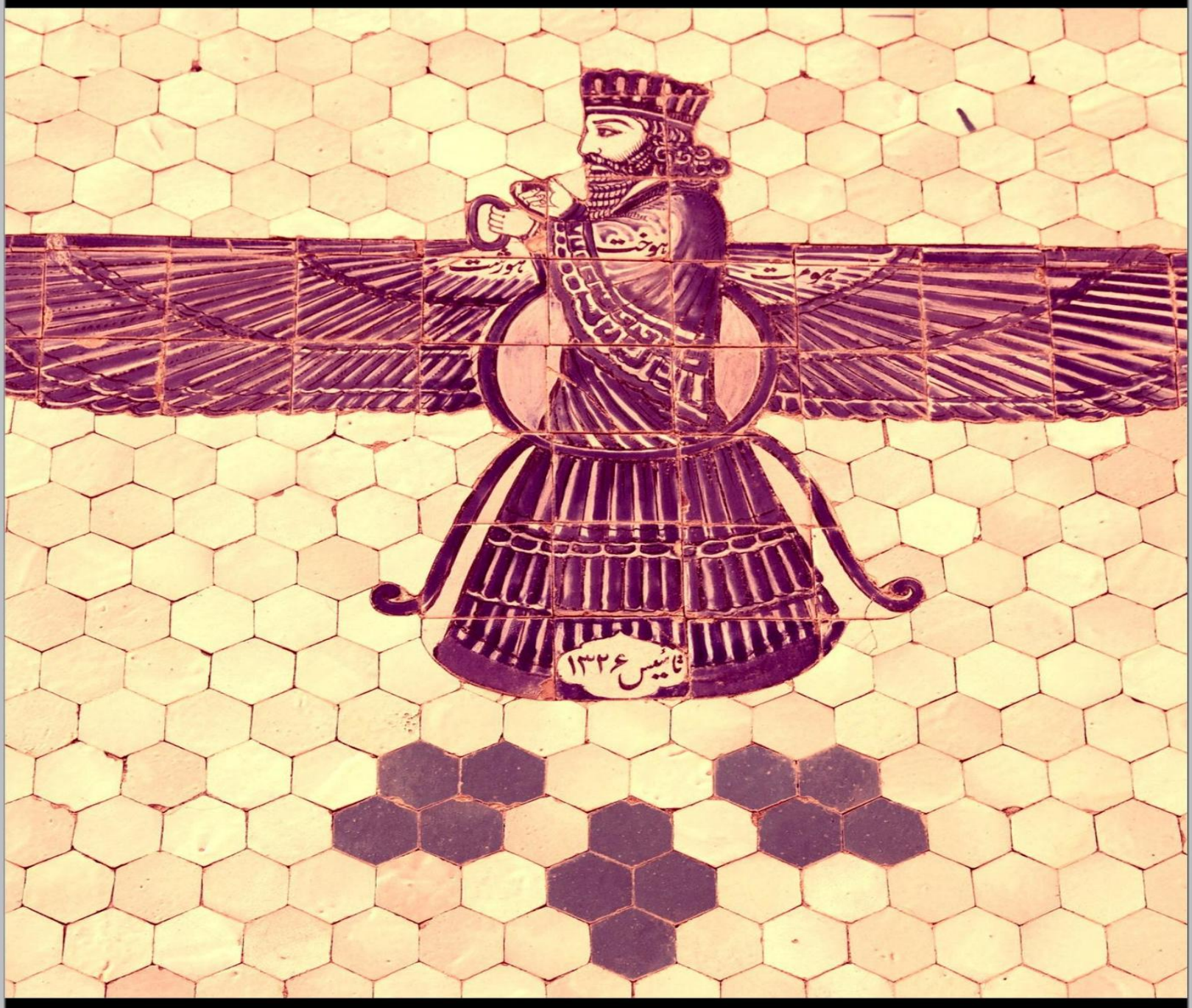
# The Zend Avesta

James Darmesteter



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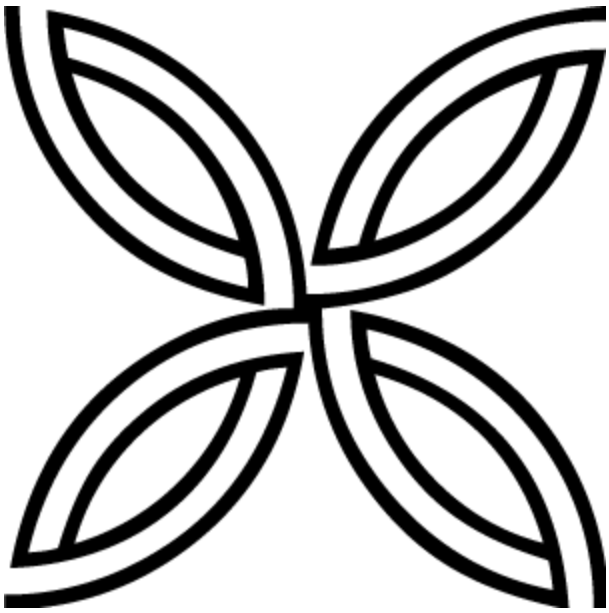

# INTRODUCTION

# Chapter 1. The Discovery Of The Zend-Avesta

THE Zend-Avesta is the sacred book of the Parsis, that is to say, of the few remaining followers of that religion which feigned over Persia at the time when the second successor of Mohammed overthrew the Sassanian dynasty [1] , and which has been called Dualism, or Mazdeism, or Magism, or Zoroastrianism, or Fire-worship, according as its main tenet, or its supreme God [2] , or its priests, or its supposed founder, or its apparent object of worship has been most kept in view. In less than a century after their defeat, nearly all the conquered people were brought over to the faith of their new rulers, either by force, or policy, or the attractive power of a simpler form of creed. But many of those who clung to the faith of their fathers, went and sought abroad for a new home, where they might freely worship their old gods, say their old prayers, and perform their old rites. That home they found at last among the tolerant Hindus, on the western coast of India and in the peninsula of Guzerat [3] . There they throve and there they live still, while the ranks of their co-religionists in Persia are daily thinning and dwindling away [4] .

