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Digital Archive of Brief notes & Iran Review

Vol.01

**NO.02**.2016



JORDAN CENTER  
FOR PERSIAN STUDIES

[www.dabirjournal.org](http://www.dabirjournal.org)

ISSN: 2470-4040





*xšnaoθrahe ahurahe mazdā*

Detail from above the entrance of Tehran's fire temple, 1286š/1917–18. Photo by © Shervin Farridnejad

## **The Digital Archive of Brief notes & Iran Review (DABIR)**

ISSN: 2470-4040

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**dabj̄r**

Digital Archive of Brief notes & Iran Review

**Vol.01**

**No.02.2016**

**ISSN: 2470 - 4040**

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University of California, Irvine

## The *Niyāyišn* and the *bagas* (Brief comments on the so-called Xorde Avesta, 2)

Götz König  
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### **The *Niyāyišn***

Among the religious texts of the Zoroastrians the (YAv) *Niyāyišn* are in an outstanding position. They are, it seems, the only surviving texts which were – as *Niyāyišn* – never part of the Long Liturgy. Instead, they serve(d) as the most important daily prayers, and according to MX 53.4 they are recited on the three *Gāhs* of the day. In the XA Mss. the *Niyāyišn* have the highest frequency and are placed at the beginning of the Mss. They all have a PTr/SkrTr (which still needs to be evaluated in comparison to the PTr of V, Y and the smaller Yts).<sup>1</sup> Some passages of the Pahlavi literature prove that the *Niyāyišn* were prayed in the 1<sup>st</sup> mill. AD. The texts emphasize the worship of the sun (ō xwaršēd abestāg-ēwāzīg Dk 3.81), fire (CHP 45, Šnš 20.1/Dk 6.301), sun and fire (Šnš 7), sun + Mihr, moon, Wahrām-/Ādurōg fire (MX 53.4-5+8). In the Syrian Acts of the Martyrs the worship of fire and sun<sup>2</sup> and the sacrifice to the

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1- Dhalla 1965; Taraf 1981.

2- For a worship of the sun among the Kurds see Hoffmann 1880, p. 75. A sacrifice of Xosrō I to the sun and to other gods “with many invocations of the gods” (πολλά τε ἐπιθειάσας) is mentioned in Procopius *His.* II.11.1.

fire and water<sup>3</sup> are seen as the characteristics of magism. Classical sources (Quintus Curtius 4.13.12) give an account of the king's invocation of heavenly and/or visible deities (sun, Mihr, fire) that precedes the battle (*Solem et Mithrem sacrumque et aeternum invocans ignem*), and of a sequence of prayers/sacrifices (προσευξάμενος; ἔθυσεν): to the fire (Ἑστία πατρῶα; Ἑστία), to A<sup>h</sup>uramazdā (= Zeus) (Διὶ πατρῶω; Διὶ βασιλεῖ), to “other gods” which are invoked by the magoi (τοῖς ἄλλοις θεοῖς; τινι ἄλλω θεῷ οἱ μάγοι ἐξηγοῦντο) (see Xenophon [430/425 – > 355 BCE] *Cyr.* 1.6.1, 7.5.57). On the Achaemenian reliefs the kings seem to revere the depicted fire which again is related to the heavenly sphere (sun [with a deity] + moon<sup>4</sup>). In V 18.19, 21 a ritual sequence is described (purification prayers; kindling of the fire and worship) that (maybe) corresponds to the celebration of an Ātaxš-Niyāyišn.<sup>5</sup>

The texts of the *Niyāyišn* themselves have some striking features: a) they are also parts of other texts groups or are highly linked with them (Ny 1-3 : Yašt; Ny 4-5 : Yasna [*Zōhr* ceremonies]); b) Ny 1+2 are to a large part identical (in the Mss., but also in the ritual practice both texts are united<sup>6</sup> [because of Mihr's identification with the sun<sup>7</sup>]); c) they are confined to *Naturgottheiten* (in Zoroastrian terms: visible deities).

