

# THE RISE OF THE SAVIOUR IN THE AVESTA<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. *Introductory*

The eschatological aspect of the Old Iranian religion is generally regarded as one of the most important innovations introduced by Zoroaster. One of the central terms referring to eschatological events is Avestan *saošiiant-*. This term has been considered rightly by KELLENS in his important article on the subject to be “au cœur du problème de la sotériologie mazdéenne”, but finally he concluded that *saošiiant-* “ne peut suffire à l’élucider. Il faudra un jour établir si elle résulte d’un développement secondaire ou de la réapparition d’une vieille croyance” (StIr 3 [1974], 209). With these words, KELLENS has well described the central problem connected with the Avestan notion of *saošiiant-*. For it seems that in the Gathas *saošiiant-* has a broader meaning than it has in the Younger Avesta, and even more than the term has in Pahlavi. As it was already observed by LOMMEL (1930, 230) the number of *Saošiiants* decreases gradually from the Gathic period down to the Sasanian period, where Pahlavi *sōšyans* is used in particular as a proper name of the “final Saviour who will bring about *frašagird*”.<sup>2</sup>

BARTHOLOMAE (1904, 1551–2) was influenced by the meaning of Pahlavi *sōšyans* when he thought that Gathic *saošiiant-* also meant ‘saviour’ (‘Retter’). HELMUT HUMBACH maintained in an article published first in

- 1 I should like to acknowledge here that this article has benefited greatly from discussions of the problems involved with JOHANNA NARTEN, BERNFRIED SCHLERATH and MARY BOYCE, who were kind enough to read through the paper at various stages and gave me valuable comments and suggestions. I would also like to thank FARROKH JAL VAJIFDAR for his discussion at the Seminar on Iranian Studies held at the Ancient India and Iran Trust, Cambridge in May 1994, where an earlier version was read as a paper.
- 2 MACKENZIE: A Pahlavi Dictionary. London 1971, repr. (with corrections) 1986, 75. LOMMEL (1930, 230) has described the semantic development of *saošiiant-* in the following way: “Denn es ist in der Entwicklung so, daß die Saushyant-Vorstellung hinsichtlich der Zahl der dafür in Anspruch genommenen Persönlichkeiten eingeschränkt wird, und das Wort zum Namen einer einzigen mystischen Heldengestalt wird.”

1952 that the Gathic *saošiiant-* was closely connected with the ritual and played a central role in it. He thought that the ritual function of the *saošiiant-* in the Gathas was that of the ‘Opferherr’,<sup>3</sup> comparable to the role the *yájamāna-* plays in the Vedic ritual. He drew this conclusion from an interpretation of the texts and from a reconstruction of the historical background to the Gathas concerning the social and religious situation at Zaratuštra’s time on the basis of comparison with Vedic ritual practice. In his translation of the Gathas, published in 1959, HUMBACH renders *saošiiant-* accordingly by ‘Kraftspender’, whereas he translates the term by ‘benefactor’ in his English edition of 1991. In this later work he seems to agree again more with BARTHOLOMAE and to abandon the ritualistic interpretation when he states that *saošiiant-* would have been used “to designate both himself [Zaratuštra] and his adherents as belonging to the party pursuing the work of salvation. But *ašauuan-* and *saošiiant-* are terms implying moral evaluation rather than being technical terms in the strict sense of the word”.<sup>4</sup>

The ritual function of the Gathic *saošiiant-* has been strongly claimed again by KELLENS in his article on *saošiiant-* of 1974, mentioned above. He considers the *saošiiant-* to be “le sacrificant” who takes part in the exchange of gifts between god and man, following the principle of *do ut des*. The basic meaning of *saošiiant-* would be “celui qui va ou qui veut prospérer” insofar as “le sacrificant” receives material goods and well-being in body and spirit as a reward for his rich, munificent sacrifice.<sup>5</sup> It is a great merit of KELLENS’ article, and he is certainly right in this, that he establishes the basic intransitive meaning of *saošiiant-* as ‘the one who will prosper/wants to prosper’, linking it semantically with Vedic *sū*, *śváyati* ‘swells, prospers’<sup>6</sup>

3 H. HUMBACH 1952 [1957], 30; Gathisch und Jungawestisch. In: WZKSO 2 (1958), 24, fn. 5.

4 HUMBACH 1991, I, p.11.

5 KELLENS 1974, 204. MESSINA (1932, 149 ff.) assumes that *saošiiant-* would exclusively denote historical persons in the Gathas without any relation to eschatological events: “la loro missione è sociale” (p. 158). The eschatological semantic component of *saošiiant-* would have developed in the course of the Younger Avestan period by connecting the term with the idea of resurrection of the dead (p. 162 f.).

6 Cf. also KELLENS’ remarks on the meaning of Av. *sū* and its derivatives in *Les Noms-racines de l’Avesta*. Wiesbaden 1974, 101. In transitive function, the causative stem *sāuuaiiā-* is used in the commenting *sāuuaiiāt* Yt 13.129, see below p. 91 and cf. HINTZE 1994, 153 fn. 90, 371 with fn. 13. – Since the Vedic root *sū* has both meanings, ‘to prosper’ and ‘to be strong’ (H. GRASSMANN 1893, 1409–10), both meanings are also

rather than with its Middle Persian cognates e. g. *swt* 'utility, advantage'. However, it may be questioned whether KELLENS' description and interpretation of *saošiiant-* cover the entire semantic range and especially whether his ritualistic definition of this important term can be upheld. Furthermore, the question remains how the notion of *saošiiant-* as it appears in some passages of the Younger Avesta developed, particularly how it happened that the *saošiiant-* became the final World Saviour.

In what follows I want to examine once again the Old Avestan attestations of *saošiiant-* and try to describe the characteristics of the term on the basis of that evidence, and then to look at the Younger Avestan texts in order to do the same there. Finally, I want to describe the semantic differences between the use of *saošiiant-* in the Older and in the Younger Avesta and show the semantic development of this term. On this basis it should be possible to draw some conclusions concerning the development and history of the Mazdayasnian religion in the Old Iranian period, and of eschatology in the Avesta in particular.