As the Parsis are the ruins of a people, so are their sacred books the ruins of a religion. There has been no other great belief in the world that ever left such poor and meagre monuments of its past splendour. Yet great is the value which that small book, the Avesta, and the belief of that scanty people, the Parsis, have in the eyes of the historian and theologist, as they present to us the last reflex of the ideas which prevailed in Iran during the five centuries which preceded and the seven which followed the birth of

Christ, a period which gave to the world the Gospels, the Talmud, and the Qur'ân. Persia, it is known, had much influence on each of the movements which produced, or proceeded from, those three books; she lent much to the first heresiarchs, much to the Rabbis, much to Mohammed. By help of the Parsi religion and the Avesta, we are enabled to go back to the very heart of that most momentous period in the history of religious thought, which saw the blending of the Aryan mind with the Semitic, and thus opened the second stage of Aryan thought.

Inquiries into the religion of ancient Persia began long ago, and it was the old foe of Persia, the Greek, who first studied it. Aristotle [5] , Hermippus [6] ; and many others [7] wrote of it in books of which, unfortunately, nothing more than a few fragments or merely the titles have come down to us. We find much valuable information about it, scattered in the accounts of historians and travellers, extending over ten centuries, from Herodotus down to Agathias and Procopius. It was never more eagerly studied than in the first centuries of the Christian era; but that study had no longer anything of the disinterested and almost scientific character it had in earlier times. Religious and philosophic sects, in search of new dogmas, eagerly received whatever came to them bearing the name of Zoroaster. As Xanthus the Lydian, who is said to have lived before Herodotus, had mentioned Zoroastrian Λόγια [8] , there came to light, in those later times, scores of oracles, styled Λόγια το ῦ Ζωροάστρου, or 'Oracula Chaldaïca sive Magica,' the work of Neo-Platonists who were but very remote disciples of the Median sage. As his name had become the very emblem of wisdom, they would cover with it the latest inventions of their ever-deepening theosophy. Zoroaster and Plato were treated as if they had been philosophers of the same school, and Hierocles expounded their doctrines in the same book. Proclus collected seventy Tetrads of Zoroaster

and wrote commentaries on them [9] ; but we need hardly say that Zoroaster commented on by Proclus was nothing more or less than Proclus commented on by Proclus. Prodicus the Gnostic had secret books of Zoroaster [10] ; and upon the whole it may be said that in the first centuries of Christianity, the religion of Persia was more studied and less understood than it had ever been before. The real object aimed at, in studying the old religion, was to form a new one.

Throughout the Middle Ages nothing was known of Mazdeism but the name of its founder, who from a Magus was converted into a magician and master of the hidden sciences. It was not until the Renaissance that real inquiry was resumed. The first step was to collect all the information that could be gathered from Greek and Roman writers. That task was undertaken and successfully completed by Barnabé Brisson [11] . A nearer approach to the original source was made in the following century by Italian, English, and French travellers in Asia. Pietro della Valle, Henry Lord, Mandelslo, Ovington, Chardin, Gabriel du Chinon, and Tavernier found Zoroaster's last followers in Persia and India, and made known their existence, their manners, and the main features of their belief to Europe. Gabriel du Chinon saw their books and recognised that they were not all written in the same language, their original holy writ being no longer understood except by means of translations and commentaries in another tongue. In the year 1700, a professor at Oxford, Thomas Hyde, the greatest Orientalist of his time in Europe, made the first systematic attempt to restore the history of the old Persian religion by combining the accounts of the Mohammedan writers with 'the true and genuine monuments of ancient Persia [12] .' Unfortunately the so-called genuine monuments of ancient Persia were nothing more than recent compilations referring to the last stage of Parsîism. But

notwithstanding this defect, which could hardly be avoided then, and notwithstanding its still worse fault, a strange want of critical acumen [13] , the book of Thomas Hyde was the first complete and true picture of modern Parsîism, and it made inquiry into its history the order of the day. A warm appeal made by him to the zeal of travellers, to seek for and procure at any price the sacred books of the Parsis, did not remain ineffectual, and from that time scholars bethought themselves of studying, Parsîism in its own home.

Eighteen years later, a countryman of Hyde, George Boucher, received from the Parsis in Surat a copy of the Vendîdâd Sâdah, which was brought to England in 1723 by Richard Cobbe. But the old manuscript was a sealed book, and the most that could then be made of it was to hang it by an iron chain to the wall of the Bodleian Library, as a curiosity to be shown to foreigners. A few years later, a Scotch-man, named Fraser, went to Surat, with the view of obtaining from the Parsis, not only their books, but also a knowledge of their contents. He was not very successful in the first undertaking, and utterly failed in the second.

