

## THE OLDEST ATTESTED PĀZAND IN THE BUNDAHIŠN TEXT OF THE MUNICH MANUSCRIPT M51

An orthographic and phonological analysis of a newly discovered type of Pāzand

The interplay between Pāzand and Pahlavi is clearly an important feature of the early Pahlavi manuscript tradition. The early transmission of the Bundahišn text is, in this respect, emblematic. A preliminary analysis of the oldest manuscripts (K20, K20b, M51, TD1, DH, TD2) shows that a considerable amount of passages belonging to the Pahlavi text is transcribed with Avestan letters. Pāzand transcriptions are to be found mostly in the manuscripts of the so-called “Indian” tradition (K20, M51 and K20b). However, a closer analysis shows that the “Iranian” manuscripts (TD1, DH, TD2) have also retained a significant number of Pāzand readings. Given that the oldest testimonies of the Bundahišn are also among the oldest Pahlavi manuscripts at disposal, the situation is quite striking and requires an explanation. Normally, Pāzand or Pārsīg transcriptions of the expected portion of Pahlavi text were inserted later on the line to fill empty spaces left by the first copyist. Clear examples are to be found in K20, in which at least two later hands have filled empty lines of the *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* text with a Pārsīg transcription. In the case of the *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*, the occasional use of Pārsīg is limited to K20, with no further traces in the manuscript tradition. On the contrary, the Bundahišn Pāzand passages seem not to have been added by later users of the manuscripts. Since they recur in all the extant oldest testimonies, they must have been incorporated at an earlier date, before the formation of the two different manuscript lines.

This great amount of early material has never been analysed properly. Whereas its philological importance for the early transmission of the Bundahišn text is almost self-evident, a careful analysis has revealed its extraordinary precision and consistency in the notation of the Middle Persian phonological system, as it was pronounced in the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> c. (or even before). The results are in line with those already reconstructed for the early stages of New Persian, and could contribute largely to the still not so numerous materials for the reconstruction of the phonological history of New Persian.

The pioneering attempts of Spiegel 1851 and West 1871 have remained unfortunately till nowadays the only available systematic descriptions of a pāzandization technique<sup>1</sup> based on the direct observation of the manuscripts. The old and precise orthography of the Bundahišn Pāzand passages, of which Bd. 13 in the Munich Manuscript M51 constitutes the best example, could be the starting point towards a complete reassessment of the importance of Pāzand not only for Zoroastrian studies (as already remarked in de Jong 2004, 77) but for Iranian linguistics in general.

### LITERATURE

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<sup>1</sup>The interesting description in Čunakova 1997, 143-146 (under *язык рукописи*), although very short, is an exception.

London 1871.