	Ny 1 sun	= Yt 6
	Ny 2 Mihr	= Ny 1 + Yt 10.144f.
	Ny 3 moon	= Yt 7
= Y 65.1-5	Ny 4 Arəduuī (Anāhitā)	= Yt 5.1ff.
= Y 62.1-10 (+ Y 33.12-14/34.4; S 1.9)	Ny 5 fire	

The sequence of the *Niyāyišn* in the Mss. (sun + Mihr – moon – heavenly waters / stars – fire) follows the usual Zoroastrian uranography. The poles (sun – fire) allude to an old, Indo-Iranian sun-fire-correspondence (see in the *Avešta* Y 36, Y 58).

## Baga in Old Iranian

As it is well known, there are three competing Avestan words for “god”, used as generic terms: *ahura-*, *baga*<sup>8</sup>, *yazata-*.

3- Hoffmann 1880, p. 51; cf. p. 53.

4- The depiction of the moon is disputed (crescent + orb?; see Schmitt 1970, pp. 85, 92, 95)

5- König 2015.

6- Cf. MX 53.4 *padīrag xwaršēd ud mihr ciyōn pad āgenēn rawēnd ēštād-an* > “standing opposite the sun and Mihr, as they proceed together” (Wešt).

7- However, in Yt 10.145 “Mithra and Ahura, the two exalted” (*miθra ahura bərəzanta*) are higher than the “stars, moon, and the sun”.

8- The term *baga* “god” survived partially in West Iran, see Kirdir KKZ 3-4, KNRm 9 *bayān gāh* = “heaven”.

Gāḏās	YH	YAv.	OP
<i>ahura-</i> ( <i>mazdā-</i> ); Pl. <i>ahurāṅhō</i> . (Y 30.9, 31.4)	<i>ahura-</i> ( <i>mazdā-</i> )	<i>ahura-</i> <i>mazdā-</i> ; <i>ahura-</i> (Miθra and Aṗamnapāt-)	
	<i>yazata-</i> (Y 41.3 Sg. = Ahura Mazdā)	<i>yazata-</i> (Sg. + Pl.) with the subgroup Aməša Spəntas	
(Y 32.8 <i>baga-</i> “portion” [of flesh given by Yima])		<i>baya-</i> ; Pl. <i>bayanqm</i> .	<i>baga-</i> Sg. + Pl.

The word *ahura-* is sometimes used as “lord” (see AiW 293; see also Yt 14.59 *ahurō.puθra-* and compare baktr. *bayepooro* etc., khot. *gyaštavūra-*), but it is mainly used together with *mazdā* as the name (see Yt 1.12) of the highest god (in the *Gāḏās ahura-* seems to be used – as *ásura-* in RV – as a class name). This highest god has in Iran not many companions, only very few traces of other *ahuras* can be found (Miθra [Yt 10.25, 69], together with Mazdā [Y 1.11, 2.11, Yt 10.145]; Aṗamnapāt [Y 1.5, 2.5, 65.12]; the water-goddesses Ahurānī; two instances for the plural of *ahura-* in the *Gāḏās*).<sup>9</sup>

The word *yazata-* occurs not before the YH and is widespread only in YAv. OI *yajatá-* occurs about 40 times in the RV, but mainly as an adjective in the singular and only three times as a plural substantive. Also in YAv the singular is always used together with a name (a certain exception is Y 22.27). The same distribution can be found in Pahlavi (the name of a deity + *yazd*, but without name in Dk 3; see B 231.16). Bartholomae (AiW 1279f.) assumes that *yazatas* were deities, “denen ein Monatstag geweiht war”, i.e., who got regular offerings.

The word (Y)Av. *baya-* “god; portion” goes back to IE \**bʰág-o* “apportionment”, a word that has a semantical development > “god apportionment” > “god” (EWA II, S. 239f.). While such an individual “god apportionment” is well known in the Veda (see OI Bhága-) his existence in the Avesta is highly uncertain<sup>10</sup>. In contrast to this situation, no class of *bhagas* (at best, a very small group) is known in the Veda, while *baga-* refers in Old Persian to the only known class of gods,<sup>11</sup> and in Young Avestan *baya-* is (next to *yazata-*) one of the two generic terms for “god”<sup>12</sup>. With the second term, *yazata-*, *baya-* is only

9- A plural in the first member of the compounds *ahura-dāta-* and *ahura-tkaēša-* is unlikely. More likely is a plural meaning in the mountain name *Ahurana* (Yt 19.5). The passages in which the adjectives *āhūiri-* and *āhūiriia-* “*ahura*-related” are used (see AiW 346f.) point in general to *the Ahura* (Mazdā) (PTr ī Ohrmazd), but in some instances a generic meaning is also plausible. On the very few *ahura*-names in the Nebenüberlieferung s. Hinz 1975, pp.24f., Tavernier 2007, p. 128.