In 1754 a young man, twenty years old, Anquetil Duperron, a scholar of the Ecole des Langues Orientales in Paris, happened to see a facsimile of four leaves of the Oxford Vendîdâd, which had been sent from England, a few years before, to Etienne Fourmont, the Orientalist. He determined at once to give to France both the books and the first European translation of them. Impatient to set off, without waiting for a mission from the government which had been promised to him, he enlisted as a private soldier in the service of the French East India company; he embarked at Lorient on the 24th of February 1755, and after three years of endless adventures and dangers through the whole breadth of Hindustan, at the very time when war was raging between France and England, he

arrived at last in Surat, where he stayed among the Parsis for three years more. Here began another struggle, not less hard, but more decisive, against that mistrust and ill-will of the Parsis which had disheartened Fraser; but he came out of it victorious, and succeeded at last in winning from the Parsis both their books and their knowledge. He came back to Paris on the 14th of March 1764, and deposited on the following day at the Bibliothèque Royale the whole of the Zend-Avesta and copies of most of the traditional books. He spent ten years in studying the material he had collected, and published in 1771 the first European translation of the Zend-Avesta [14] .

A violent dispute broke out at once, as half the learned world denied the authenticity of the Avesta, which it pronounced a forgery. It was the future founder of the Royal Asiatic Society, William Jones, a young Oxonian then, who opened the war. He had been wounded to the quick by the scornful tone adopted by Anquetil towards Hyde and a few other English scholars: the Zend-Avesta suffered for the fault of its introducer, Zoroaster for Anquetil. In a pamphlet written in French [15] , with a verve and in a Style which showed him to be a good disciple of Voltaire, W. Jones pointed out, and dwelt upon, the oddities and absurdities with which the so-called sacred books of Zoroaster teemed. It is true that Anquetil had given full scope to satire by the style he had adopted: he cared very little for literary elegance, and did not mind writing Zend and Persian in French; so the new and strange ideas he had to express looked stranger still in the outlandish garb he gave them. Yet it was less the style than the ideas that shocked the contemporary of Voltaire [16] . His main argument was that books, full of such silly tales, of laws and rules so absurd, of descriptions of gods and demons so grotesque, could not be the work of a sage like Zoroaster, nor the code of a religion so much celebrated for its

simplicity, wisdom, and purity. His conclusion was that the Avesta was a rhapsody of some modern Guebre. In fact the only thing in which Jones succeeded was to prove in a decisive manner that the ancient Persians were not equal to the lumières of the eighteenth century, and that the authors of the Avesta had not read the Encyclopédie.

Jones's censure was echoed in England by Sir John Chardin and Richardson, in Germany by Meiners. Richardson tried to give a scientific character to the attacks of Jones by founding them on philological, grounds [17] . That the Avesta was a fabrication of modern times was shown, he argued, by the number of Arabic words he fancied he found both in the Zend and Pahlavi dialects, as no Arabic element was introduced into the Persian idioms earlier than the seventh century; also by the harsh texture of the Zend, contrasted with the rare euphony of the Persian; and, lastly, by the radical difference between the Zend and Persian, both in words and grammar. To these objections, drawn from the form, he added another derived from the uncommon stupidity of the matter.

In Germany, Meiners, to the charges brought against the new found books, added another of a new and unexpected kind, namely, that they spoke of ideas unheard of before, and made known new things. 'Pray, who would dare ascribe to Zoroaster books in which are found numberless names of trees, animals, men, and demons unknown to the Ancient Persians; in which are invoked an incredible number of pure animals and other things, which, as appears in the silence of ancient writers, were never known, or at least never worshipped, in Persia? What Greek ever spoke of Hom, of Jemshîd, and, of such other personages as the fabricators of that rhapsody exalt with every kind of praise, as divine heroes [18] ?' Yet, in the midst of his Ciceronian nonsense, Meiners inadvertently made a remark which, if correctly interpreted, might have led to important

discoveries. He noticed that many points of resemblance are to be found between the ideas of the Parsis and those of the Brahmans and Musulmans. He saw in this a proof that Parsîism is a medley of Brahmanical and Musulman tales. Modern scholarship, starting from the same point, came to that twofold conclusion, that, on the one hard, Parsîism was one of the elements out of which Mohammed formed his religion, and, on the other hand, that the old religions of India and Persia flowed from a common source. 'Not only does the author of that rubbish tell the same tales of numberless demons of either sex as the Indian priests do, but he also prescribes the same remedies in order to drive them away, and to balk their attempts.' In these words there was something like the germ of comparative mythology; seldom has a man approached the truth so closely and then departed from it so widely.

Anquetil and the Avesta found an eager champion in the person of Kleuker, professor in the University of Riga. As soon as the French version of the Avesta appeared, he published a German translation of it, and also of Anquetil's historical dissertations [19] . Then, in a series of dissertations of his own [20] , he vindicated the authenticity of the Zend books. Anquetil had already tried to show, in a memoir on Plutarch, that the data of the Avesta fully agree with the account of the Magian religion given in the treatise on 'Isis and Osiris.' Kleuker enlarged the circle of comparison to the whole of ancient literature. He tried also to appeal to internal evidence, an attempt in which he was less successful. The strength of his defence was seldom greater than the strength of the attack. Meiners had pointed out the mythical identity of the Mount Albor *g*, of the Parsis with the Mount Meru of the Hindus, as a proof that the Parsis had borrowed their mythology from the Hindus: the conclusion was incorrect, but the remark itself was not so. Kleuker fancied that he could remove the difficulty by

stating that Mount Albor *g* is a real mountain, nay, a doubly real mountain, since there are two mountains of that name, the one in Persia, the other in Armenia, whereas Mount Meru is only to be found in Fairyland. Seldom were worse arguments used in the service of a good cause. Meiners had said that the name of the Parsi demons was of Indian origin, as both languages knew them by the Latin name 'Deus.' This was an incorrect statement, and yet an important observation. The word which means 'a demon' in Persia, means quite the contrary in India, and that radical difference is just a proof of the two systems being independent of one another. Kleuker pointed out the incorrectness of the statement; but, being unable to account for the identity of the words, he flatly denied it.

