



## Eastern Iranian Epic Traditions III: Zarathustra and Diomedes—an Indo-European Epic Warrior Type\*

P R O D S O K T O R S K J Æ R V Ø

The name of Zarathustra to most people is that of the Old Iranian prophet, a religious reformer, who arose among the Central Asian Iranians in the first or second millennium B.C.E. and told them to relinquish several of the beliefs and ritual practices of their ancient Aryan past and instead embrace thoughts and actions more consonant with modern Western ethical ideals.

The literature of the ancient Iranians themselves, however, which has come down to us in the *Avesta* and later Zoroastrian scriptures, tells a different story, namely, that of a Zarathustra, first sacrificer and great fighter of evil. This Zarathustra was first among humans to assist Ahura Mazdā in reestablishing the ordered cosmos, which, although ordered by Ahura Mazdā, had been invaded by the forces of evil and now must be reordered. For this someone was needed who would reperform among humans the primal sacrifice by which order was first established by Ahura Mazdā, who would provide humanity with an organized society based upon Ahura Mazdā's Law; and who would ward off the evil gods and their master, the Evil Spirit himself. It is the description of this third function of Zarathustra, as fighting the Evil Spirit, that is the subject of this study.

### Themes in the Descriptions of the Epic Hero Combating Evil

Parts of the story of how Zarathustra combated the Evil Spirit are found in two Avestan texts: in *Yašt* 17, the hymn to Aši, goddess of rewards, and in the nineteenth chapter of the *Videvdad*

(*Widēwdād*), the "Law prescribing how to keep the *daēuvas* away."

Here I would like to draw attention to two themes in these stories that have clear counterparts in what we might at first think of as an unlikely place, namely the story of Diomedes in Homer's *Iliad*, book 5, but they are also reflected in the Indic epic the *Mahābhārata* and in the Old Indic *Rigveda*, and so can be regarded as belonging to the Indo-European epic-poetic inventory.

The first theme is that of "Loving/Motherly Encouragement," which regularly involves a hero in doubt or distress who is encouraged by a god, who is sometimes his mother.

The second theme is the use of stones as weapons, but of a size such that they can only be wielded by heroes of ancient caliber.

### I. *Loving/Motherly Encouragement*

The first theme is seen in the Hymn to Aši. It comprises several subthemes, among which are the following:

1. Reference to chariot
2. Proximity of the goddess
3. Stroking of the hero
4. Address of the hero by name
5. Praise of the beauty and strength of the hero

We see most of these themes in the following description of Aši, where she has arrived at Zarathustra's invocation and stands by his chariot standing near him and speaking to him, stroking him, and telling him what good legs and arms he

has and how good-looking he is, remarking that Glory has been placed in his body:

Yt. 17.17  
*upa.staota yazatanqm*  
*amuiiamna razištanqm*  
*paiti.staiiata †raiθiia*  
*ašiš vaqʰhi yā borəzaiti*  
*uiti vacəbiš aojana*  
*kō ahi yō mqm zbaiiehi*  
*yejhe azəm frāiio zbaiiəntqm*  
*sraēštəm susruiiie vācim*

Praised among beings worthy of worship,  
 not to be moved away from the straightest  
 (paths),  
 good Aši the tall stood at/on the chariot [or: as  
 charioteer?],

**speaking thus with words:**

**Who are you who invoke me,**  
 whose voice is by far the most beautiful  
 I have (ever) heard among those who invoke  
 (me)? . . .

Yt. 17.22  
*ā dim usca pairi.marəzaṭ*  
*hāuuōiia bāzuuō dašinaca*  
*dašina bāzuuō hāuuaiiaca*  
*uiti vacəbiš aojana*  
*sriro ahi Zarəθuštra*  
*hukərətō ahi Spitama*  
*huuascuuō darəyo.bāzəuš*  
*dātəm tē tanuiie xʰarəno*  
*urunaēca darəyəm huuaḡhəm*  
*yaθa imaṭ yaṭ tē frāuuuocim*

**She stroked him above** all around  
 with the left hand and the right,  
 with the right hand and the left  
**speaking thus with words:**

You are beautiful, Zarathustra,  
 you are well-made, Spitama,  
**you have good calves, long arms.**  
**In your body has been placed glory**  
 and long well-being for (your) soul,  
 just as I foretold you.