10- On the long discussion on \**Baga* in Iran see with literature Sims-Williams in Bailey/Sims-Williams/Zimmer 1988, p. 405f. For Bhága’s relation to marriage (sogd. by’ny-pš-kt’kw “wedding” [“making of a *baga*-union”]) (on which the discussion of the Iranian question was based; see also Boyce 1975, p. 57) cf. Av *hu-baya-* (OI *su-bhága-* “with good apportionment”) and *vohu.baya-* (see AiW 1828, 1432). According to Henning 1965, pp. 249f., the meaning of *miθra-* in Yt 10.116 is “marriage settlement”.

11- In the times after the inscription DB A<sup>h</sup>uramazdā is called the *baga-vazarka-* and (*baga*) *vazarka-haya maḏišta bagānām*. The OPI can be divided into two groups: inscriptions that start with *baga-vazarka-* and such, that start with *adam + ḏātiy* (*res geštāe*). The Nebenüberlieferung attests a mass of *baga*-names (see Hinz 1975, pp. 53-61; Tavernier 2007, pp. 130-145) (but no *yazata*-names and only very few *ahura*-names).

12- *Baga* occurs also in Median names, see for instance \**baga-spāda-* (or \**baga-zbātā*) (Hinz 1975, p. 50), \**bagayāza-*, \**baga-zušta-*, \**baga-zauša-* (see Hinz 1975, p. 61; Tavernier 2007, p. 144).



partially interchangeable,<sup>13</sup> and it seems that *baγa-* refers to a particular group of gods:

### The *baγas* in the Younger Avesta

**Ahura Mazda:** Y 10.10 says about Haoma: θβā. *dāmiδātəm. bayō. tatašaṭ./nidaṭaṭ. huuāpā.* “the beneficent (*huuāpā.*) *baγa* created/plant thee, the one who is created by the creator”. In Yt 10.92 *huuāpah-* is epithet of Mazdā. Ahura Mazdā is called *baγa-* also in Y 70.1. Ohrmazd is also *bag*, *bay*<sup>14</sup> in MParth/MMP and in the Sasl (ANRb<sup>15</sup>). **Miθra:** In Yt 10.141 Miθra is called *baγanqm. ... aš.xradβasṭəmō.* „is the wisest of the *baγas*“ (≠ MMP *Mihr-yazad*<sup>16</sup> [cf. pahl. *mihr yazd, yazd mihr*]; but sogd. myšyy βγγγ<sup>17</sup>; baktr. *vvaga-/vaka-mihira*<sup>18</sup>).<sup>19</sup> **Māh:** In Yt 7.5 *māh-* „moon“ is called *baγa-* (cf. sogd. m’γw βγγ „god moon“).

A few other deities are closely related to the *bagas*. Like **Haoma** (see above) the **stars** are „made by the *baga(s)*“ (*bayō.dāta-*) (V 19.23), and **Tištriia**’s „way“ (*yaona-*) is *bayō.baxta-* „given by the *baga(s)*“ (ved. *bhāga-bhakta-*) (Yt 8.35).<sup>20</sup>

An act of divine giving (*baxš-* [ai. *bhakṣ-*]) is well known in the Avesta. In FO 4b “**Ahura Mazdā** gives prosperity” (*fradaθəm. baxšaṭ. ahurō. mazdā.*). The subject of such an act is the *x’arənah* of the sun and the moon (given by the Yazatas, Yt 6.1, Aməša Spəntas Yt 7.3 [cf. Vyt 34, 46 *baxšānti. raēšca. x’arənasca.*]), i.e., the act is a dispensing of light. In Yt 10.108 **Miθra**, in Yt 8.1 the **stars** and the **moon** dispense the *x’arənah*. **Tištriia** dispenses (*vībaxšaiti.*<sup>21</sup>) water, in Yt 8.1 he is called *baxtar-* “the dispenser”. Bad things are given by Miθra and **Vərəθrayna**. **Haoma** distributes sacrificial portions (*baxšaiti.*, Y 10.13, Y 9.22–23; cf. Yima in Y 32.8).

