 334).

For facility of reference on the part of the reader, some text-book of astrology had to be fixed upon which was well-known, which carried high authority, which was of ancient date and of which good translations existed; all these desiderata are satisfied by the famous work of the astrologer Varah Mihira—the Brihajjatakam. There are two translations of this work easily accessible. At the same time, this work has been singled out only for facility of reference, and any other text-book of astrology will impart that information of a rather elementary character which has been utilised here. What is required here is the application of only the elementary concepts of astrology, and no profound knowledge of that subject is either required of the reader or claimed by the writer.

ANTIQUITY, AND LOCALITY OF FORMATION OF THE SCHEME IN THE YASHT.

There is every indication both of antiquity and of distinctive character in the Zodiacal scheme of the Bahram Yasht. To start with, the sign cancer is not *specifically* mentioned, and the absence of this name is evidence of the antiquity of the scheme. As we shall see the name "Libra did not exist in the Egyptian Zodiac and its place was occupied by the claws of the scorpion." (Fosbrooke's *Encyclopædia of Antiquities*, Vol. 1, p. 222.) Even in Virgil's days the space filled by it was regarded as "so much waste land" (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. 28, p. 994). Again, while a great many constellations are common to the Babylonian Zodiac and the Zodiacal scheme of the Yasht, there are two or three names of constellations which the latter scheme shares with the Chinese Zodiac. Thus, the raven or eagle, and the pig or boar, are common to the Chinese Zodiac and the Bahram Yasht.

It is obvious from the antiquity of the scheme of the yasht, and from the mingling therein of the Chinese and Babylonian names of constellations, that the prosecution by expert astronomers of the inquiry inaugurated in this paper must prove of great value to the history of Astronomy. It might easily throw important light on the old controversy as regards the origin of constellations and about our respective obligations to the Chinese, the Indians and the Babylonians as regards the naming of constellations (Cf. Dr. Thibaut's article in *Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie*, band III, heft 9, pp. 14-15). Much has been written as to whether the Chinese borrowed their asterisms from the Arabs or the Arabs from the Chinese. Bentley observes in his great work on Hindu Astronomy that "he mentioned the circumstance to a learned Mahomedan, in the hope of getting some information, and his reply was, "that

neither the Chinese borrowed from the Arabs, nor the Arabs from the Chinese; but that they both had borrowed from one and the same source which was from the people of a country to the North of Persia, and to the West or North-west of China." Now, it will appear from our present study that this was the very region in which the Zodiacal scheme of the Bahram Yasht was constructed.

Then there is the problem as to the locality in which the early observations of stars and constellations were made. There is a belief that "from 32 to 41 degrees northern were the certain limit of the station of the first founders of solar Zodiacal astronomy"; some authorities "think the region lay between the sources of the Oxus and India" (Proctor, *Myths and Marvels of Astronomy*, p. 361). For, the position from which the observations were made "must have counted for something in determining the association between a star-group and a known object" e.g., a lion or a camel (*Ibid.*, p. 340). From this point of view, too, the study of the names of star-groups in the Bahram Yasht by experts is bound to be very fruitful. Fortunately, the Yasht itself furnishes us with valuable data regarding the approximate locality in which its Zodiacal scheme was formed. The most important factors in deciding this question are the presence of the camel and the absence of the lion. It is to be emphasized that S. 4 of Bahram Yasht uses the phrase "large humps" in describing the camel and thus invites attention to the fact that it was a Bactrian camel that was intended to be described. The Yasht, indeed, goes on still further to specialise the matter and adds that it is a "burden-bearing camel" or a tame camel that was being described, and thus distinguishes it from the wild camel which still flourishes in Central Asia. The writer of the Yasht was fully aware of the details of the life history of the camel—its being covered with the scars obtained in its fights, its keen and eerie powers of sight and locomotion and the phenomena of its rutting season. Such knowledge could only have been obtained in Central Asia. Indeed the best commentary on this section of Bahram Yasht is constituted by some passages in Sven Hedin's *Travels in Central Asia*.