Kleuker was more successful in the field of philology: he showed, as Anquetil had done, that Zend has no Arabic elements in it, and that Pahlavi itself, which is more modern than Zend, does not contain any Arabic, but only Semitic words of the Aramean dialect, which are easily accounted for by the close relations of Persia with Aramean lands in the time of the Sassanian kings. He showed, lastly, that Arabic words appear only in the very books which Parsi tradition itself considers modern.

Another stanch upholder of the Avesta was the numismatologist Tychsen, who, having begun to read the book with a prejudice against its authenticity, quitted it with a conviction to the contrary. 'There is nothing in it,' he said, 'but what befits remote ages, and a man philosophising in the infancy of the world. Such traces of a recent period as they fancy to have found in it, are either understandings, or belong to its later portions. On the whole there is a marvellous accordance between the Zend-Avesta and the accounts of the ancients with regard to the doctrine and institutions of Zoroaster. Plutarch agrees so well with the Zend books that I think no one will deny the close resemblance of doctrines and identity of origin. Add

to all this the incontrovertible argument to be drawn from the language, the antiquity of which is established by the fact that it was necessary to translate a part of the Zend books into Pahlavi, a language which was obsolete as early as the time of the Sassanides. Lastly, it cannot be denied that Zoroaster left books, which were, through centuries, the groundwork of the Magic religion, and which were preserved by the Magi, as shown by a series of documents from the time of Hermippus. Therefore I am unable to see why we should not trust the Magi of our days when they ascribe to Zoroaster those traditional books of their ancestors, in which nothing is found to indicate fraud or a modern hand [21] .'

Two years afterwards, in 1793, was published in Paris a book which, without directly dealing with the Avesta, was the first step taken to make its authenticity incontrovertible. It was the masterly memoir by Sylvestre de Sacy, in which the Pahlavi inscriptions of the first Sassanides were deciphered for the first time and in a decisive manner. De Sacy, in his researches, had chiefly relied on the Pahlavi lexicon published by Anquetil, whose work vindicated itself--better than by heaping up arguments--by promoting discoveries. The Pahlavi inscriptions gave the key, as is well known, to the Persian cuneiform inscriptions, which were in return to put beyond all doubt the genuineness of the Zend language.

Tychsen, in an appendix to his Commentaries, pointed to the importance of the new discovery: 'This,' he writes, 'is a proof that the Pahlavi was used during the reign of the Sassanides, for it was from them that these inscriptions emanated, as it was by them--nay, by the first of them, Ardeshîr Bâbagân--that the doctrine of Zoroaster was revived. One can now understand why the Zend books were translated into Pahlavi. Here, too, everything agrees, and speaks loudly for their antiquity and genuineness.'

About the same time Sir William Jones, then president of the Royal Asiatic Society, which he had just founded, resumed in a discourse delivered before that Society the same question he had solved in such an off-hand manner twenty years before. He was no longer the man to say, 'Sied-il à un homme né dans ce siècle de s'infatuer de fables indiennes?' and although he had still a spite against Anquetil, he spoke of him with more reserve than in 1771. However, his judgment on the Avesta itself was not altered on the whole, although, as he himself declared, he had not thought it necessary to study the text. But a glance at the Zend glossary published by Anquetil suggested to him a remark which makes Sir William Jones, in spite of himself, the creator of the comparative grammar of Sanskrit and Zend. 'When I perused the Zend glossary,' he writes, 'I was inexpressibly surprised to find that six or seven words in ten are pure Sanscrit, and even some of their inflexions formed by the rules of the Vyácaran [22] , as yushmácam, the genitive plural of yushmad. Now M. Anquetil most certainly and the Persian compiler most probably, had no knowledge of Sanscrit, and could not, therefore, have invented a list of Sanscrit words; it is, therefore, an authentic list of Zend words, which has been preserved in books or by tradition; it follows that the language of the Zend was at least a dialect of the Sanscrit, approaching perhaps as nearly to it as the Prácrit, or other popular idioms, which we know to have been spoken in India two thousand years ago [23] .' This conclusion, that Zend is a Sanskrit dialect, was incorrect, the connection assumed being too close; but it was a great thing that the near relationship of the two languages should have been brought to light.

In 1798 Father Paulo de St. Barthélemy further developed Jones's remark in an essay on the antiquity of the Zend language [24] . He showed its affinity with the Sanskrit by a list of such Zend and Sanskrit words as were least likely to

be borrowed, viz. those that designate the degrees of relationship, the limbs of the body, and the most general and essential ideas. Another list, intended to show, on a special topic, how closely connected the two languages are, contains eighteen words taken from the liturgic language used in India and Persia. This list was not very happily drawn up, as out of the eighteen instances there is not a single one that stands inquiry; yet it was a happy idea, and one which has not even yet yielded all that it promised. His conclusions were that in a far remote antiquity Sanskrit was spoken in Persia and Media, that it gave birth to the Zend language, and that the Zend-Avesta is authentic: 'Were it but a recent compilation,' he writes, 'as Jones asserts, how is it that the oldest rites of the Parsis, that the old inscriptions of the Persians, the accounts of the Zoroastrian religion in the classical writers, the liturgic prayers of the Parsis, and, lastly, even their books do not reveal the pure Sanskrit, as written in the land wherein the Parsis live, but a mixed language, which is as different from the other dialects of India as French is from Italian?' This amounted, in fact, to saying that the Zend is not derived from the Sanskrit, but *th*at both are derived from another and older language. The Carmelite had a dim notion of that truth, but, as he failed to express it distinctly, it was lost for years, and had to be re-discovered.