### 2a. *Saošiiant-* in the Gathas

The word *saošiiant-*, which is not attested in the Yasna Haptanḥāiti, is found six times in the Gathas, being used both in the singular (Y 45.11, 48.9, 53.2) and in the plural (Y 34.13, 46.3, 48.12). In the singular, *saošiiant-* is found in the following contexts:

#### Y 45.11:

*yastā daēuuāṅg aparō mašiiāscā*

'who as a second one despised with him Daēvas and men

*tarē maštā yōi im tarē mainiiāntā*

who despise him,

*aniiāṅg ahmāi yā hōi arēm mainiiātā*

(those, who are) other than this one, who conforms in mind to him:

*saošiiāntō dāṅg patōiš spāntā daēnā*

he is through the beneficent Daēnā of a Saošiiant, of the house-lord,

possible for Av. *sā* in *saošiiant-*: 'the one who will prosper/wants to prosper' or 'the one who will be strong/wants to be strong' (practically as a 'future' of *sūra-/sūra-* 'hero'). On the interpretation of the future see below under 2 d.

*uruuaðō brātā ptā vā mazdā ahurā*  
a companion, a brother, or a father, o Wise Lord.<sup>7</sup>

**Y 48.9:**

*kadā vaēdā yezī cahiiā xšaiiaðā*  
'When shall I know whether You have control over some (danger),  
*mazdā ašā yehiiā mā āiðiš duuaēðā*  
through truth, O Wise One, the fear of which scares me.  
*ərəš mōi [ərəž]ūcqm vañhəuš vafuš manəñhō*  
Let the pronouncement of good thinking be told to me rightly;  
*vīdiiāt saosiias yaðā hōi ašiš añhat*  
may the Saosiiañt know of what kind his reward will be.'<sup>7</sup>

**Y 53.2:**

*aṭcā hōi scañtū manəñhā uxðāiš štiaodnanāišcā*  
and they shall follow readily the recognition of the Wise one and his  
generations  
<sup>+</sup>*xšnām*<sup>8</sup> *mazdā vahmāi.ā fraoraṭ yasnaścā*  
for his praise with thought, words and deeds,  
*kauuacā vištāspō zaraðuštriš spitāmō fərašaoštrascā*  
Kauui Vištāspa, (and) the Zaruštra-son, the Spitamid, and Fərašaoštra,<sup>9</sup>

7 The translation follows HUMBACH 1991, I, 178.

8 The reading <sup>+</sup>*xšnām* here and in Y 48.12 (see below) follows HUMBACH 1959, II, 94 and KELLENS 1974, 201, fn. 35. KELLENS/PIRART 1988, I, 189 read *xšnūm* and translate this by 'choyer' (II, 234: 'accueil amical'); but PIRART's analysis of <sup>+</sup>*xšnū-* (MSS 47 [1986], 189) is improbable.

9 The translation of this line follows BARTHOLOMAE 1904, 1624 (an older view of him is found BARTHOLOMAE 1904, 571 below). – The question is whether the expression consists of three or of two members. Since *zaraðuštriš spitāmō* is not connected by *-ca* with the preceding, KELLENS/PIRART 1988, I, 9 assume that it belongs with *kauuacā vištāspō*. Their view that Vištāspa was the son of Zaruštra was based on this passage. Although their view cannot be disproved, the material basis of a missing *-ca* is too weak for setting up such a new genealogy. – Most other authors consider the expression as consisting of three members, although there is no explanation for the missing middle *-ca*. The interpretation of *spitāmō* as the name of one of Zaruštra's sons (so HUMBACH 1952 [1957], 11; 1959, I, 157; 1991, I, 192; KELLENS 1974, 202) has little to recommend it, since *spitāma-* is always used as the name of the family. The patronymic adjective *zaraðuštriš* may refer to Isat.vāstra, the oldest son of Zaruštra, as

*dāñhō arəzūš paθō yaṃ daēnaṃ ahurō saoišantō dadāt*

(they shall follow) the straight paths of giving: (this is) the Daēnā which the Lord created as the one of a Saošiant. <sup>10</sup>

The attestations of *saošiant-* in the plural are the following:

**Y 34.13:**

*təm aduuānəm ahurā yəm mōi mraoš varhēuš manarhō*

‘(Teach us) this path, o Lord, which you point out to me as the one of good thinking,

*daēnā saoišiantəm yā +hū.kərətā ašācīt uruuāxšat*

on which well-made (path) the Daēnās of Saošiants walk with truth

*hiiaṭ +cəuištā +hudābiiō mīzdəm mazdā yehiā tū daθrəm*

towards the reward which you present<sup>11</sup> to the well-giving, (and) of which you (are) the one who sets (it).<sup>12</sup>

**Y 46.3:**

*kadā mazdā yōi uxšānō asnaṃ*

‘When, o Wise One, will rise the bulls of the days<sup>13</sup>

BARTHOLOMAE 1904, 1676 assumed, quoting Y 23.2 and 26.5 (ibid. fn.1), where *Isaṭ.vāstra* is mentioned in connection with *Vīštāspa*.

- 10 It emerges from HUMBACH’s (1959, II, 94) comparison of Y 53.2 *yaṃ daēnaṃ ... saoišiantō dadāt* with Y 49.4 *yā drəguuatō daēnā* that *saošiant-* is opposed to *drəguuant-*.
- 11 The reading *\*cəuištā* is found in K5; GELDNER edits with J2 Pt4 and other Mss. *ciuištā*. The form is 2.Pl.Inj.root-Aor.Act. (disyllabic, < *cōištā*, cf. HUMBACH 1959, II, 47: “*cəuištā* steht für *\*cōištā* wie *cəuišī* Y 51,15 für *\*cōišī*”) from the root *ciš* ‘to assign’, see NARTEN 1975, 82 with fn.4.
- 12 *daθra-* is used here metonymically, see BARTHOLOMAE 1904, 679: ‘*cuius tu (es) constitutio (sva. constitutor)*’ and NARTEN 1975, 83 f. (: ‘Bestimmer’), who noticed that in several passages *ciš* goes parallel with *dā* (= ved. *dhā*). For a neuter verbal abstract noun formed with the suffix *-tra-* and used as a predicative nominative with *as* or *bhū* referring to a masculine noun, cf. Ved. (MS 3.3.7 : 40.7.8 = KS 21.10 : 50.2.3) *sā rāstrām ābhavat* ‘he became the rule (= ruler)’, WACKERNAGEL/DEBRUNNER: *Altindische Grammatik* II, 2, Göttingen 1954, p.704, cf. also HOFFMANN: *German Scholars on India*, vol. II. Bombay 1976, 106 f. fn.6 (= Aufsätze zur Indoiranistik III [1992], 721 f. fn. 6).
- 13 *uxšānō asnaṃ* was explained as a metaphor for dawn by BARTHOLOMAE 1904, 383. As a second instance of this usage he quoted Y 50.10, where the metaphor is clear: *raocā x<sup>h</sup>əng asnaṃ uxšā aēuruš* ‘das Sonnenlicht, der schimmernde Stier der Tage’. HUMBACH (WZKSO 2 [1958], 23–24) connects this metaphor with the ritual: “Die vielbezügige