The absence of the lion from the scheme in the Yasht is also very significant. The lion was not a denizen of northern Persia, let alone Central Asia. Agassiz asserts "that the species has always kept within its original boundaries." (Andrew Murray, *Geographical Distribution of Mammals*, p. 94.) Thus this factor also points to some region in Central Asia as the place of the composition of the Zodiacal scheme under review.

Lastly, we have to consider the fact that in our scheme are included some names of constellations which indicate, if not a borrowing from Chinese sources, some common influences. The reference to the "Mereg-Sin" (the Chinese bird) in the Yasht is an admission of some obligation to Chinese symbolism.

One of the names of the constellations in the Yasht is the Vareghna which has been translated as the Raven. Now it is significant that in China the Raven is regarded as a spectre-bird (De Groot, *Religious System of China*, Vol. V, pp. 634-640). Again, in China "the sun is symbolized by the figure of a raven in a circle" (Werner, *Myths and Legends of China*, p. 176). The same bird as described in S. 7 of the Bahram Yasht is reminiscent of the bird of Dawn as described in ancient Chinese classics (See Werner, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-187).

We might then conclude that the Zodiacal scheme of the Bahram Yasht is a very ancient one and was composed in some region of Central Asia which was near enough to China to permit of an exchange of astral symbolism.

PARALLELISM OF THE SCHEME OF THE YASHT AND OUR PRESENT-DAY ZODIACAL SCHEME.

Before proceeding further, let us give the names which our Yasht assigns to the Zodiacal figures. We shall give the names of these figures and opposite each of them the section of the Yasht in which it is described or introduced in it.

1.	The wind	..	..	Bahram Yasht	S.	1
2.	The bull	..	..	"	"	S. 2
3.	The horse	..	..	"	"	S. 3
4.	The camel	..	..	"	"	S. 4
5.	The boar	..	..	"	"	S. 5
6.	The boy	..	..	"	"	S. 6
7.	The raven	..	..	"	"	S. 7
8.	The ram	..	..	"	"	S. 8
9.	The goat	..	..	"	"	S. 9
10.	The warrior	..	..	"	"	S. 10
11.	The Kara fish	..	..	"	"	S. 11

It is obvious that one of the constellations has been left out. The reasons for not mentioning explicitly the constellation Cancer in the Bahram Yasht will be given later.

In order to demonstrate the correspondence of the scheme of star-groups in the Yasht with the Zodiacal scheme prevalent in our own days, we shall have to classify the constellations into groups and it is here that the ideas of astrology will be so helpful to us. We have to take account of the age-long division of the constellations into the well-known triplicities of fire, air, earth and water; for the two classifications correspond fairly well. Among these groups we must naturally place the fiery triplicity at the top, since the nature of Mars is fiery. For the same reason the watery triplicity is placed at the bottom, since the "Neecha" or "depression sign" of Mars is in the watery constellation Cancer (Brihajjatakam, Ch. 1, Verse 13) and because they are all "cadent" houses. These triplicities were well-known in the Sassanide age and even to much earlier ages. For we find in the Rashnu Yasht a classification of constellations

according to those "that have the seed of water in them" (the watery triplicity) and those that have the seed of earth in them (Earthy triplicity). Thus we are warranted by the beliefs of the age of the Avesta in classifying the constellations on the well-known lines of the Triplicities.

Again, in each triplicity the signs are arranged or graded in the order of their congeniality to Mars. Thus Aries is put on the same side as Capricornus, because Mars is the "lord of Aries" while Capricornus is the "Exaltation sign of Mars" (*Ibid.*, Ch. 1, Verse 13). Pisces is put on the same side, as Mars is exalted in a part of it (*Ibid.*). Arranging the constellations according to these simple astrological principles we get the following scheme of the Zodiac as regarded by the followers of the cult of Bahram or Mars:—