The first twenty-five years of this century were void of results, but the old and sterile discussions as to the authenticity of the texts continued in England. In 1808 John Leyden regarded Zend as a Prakrit dialect, parallel to Pali; Pali being identical with the Magadhi dialect and Zend with the Sauraseni [25] . In the eyes of Erskine Zend was a Sanskrit dialect, imported from India by the founders of Mazdeism, but never spoken in Persia [26] . His main argument was that Zend is not mentioned among the seven dialects which were current in ancient Persia according to

the Farhang-i Jehangiri [27] , and that Pahlavi and Persian exhibit no close relationship with Zend.

In Germany, Meiners had found no followers. The theologians appealed to the Avesta in their polemics [28] , and Rhode sketched the religious history of Persia after the translations of Anquetil [29] .

Erskine's essay provoked a decisive answer [30] from Emmanuel Rask, one of the most gifted minds in the new school of philology, who had the honour of being a precursor of both Grimm and Burnouf. He showed that the list of the Jehangiri referred to an epoch later than that to which Zend must have belonged, and to parts of Persia different from those where it must have been spoken; he showed further that modern Persian is not derived from Zend, but from a dialect closely connected with it; and, lastly, he showed what was still more important, that Zend was not derived from Sanskrit. As to the system of its sounds, Zend approaches Persian rather than Sanskrit; and as to its grammatical forms, if they often remind one of Sanskrit, they also often remind one of Greek and Latin, and frequently have a special character of their own. Rask also gave the paradigm of three Zend nouns, belonging to different declensions, as well as the right pronunciation of the Zend letters, several of which had been incorrectly given by Anquetil. This was the first essay on Zend grammar, and it was a masterly one.

The essay published in 1831 by Peter von Bohlen on the origin of the Zend language threw the matter forty years back. According to him, Zend is a Prakrit dialect, as it had been pronounced by Jones, Leyden, and Erskine. His mistake consisted in taking Anquetil's transcriptions of the words, which are often so incorrect as to make them look like corrupted forms when compared with Sanskrit. And, what was worse, he took the proper names in their modern Parsi forms, which often led him to comparisons that would

have appalled Ménage. Thus Ahriman became a Sanskrit word ariman, which would have meant 'the fiend;' yet Bohlen might have seen in Anquetil's work itself that Ahriman is the modern form of Angra Mainyu, words which hardly remind one of the Sanskrit ariman. Again, the angel Vohu-manô, or 'good thought' was reduced, by means of the Parsi form Bahman, to the Sanskrit bâhuman, 'a long-armed god.'

At last came Burnouf. From the time when Anquetil had published his translation, that is to say, during seventy years, no real progress had been made in knowledge of the Avesta texts. The notion that Zend and Sanskrit are two kindred languages was the only new idea that had been acquired, but no practical advantage for the interpretation of the texts had resulted from it. Anquetil's translation was still the only guide, and as the doubts about the authenticity of the texts grew fainter, the authority of the translation became greater, the trust reposed in the Avesta being reflected on to the work of its interpreter. The Parsis had been the teachers of Anquetil; and who could ever understand the holy writ of the Parsis better than the Parsis themselves? There was no one who even tried to read the texts by the light of Anquetil's translation, to obtain a direct understanding of them.

About 1825 Eugène Burnouf was engaged in a course of researches on the geographical extent of the Aryan languages in India. After he had defined the limits which divide the races speaking Aryan languages from the native non-brahmanical tribes in the south, he wanted to know if a similar boundary had ever existed in the north-west; and if it is outside of India that the origin of the Indian languages and civilisation is to be sought for. He was thus led to study the languages of Persia, and, first of all, the oldest of them, the Zend. But as he tried to read the texts by help of Anquetil's translation, he was surprised to find that this was not the clue he had expected. He saw that two causes

had misled Anquetil: on the one hand, his teachers, the Parsi dasturs, either knew little themselves or taught him imperfectly, not only the Zend, but even the Pahlavi intended to explain the meaning of the Zend; so that the tradition on which his work rested, being incorrect in itself, corrupted it from the very beginning; on the other hand, as Sanskrit was unknown to him and comparative grammar did not as yet exist, he could not supply the defects of tradition by their aid. Burnouf, laying aside tradition as found in Anquetil's translation, consulted it as found in a much older and purer form, in a Sanskrit translation of the Yasna made in the fifteenth century by the Parsi Neriosengh in accordance with the old Pahlavi version. The information given by Neriosengh he tested, and either confirmed or corrected, by a comparison of parallel passages and by the help of comparative grammar, which had just been founded by Bopp, and applied by him successfully to the explanation of Zend forms. Thus he succeeded in tracing the general outlines of the Zend lexicon and in fixing its grammatical forms, and founded the only correct method of interpreting the Avesta. He also gave the first notions of a comparative mythology of the Avesta and the Veda, by showing the identity of the Vedic Yama with the Avesta Yima, and of Traitâna with Thraêtaona and Ferîdûn. Thus he made his 'Commentaire sur le Yasna' a marvellous and unparalleled model of critical insight and steady good sense, equally opposed to the narrowness of mind which clings to matters of fact without rising to their cause and connecting them with the series of associated phenomena, and to the wild and uncontrolled spirit of comparison, which, by comparing everything, confounds everything. Never sacrificing either tradition to comparison or comparison to tradition, he knew how to pass from the one to the other, and was so enabled both to discover facts and explain them.

