

## More observations on the real character of Zoroastrian dualism

Dr. Kersey Antia, May 11, 2019; updated Sep 29, 2019

In his paper, “Short Remarks About Ohrmazd Between Limited and Unlimited Time” (in *Silk Road Studies, VIII*, edited by Alois Van Tongerloo, Brepolis, 2003, pp. 195-200), Antonio Panaino traces the origin of the concept of the Limited Time to two Avestan sources, namely, Yasht 9.10 and Vendidad (Pahlavi commentary for its second chapter, paragraphs 19 and 20), both denoting a time period of 1,000 years.

He notes that “a crude scheme of 12 millennia originally had nothing to do with the impact of Hellenistic astrology, that (with additional Indo-Egyptian elements) will be seminal only for the Sasanian cosmology. Such a temporal cycle seems to be a very simple representation/schematization of a standard year of 12 months, a concept that was currently known and mastered in the ancient Iranian world.” The existence of such a cycle is supported by well-known Avestan references to two fundamental concepts such as Zurvan *akarana*, literally the Time without beginning (or borders)” and Zurvan Daregho-Khavadhata, “the Time following a long self-law.” Panaino sees the qualitative difference between Ohrmazd and Ahreman, as pointed out by J. Kellens in his revision of stanza 11 of the Tishtar Yasht and of stanzas 55 and 74 of the Mihr Yast.

While the direct involvement into the “mixed dimension”, later called *gumezishn*, may be possible for some Yazatas, Ahura Mazda remains in his supreme status of intangibility without any compromise with the so-called *getig* status in its “mixed” reality, which I find is so often overlooked, leading to a misinterpretation. Panaino adds that the “enactment of the *getig* dimension after Ahreman's irruption into the creation put Ohrmazd and Ahreman in two completely different situations as due to his “omniscience” he displays the limited time before his primordial meeting with Ahreman.” However, “he does not enter forthright into the *getig* and is not even personally involved in the earthly conflict.” The ontological superiority of life (and in particular of human life and conscience) is per se, sufficient in this battle against Ahreman and its forces,” making him unable to destroy life and rather rendering him “prisoner of the newly fashioned space-temporal dimension, without any possibility of escaping from it.” I find this a very Gathic idea in a Pahlavi garb.

Panaino finds this arrangement very asymmetric because the limited time started even before the pact did and even so it does not become the

unique time of Ohrmazd but only one of his many weapons. “On the contrary, with the irruption and the attempt of destruction of the *getig* Ahreman definitively becomes prisoner of the *getig* because of his knowledge *a posteriori* (*pas-danisnih*) and thus he is submitted to the limited time, while Ohrmazd stays outside of it as the unique master of the time and of the entire creation.” Ohrmazd will enter in the limited time, only at its very end of Time only to demolish Ahreman totally from the world.

This further proves the unique Avestan basis, however rudimentary of the Pahlavi dualism which not only strengthens and reinforces the Gathic monotheism but also in its own way subtly reinforces the Gathic injunction for motivating mortals to see it as their earthly mission to eradicate evil from the world in every way on their own and not to relegating it to God, so as to become a Humkaar (co-worker) of God. No wonder therefore we can even find Avestan parallels to Pahlavi Time Periods which account for the problem of evil which however remains mostly unresolved in other forms of monotheism.