*aṅhāuš darəθrāi frō ašahiia [fr]ārəntē*  
 in order to hold the life of truth,  
*vərəzdāiš səṅghāiš saošiiantəm xratauuō*  
 the wits of Saošiiants, with mature teachings?  
*kaēibiio ūθāi vohū jimaṭ manəḡhā*  
 To whom will one go for fat<sup>14</sup> with good thinking?  
*maibiiō θβā sastrāi vərənē ahurā*  
 To teach me that I choose you, o Lord.'

**Y 48.12:**

*aṭ tōi aṅhən saošiiantō daxiiunəm*  
 'They will be Saošiiants of the countries,  
*yōi +xšnəm vohū manəḡhā hacāntē*  
 who pursue recognition with good thinking,  
*šiiəoθanāiš ašā θβahiia mazdā səṅghahiia*  
 (the recognition) of your teaching, o Wise One, with their actions through  
 truth;  
*tōi zī dātā hamaēstārō +aēšəmahiiā*  
 for they are created as defeaters of Rage.'<sup>15</sup>

*2b. Characteristics of Gathic saošiiant-*

The difference between the use of *saošiiant-* in the singular and in the plural has been explained by BARTHOLOMAE 1904, 1551, in this way that the singular would refer to Zaruštra as the 'saviour', the plural to those who

Frage nach den Stieren der Tage, die den mit dem Aša identifizierten Kuhherden der Morgenröte voran das Dunkel der Nacht durchbrechen und ihnen so den Weg bahnen sollen, folgt auf Zarathustras Klage über seinen geringen Viehbestand in Y 46,2. Im Unterton führt sie so die dort schon anklingende Forderung nach dem vom Opferherrn zu spendenden, aus Milchkühen bestehenden Opferlohn weiter, die in voller Deutlichkeit allerdings erst in der Schlußstrophe Y 46,19 ausgesprochen wird (MSS 2<sup>2</sup>, 1952 [1957], 29 Anm.30)", cf. also HUMBACH 1991, II, 177: "The whole is an allusion to the patrons, who are expected to contribute to an improvement of Zaruštra's material conditions by granting him a prize consisting of cattle". However, since in the present passage *uxšānō asnəm* is obviously parallel with *saošiiantəm xratauuō*, the expression is here rather a metaphor for the 'wits of the Saošiiants'.

<sup>14</sup> On *ūθāi* see below with fn.26.

<sup>15</sup> For the translation see HINTZE 1994, 152 f.

help Zaratuštra with his work of salvation. With reference to Y 43.3<sup>16</sup>, LOMMEL 1930, 228f. maintained that *saošiiant-* could refer in the singular to a yet greater man who would bring Zaratuštra's work to completion, cf. also BOYCE 1975, 234f. However, the text passages where *saošiiant-* occurs in the singular are not clear about this. In Y 53.2 it is Kauui Vištāspa, Zaratuštra's son and Fərašaōštra who are said to follow 'the straight paths of giving', and in doing so they have the Daēnā of a Saošiiant. In Y 45.11 *saošiiant-* has the apposition *dāng patōiš* and therefore may refer to any 'lord of the house' (see on this below p. 84). The only attestation which could be used in support of the view that *saošiiant-* in the singular would refer to Zaratuštra is Y 48.9, where three forms in the first person (*vaēdā, mā, mōi*) are found.<sup>17</sup> But since in the last line, in which *saošiiqs* occurs, the person switches to the third person, an impersonal interpretation of this line is also possible: 'may one know as a Saošiiant, how his reward will be'. However this may be, Zaratuštra would certainly be a Saošiiant, but he would not be the only one. It does not seem that a certain specific person is thought of in the Gathas when *saošiiant-* is used in the singular, and especially not such a person who is to become the Saošiiant par excellence in the later tradition. It rather seems that in the singular *saošiiant-* is used in a generic sense, not very different from its use in the plural.

For in the plural, *saošiiant-* is used in similar contexts: the Daēnās of the Saošiiants are said in Y 34.13 to walk on the path of good-giving, cf. the last line of Y 53.2, and similarly as in Y 53.2 they are said in Y 48.12 to follow the recognition (*xšnām*) of Mazdā. Whereas in the singular a Saošiiant is called a 'lord of the house' (Y 45.11), in the plural they are called 'Saošiiants of the countries' (*saošiiantō daxiitunqm*, possessive genitive, Y 48.12). That could mean that there are Saošiiants everywhere, in every country, and that they are important for the welfare of the country. In the hierarchy of social organization, the 'country' (*dajhu-*) is the largest unit going down through *zəntu-* 'tribe' and *vis-* 'clan' to *dam-* 'house,

16 In this stanza the wish is expressed that 'that man ... may teach us the straight paths of prosperity of this corporeal existence and (of that) of thought' (cf. HUMBACH 1991, I, 152, who, however, translates *sauuanhō* by 'benefit').

17 HUMBACH 1952 [1957], 31 fn.31 assumes that *saošiiant-* refers here to Vištāspa: "Mit dem Saošyant dürfte Kavi Vištāspa, nach Y 53,2 der Erste unter den Saošyants gemeint sein".

family' as the smallest unit.<sup>18</sup> Thus it happens that the Gathas testify to the existence of Saošiiants in the smallest and in the largest units, and it may be implied that a Saošiiant of the house (*dam-*) is also a Saošiiant of the country (*darjhu-*) at the same time. It seems that even as there can be Saošiiants in every land, so every head of a family (*dāng pati-*) can and should be a Saošiiant – that it is within the grasp of virtually everyone to be a Saošiiant. As Saošiiants they resist and defeat Aēšma (Y 48.12). The Saošiiants constitute the “army” of Ahura Mazdā among people, and for this reason it is important that they are numerous.