At the same time the ancient Persian inscriptions at Persepolis and Behistun were deciphered by Burnouf in Paris, by Lassen in Bonn, and by Sir Henry Rawlinson in Persia. Thus was revealed the existence, at the time of the first Achæmenian kings, of a language closely connected with that of the Avesta, and the last doubts as to the authenticity of the Zend books were at length removed. It would have required more than an ordinary amount of scepticism to look still upon the Zend as an artificial language, of foreign importation, without root in the land where it was written, and in the conscience of the people for whom it was written, at the moment when a twin language, bearing a striking likeness to it in nearly every feature, was suddenly making itself heard from the mouth of Darius, and speaking from the very tomb of the first Achæmenian king. That unexpected voice silenced all controversies, and the last echoes of the loud discussion which had been opened in 1771 died away unheeded [31] .

# Chapter 2. The Interpretation Of The Zend-Avesta

THE peace did not last long, and a year after the death of Burnouf a new controversy broke out, which still continues, the battle of the methods, that is, the dispute between those who, to interpret the Avesta, rely chiefly or exclusively on tradition, and those who rely only on comparison with the Vedas. The cause of the rupture was the rapid progress made in the knowledge of the Vedic language and literature: the deeper one penetrated into that oldest form of Indian words and thoughts, the more striking appeared its close affinity with the Avesta words and thoughts. Many a mysterious line in the Avesta received an unlooked-for light from the poems of the Indian *Ri*shis, and the long-forgotten past and the origin of many gods and heroes, whom the Parsi worships and extols without knowing who they were and whence they came, were suddenly revealed by the Vedas. Emboldened by its bright discoveries, the comparative method took pity on its slower and less brilliant rival, which was then making its first attempts to unravel the Pahlavi traditional books. Is it worth while, said the Vedic scholars [32] , to try slowly and painfully to extract the secret of the old book from that uncouth literature? Nay, is there any hope that its secret is there? Translating the Avesta in accordance with the Pahlavi is not translating the Avesta, but only translating the Pahlavi version, which, wherever it has been deciphered, is found to wander strangely from the true meaning of the original text. Tradition, as a rule, is wont to enforce the ideas of its own ages into the books of past ages, From the time when the Avesta was written to the

time when it was translated, many ideas had undergone great changes: such ideas, tradition must needs either misunderstand or not understand at all, and tradition is always either new sense or nonsense. The key to the Avesta is not the Pahlavi, but the Veda. The Avesta and the Veda are two echoes of one and the same voice, the reflex of one and the same thought: the Vedas, therefore, are both the best lexicon and the best commentary to the Avesta.

The traditional school [33] replied that translating Zend by means of Sanskrit and the Avesta by means of the Vedas, because Zend and the Avesta are closely related to Sanskrit and the Vedas, is forgetting that relationship is not identity, and that what interests the Zend scholar is not to know how far Zend agrees with Sanskrit, but what it is in itself: what he seeks for in the Avesta, is the Avesta, not the Veda. Both the Vedic language and the Vedas are quite unable to teach us what became in Persia of those elements, which are common to the two systems, a thing which tradition alone can teach us. By the comparative method, the Zend meregha, which means 'a bird,' would assume the meaning of 'gazelle' to accord with the Sanskrit m *ri*ga; ratu, 'a part of the day,' would be extended to 'a season' out of regard for *ri*tu; mainyu, 'a spirit,' and dahyu, 'a province,' would be degraded to 'anger' and to 'a set of thieves,' and 'the demons,' the Daêvas, would ascend from their dwelling in hell up to heaven, to meet their philological brothers, the Indian Devas. The traditional. method, as it starts from matters of facts, moves always in the field of reality; the comparative method starts from an hypothesis, moves in a vacuum, and builds up a fanciful religion and a fanciful language.

Such being the methods of the two schools, it often happened that a passage, translated by two scholars, one of each school, took so different an aspect that a layman would have been quite unable to suspect that it was one

and the same passage he had read twice. Yet the divergence between the two methods is more apparent than real, and proceeds from an imperfect notion of the field in which each of them ought to work. They ought not to oppose, but assist one another, as they are not intended to instruct us about the same kind of facts, but about two kinds of facts quite different and independent. No language, no religion, that has lived long and changed much, can be understood at any moment of its development, unless we know what it became afterwards, and what it was before. The language and religion of the Avesta record but a moment in the long life of the Iranian language and thought, so that we are unable to understand them, unless we know what they became and whence they came. What they became we learn directly from tradition, since the tradition arose from the very ideas which the Avesta expresses; whence they came we learn indirectly from the Vedas, because the Vedas come from the same source as the Avesta. Therefore it cannot happen that the tradition and the Veda will really contradict one another, if we take care to ask from each only what it knows, from one the present, and the past from the other. Each method is equally right and equally efficacious, at its proper time and in its right place. The first place belongs to tradition, as it comes straight from the Avesta. The second inquiry, to be successful, requires infinite prudence and care: the Veda is not the past of the Avesta, as the Avesta is the past of tradition; the Avesta and Veda are not derived from one another, but from one and the same original, diversely altered in each, and, therefore, there are two stages of variation between them, whereas from the Avesta to tradition there is only one. The Veda, if first interrogated, gives no valuable evidence, as the words and gods, common to the two systems, may not have retained in both the same meaning they had in the Indo-Iranian period: they may have preserved it in one and lost it in the other, or they

may have both altered it, but each in a different way. The Veda, generally speaking, cannot help in discovering matters of fact in the Avesta, but only in explaining them when discovered by tradition. If we review the discoveries made by the masters of the comparative school, it will be seen that they have in reality started, without noticing it, from facts formerly established by tradition. In fact tradition gives the materials, and comparison puts them in order. It is not possible, either to know the Avesta without the former, or to understand it without the latter.