13- Also in this regard the title *Nask Bayān* (Dk 8.15) persists as a problem. Baileys (in Bailey/Sims-Williams/Zimmer 1988, p. 403) reference to a Pahlavi phrase *yazdān bayān* points to GrBd 5.2 (*yazdān bagān* [TD2 yzd’bg’n’] *amahraspandān*).

14- On the Varuna-theory of Boyce see Boyce 1982, pp. 15-17, 139, 143, 250, 283.88; Boyce 1981.

15- Information by Shervin Farridnejad.

16- Henning 1944, pp. 134f.; Henning 1965, p. 250; Boyce 1962, pp. 44-54; Sundermann 1978, 1979.

17- See Gershevitch 1959, pp. 40f.; Dietz 1978; Humbach 1979, p. 719.

18- Bailey 1979, p. 390; Bailey in Bailey/Sims-Williams/Zimmer 1988, p. 404.

19- It seems likely that Miθra was often called ‘the *baga*’. The seventh month of the year, the month of Miθra, has in the OP calendar the name *Bāgayādi-* (cf. AiW 952-3; Schmitt 1988 with lit. [for Miθra = god (of the month) Anāmaka see Kellens 1976, pp. 127f.]), while the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the month, the day of Mihr, corresponds to the Khwarezmian day called βγγ (Bīrūni fyγ) (see Bailey 1988, p. 404). For a late OP name \**baga-mihr* see Hinz 1975, p. 57. On \**Bagamihr* see with lit. Boyce 1975, p. 57; on \**Bagakāna* (cf. \**Mithrakāna*) see Boyce 1975, p. 58; on Miθra-Baga see Boyce 1982, pp. 139, 140, 283. Bailey 1979, p. 390, refers to Agathangelos, who says that the temple (*mehean*) of Mihr (*Mhrakan*) was called in Parthian *Bagayarič*. The designation of Mihr (a sun-god) as *bōžaka* (see Scheftelowitz 1933) evokes the OP PN *Baga-buxša-*.

20- The *baga* in Yt 15.1 (*yazāi. apəmca. bayəmca.*) is probably not Vaiiu.

21- Cf. Parsi-Skr. *vibhaktar-*.

<i>baya-</i>	Made by/closely related to the <i>baya(s)</i>	Act of ( <i>vī</i> ) <i>baxš-</i>
Ahura Mazdā		Ahura Mazdā
		indirectly: Huuar
Miθra		Miθra
Māh		indirectly: Māh
	Stars, Tištriia	Tištriia
	Haoma	Haoma; Vərəθraϥna

It can be seen that those divinities that dispense/distribute/give (*baxš-*) sth. are also designated as *baya-* (and more or less *vice versa*). Still the ŠGW 9.14 (= Dk 3.239a) points to the “dispensing *bagas*” (*baya. baxšinīdārqn.*). Ātar’s absence among the *bagas* / dispensers is remarkable (if not Vərəθraϥna = Ātar), particularly since Agni is called/compared with a/the *Bhága-* in the RV (RV 144.3, 2.1.7, 3.20.4, (3.54.21), 5.16.2, 6.13.2). However, we may point to two issues: a) a phrase (θβā.) āθrā. (*suxrā.*) *vañhāu. vīdāti-* (Akk./Lok.Sg.) *rāna-* (Gen./Dat. or Instr.Du.) „by means (of your) (red) fire at/for the distribution of the Good<sup>22</sup> by/for the two *rānas*“ (Y 31.19, 43.12, 47.6) in which *vī-dā-* (object: the Good) – a ritualistic term – seems to be an equivalent to *baxš-*;<sup>23</sup> b) the (maybe not accidental) name of one of the three greatest Wahrām fires, Farn-bag (Farr-bay), which means “dispenser of glory”.

The Young Avestan *bayas* / dispensers are more or less identical with the gods that are worshipped in Ny 1-4 (if Anāhitā is taken as a star-goddess). At first glance, they differ from those gods who are called *bhága* (or who are compared with the *Bhága*) of the Veda, Agni, Savitár (partly identified with Sūrya) and *Bhága*, Aditi’s son. However, light seems to have some importance in both ‘groups’. And as in the Veda, in the Avesta only very few gods are designated as *bayas*. An Avestan *baya* seems to be qualified by his visibility and/or luminosity and often by his ability to spend *xʷarənah-* “glory”. In the daily worship (beyond the sacrifice), these deities were seen as the most important ones, and probably thereby they resisted the Zoroastrian tendency to generalize the term *yazata*.