With this description we can compare *Iliad* 5.121–26, where Diomedes has just been wounded by Pandaros, son of Lycaon, by an arrow that pierces his corselet. Diomedes stands before his chariot praying to Athene, who hears him and comes to his aid, stands near him, relieving his arms and legs of the torpor caused by the wound, and remarking on the *ménos*

“impetuosity, courage,” of his father, which she has placed in his chest:

*Iliad* 5.107–8, 114–15, 121–26  
 . . . *prósth' híppoiin kai ókhesphin*  
*éstē . . .*  
*ḗ δὲ τότ' ἔπειτε ἐράτο βοῆν ἀγαθὸς Διομήδης:*  
*κλήθι μεν ἀγιόκχοιο Διὸς τέκος Ἀτρουτόνῃ*  
 . . .

*hōs éphat' eukhómēnos toú d' éklue Pallàs*  
*Athēnē*  
*guía d' éthēken elaphá pódas kai kheiras*  
*húperthen*  
*agkhou histaménē épea pteróenta prosēúda*  
*tharsōn nún Diómēdēs epí Trōessi mákhesthai*  
*en gár toi stēthessi ménos patríōin hēka*  
*átromon hoíon ékheske sakéspalos híppóta*  
*Tudeús*

**he stood** before the horses and **the chariot** . . .  
 And then Diomedes, good at the war-cry, made  
 a prayer:

Hear me, child of Zeus who carries the aegis,  
 unwearied one! . . .

**Thus he spoke in prayer,** and Pallas Athene  
 heard him,  
 and **made his limbs light, his feet and his**  
**hands above;**  
 and **she stood near him and spoke to him**  
 winged words:

“Be **daring** now, Diomedes, to fight against the  
 Trojans,  
 for **in thy breast I have put the impetuosity** of  
 thy **father,**  
 the dauntless might, such as the horseman  
 Tydeus, wielder of the shield, used to have.

Among the formulaic parallels note the following:

good Aši the tall stood (*paiti.staiiata*) at/on the  
 chariot  
 ~ he stood before (*prósth' . . . éstē*) the  
 horses and the chariot  
 Stand closer to me (*nazdiio mām upa.hišta*)  
 ~ she stood near him (*agkhou histaménē*)  
 speaking thus with words (*uiti vacəbiš aojana*)  
 ~ spoke to him winged words (*épea*  
*pteróenta prosēúda*)  
 In your body has been placed (*dātəm tē*  
*tanuiie*)  
 ~ in thy breast I have put (*en gár toi*  
*stēthessi . . . hēka*)

Especially, I want to draw attention to the ad-  
 verb “up above” (*usca*) in the Avestan text,  
 which seems to have no specific function, but

corresponds to an equally useless *húperthen* in the Greek text, which the famous commentator on the *Iliad*, G. S. Kirk, characterizes as an “otiose description of the arms as ‘above.’”<sup>1</sup> Personally, I think it is more likely that these adverbs refer to the position of the goddesses, as hovering in the air next to their heroes.

The theme of “stroking” is not in this Iliadic passage, but is found elsewhere, where the Greek verb used is *katarrédzein*, sometimes accompanied by “speaking with words,” also in contexts where they “introduce motherly, comforting language,” as in the following passage involving Thetis and her son Achilles, which also contains explicitly the theme of the Address of the hero by name:<sup>2</sup>

*Iliad* 1.361, 24.127  
*kheirí té min katérekseu épos t' éphat' ek t' onómadze*

and she (Thetis) stroked him (Achilles) with her hand and said a word to him, and called his name

Looking to India, so far, I have one passage that strikes similar notes, uncovered for me by Stephanie Jamison. It is in book 5 in the story of the battle between Bhīṣma and Rāma. After the death of his charioteer, while Bhīṣma is still in shock, Rāma hits him with an arrow that pierces his collarbone, and he falls to the ground, which is similar to what happens to Diomedes.