The traditional school, and especially its indefatigable and well-deserving leader, Spiegel, made us acquainted with the nature of the old Iranian religion by gathering together all its materials; the comparative school tried to explain its growth. The traditional school published the text and the traditional. translations, and produced the first Parsi grammar, the first Pahlavi grammar, and the first translation of the Avesta which had been made since Anquetil. The danger with it is that it shows itself too apt to stop at tradition, instead of going from it to comparison. When it undertakes to expound the history of the religion, it cannot but be misled by tradition. Any living people, although its existing state of mind is but the result of various and changing states through many successive ages, yet, at any particular moment of its life, keeps the remains of its former stages of thought in order, under the control of the principle that is then predominant. Thus it happens that their ideas are connected together in a way which seldom agrees with their historical sequence: chronological order is lost to sight and replaced by logical order, and the past is read into the present. Comparison alone can enable us to put things in their proper place, to trace their birth, their growth, their changes, their former relations, and lead us from the logical order, which is a shadow, to the historical order, which is the substance.

The comparative school developed Indo-Iranian mythology. Roth showed after Burnouf how the epical history of Iran was derived from the same source as the myths of Vedic India, and pointed out the primitive identity of Ahura Mazda, the supreme god of Iran, with Varu *n*a, the supreme god of the Vedic age. In the same direction Windischmann, in his 'Zoroastrian Essays' and in his studies on Mithra and Anâhita, displayed singular sagacity. But the dangers of the method came to light in the works of Haug, who, giving a definite form to a system still fluctuating, converted Mazdeism, into a religious revolution against Vedic polytheism, found historical allusions to that schism both in the Avesta and in the Veda, pointed out curses against Zoroaster in the Vedas, and, in short, transformed, as it were, the two books into historical pamphlets [34] .

In the contest about the authenticity of the Avesta, one party must necessarily have been right and the other wrong; but in the present struggle the issue is not so clear, as both parties are partly right and partly wrong. Both of them, by following their principles, have rendered such services to science as seem to give each a right to cling to its own method more firmly than ever. Yet it is to be hoped that they will see at last that they must be allies, not enemies, and that their common work must be begun by the one and completed by the other.

# Chapter 3. The Formation Of The Zend-Avesta

§ 1. The collection of Zend fragments, known as the Zend-Avesta [35] , is divided, in its usual form, into two parts.

The first part, or the Avesta properly so called, contains the Vendîdâd, the Vispêrad, and the Yasna. The Vendîdâd is a compilation of religious laws and of mythical tales; the Vispêrad is a collection of litanies for the sacrifice; and the Yasna is composed of litanies of the same kind and of five hymns or Gâthas written in a special dialect, older than the general language of the Avesta.

These three books are found in manuscripts in two different forms: either each by itself, in which case they are generally accompanied by a Pahlavi translation; or the three mingled together according to the requirements of the liturgy, as they are not each recited separately in their entirety, but the chapters of the different books are intermingled; and in this case the collection is called the Vendîdâd Sâdah or 'Vendîdâd pure,' as it exhibits the original text alone, without a translation.

The second part, generally known as the Khorda Avesta or 'Small Avesta,' is composed of short prayers which are recited not only by the priests, but by all the faithful, at certain moments of the day, month, or year, and in presence of the different elements; these prayers are the five Gâh, the thirty formulas of the Sîrôzah, the three Âfrigân, and the six Nyâyi *s*. But it is also usual to include in the Khorda Avesta, although forming no real part of it, the Ya *s*ts or hymns of praise and glorification to the several Izads, and a number of fragments, the most important of which is the Hadhôkht Nosk.

§ 2. That the extent of the sacred literature of Mazdeism was formerly much greater than it is now, appears not only from internal evidence, that is, from the fragmentary character of the book, but is also proved by historical evidence. In the first place, the Arab conquest proved fatal to the religious literature of the Sassanian ages, a great part of which was either destroyed by the fanaticism of the conquerors and the new converts, or lost during the long exodus of the Parsis. Thus the Pahlavi translation of the Vendîdâd, which was not finished before the latter end of the Sassanian dynasty, contains not a few Zend quotations from books which are no longer in existence; other quotations, as remarkable in their importance as in their contents, are to be found in Pahlavi and Parsi tracts, like the Nîrangistân and the Aogemaidê. The Bundahi *s* contains much matter which is not spoken of in the existing Avesta, but which is very likely to have been taken from Zend books which were still in the hands of its compiler. It is a tradition with the Parsis, that the Ya *s*ts were originally thirty in number, there having been one for each of the thirty Izads who preside over the thirty days of the month; yet there are only eighteen still extant.