From three out of the six Gathic attestations (Y 45.11, 53.2, 34.13) it emerges that the most important characteristic of Saošiiant of the Older Avesta is the possession of a very good *daēnā-*,<sup>19</sup> an Avestan term difficult to translate: *daēnā-*, morphologically a derivative from the verbal root *dī* ‘to see’ (especially with the inner eye) with the suffix *-anā-* (< Proto-Iranian \**dhaiH-ánā-*), basically refers to the mental view and attitude of a person towards his own life and towards the world around him. The quality of the individual’s *daēnā-* depends on whether he chose Good or Evil to follow during his lifetime. If he chose Good, his words and deeds will be good during lifetime, if he chose Evil, they will be bad. His *daēnā-* is shaped by his words and deeds and insofar the *daēnā-* is that part of the human inner self which is shaped deliberately by the will of the individual,<sup>20</sup> it is part of the human inner being. After death the individual parts of a person are separated (Av. *vī-uruuisti-*), whereby *uruuan-* and *daēnā-* become individual beings and appear in their real shape. It is only after death when the soul (*uruuan-*) of the individual, coming to the Cinvat-Bridge, will see the real shape of his own *daēnā-*. Since the decision of the individual person for Good or Evil is a religious choice, *daēnā-* may also

18 See on this BENVENISTE: Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes, vol. I. Paris 1969, 294 ff.

19 The Gathic attestations of *daēnā-* have been translated by F.-T. Lankarany: *Daēnā im Avesta, eine semantische Untersuchung*. Hamburg 1985, 82–108.

20 See BOYCE 1975, 238–9. The concept has been judged to be perhaps Zaratuštra’s “profoundest contribution ... to the history of religion”, see BOYCE 1991, 464. An intrinsic difference between the Avestan notions of *daēnā-* and *uruuan-* is that the shape of the *daēnā-* lies in the hands of the individual, but the shape of *uruuan-* not (see LOMMEL 1930, 170 f.).



be considered as referring to one's attitude towards religion, therefore: 'religious view'.<sup>21</sup>

The *daēnā-* of a Saošiiant is characterized as *spənta-* 'beneficent': it is through the beneficent *daēnā-* of the Saošiiant, of the house lord, that people are united with each other, so that one might become to the other 'a companion, a brother or a father' (Y 45.11). Thus the *daēnā-* of the Saošiiant strengthens the social bonds between individual people. Furthermore, the *daēnā-* of a Saošiiant is described as one that walks on the prepared path of good thinking, and as one that walks towards a reward apportioned by Ahura Mazdā to those who give generously (Y 34.13). It is the *daēnā-* of the Saošiiant that causes him to follow the 'straight path of giving', the veneration (*yasna-*) of Ahura Mazdā and his recognition (*xšnā-*, Y 53.2). Thus the main characteristic of the Saošiiant is his spiritual ability, to which belongs first of all his inner, mental view and disposition, his *daēnā-*. The visible reflex of his *daēnā-* is his willingness to give generously (*hudāh-*) and to pay homage to Ahura Mazdā (*yasna-*): that is how he follows the straight path of good thinking (Y 34.13). By knowing and going along these 'straight paths' the Saošiiant will receive his well-deserved reward (*mīžda-*, *ašī-*). A second component of the Saošiiant's spiritual ability is his mental power, his intellect (*xratu-* Y 46.3), which is also called 'the bulls of the days'. By his mental power the Saošiiant has grasped Ahura Mazdā's teachings and continues to strive for the recognition of Mazdā and his teachings (Y 53.2 and 48.12), and he also seems to care for the diffusion of Mazdā's teachings (Y 46.3).

21 HUMBACH 1991 *passim* renders *daēnā-* by 'religious view'. Earlier (HUMBACH 1959, I, 56–58) he maintained that *daēnā-* may be used in the Gathas as a synonym for *uruuan-*. But Y 49.11, which HUMBACH quotes as an example for this, rather seems to describe the situation when the souls of those deceitful people who have already died and who are already in the House of Deceit welcome the newcomers with evil-smelling food (*akāiš x'arədvāiš paitī uruuqno paitīicēntī*). These newcomers have just fallen down from the Cinvat-Bridge because of their evil rule, evil deeds, words, *Daēnā* and mind. A similar situation is described in *Hāddōxt-Nask* II 34–36. Cf. LOMMEL 1930, 191 f., 198 and his interpretation of Y 49.11 in LOMMEL 1971, 166: "Hier wird den Lügern, über die noch sonstiges Schlimmes ausgesagt wird, künftiger Aufenthalt im Haus der Lüge und üble Speisen, die sie dort erhalten sollen, vorausgesagt". – In Y 51.13 it is the question whether *xraodaitī* is transitive or intransitive; if it is used in an intransitive sense, it may describe the soul (*uruuan-*) of the deceitful one arriving at the Cinvat-Bridge.

2c. *The ritualistic interpretation of saošiiant-*

For a ritualistic interpretation of *saošiiant-* words like *hudāh-*, *aši-*, *mīžda-*, *aduan-*, *paθ-*, *ūθa-*, *vahma-*, *yasna-*, which occur in the same stanzas as *saošiiant-*, have been referred to.<sup>22</sup> Thus, for instance, in Y 34.13 a ‘well-made path’ is mentioned on which the Daēnās of the Saošiiants proceed towards the reward (*mīždām*) they deserve, because they are ‘well-giving’ (*hudāh-*), and in Y 53.2 ‘the straight paths of giving’ are spoken of: in both passages the ‘straight’ or ‘well-prepared path’ is described as the path of the one who gives generously. The Saošiiant’s *daēnā-* walking on the ‘well-made path of good thinking’ towards a reward presented by Ahura Mazdā to the munificent may be interpreted in this way, that the ‘munificent’ is the one who gives generously in sacrifice, as KELLENS 1974, 202 supposes. The ‘straight path’, on which the *daēnā-* of the Saošiiant walks, may then be considered as a poetic description of the sacrifice which connects man and god. A similar expression is known also from the Vedic ritual language.<sup>23</sup> In the Rigvedic hymns the ‘straight path’ may be used as a metaphor for the sacrifice, and it may be assumed that this expression formed part of the Indo-Iranian poetic language of ritual: the gods are invited to come down to the well-prepared place of sacrifice in order to receive the strengthening (Av. *ižā-*, Ved. *īlā-*), and the gods in their turn give well-being and prosperity to the sacrificer. Thus a ‘straight path’ between man and god is established through sacrifice.<sup>24</sup> It can be gathered from this and from a number of other usages that Zaratuštra’s language is deeply rooted in the Indo-Iranian religious ritual language. The image of the ‘straight path’ on which walk those