Bhīṣma, after receiving his wound, is surrounded by eight Brahmins, who hold him in their arms, keeping him aloft, off the ground, and telling him not to fear. Comforted by their words, he gets up and suddenly notices that his mother, Gaṅgā herself, is standing on his chariot. He bids her leave, and again takes charge of the chariot and the horses.

*Mbh.* 183.111–53<sup>3</sup>  
*tato 'paśyaṃ pātīto rājasimha*  
*dvijān aṣṭau sūryahutāśānābhān*  
*te mām samantāt parivārya tasthuh*  
*svabāhubhiḥ pariḡrhyājimadhye*  
*rakṣyamāṇaś ca tair viprair*  
*nāhaṃ bhūmim upāspṣam*  
*antarikṣe sthīto hy asmi*  
*tair viprair bāndhavair iva*  
*svapann ivāntarikṣe ca*  
*jalabīndubhir ukṣitah*  
*tatas te brāhmaṇā rājān*

*abruvan pariḡrhyā mām*  
*mā bhair iti samaṃ sarve*  
*svasti te 'stv iti cāsakṛt*  
*tatas teṣām ahaṃ vāgbhis*  
*tarpitāḥ sahasotthitāḥ*  
*mātaraṃ saritām śreṣṭhām*  
*apaśyaṃ ratham āsthitām*

Then, felled, I saw, O lion of kings, eight

Brahmins like suns offering fires;  
 they stood **all around me surrounding me, with their arms embracing me** in the middle of the battle.

Protected by those Brahmins **I did not touch the ground,**

for I am **standing in the air.** By those Brahmins, like kinsmen, (I am) sprinkled with drops of water as if asleep **in the air.**

Then the Brahmins, **embracing me, said:** O king,

**don't fear!** may you fare well! again and again. Then satisfied by **their words** I suddenly got up.

I saw **my mother,** most beautiful of rivers, **standing on the chariot.**

The general similarity with the Avestan and Greek passages is unmistakable, only with the role of Aṣi and Athene being divided between the Brahmins and the goddess. Note the insistence on “around, surrounding” (*pari- . . . pari-*), which recalls Aṣi's stroking Zarathustra “all around” (*pairi-*), and again we notice the theme of “aloft,” which here refers specifically to the desire to keep the wounded off the ground, perhaps because touching the ground would imply death. Note that in the Diomedes passage the theme of impending, but averted death is also present. First, Diomedes tells Athene that his enemy boasts that he shall not long see the light of the sun, which Kirk points out is an old Indo-European poetic formula, and, second, the term used for Diomedes' “limbs” is *gūa*, which Kirk points out most often refers to the limbs when loosened in death.

## II. The Use of Stones as Weapons

The second theme is found in two places in the *Avesta*, as well as in the Diomedes story. Following Yt. 17.17 just quoted we have a passage in which the effects of Zarathustra's birth upon

the world in general and the Evil Spirit in particular are described:

Yt. 17.18  
*āōāṭ uiti frauuasāta yō spitāmō Zarahuštra*  
*yō paoiriō mašiiākō staota ašam yaṭ*  
*vahištəm*  
*yazata ahurəm mazdqm yazata aməšə spəntə*  
*yejhe zqθaēca vaxšaēca uruuāθən apō*  
*uruuarāscā*  
*yejhe zqθaēca vaxšaēca uxšin āpō*  
*uruuarāscā*

Then Zarathustra Spitama \*welled forth(?) thus, he, who first praised that Order that is best, worshipped Ahura Mazdā, worshipped the Vitalizing Immortals. at whose birth and growth the waters and plants rejoiced, at whose birth and growth the waters and plants grew,

Yt. 17.19  
*yejhe zqθaēca vaxšaēca apaduuarəṭ aṅrō*  
*mainiiuš*  
*haca zəmaṭ yaṭ paθanaiiā skarənaiiā*  
*dūraēpāraiīā*  
*uiti dauuata hō yō duždā aṅrō mainiiuš*  
*pouru.mahrkō*  
*nōiṭ mqm vispe yazatāṅhō anusəntəm*  
*fraorəciṇta*  
*āaṭ mqm aēuuō zarahuštrō anusəntəm*  
*apaiieiti*

at whose birth and growth the Evil Spirit ran away from the earth, wide, round, (and) with distant borders. Thus he spoke, the Evil Spirit who gives bad gifts, full of destruction: All the beings worthy of worship could not \*catch up with me against my will, but Zarathustra, alone, reaches me against my will.