Aries (Ram, s. 8)	Leo (Camel, s. 4)	Sagittarius (Horse, s. 3)	} Fiery Triplicity
Capricornus (Buck, s. 9)	Virgo (Boar, s. 5)	Taurus (Bull, s. 2)	
Aquarius (Hero, s. 10)	Gemini (The boy, s. 6)	Libra (The wind, s. 1)	} Earthy Triplicity
Pisces (Kara fish, s. 11)	Scorpio (Raven, s. 7)	Cancer	
			} Watery Triplicity

In this scheme in each square we have put first the name of a constellation of the Zodiac; under it is given the name of the constellation as given in the scheme of the Bahram Yasht together with the section of the Yasht in which it is mentioned.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL ZODIACAL CONSTELLATIONS.

Coming to identify the star-groups, as named in the Yasht, with those of the prevalent denomination we first note that in the Yasht we start with "the Wind", and we propose to identify it with the sign Libra. Now we know that the sign Libra remained unnamed even as late as the days of Virgil. As thus there was a gap in the Zodiacal scheme, what could be more natural than that this unnamed and unclaimed portion of the windy triplicity should have been described after the triplicity itself and have been called "the Wind" in the Yasht? It was quite natural that in the absence of a specific name for this constellation the generic name of the triplicity to which it belonged was made to do duty.

We can also explain in great measure why the Yasht began its enumeration of signs with Libra. The reason was that while in the watery triplicity Mars was in its "cadent houses", and

in particular when it was in the sign Cancer the planet was in its depression sign. While its passing out of Cancer into Libra was, from the point of view of the cult of Mars, an auspicious incident in so far as it had left its house of depression.

(2) It need hardly be said that "the bull" mentioned in s. 2 of the Bahram Yasht is identical with the sign Taurus. This sign appears under the same name in almost every system of Zodiacal signs.

(3) We have very good grounds indeed for identifying "horse" mentioned in Bahram Yasht s. 3 with the constellation Sagittarius. Even in the Western system of Astronomy, Sagittarius is, according to some, the Centaur Chiron who is half horse and half man—(Brennand's, *Hindu Astronomy*, p. 17, quoting from the *Encyclopædia Metropolitana*). The Pehlavi writers called Sagittarius the "Nim-asp" (or half horse; Cf. Bundahesh 11, 2) which corresponds very closely with the idea of a Centaur. Thus we have traced the identity of Sagittarius and Centaur, half-man and half-horse.

(4) We now come to the sign Leo to which corresponds the sign of the Camel in the Bahram Yasht. The Lion was not to be found in Central Asia where the Yasht was written. In other countries where the Lion was not a native other substitutes had to be found for him on the Zodiac. The Egyptian image of the Sphinx is supposed to have originated when "the solstice was at the point dividing the two constellations Leo and Virgo (Brennand, *op. cit.*, p. 13). In Central Asia, the camel with its body covered with scars of fights and with its keen and eerie powers of sight and locomotion would serve as a better representative of Mars than even the lion itself. We regard the lion as the royal animal; and in the same spirit the Bahram Yasht speaks of the camel as "standing like a king." The ideals of a dignified and kingly bearing and great fighting strength which other nations found in the lion were combined in Central Asia in the camel. It is the idea of royalty which is implied by the sign of Leo, and attributes of royalty are expressly ascribed to the camel by the Yasht.

(5) At first sight the Virgo of our modern Zodiac appears to be far removed from the Boar put in its place by the Bahram Yasht. But even that seeming gulf is spanned by comparative mythology. We discover that even in the celestial regions the beast is never far from beauty. In the Babylonian Zodiac the Virgo represented Ishtar which is identified with Venus (Jastrow, *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, pp. 370 and 459). This brings us to the "widely-spread nature myth" according to which the goddess (known as Venus or Ishtar) mourns for her admirer Tammuz, Adonis or Attis. The death of this admirer was always due to Mars who assumed the form of a boar to slay the former (Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, pp. 8 and 220). Consequently, to the worshippers of Mars (or Bahram),

the constellation of the Virgo is pre-eminently that of the Boar.