22 Cf. KELLENS 1974, 199 ff.

23 E. g. RV 10.51.5:

*éhi mánur devayúr yajñákāmo 'raṁkṛtyā tāmasi kṣesy agne  
sugān pathāḥ kṛnuhi devayānān váha havyāni sumanasyámānaḥ*

‘Come! Manu devoted to the gods, having made ready, wishes to sacrifice. You are dwelling in the dark, o Agni. Make the paths going to the gods to be walked on well! With propitious mind convey the sacrifices!’.

Cf. also THIEME: *Der Fremdling im Rgveda*. Leipzig 1938, 120 f.

24 Also ‘path of Ṛta’ could be used in this sense, cf. LÜDERS: *Varuṇa*, vol. II. Göttingen 1959, 468. On the Avestan parallels to Vedic *pánthā-* cf. SCHLERATH: *The concept of the ‘path’ in the Avesta*. In: Dr. J. M. Unvala Memorial Volume. Bombay 1964, 141–144.

who are well-giving, found in Y 34.13, is likely to be a poetic image inherited from that language.

However, it is by no means certain that these terms and images as they occur in the Gathas refer to ritual practice in the same way as they do in the Rigveda. For in the Rigveda the ritual context of the hymns is obvious; in the Gathas, however, it is not. Certainly, the language used in the Gathas is indebted to the inherited Indo-Iranian ritual and poetic language. But the function and context of Gathic poetry seem to be different from what is known of the Rigveda. All the terms quoted above which have been interpreted as referring to the ritual may be interpreted differently, i. e. they may refer not to ritual but to religious matters. Thus it may well be that ancient poetic formulas are used in the Gathas, but that they are given a new content. For instance, the 'path' may no more be the path that connects gods and sacrificer during the sacrifice, but 'the path of Good Thinking', i. e. something spiritual or ethical.<sup>25</sup> The only term that may refer to a ritual of sacrifice is *ūṇa-* in Y 46.3, if it is linked with YAv. *ūṇa-*<sup>26</sup> which denotes the 'fat' of a human or animal body. Ritual use of YAv. *ūṇa-* is only clear from a passage in Nirangistan 65, where it is described how the fat of the sacrificial animal is offered. In the other two passages, Vd 6.10 and 16.17, *ūṇa-* is used of a dead body polluting earth and fire and can hardly refer to a sacrificial offering. There is no evidence that *ūṇa-* is used as a ritual term in a technical sense. In the Gathic passage, it may be interpreted as a metaphor for 'prosperity'.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, *saošiiant-* occurs in passages which evidently have no connection with the ritual, as Y 45.11, and in that passage KELLENS 1974, 199 assumes that *saošiiant-* would be "purement adventice". The passages in which *saošiiant-* occurs may refer to something outside the ritual context and thus to something quite different from what is known from Vedic,

25 Cf. the metonymical use of *ižā-* and *āzūiti-*, both terms inherited from Ilr. ritual language, in Y 49.5 *aṭ huuō mazdā ižacā āzūitišcā yē daēnaṃ vohū + sārəštā mananḥā* 'But that person, O Wise One, (is) abundance and fat, who shelters (his) religious view with good thought' (translation by HUMBACH 1991, I, 181), see on this passage HUMBACH, Indogermanische Forschungen 63 (1957/58), 41.

26 HUMBACH (WZKSO 2 [1958], 24 fn. 5): "*ūṇāi*, nach Bartholomae 1904, 388 ein Infinitiv zu *av* 'helfen', ist ohne Zweifel zu j. *ūṇa-/uṇa-* 'Fett, Fettspende' zu stellen".

27 Cf. HUMBACH's translation of Y 46.3 (HUMBACH 1991, I, 168): 'To which people will one come with good thought to (provide them with) fat?'.

which has no equivalent to *saošiiant-*.<sup>28</sup> It does not emerge from the Gathic passages that *saošiiant-* is a ritual technical term as e. g. the IIr. *\*j<sup>h</sup>ātar-*. It rather seems to emerge from the texts that the Saošiiants are persons who play a central role in early Mazdayasnianism and its religious conception, but not necessarily in the ritual inherited from the Indo-Iranian period.

#### 2d. The basic meaning of *saošiiant-*

The question remains what is the basic meaning of the future in the form *saošiiant-*. It may either denote a declaration of will ('the one who wants to be strong/wants to prosper') or it may denote a simple future tense ('the one who will be strong/will prosper'), cf. KELLENS 1974, 204: "celui qui va, ou qui veut, prospérer". KELLENS' interpretation of the *saošiiant-* as a participant in the exchange of goods between god and man following the principle of *do ut des* requires the interpretation of the future participle as an expression of will: 'the one who wants to be strong/wants to prosper', for by interacting with god the sacrificer wants to prosper. Otherwise (i. e. 'the one who will be strong/will prosper') one would rather expect a general present, not a future: the one who prospers because he enters into interaction with god, as the prosperity resulting from sacrifice should materialize in the sacrificer's earthly welfare. Yet the interpretation of *saošiiant-* as denoting a future tense also requires an explanation, because who can say of himself that 'he will be strong'? But if *saošiiant-* is a religious, and not a ritual, term, then nothing speaks against an eschatological interpretation: 'the one who will be strong' because once he has chosen to fight Evil he is destined by Ahura Mazdā to be stronger than Evil.