Note here especially strophe 20, where the Evil Spirit complains:

Yt. 17.20  
*jaiṇti mqm Ahuna Vairiia*  
*uuuuuata snaiṭiša yaθa asma katō.masā*  
*tāpaiieiti mqm aša vahišta mṇnaiiən ahe yaθa*  
*aiiō.xšustəm*  
*raēkō mē haca aṅhā zəmaṭ \*vaṅhuiiā*  
*kərənaoiti*

*yō mqm aēuuō jāmaiieiti yō Spitāmō*  
*Zarahuštrō*

**He smashes me with the Ahuna Vairiia,** (as) with a weapon like a stone the size of a house.

He heats me with the Aša Vahišta just like metal.

He makes me flee from this good earth, who alone comes against me, Zarathustra Spitama.

Compare the same scene in the *Videvdad*, which contains an additional theme, namely the reference to his father, as in Athene's speech to Diomedes: "the *ménos* of your father . . . Tydeus":

V. 19.4  
*usahištaṭ Zarahuštrō frašūsəṭ Zarahuštrō*  
*asānō zasta dražimnō katō.masəṅhō həṇti*  
*ašauua Zarahuštrō viṇəmnō dāvušō Ahurāi*  
*Mazdāi*  
*kuua hē dražahe aṅhā zəmnō yaṭ paθanaiiā*  
*skarənaiiā dūraēpāraiīā*  
*Drəjiia paiti zbarahi nmānahe Pourušaṣape*

Up rose Zarathustra, forth went Zarathustra

**holding stones in (his) hand—they are the size of houses—**

(was) Zarathustra follower of Order, (having) obtained (them) from Ahura Mazdā the creator.

Where upon this earth, wide, round, (and) with distant borders, are you carrying \*them, on the shore of the Drəjiia \*in the home of Pourušaṣpa?

With this compare now Diomedes' meeting with Aeneas, where Diomedes wields a stone alone in the manner of the heroes of old:

*Iliad* 5.302-4  
 . . . *ho dē khermádion lábe kheiri*  
*Tudeídēs méga érgon hò ou dúo g' ándre*  
*phéroien*  
*hoíoi nún brotoi eis' ho dé min hréa pálle kai*  
*oíos*

But he grasped in his hand a stone, the son of Tydeus [= Diomedes]—a mighty deed—one that not two could bear, such as mortals now are, yet lightly did he wield it even alone.

Note the minimal formulaic parallel "alone" (*aēuua ~ oíos*) in both episodes.

Again looking to India, the *Rigveda* too contains traces of several of the themes seen above, for instance, in the following passages from hymns to Indra, the principal opponent of the forces of darkness in these texts. In the following text, Indra is described as listening to the call of the imploring bard, carrying forth his chariot, standing close to him, and holding aloft the songs, presumably as weapons:

RV. 1.178.3 (Indra, XVII, p. 54)  
*jētā nṛbhīr indrah pṛtśú śúrāh*  
*śrótā hávam nādhāmānasya kārōh |*  
*prābhartā rátham dáśūśa upākā*  
*údyantā gíro yádi ca tmāná bhūt ||*

Indra, the winner in battles with (his) men/  
 heroes, rich in vitalizing strength,  
**who listens to the call of the imploring bard,**  
**who carries forth the chariot** for the fulfiller of  
 the obligation, (standing) **close to him,**  
**who holds aloft the songs** (as weapons?)<sup>4</sup> if he  
 appears in person.

Note in this passage the echoes in "who listens (*śrótā*) to the call (*havam*) of the imploring bard" with Avestan *zbaiehi* in Yt.17.17 and Greek "Pallas Athene heard (*ékluē*) him."

The use of "songs" as weapons recalls Zarathustra's use of the holy prayers as weapons against the Evil Spirit.