## The *bagas* of the Kušān

It is remarkable that we encounter four of the five daily worshipped and visible Zoroastrian gods in a prominent position in an Iranian empire that had is famous for its syncretic pantheon. On Kaniška’s first emission of gold issues (see Göbl 1984) (mint A+B) Hēlios/Miuro,<sup>24</sup> Salēnē/Mao, Hēphaištos/Aθšo,

22- Compare with *vañhāu. Y 33.2 yθ. ... vañhāu. vā. cōiθaitē. ašīm.* „wer ... beim Guten den Gast (≠ Trughafter) erkennt“, in which phrase *ašīm.* is a metaphor for ātar-, cf. ved. ātithi- (= av. *ašti-*) = Agni (EWA I, 57f.; see RV 8.71.9; 10.7.4). In the Avesta *ašti-* is three times connected with the ‚fire-word‘ *vāzišta-*.

23- Cf. as regards content RV (Geldner) 2.1.7 [Agni] “Du, o Fürst, verfügst als Bhaga über das Gut (*vásva īśiše* [*vásu- īś-* is an often used phrase in the RV]), du bist im Hause Schützer (*pāyúr dame*) ...”; RV 6.13.2 “Du bist uns Bhaga, ... Verteiler vielen Gutes. O Gott (*kṣattā vāmasya deva bhūreḥ*) ...”.

24- The iconography of the Kušānian coins presents MIIRO (and AḅAEIXḅO) with a „Strahlennimbus“ (Göbl 1984, p. 40; see Tafeln 165, 166). On some coins MIIRO and MAO face each other (Göbl 1984, Tafel 166]).

Nanaia/Nana are depicted.<sup>25</sup> The second emission shows also Oēšo, and in mint B also Ardoxšo and Oado. As in OP all Bačtrian gods are called βγ in general and in particular (Manaobago ≈ Av. Vohu manah or Ved. Mánaśas Páti (?))<sup>26</sup>. Their place is called βαγολαγγο “shrine/altar” (cf. B sogd. βγδ³n³k),<sup>27</sup> and in Rabatak it has the name βαγεαβο “water of god (?)”. Kaniška gets his kingdom (R2) ασο νανα οδο ασο οισποανο μι βαγανο „from Nana and all gods“, cf. OP *a<sup>h</sup>uramazdā hadā visaibiš багаibiš*. The word *yaz-* is only part of the royal titles, Kaniška is βαγο ι ηζυγο / βαγο [η]ζνογο<sup>28</sup> (Dašt-e Nawur / R2; cf. SKM1 that has βαγο βαο).<sup>29</sup>

### The distribution of the word *baga* “god” in Iran

While the Vedic Bhága is a name of a deity, and Agni is ‘like Bhága’, *i.e.*, *bhága* becomes a group name by means of a metaphoric process, in Iran we encounter a small group of *bagas* in the Younger Avesta and a generic term *baga* in Old Persian or in Bačtrian. Because of the absence of a god \*Baga in the Avesta it seems more plausible to assume that the Avestan group of Bagas is the remnant of a formerly greater pantheon of Bagas, than to assume that Young Avestan is on the way to develop such a pantheon.

The distribution of the generic terms for god in Middle Iranian is remarkable. In Parth. *yzd* and *bg* are well attested (Sg. + Pl.), but in MMP only *yzd* is used.<sup>30</sup> In Parth. and in MMP some (originally) Zoroastrian deities add the word *yzd* (³b°, ³dwr°, m³h°, myhr°, nrysf°/nrysh° [cf. sogd. *yzd nr³ysβ*], srwš³w°, w³d°, whmn-*yzd*). However, Ohrmazd is designated as (Parth./MMP) ³whrmyzd *bg/by* (cf. DNRa), and the „Father of Greatness“ is called *bgr³štygr* “righteous *bag*”. Sogdian (most often M, B) uses βγ (and βγ derivations/compounds) nearly exclusively (*e.g.*, B βγ³n βγtm “god of gods”; PN βγγfrn [IPNB II/8, no. 289], cf. MP *Farnbag* and the av. phrase *baxš- x³arənah* [for further material see Gharib 1995, pp. 100-103; Sims-Williams 2012, pp. 50-52]); the loanword *yzd³n* is cited only in a certain phrase (Sims-Williams 2012, p. 229; Gharib 1995, p. 453). However, in contrast to Bačtrian and Sogdian, the Saka languages prefer the *yazata*-word<sup>31</sup> (see *gyaštānu gyaštā* “od of gods” [Bailey 1988, p. 403]), while “there is no trace