A significant passage which may allow one to describe the synchronic meaning of Gathic *saošiiant-* is Y 48.12. The phrase *tōi aṅhān saošiiantō daxiunam* 'they will be Saošiiants of the countries' actually contains a

28 Since *saošiiant-* has no Vedic equivalent, it cannot be reconstructed for the Indo-Iranian period; it seems to be an Iranian innovation, maybe even coined by Zarathuštra himself. Thus it is misleading to describe *saošiiant-* as "un vieux terme du rituel" (KELLENS 1974, 209). The term is neither old nor ritual. It rather seems that the term *saošiiant-* denotes a new person with a new function in a new religious concept of which Vedic has no evidence. Therefore, in the case of *saošiiant-* comparison with Vedic material does not help, because the concept of the Saošiiant is a genuine Iranian creation that developed after the splitting up of the Indo-Iranian community.

double expression of future. Here ‘the one who will be strong’ could be understood as ‘the one who will overcome Evil’ and in that case, *saošiiant-* would be used as an eschatological term. This interpretation is supported by the last verse line of that stanza *tōi zi dātā hamaēstārō* <sup>+</sup>*aēšmahiiā* ‘for they are created (or: destined) as defeaters of Rage’. The agent of that clause is Ahura Mazda who has destined the Saošiiants to overcome Evil. The Saošiiants are conceived as opponents to Aēšma and as his defeaters. LOMMEL 1930, 227f., compares the Saošiiants of this passage with the ‘companions’ of Astuuat.ərəta said in Yt 19.95 to fight and defeat Aēšma, and points out that this is one of the individual features which indicate the continuity of the tradition.<sup>29</sup> Here the term has an aggressive notion, the Saošiiant being described as someone who fights. If this interpretation is correct, *saošiiant-* has acquired the meaning ‘saviour’ already in the Gathas.

### 3. *Saošiiant-* in the Younger Avesta

In the Younger Avesta, *saošiiant-* is used in most attestations in the plural, but in a few instances also in the singular. BARTHOLOMAE 1904, 1551–2, thinks that in the Younger Avesta *saošiiant-* in the plural would refer on the one hand to the priests as those who continue Zaratuštra’s work of salvation and on the other hand to the future saviours at the end of time. Thus, for instance, *saošiiant-* denotes the priests in Y 14.1, where the *zaoatar-* speaks of himself as one of the Saošiiants and puts them as a group into apposition to the Aməša Spəntas:

Y 14.1 (= Vr 5.1, 11.20)

*yada diš azəm yō zaoatā āuuāēdaiemi...*

*yūšmākəm yasnāica vahmāica xšnaoθrāica frasastaiiaēca*

*yaṭ aməšanəm spəntanəm*

*ahmākəm* <sup>+</sup>*hauuarj’hāica ratufritaiiaēca ašauuastāica vərəθraγniīāica*

*huruniīāica yaṭ saošiiantəm ašaonəm*

‘(We dedicate them,...) as I, the priest, dedicate them

for veneration, praise, strengthening und laudation of you, the Aməša Spəntas,

for good life, pleasing of the Ratus, truthfulness, victory and peace of the soul

of us, the truthful Saošiiants.’

29 The figure of Astuuat.ərəta, however, has no Gathic antecedent, see below under 4.

In **Y 9.2** the Saošiiants are described as future persons who give right veneration to Haoma:

*aoi maṃ ... stūdi yaḍa mā aparaciṭ saošiiantō stauuaṇ*  
 ‘praise me [Haoma], as the future Saošiiants will praise me’.

These examples show that in the Younger Avesta the Saošiiants play a role in the worship not only of Ahura Mazdā, but also of the Aməša Spəntas (Y 14.1) and of Haoma (Y 9.2), but it cannot be concluded from these passages that *saošiiant-* was a technical ritual term. Nor can it be upheld that *saošiiant-* would refer to the priests in all instances listed by BARTHOLOMAE.<sup>30</sup> Most passages rather testify to the interpretation that all good people can aspire to be Saošiiants.

The semantic component of the Saošiiant as someone who fights against enemies, which is attested explicitly in one of the Gathic passages (Y 48.12), becomes much more prominent in the Younger Avesta. As Saošiiants people fight against Daēvic creatures, especially against Falsehood, Av. *druj-*, thus **Y 61.5**:

*kaḍa drujəm niš ahmaṭ ā niš.nāšāma*  
 “How shall we remove Falsehood from here?” –  
*niš.nāšāma saošiiantō +drujīm*  
 “As Saošiiants we shall remove Falsehood.” –  
*kaḍa niš.nāšāma*  
 “How shall we remove?” –  
*yaḍa hīm janāma xšaiiamnō +axšaiiamnanəm*<sup>31</sup>  
 “We shall slay her as being powerful over the powerless,  
*višpāiš haca karšuuṇ yaiš hapta*  
 from all seven climes,  
*hamistāe nižbərətāe višpaiiā druuatō stōiš*  
 to smite, to remove all deceitful existence,  
*stauuas ašā yē hudā yōi hēntī*  
 praising with truth (the one) who is well-giving (among those,) who exist.”

30 BARTHOLOMAE 1904, 1552 lists the passage Y 9.2 just quoted in the second group which would refer to the future saviours.

31 See BARTHOLOMAE 1904, 52 with note 2.

In particular, the Saošiiants may have the epithet *vərəθrajan-*. In a warlike context in **Yt 13.38**, the Saošiiants constitute a group of people fighting against enemies of the Avesta-people:

<i>yūžəm taða tauruuaiata</i>	‘Then you (Frauuajšis) overcame
<i>vərəθrəm dānunqm tūranqm...</i>	the defence of the Turanian Dānus, ...
<i>yūšmaoiō parō karšnazō</i>	Formerly through you the manly Karšnazides
<i>huūtra baon səuuīšta</i>	were the strongest,
<i>yōi taxma xštāuuaiō</i>	the swift Xštāuuis,
<i>yōi taxma saošiiantō</i>	the swift Saošiiants,
<i>yōi taxma vərəθrājanō</i>	the swift victorious ones.’