After the preceding it now seems less than a coincidence that occasionally Indra gives his *vajra* a break, as it were, and has recourse to stones instead, as in the following text, where Indra on his chariot, after having been invigorated by the worshippers' songs, with a stone smashes Vṛtra, who has grown by his *māyā*:

RV. 6.22.5-6  
*tā pṛchāntī vājrahastam ratheshthām*  
*indram vēpī vākvarī yāsyā nū gñh |*  
*tuvigrābhām tuvikūrmīm rabhōdām*  
*gātūm iše nākṣate tūmram ācha ||*  
*ayā ha tyām māyāyā vāvṛdhānām*  
*manojūvā svatavaḥ pārvatena |*  
*ācyutā cid vīlitā svojo rujō*  
*vī dṛlḥā dhṛṣatā virapsin ||*

Asking for him, Indra, the **chariot-driver with vajra** in hand, to whom belongs the vibrating, gushing song,  
 the one of **strong grasp**, strong . . . , who gives courage, (the song) seeks a way (and) reaches the strong one.

Him (Vṛtra)<sup>5</sup> having grown through this *māyā* (**you smashed**) with a stone having the speed of thought, O self-strong one!

Even immovable \*solidified (things) you split open, O you of good strength, courageously,<sup>6</sup> firmly established things, O super-wealthy one!

and in the following passage Indra is requested to throw stones down from heaven to smash the *rakṣases*, evil powers of darkness:

RV. 7.104.19  
*prā vartaya divō āsmānam indra*  
*sōmaśitam maghavan sām śiśādhi |*  
*prāktād āpāktād adharād údaktād*  
*abhī jahi rakṣāsah pārvatena ||*

**Throw the stone** down from heaven, O Indra!  
 Make (it) sharpened by soma quite sharp!  
 From in front, from in the back, from below,  
 from above  
**smash the evil powers of darkness with the stone!**

That these passages are related to the Zarathustra myth is rendered even more likely by the next strophe from the same hymn, which portrays the *rakṣases* as "flying about":

RV. 7.104.20  
*etā u tyē patayanti śvāyātava*  
*indram dipsanti dipsāvō 'dābhyam |*  
*śiśīte śakrāh piśunebhyo vadhām*  
*nūnām sṛjad aśānim yātumādabhyah ||*

**These fly about** as werewolves. They try to deceive Indra, the deceivers the undeceivable one.

Śakra sharpens the weapon against the vilifiers. Now **he lets loose the stone** against the sorcerers.

with which we must compare another part of the Zarathustra story, namely how, by reciting the *Ahuna Vairiia*, he forced the *daēuuas*, who used to be "flying about," to go under earth, as told in the hymn to Haoma (Y. 9), and in the hymn to the earth (Yt. 19), where Indra's standard epithet "resistance-smasher" is likewise applied to Zarathustra:

Y. 9.15  
*tūm zəmərgūzō ākəṛənuuō vīspe daēuua*  
*Zarəθuštra*  
*yōi para ahmāt vīrō.raoḍa apataiən paiti āiia*  
*zəmə*

yō aoištō yō tančištō yō θβaxšišťō yō āsištō  
yō \*āš.vərəθrajaštēmō ƒabauuať mainiuuđ  
dāmąn

You made all the *daēuuas* hide in the ground,  
O Zarathustra,  
who before that **flew about** on this earth in the  
shape of men,  
(you) the strongest, the firmest/fleetest, the  
most energetic, the fastest,  
who were the greatest **resistance-smasher** of  
the creations of the two forces.

Yt. 19.79

yať upąhacať ašauuanəm zaraθušťrəm  
anumatē daēnaiiđi anuxtē daēnaiiđi  
anuuarštē daēnaiiđi  
yať as višpahe ańhəuš astuuatō  
ašəm ašauuastēmō xšaθrəm huxšaθrō.təmō  
raēm raēuuastēmō x'arəno x'arənaŋ'hastēmō  
vərəθra vərəθrauuastēmō

(the Glory) which followed Zarathustra,  
follower of Order,  
(causing him) to think following the *daēnā*, to  
speak following the *daēnā*, to act following  
the *daēnā*,  
so that he was in the entire material world  
in Order the most follower of Order, in  
command the one with best command.  
in wealth the wealthiest, in Glory the most  
Glorious,  
**in resistance the most resistance-smashing.**

Yt. 19.80

vaēnəmnəm ahmať para daēuuā pataiiən  
vaēnəmnəm **maiđ** ƒrəuuoiť  
vaēnəmnəm apa.karšaiiən jaiñiš haca  
mašiiākaēibiio  
āať tđ snaođəntiš gərəzənd hazō niuuarəzaiiən  
daēuuā

Before that **the demons would fly about** in full  
view.