25- Nana, Kaniška’s most important deity (because she bestows the kingdom upon him, see Rabatak 2, 9), was often identified with Anāhitā (see Boyce 1982 (HZ II), S. 29-31). On the reliquary of Kaniška Mihr + Māh are depicted (with names) (see Bachhofer 1929, II, Taf. 148). On the worship of Mihr and Māh in the empire of the der Saka see Widengren 1965, pp. 334, 336. In/on the βαγολαγγο of Rabatak the sun, moon and fire gods are missing.

26- See Humbach 1975, pp. 138f; Humbach 2010, 57-60 “Lord of Thought”.

27- Cf. also *bagina* „shrine“ (Henning 1965, pp. 251f. n.60) and OP \**bagastāna* “Behištūn” (cf. B sogd. βγγst³n „place of the gods“).

28- For the reading of ZY ALHYA as ī bagān (*bayān, bayān*) in the first *stratum* of the Frataraka coins (the three other *strata* replace it with MLKA/šāh) see PANAINO 2003, p. 265, fn. 2+3; cf. FP ³RHY³n³ = bg³n, pāz. *byyqn*. (K25 fol. 49 r 14+15).

29- Some of the information on the Kušān I owe to the work of our master student St. Härtel and his paper “Contextualisation and Interpretation of the Rabatak Inscription”.

30- Except the loans from Parthian in MMP, only S23 v 3 (Sogd. script) has *bg³n*.

31- On Zoroastrian terms in Khotanese see Maggi 2009.

of *baga-*” (Sims Williams 1988, p. 404<sup>32</sup>).<sup>33</sup>

NW						NO
		MParth bg; yzd				
				Sogd. by-	Saka <i>gyašta-</i> , <i>jezda-</i>	
			Baktr. by		YAV <i>yazata-</i> (cf. Ol <i>yajatá-</i> ); small group of <i>bayas</i>	
	OP + Med. <i>baga-</i> ; MMP yzd; Pahl. yzd + traces of bg					
SW						SW

The marginal appearance of the word *yazata-* in the YH (only Sg.) and its increase in the YAv on the one hand, the seeming importance of a term *ahura* (because of Ahura Mazdā) on the other hand, has disguised the fact that the older Iranian religious history is strongly related to the history of the term *baga*: The *baga*-term is in opposition to *daiva* (in OP); its relation to *ahura* is (more or less) inverse to The situation in the RV (Ahura(mazdā) = name / *bagas* = class; Bhāga = name / *ahuras* = class); a small group of Avestan deities (the bright and visible deities)<sup>34</sup> seems to preserve and to defend their *baga* status against a tendency to generalize the term *yazata*.

32- Cf. Emmerick/Skjærvø 1987, pp. 132-134, against Bailey 1979, p. 390.

33- Bailey 1979, p. 109. Khot. *gyašta* is from \**yaysata* < \**yazata*. Konow 1932, p. 39, explains the appearance of *-št-* as following: “the unaccented penultima must have disappeared so early that the rule according to which *ys* in secondary contact voices a following *t* had not yet taken effect.” Cf. Emmerick 1969/1, p. 63 n. 13, on *deva buddha = gyašta balysa* (I am grateful to our student Federico Dragoni for the references). On the other hand, there is no further development of *-št-* to *-št-* as in the PPP of *gyays-* (OIr \**yaz-*), *gyašta-*. Usually it is assumed that the word is “effected” or “influenced” by or “conflated” with *gyašta-* (*jeh-* “to purify”), see Bailey 1967, p. 118; Emmerick 1969, p. 63; Skjærvø 2004, p. 267.

34- Cf. the designation of the zodiacal constellation as bayān (see Panaino, A. “Zodiac”, Elr 2004, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/zodiac>).

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