In **Y 70.4** the ‘truthful men’ (*narō ašauuanō*) with good thoughts, words and deeds say that they want to be Saošiiants and victorious:

*yaða īža vācim nāšima*  
 ‘because through strengthening we want to raise our voice  
*yaða vā saošiiantō daxiiunqm suiiamna vācim barəntū*  
 as the Saošiiants of the countries, becoming strong, shall raise their voice;  
*buiiama saošiiantō buiiama vərəθrājanō*  
 we want to be Saošiiants, we want to be victorious,  
*buiiama ahurahe mazdā friia vāzišta astaiō*  
 we want to be dear, strongest guests of Ahura Mazdā,  
*yōi narō ašauuanō humatāiš mainimna*  
 we truthful men who are thinking with good thoughts,  
*hūxtāiš mruuatō huuarštāiš vərəziiantō*  
 speaking with good words, acting with good deeds’.

In the singular, *saošiiant-* occurs only with the epithet *vərəθrajan-*, and in that case the word refers to one particular Saošiiant, namely to Astuuat.ərətā. His name is explained in **Yt 13.129**:

*yō anhaṭ saošiiqs vərəθraja nāma astuuat.ərətasca nāma*  
*auuaða saošiiqs yaða višpəm ahum astuuantəm sāuuaiiāt*  
*auuaða astuuat.ərətō yaða astuuā hq uštānauuā*  
*astuuat + aiθiiejahim paitišāt*  
 ‘Who will be ‘victorious Saošiiant’ by name and Astuuat.ərətā by name.  
 Saošiiant insofar, as he will strengthen all corporeal life.

Astuuat.ərəta insofar, as being corporeal (and) living  
he will provide corporeal freedom from danger.'

In this passage, the victorious Saošiiant, being himself 'the one who will be strong', is described as someone who causes 'the corporeal life' to be strong: the transitive interpretation of *saošiiant-* is coming in.

In **Y 59.28** *saošiiantəm vərəθrājanəm yazamaide* the 'victorious Saošiiant' is being worshipped, and in **Y 26.10** (= Y 59.27) the 'victorious Saošiiant' denotes the final point in the history of mankind, opposed to the first mortal, *gaiiō marətan-*:

*vīspā ašāunəm vaŋ'hīš sūrā frauuašaiiō yazamaide*

'We worship all good (and) strong Frauuašis of the truthful ones,

*yā haca gaiiāt marəθnať ā saošiiantāt vərəθra-ŋnať*

those from Gaiiō Marətan up to the victorious Saošiiant'.

The conception of the history of mankind found in this passage shows that a final Saošiiant is expected who marks the final point of this age and implicitly ushers in a new age. Furthermore, there are two other passages which show that a myth is connected with the 'victorious Saošiiant'. In **Vd 19.5** it is said that the victorious Saošiiant is expected to be born out of Lake Kašaoiia:

*janāni pairikəm yəm xnađaiti*

'I shall slay the witch Xnađaitī,

*yahmāi us.zaiiāite*

until the victorious Saošiiant

*saošiias vərəθraja*

will be born

*haca apať kašaoiiať*

out of Lake Kašaoiia,

*ušastarať haca naēmāt*

from the eastern side,

*ušastaraēibiō haca naēmaēibiō*

from the eastern sides.'

The birth and rise of the 'victorious one among the Saošiiants', i. e. Astuuat.ərəta, and his actions are described in more detail in the eight final stanzas of the Zamyād Yašt, starting from stanza 89. In stanza 89 it is said that the 'glory', the *x<sup>v</sup>arənah-*, accompanies the victorious one among the Saošiiants, and also his other companions, so that he will make life wonderful, unageing, undecaying etc.<sup>32</sup>:

32 On the passages where *saošiiant-* occurs besides *frašō.carətar-* see HINTZE 1994, 154–157.



<p>(x<sup>v</sup>arəno) yaṭ uparḥacaṭ  saošiiantəm vərəθrājanəm  uta ariiāscit̄ haxaiiō  yaṭ kərənauuāt̄ frašəm ahum</p>	<p>‘(The glory) which accompanies the  victorious one among the Saošiiants  and his other companions,  in order that he makes life wonderful ...’.</p>
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In the next section, starting from stanza 92, it is told that Astuuat̄.ərəta, the son of Vispa.tauruuairī, steps forth from Lake Kašaoiia as a messenger of Ahura Mazda. He is brandishing a weapon, a missile providing victory, which other heroes bore before him: Thraētaona bore this weapon and slew Aži Dahāka, Frajrasiiian slew Zainigau, Kauui Haosrauuah slew Frajrasiiian and Kauui Vīštāspa slew the enemies of Truth. It is this weapon with which Astuuat̄.ərəta will remove Falsehood from the world of truth (stanza 93).

This myth recalls the ancient myth of the hero slaying a dragon, inherited from Indo-Iranian and even Indo-European times, and this myth is explicitly referred to in stanza 92 immediately after the mentioning of Astuuat̄.ərəta. The verb which describes the killing of a dragon in that stanza as well as in the Indo-European myth is the verb *jan* (IE \*g<sup>wh</sup>en),<sup>33</sup> and it occurs four times in stanza 92–93 (*jaini* ‘he was slain’). Myths of the slaying of a dragon are alluded to several times in the Zamyād Yašt: in stanza 37 it is told how Thraētaona slew the dragon Dahāka who is also called ‘Daēvic falsehood’ (Av. *daēuuīm drujim*), and stanza 40 tells how the hero Kərəsāspa slew the horn-bearing dragon (*aži- sruuana-*). Thus Astuuat̄.ərəta also is described as a hero, similar to the heroes of ancient times who slew dragons: as the ancient heroes slew a dragon, so Astuuat̄.ərəta slays Falsehood.

#### 4. Mingling of religious and heroic traditions

In the Younger Avestan passages which speak of a single ‘victorious Saošiiant’ the Saošiiant is connected with a tradition different from the religious tradition which prevails in the Gathas. Here it is the tradition of heroic myth and epic. Thus it seems that two different traditions have merged in the notion of the *saošiiant-* of the Younger Avesta. That the religious and heroic traditions are mingled in the Yašts quite widely (e. g. heroes sacrificing to Yazatas, and tales of their deeds being thus introduced) is of

33 See WATKINS 1987, 270–299.

course obvious,<sup>34</sup> and it has become even more readily comprehensible with the realisation that these are from an oral tradition,<sup>35</sup> so to describe the Saošiant's future feats in heroic terms was a natural development within the religious tradition.