{Their} pleasures would \*take place in full  
view.

In full view they would drag off the women  
from the humans.

Then the demons would by force debase them  
weeping and complaining.

Yt. 19.81

āať tē aēvuō ahunō vairiio yim ašauuanəm  
zaraθušťrəm ƒrasrəuuaiiať  
vi.bərəθƒańťəm äxtüürim aparəm xraožđiiehiia  
ƒrasrəüiti

\*zəmarəgüzō auuazať višpe daēuuā aiiesniia  
auuahmiia

Then a **single Ahuna Vairiia** of yours, which  
Zarathustra, follower of Order, made heard,  
with partitions (spoken) for times, the last  
with stronger enunciation,  
drove all the demons under ground depriving  
them of sacrifice and prayer.

Here we note the following similarities:  
the use of *pataya-/pataiia-* "to fly about" ap-  
plied to the evil beings;  
the mention of the demons' *māiās* which re-  
calls the *māyā* of Vrtra in RV 6.22.6,  
the use of the sacred word as weapon.

## Conclusions

It seems unlikely that the combination of themes  
in the Zarathustra-Diomedes (and Bhišma) sto-  
ries and the similarity between both of them  
with the Indra myth are coincidental, and, de-  
spite the fact that we are dealing with a type of  
narratives where these kinds of standard themes,  
or at least some of them, and formulas are ex-  
tremely common, I think we can safely conclude  
that the themes involved belong to the heritage  
of Indo-European epic narrative.

But what about the wider context of these  
episodes? The Diomedes episode is part of the  
great story of the War of Troy, which is but one  
reflex of the Indo-European apocalyptic-mythical  
war stories that show up in almost all the mytho-  
logies of the Indo-Europeans.<sup>7</sup> The particular Za-  
rathustra stories that I have discussed here are  
not set in the context of great wars, but, in an-  
other part of the Iranian epic tradition, Zarathus-  
tra does appear at the point when the fate of the  
world is to be decided by a great battle, a battle  
that closes the old Iranian epic, like the great  
battle of the *Mahābhārata*.

There is a fundamental problem, however,  
namely, how to place the Zarathustra story both  
within the Iranian epic tradition and the wider  
context of epics descended from Indo-European  
ancestors, for the *Mahābhārata* epic battle does  
not exactly correspond to the epic battle that  
Zarathustra is usually pictured as being involved  
in. As a matter of fact, the Iranian tradition con-  
tains two great battles, one in which the so-  
called Kayanids are involved, that is, the series  
of mythical *kauiis* who rule after the death of

the Great Dragon killed by the great dragon-slaying hero Өraētaona. During the time of the *kauuis*, the Iranians are at war with the Turanians, whose leader is the redoubtable Fraŋrasian, the Afrāsiyāb of the Persian epic. It is this period and its final battle that correspond closely to the *Mahābhārata* and the battle of the Pāṇḍavas.

The Kayanids are followed by another "dynasty," however, composed in part of individuals

also appearing in the *Gāθās*, the oldest Avestan texts. Their leader is Kauui Vištāspa, during whose reign according to the epic tradition Zarathustra appeared. This period also sees a great battle, again with the Turanians, but while the prior battle has a mixed bag of causes, this one is specifically fought over Zarathustra's new religion (*dēn*).<sup>8</sup> If anything, therefore, this battle resembles that of the *Song of Roland*, even in its formulaics.