(6) The identification of Gemini with "the boy of fifteen" in Bahram Yasht is based on the fact that in the Babylonian Zodiac Gemini was represented by two boys placed feet to feet (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 994). We read in the same work that even in Rome "in the third month and sign, the building of the first city and the fratricidal brothers—Romulus and Remus of the Roman Legend—were brought to mind." The only difference between our Zodiacal system and that of the Yasht is that the latter refers to one boy instead of two.

(7) The Scorpio of our own Zodiac was placed there as a symbol of darkness, because of the "definitive decline of the Sun's power after the autumnal equinox" (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 994). Exactly the same idea of darkness and the decline of the Sun's power is well represented by the Raven in our Yasht. One can scarcely dispute the right of the Raven to represent the autumnal darkness. The appropriateness of the Raven as a symbol of autumn will be better appreciated when it is remembered that, in Astrology, Mars indicated the season of Summer (Brihajatakam, Ch. 11-12), and hence the sign of Scorpio or Raven expressed a decline in the power of Mars as well.

(8) The "wild beautiful ram" of the next section of the Yasht is of course the same as our sign of Aris. Astrologically it is the "exaltation sign" of Mars and thus specially identified with it. We read in Jastrow's work on the Religion of Babylonia and Assyria why Mars (called Nergal by the Babylonians) came to be designated as the sheep or ram. The Babylonians regarded the Sun as the overseer or shepherd of the planets which were his sheep. Mars, however, was considered the sheep or ram *par excellence*, perhaps because of the intensity of his light (pp. 459-460). We note that in the Yasht the ram's horns are specially described, since among the Zodiacal constellations, Aries corresponds to the head, according to Astrology.

(9) It is not difficult to identify the "fighting buck" mentioned in the 9th section of our Yasht with Capricornus. Indeed, in the Hindu representation of the Zodiac, Capricornus is endowed with the head of a buck (Brennand, *op. cit.*, p. 14, plate 11), and its figure is very similar in the ancient Egyptian Zodiac (*Ibid.*, plate 1). We note also the prevalence of the buck in Central Asia where the scheme of the Yasht was formed.

(10) Aquarius was represented, in the symbolism of Babylon, by the god Ramman (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 994), who was the thunder-god and storm-god. As the god of thunder he fulfilled well the conception of Aquarius. At the same time, as presiding over the battle of the elements he came to be conceived as the god of war to whom Assyrian vic-

tories were ascribed (Jastrow, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-161). The description of the martial figure given in the tenth section of the Bahram Yasht is quite in accord with this idea; only, as befits a Martian concept of the god of war, the water jar is removed from his hands and a sword is substituted for it.

(11) Coming to the sign of Pisces we find that in our Yasht, section 11, Bahram is not specifically mentioned as appearing in the form of a fish. This is so probably for the reason that Mars, as the fiery planet, could not appropriately be made to appear in the guise of an aquatic being. But it is very significant that exactly in the eleventh section, where we would expect the sign Pisces to be described, we have a description of the Kara fish "that lives beneath the water." Nor, perhaps, is the resemblance of the name of the kara fish to the Indian name for Pisces—Makara—without significance.

(12) Having thus found that the Bahram Yasht deals with eleven out of the twelve signs of our Zodiac, we come to account for the significant omission of the twelfth sign that of the Cancer. Here, again, it is Astrology that comes to our assistance, for according to it Cancer is the "neecha" or depression sign of Mars, and, accordingly, the worshipper of Bahram might well avert his eyes from that cadent sign. We have to remember that the Bahram Yasht envisages the progress of that planet Mars not merely from the technically astronomical or astrological aspect, but also from the point of view of the worship of the planet with the object of obtaining some boon. With such an object it would not be advisable to worship the planet while it is in its "depression" sign. If the reader would consult the rules for planetary worship, say, the exposition of such rules on Sabaeen lines by Prof. de Goeje before the sixth International Congress of Orientalists, he will find it stated that it is best to offer prayers to each planet at his period of exaltation; the positions of planetary depression are to be avoided by the devotee. Hence in the Bahram Yasht it was to be expected that the aspect of the planet in its "depression" would be passed over and not expressly mentioned. Consequently in the Martian liturgy before us we find no mention of Cancer. This position is in no way inconsistent with the much later astrological dictum to be met with in the "Epistle of Manush-Chithra" that "the Padramgosh position of Mars is a favourable one." The position is stated to be only *conditionally* favourable—if Mars is at the end of *and about to leave Cancer*, and if the Sun and the Moon are in the latter part of Aquarius, and Saturn is in the first part of Aries. As the Astrological text books inform us, the depression in Cancer lasts only for 28 degrees out of 30. (See notes to Brihajjatakam, Ch. 1, 13.) Hence the proposition laid down by the Pehlevi astrologers is in no way inconsistent with the general position that Mars has a generally unfavourable aspect when it is in Cancer.