The link between the two traditions may be seen in the root *sū* 'to be strong' from which the future participle *saošiant-* is derived as well as the noun *sūra-* 'hero', the Indo-Iranian term for the hero who slays a dragon. In Vedic, *sūra-* is an epithet of Indra in most instances and Indra is the god who slays the dragon *vṛtrá-*, cf. e. g. RV II 11,5 *áhann áhim sūra víryēna* 'you [Indra] slew the dragon, o hero, with strength'. For this reason Indra, being the slayer of the dragon *Vṛtra*, is also called *vṛtrahán-* 'slayer of *Vṛtra*', literally: 'breaking the defence'.<sup>36</sup> That also the Avestan *saošiant-* bears the epithet *vərəθrajan-* may be due to the connection of the concept of the Saošiant with the myth of the hero slaying a dragon.

The name which was given to the final, heroic and victorious Saošiant, *Astuuat.ərəta*, is strongly ethical and was created by Mazdayasnian theologians of the Younger Avestan period through theological speculation within the religious tradition on the basis of the Gathic passage Y 43.16 *astuuat ašəm xiiāi uštānā +aojōnhuuat* 'truth may be corporeal, strong through vitality'.<sup>37</sup> In creating this name the priests used their own dialect form, for *-ərəta-* corresponds to normal Avestan *aša-*. Since the myth of *Astuuat.ərəta* is closely connected with the region of lake Hāmūn (Av. *kašaoiia-*), it is likely that the name itself is a dialect form of that region.<sup>38</sup> KARL HOFFMANN and JOHANNA NARTEN have listed a considerable number of other dialectal peculiarities which do not comply with Avestan sound laws. Thus the region of Arachosia/Drangiane seems to have played an important role

34 Cf. e. g. BOYCE, BSOAS 47 (1984), 57 f.; HINTZE 1994, 33 ff.

35 See BOYCE 1975, 108; *ibid.* 283 she remarks rightly that "Astvat.ərəta is seen as the culmination of a line of valiant warriors, all of whom had fought bravely and victoriously against some great evil, embodied in man or beast."

36 Cf. E. BENVENISTE/L. RENO, *Vṛtra et Vṛthraγna*. Étude de mythologie indo-iranienne. Paris 1934 (Cahiers de la Société Asiatique 3).

37 Cf. on this passage NARTEN 1986, 181, fn.51.

38 So HOFFMANN (Festschrift Humbach. München 1986, 167) and BOYCE 1975, 293, see HINTZE 1994, 371-2. KELLENS 1974, 209 prefers to consider the name as a western Iranian dialect form (cf. OP *arta-*; on the transcription of [ərta-] with *a* see HOFFMANN, Aufsätze zur Indoiranistik II [1976], 627 with fn. 8).

during a significant period of the development of the Mazdayasnian faith and the diffusion of Zoroastrianism, and the priests of that region exerted an influence on the form of the Avestan text as it has come down to us.<sup>39</sup> It is therefore not unlikely that the name of Astuuat.ərəta is a product of their theological speculations. Astuuat.ərəta was connected by them with old Iranian history by placing him in a line with the heroes of ancient times.

But not only the name of Astuuat.ərəta is their creation. The whole myth of a saviour stepping forth from lake Kašaoiia and bringing about the renovation of the world may have entered the Avesta during that period. All Avestan passages in which *kašaoiia-* or *haētumant-* are mentioned are either geographical descriptions (so Yt 19.66) or deal with eschatology (Yt 19.92 and Vd 19.5).<sup>40</sup> This reveals a rather rationalistic attitude of the priest poets. One gets the impression that they wanted to make clear that it is this certain lake in Sīstān which plays such an important role in Frašō.kərəti and that it is this very lake from which Astuuat.ərəta steps forth.<sup>41</sup> GHERARDO GNOLI has described the importance of Sīstān in his book "Ricerche storiche sul Sīstān antico" although I cannot accept that the origins of Zoroastrianism should also be sought there. It rather seems that at a certain stage the priests of that region influenced strongly the development of the Mazdayasnian faith, see BOYCE 1992, 4–5.

### 5. Conclusion

The Gathic concept of the Saošiiant forms an essential part of Zaratuštra's religious message. The Saošiiants constitute a group of people who oppose Evil actively. Without their action Good could never be stronger than Evil. Thus they play a decisive role in the Renovation of the World, in fact they are those who actually bring it about. The emphasis in the concept of Saošiiant lies in this, that he fights Evil actively and by doing so he contributes to the final victory over Evil. In this sense, Saošiiant is *per se* an eschatological term, and this already in the Gathas. The term is coined and filled with content from the perspective of the final victory over Evil. This con-

39 See HOFFMANN/NARTEN 1989, 77–85. For a criticism of the "Arachosian hypothesis" cf. BOYCE 1991, 122–124.

40 Cf. HINTZE 1994, 41 f.

41 Cf. GNOLI 1980, 87–88, 129 ff.

ception underlies the formation of the word as a future participle. Because the semantic content is reflected in the morphology, it may be assumed that *saošiiant-* was coined as a term by Zaratuštra himself to denote these new persons who form such an important and essential part in his religious message.

The notion of the *saošiiant-* as a 'saviour' resisting Aēšma and implicitly also bringing about the final victory over all evil creatures is present in the Gathas (Y 48.12, see above 2d.), but is conceived of there as a collective work of the Saošiiants. The concept of the Saošiiant as it is reflected in the Gathas is a concept of numerous Saošiiants: the more the better. This concept is continued also in the Younger Avesta, e. g. in Y 70.4, where 'the truthful men' pray to be Saošiiants and to be victorious. But the mingling of the religious Saošiiant-concept with the heroic tradition of the myth of the hero slaying a dragon changed the religious concept of Saošiiant by introducing a new semantic component not present in the Gathas: it is the idea of a single Saošiiant who brings about the final and utter defeat of Evil and who is therefore called 'victorious'. The idea of a single Saošiiant as a final World Saviour bringing about utter destruction of Evil is a post-Gathic development. An eschatological myth of a victorious Saošiiant named Astuuat.ərəta was fully developed in south-eastern Iran in the region of the river Haētumant and connected with the local places there. Thus the originally collective work of defeat of Evil brought about by all Saošiiants of the Gathas gradually becomes in the Younger Avesta the work of a single person, of a heroic man, a final World Saviour who is to become the Sōšyans of the Pahlavi texts.

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