The cause that preserved the Avesta is obvious; taken as a whole, it does not profess to be a religious encyclopedia, but only a liturgical collection, and it bears more likeness to a Prayer Book than to the Bible. It can be readily conceived that the Vendîdâd Sâdah, which had to be recited every day, would be more carefully preserved than the Ya *s*ts, which are generally recited once a month; and these again more carefully than other books, which, however sacred they might be, were not used in the performance of worship. Many texts, no doubt, were lost in consequence of the Arab conquest, but mostly such as would have more importance in the eyes of the theologian than in those of the priest. We have a fair specimen of what these lost texts may have been in the few non-liturgical fragments which

we still possess, such as the Vi *s*tâsp Ya *s*t and the blessing of Zoroaster upon King Vi *s*tâsp, which belong to, the old epic cycle of Iran, and the Hadhôkht Nosk, which treats of the fate of the soul after death.

§ 3. But if we have lost much of the Sassanian sacred literature, Sassanian Persia herself, if we may trust Parsi tradition, had lost still more of the original books. The primitive Avesta, as revealed by Ormazd to Zoroaster and by Zoroaster to Vi *s*tâsp, king of Bactria, was supposed to have been composed of twenty-one Nosks or Books, the greater part of which was burnt by Iskander the Rûmi (Alexander the Great). After his death the priests of the Zoroastrian religion met together, and by collecting the various fragments that had escaped the ravages of the war and others that they knew by heart, they formed the present collection, which is a very small part of the original book, as out of the twenty-one Nosks there was only one that was preserved in its entirety, the Vendîdâd [36] .

This tradition is very old, and may be traced back from the present period even to Sassanian times [37] . It involves the assumption that the Avesta is the remnant of the sacred literature of Persia under the last Achæmenian kings. To ascertain whether this inference is correct, and to what extent it may be so, we must first try to define, as. accurately as we can, the exact time at which the collection, now in existence, was formed.

§ 4. The Ravâet quoted above states that it was formed 'after the death of Iskander,' which expression is rather vague, and may as well mean 'centuries after his death' as 'immediately after his death.' It is, in fact, hardly to be doubted that the latter was really what the writer meant; yet, as the date of that Ravâet is very recent, we had better look for older and more precise traditions. We find such a one in the Dînkar *t*, a Pahlavi book which enjoys great authority with the Parsis of our days, and which, although it

contains many things of late origin [38] , also comprises many old and valuable traditions. According to a proclamation, ascribed to Khosrav Anôsharvân (531-579), the collection of the Avesta fragments was begun in the reign of the last Arsacides, and was finished under Shapûr II (309-380). King Valkash (Vologeses), it is said, first ordered all the fragments of the Avesta which might have escaped the ravages of Iskander, or been preserved by oral tradition, to be searched for and collected together. The first Sassanian king, Ardeshîr Bâbagân, made the Avesta the sacred book of Iran, and Mazdeism the state religion: at last, Âdarbâd under Shapûr II, purified the Avesta and fixed the number of the Nasks, and Shapûr proclaimed to the heterodox [39] : 'Now that we have recognised the law of the world here below, they shall not allow the infidelity of any one whatever [40] , as I shall strive that it may be so [41] .'

§ 5. The authenticity of this record has been called in question, chiefly, I think, on account of the part that it ascribes to an Arsacide prince, which seems hardly to agree with the ideas generally entertained about the character of the Sassanian revolution [42] . Most Parsi and Muhammedan writers agree that it was the Sassanian dynasty which raised the Zoroastrian religion from the state of humiliation into which the Greek invasion had made it sink, and, while it gave the signal for a revival of the old national spirit, made Mazdeism one of the corner stones of the new establishment [43] . Therefore it seems strange to hear that the first step taken to make Mazdeism a state religion was taken by one of those very Philhellenic Parthian princes, who were so imbued with Greek ideas and manners. Yet this is the very reason why we ought to feel some hesitation in rejecting this document, and its being at variance with the general Parsi view speaks rather for its authenticity; for as it was the general post-Sassanian tradition that the restoration of Mazdeism was the work of

the first Sassanian kings, no Parsi would ever have thought of making them share what was in his eyes their first and best title of honour with any of the despised princes of the Parthian dynasty.

§ 6. It is difficult, of course, to prove directly the authenticity of this record, the more so as we do not even know who was the king alluded to. There were, in fact, four kings at least who bore the name of Valkhash: the most celebrated and best known of the four was Vologeses [44] , the contemporary of Nero. Now that Zoroastrianism prevailed with him, or at least with members of his family, we see from the conduct of his brother Tiridates, who was a Magian (Magus) [45] ; and by this term we must not understand a magician [46] , but a priest, and one of the Zoroastrian religion. That he was a priest appears from Tacitus' testimony [47] ; that he was a Zoroastrian is shown by his scruples about the worship of the elements. When he came from Asia to Rome to receive the crown of Armenia at the hands of Nero, he wanted not to come by sea, but rode along the coasts, [48] , because the Magi were forbidden to defile the sea [49] . This is quite in the spirit of later Zoroastrianism, and savours much of Mazdeism. That Vologeses himself shared the religious scruples of his brother appears from his answer to Nero, who insisted upon his coming to Rome also: 'Come yourself, it is easier for you to cross such immensity of sea [50] .'

§ 7. Thus we hear on one hand from the Parsis that the first collection of the Avesta was made by an Arsacide named Vologeses; and we hear, on the other hand, from a quite independent source, that an Arsacide named Vologeses behaved himself as a follower of the Avesta might have done. In all this there is no evidence that it is Vologeses I who is mentioned in the Dînkar *t*, much less that he was really the first editor of the Avesta; but it shows at all events that the first attempt to recover the sacred