THE BOONS CONFERRED BY BAHRAM.

(Bahram Yasht, Sec. 11-14.)

Having occupied exactly the first half of its length in a presentation of the Zodiacal Scheme, our Yasht in the next three sections recounts the various boons which Bahram can confer. Here again Astrology confirms the dicta of the Yasht and helps us to interpret them. In fact, the Bahram Yasht is the one Yasht which has retained its former astrological and astronomical features so well that we can apply this method of interpretation to it with confidence and advantage. The boons which Bahram grants in the Yasht are exactly those which astrology endows Mars with the capacity to confer. Thus the Bahram Yasht in its verses 12, 29, 31 and 33 states that the angel Bahram can confer the gift of a brilliant eye sight—such eye sight as the horse, the vulture, the Kara fish or the camel possesses. That reminds us that, according to astrology, Mars rules the eyes (Cf. the Jyotish Kalpa Brikkha) and as a corollary of this position he can endow one whom he favours with bright eye sight. Hence in Bahram Yasht, section 11, he endows Zoroaster with such eye-sight. But, contrariwise, if Mars is unfavourable, he can deprive one of the powers of sight. Hence, among the Sabaeans who held the astrological religion, Mars was called الملك الاعمي, i.e., the king of the blind. Chwolsohn in his great work (*Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus*, Vol. 11, pp. 24 and 188) was at a loss to account for the expression; but Prof. de Goeje commenting on the same expression showed that if Mars had the power of improving eye sight, he was also in a position to take away the powers of sight if he was in an unfavourable position.

Then again, Bahram endows Zoroaster with "the strength of the arms." So also works on Astrology tell us that a person born with Mars in the signs Gemini or Virgo will have a great capacity for fighting (Cf. Aiyar's Edition of Brihajjatakam, p 174). In Astrology, Gemini governs lungs and arms, and an auspicious Mars can strengthen these limbs. The other gifts said to have been conferred on Zoroaster in the Bahram Yasht could also be shown to be corollaries of astrological dicta.

IDENTITY OF THE "FIGURE WITH THE HALO" IN A
TAK-I-BOSTAN SCULPTURE.

In a paper read before the Asiatic Society of Bengal I have argued that the figure with the nimbus of Sun-rays on the well-known sculpture on the Tak-i-Bostan was to be identified with the angel Bahram. The argument in that essay proceeded on archæological and historical grounds; but I am now in a position to corroborate my thesis on astrological grounds. The first point on which Astrology can throw light is the expression "delicate heeled" or "thin-heeled" in the Bahram Yasht,

Verse 17. In a foot-note to my above-mentioned essay I drew attention to the analogy between these delicate or weak feet thus ascribed no Mars and Bahram and the legends of the vulnerable feet of great warriors like Achilles, Krishna and Gandarewa. The problem of this curious combination of great strength with weak feet can be solved, as I am going to show, by Astrology. For, among the Zodiacal constellations Aries forms the head and Pisces the feet as our table shows, (Cf. Brihajjatakam, Ch. 1, verse 4 and verse 13). Now the depression sign of Mars is in the watery triplicity, and hence Mars is weak in Pisces or the feet.