The periods of the Iranian epic reigns according to select Avestan texts are set out in the following table:

Yt. 19	Yt. 15	Yt. 5	Yt. 17	Yt. 13
	Ahura Mazdā	Ahura Mazdā		Ahura Mazdā + miscell. deities
Haošiiŋha	Haošiiŋha	Haošiiŋha	<b>Zarathustra</b>	Gaiia Marətan
Taxma Urupi	Taxma Urupi		Haošiiŋha	<b>Zarathustra</b>
<b>Yima</b>	<b>Yima</b>	<b>Yima</b>	<b>Yima</b>	Maišiiōmāh
Өraētaona	Aži dahāka	Aži dahāka		...
Kərəsāspa	Өraētaona	Өraētaona	Өraētaona	sons of Zarathustra
	Kərəsāspa	Kərəsāspa		<b>Vištāspa</b>
				<b>Zairiuuairi</b> + miscell.
				Frašaoštra
				<b>Jāmāspa</b>
				saošiiŋants
			Haoma	Yima
Fraŋrasian		Fraŋrasian	Fraŋrasian	...
Kauui Kauuāta				
	Auruuasāra	Kauui Usa		Haosrauua
Haosrauua		Haosrauua		Kərəsāspa
		...		
		<b>Jāmāspa</b>		
		...		
<b>Zaraθuštra</b>		<b>Zaraθuštra</b>	<b>Zaraθuštra</b>	
<b>Vištāspa</b>	Hutaosā	<b>Vištāspa</b>	<b>Vištāspa</b>	
	unwedded girls	<b>Zairiuuairi</b>		
Saošiiŋant		...		

The standard order of the earlier and later "dynasties" is seen everywhere, except in *Yāšt* 13, dedicated to the *frauuašis*, preexisting [guardian] spirits of men, a kind of valkyries, where the characters belonging to the story of Vištāspa are listed before those of the Kayanid "dynasty." The reason for the divergence is unclear, but,

logically, Zarathustra being the first sacrificer and fighter of evil (as told in Yt. 13.87–89 and Yt. 17.18), his story ought to precede all the others, and this is the order we do find in *Yāšt* 13, as well as in *Yāšt* 17, where, however, Zarathustra is also found together with Vištāspa in the "standard" position.

I can think of several possible explanations for these facts, one comparing Hesiod's successive ages, another involving the possible merger of different traditions. For now, however, suffice it to point out that both the Greek and the Avestan texts would obviously benefit from renewed comparison and attention to the fact that they are heirs to Indo-European epic-poetic traditions.

## Notes

\* Slightly revised version of a paper presented at the 208th meeting of the American Oriental Society in New Orleans, April 5–8, 1998.

1. Kirk 1990, p. 68.
2. Cf. Martin 1989, p. 19. The same line is found in 5.372 (Dione and Aphrodite), 6.485 (Priam and Hecabe); Od. 4.610 (Maenelaus and Telemachus), 5.181 (Calypso and Odysseus), 13.288 (Odysseus and Athene).
3. Cf. Buitenen 1973–1978, vol. 3, p. 514.
4. Cf. Grassmann s.v. *ud-yam* "to hold aloft weapons, etc."—We may also have a play on words with *gir-* "song" and *giri-* "mountain," as suggested by Stanley Insler at the AOS meeting.
5. Thus Sāyaṇa, Geldner *ad loc.*
6. Note here *dhṛṣatá* "courageously," the etymological equivalent of Gk. *tharsón* "be daring" in *Iliad* 5.124, and note the use in Y. 57.11 (hymn to Sraoša, the deified readiness to listen to the prayers of men) of Av. *daršita-* with adjectives such as *varəθrājan-* "obstacle-smashing," *taxma-* "firm," *āsu-* "fleet," *aojaṇ* "haṇt- "strong," and *sūra-* (OInd. *sūra-*).
7. On the significance of these battles see the work of G. Dumézil, e.g., Dumézil 1968, vols. 1–3, pt. 1, chaps. 7–9.

8. The *weh dēn ī māzdēšnān* "good Mazdaiiasnian *dēn*." That this is a reinterpretation in epic setting of an ancient myth seems clear from the fact that in the *Videvdad* passage the Evil Spirit asks Zarathustra to "un-praise" the "good Mazdaiiasnian *dāēnā*" which Zarathustra refuses to do (V. 19.6–7), and in the fragments of the Vištāspa myth he, too, is involved in the support of the "good Mazdaiiasnian *dāēnā*" (Yt. 13.99–100, cited in Watkins 1995, pp. 161–64).

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