

# FURTHER EVIDENCE FOR THE ACHAEMENIANS BEING ZOROASTRIANS

Dr. Kersey Antia, Oct 5, 2019; updated Nov 10, 2019

Prod Oktor Skjaervo in his paper on “Truth and Deception in Ancient Iran” (in *Atash-e-Dorun, J.S. Soroushian Memorial Volume II*, edited by C.G. Cereti and F.J. Vajifdar, 2003) further establishes the continuity between the Gathic precepts and Darius I's admonitions in his rock inscriptions which I find worth quoting here at length as I do not know of any other scholar who has brought out this issue so well: The universe of the ancient Iranian *Avesta*, the holy book of the Zoroastrians, and the Old Persian inscriptions of the Achaemenian kings is one in which the powers of cosmos and chaos, reality and appearance, straight and crooked, good and evil, continually vie for supremacy, and humans are constantly prone to being misled as to what is right behavior; even the Avestan poet-sacrificer and the Achaemenian king are not exempt from this risk. ----- The king's reality, the one he, as Ahura Mazda's chosen, knows is the true one (old Persian, *hashiya*), not an effect of deception (old Persian, *duruxta*-), is the ordered cosmos of Ahura Mazda on a human scale, namely his own kingdom, which is threatened by political adversaries. The latter, in their weakness, have been deluded as to the true political reality, the one intended by Ahura Mazda. Thus, although both the poet (worshipper) and the king know what is truly real or really true, the danger of delusions caused by the cosmic Lie, or Deception (*Avesta, druj*-, old Persian, *drauga*), whose principal feature is *misrepresentation* of the true reality, as well as by those possessed by it is ever-present.”

To the Gathic worshipper, the supporters of Order (Asha) are the men who accept Ahura Mazda as highest God and abide by his announcements (*sengha*-). Similarly the Achaemenian king who claims to be Ahura Mazda's chosen viceroy on earth is upheld by those who listen to his announcements, accept him as their king, and thereby become “attached to him by the bonds of harmonic cosmic and political appurtenances. Their principal function is to uphold and maintain Order in the worlds of men and gods. The Lie/Deception, on the other hand, is served by the daeuuas and men who have already been deluded by it and are possessed by it, notably the king's political opponents, who have been led astray by the Lie.”

Men and gods are classified in one of these two groups in accordance with their compliance with the Law (*Daata*) established by Ahura Mazda and the king. Those who choose the Lie defy the *Daata* (the Law) and swing to the evil ones leading to Darius' complaint in his Bahistun

inscription 3.25-28: “he concluded contracts with (others) away from me.”

The perennial conflict between Order and the Lie (Asha and Druja), and the struggle to defeat the Lie and those who choose it are the all-pervasive themes both in the Avesta and the Old Persian inscriptions. “It has three sub-themes: the origin of the *cosmic conflict*, which for the king translates into the *political conflict*, in particular, that surrounding his accession to power; the origin and nature of the *social conflict*; and the *eschatological conflict*, which in turn is closely connected with the themes of the *competition* and *chariot race* in the *Gathas* and *human behavior* in the Old Persian inscriptions.

“In the respective societies of the Gathic poet-sacrificer and the Achaemenian king, the *social conflict* translates into contrasts between rich and poor, strong and weak, patron and dependent, the poet-sacrificer and his rivals, the king and his subjects as in Yasna 34.8: “when the one of great strength (frightens) the one weaker (than him, threatening him) with the “misfortune of your deal, O Mazda, (then) you throw good thought far away from those who do not think Order.”

For instance, Skjaervo finds similarities between Yasna 31.4, 48.1 and 60.5 with D) (Darius' Bahistun inscription) B22-24, 27-32; with Yasna 44.14, 33.2 and XPh (Xerxes' Daeva inscription); moreover Yasna 44.13, 61.5, Yasht 19.12 also seem to support Xerxes' Daeva inscription; Yasna 31.18 with DB 4.2-7, DB 2.29-36, Dna (Darius' Naxe-Rustom inscription 30.38, XPh 28-35 and Yasht 19.95-96 along with some affinities with Rigvedic exhortations. Skjaervo presents too many of such similarities to be included here in toto but this very fact in itself provides irrefutable evidence for the Zoroastrian background of the Achaemenians as how else they could have come to acquire such notions as they are not at all found elsewhere.