The designer of the figure with the nimbus on the Tak-i-Bostan was well-versed both in Avesta and in Astrology, as was only to be expected from a member of the priestly order in the Sassanide age. The whole figure in question is so figured as to fulfil the astrological symbolism of Mars or Bahram. Thus Mars has his "exaltation" in the fiery triplicity, and his "depression" in the watery triplicity. Corresponding to this the figure has fiery rays emerging from his head while his feet are small and rest on the water-flower. Both the small feet and the lotus indicate a reference to the watery triplicity containing Pisces and Cancer which are the "cadent" houses of Mars. But, further, when the garden of the Tak-i-Bostan was better kept than it is now—as it was under the Sassanides—the scene must have been very realistic with the lotus at the feet of the figure appearing to float on the water overflowing from the pond at the feet of the sculpture, and the fishes floating on the pond forming a live representation of the constellation Pisces in the heavens.

Many other features of the figure with the nimbus can be explained with the help of our astrological data. Thus the figure appears more youthful and shorter than the other two figures of the sculpture. This reminds us of the dictum of Astrology that "Mars is not of a tall figure" (Brihajjatakam, 11, 4), and "has a youthful body" (*Ibid.*, 11, 9). He has "also a narrow middle" (*Ibid.*) as we see in the figure we are considering.

A pertinent question might be asked here—why did the iconoclast of a later age smash only the region of the eyes of the figure before us in the whole sculpture? An answer can be suggested in the light of our study. The Yasht in Verse 17 emphasises "the shining clear eyes" possessed by Bahram. As we have seen also this feature of Mars was emphasized by all astrological descriptions. Presumably, the sculptor, in order to make the figure correspond to this description had endowed the former with specially prominent and expressive eyes. But, in the opinion of the ignorant iconoclast this constituted a special crime, and he concentrated his malice on that distinguishing feature of the figure.

APPLICATION OF OUR METHOD TO OTHER YASHTS.

The above line of study is most fruitful when applied to Bahram Yasht, since in other Yashts the ethicising process has gone so far and has so much become the dominating *motif* that the astronomical and astrological elements have been reduced to a position of less importance. The later belief that "planets belong to Ahriman" (*Minokhirad*, VIII, 19 and *Bundehesh*, 111, 25; V. 1), might have helped that process (*S.B.E.*, XXIII p. 176, note 2). But there are still traces in several Yashts of the old astrological beliefs. Thus, in the Rashnu Yasht we have references to the astrological triplicities when stars are classified among those that have the seed of water, earth, etc. in them. A few reminiscences of the old astrological beliefs are to be found in the Ram Yasht also. In that Yasht, Vayu reminds us again of Libra (see above pp. 227 and 228) and of the influence of planets being in Libra. Thus, in verses 39-41, the maids desiring good husbands are said to pray to Vayu, and their request is granted. Now on referring to manuals of Astrology, we find the following description of the effects of Mars being in Libra (which is the positive house of Venus), "Occasionally, marriage is very much delayed . . . The native is passionate and quick and may suffer through his affections." This is indeed a very exact description of the aspirants to matrimony mentioned in the Ram Yasht. It might be added that according to works on Astrology, Jupiter in Libra is also fortunate for marriage.

We have already noted how the old Pehlevi commentators on Tir Yasht applied astrological notions to the interpretation of that Yasht. Thus we are told in *Bundehesh* VII, 4 that "Tishtar was converted into three forms, the form of a ram and the form of a horse and the form of a bull . . . as the astrologers say that every constellation has three forms." The age and region in which the Tir Yasht was composed had developed further the idea of the worship of certain constellations in order to ward off the effects of the maleficent aspects of different planets. In particular, the constellation Haptoiringha was invoked to defeat the maleficent aspect of Mars. As Tishtra was an ally of Haptoiringha there are analogies between it and the Bahram Yasht, since to the constellation or star which helps to defeat the maleficent aspects of Mars is ascribed some of the qualities of the same planet when it is a beneficent aspect.