

סג . טז . סג . ד . ישיב למצוה . וסגולת

¿Habló Zaruštra?

Editores

Número 6

Edita

Girona

Estudios Iranios y Turanios

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Depósito Legal: GI 1630-2024

ISSN: 2386-7833

Imprimida por: Printcolor

Ctra. de Mollet a Sabadell Km. 4,3 – Pol. Ind. Can Vinyals, Nave 18
08130 Santa Perpètua de Mogoda (Barcelona)

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Av. *kauui-* and Ved. *kaví-* The Reasons Behind a Semantic Polarization*

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ABSTRACT: The present article proposes a new discussion of two Indo-Iranian terms, such as Av. *kauui-* and Ved. *kaví-*. The author suggests that within the early Avestan world *kauui-* was an authority who assumed two functions, that of clan-lord, and that of sacrificer. Thus, the *kauui-* *Vīštāspa* would have been not only a *yájamāna-* in the *Ṛgvedic* sense, but also a sacrificer. The Indo-Iranian **kaví* was given with a special knowledge of secret and esoteric origin, so that, in his “priestly” quality, he possessed the function of mediator between the human and divine worlds as well. The Iranian more advanced “politicization” of the *kauui-* role did not therefore represent a major deviation from the past, but its development confirms the fact that the highest social “authority” was in close relation with the divine power and the priestly function.

KEYWORDS: Vedic *kaví-*; *viśpáti-*; *grhāpati-*; *yájamāna-*; Avestan *kauui-*; *yazəmna-*; *Vīštāspa*.

The extraordinary contribution offered by Jean KELLENS in the field of the Avestan studies has definitely exercised a remarkable influence on the modern approach to the historical-religious studies of Zoroastrianism, in particular for the earliest phases of the Indo-Iranian cultural sphere, where only the methods of a critical linguistic stratigraphy can impose new problems and open up unpredictable solutions. I would like to contribute to this *Festschrift* dedicated to the celebration of such a great scholar with an essay concerning an Indo-Iranian stem, which presents a number of problems concerning its semantics and, whose solution has assumed a controversial and contradictory evolution in the course of the studies. Although it would be unnecessary to analyse again in a systematic form the problem produced by the apparent contrasting use¹ of Old and Later

* I want to express my thanks for their kind remarks and suggestions to Prof. Dr. Toshifumi Gotō (Tohoku University), Prof. Dr. Velizar Sadovski (Wien), and Dr. Frank Köhler (Münster); Dr. Jeffrey Kotyk (University of Bologna).

¹ O.Av. *kəuuī-*, m. (L.Av. *kauui-*; strong stem *kauuāi-/kauuai-*), refers both to a group of religious enemies of Zoroaster, but to *Vīštāspa* as well (KELLENS/PIRART 1988, I: 25). Its relations with Ved. *kaví-* is indisputable, although in the Vedic context it is not properly a title, but it refers to one of the main qualities of the poets and some gods (SILBURN 1955: 21; NEISSER 1930: 56f.; RENOU 1953: 167ff.; GONDA 1963: 44ff., *passim*), and can be interpreted as “wise, seer, sage”. In the case of O.Av. *karapan-*, m. (also attested in L.Av.), which is referred to some adversaries of Zoroaster, it does not seem to be either a title or the name of a priestly function, according to KELLENS/PIRART (1990: II, 228), but this statement, perhaps, is not definitive. Unfortunately its etymological connection with Ved. *kālpa-*, m. “rite,” already proposed by BARTHOLOMAE (1904: 455), is unclear. Less probable HERTEL’s solution (1925: 185b): **ka-rapan-* (cf. Ved. *lāpati* “he chatters, talks”). See MAYRHOFER 1956: 183f.; 1976: III, 89, 668. A different opinion has been advanced by MALANDRA (2010). This scholar, in fact, assumes that HENNING’s comparison (1951: 45) between Xwar. *karb-*, “to moan, mumble”

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Av. *kauui*-² against Vedic *kavī*-,³ which has been the subject of a systematic investigation by KÖHLER,⁴ some new remarks on the semantics of this family of words can be proposed again. The Avestan stem, most interestingly, presents a very negative connotation in a number of important occurrences, particularly within the context of the Gāthic sources, with a remarkable exception for the case of Vištāspa,⁵ Zoroaster's patron and supporter, and few other people, while actually the worst enemies of Zaratustra and his rituals were denominated *kauui*-s as well (Y 32.14: *kāuuaiiascī*; Y 46.11: *karapanō kāuuaiiascā*).⁶ It seems that a basically positive character was assumed in Vedic by this stem, to which we may attribute the meaning of "wise, seer, sage, poet," but the semantics of this stem was negatively reversed and adapted in the Mazdean framework, at least in a number of patent references to opponents of Zoroaster.

From a strict etymological point of view, we may recall that MAYRHOFER⁷ proposed a direct connection with the family of Gr. κοῖης "priest of mysteries" (< **koīl-ās*), Gr. κοῖω, Lat. *caueo*, etc.⁸ DE VAAN,⁹ in his turn, suggests

with Av. *karapan*- is most likely, stating: "Rather than originally a pejorative designation 'mumbler,' as supposed by HENNING, it would have referred to a priestly functionary, who cogently derived the term from **√karp*- (OInd. *√krap*- /*krp*- 'to pray for, implore; lament') with the meaning 'supplicator, hymnist.' Alternatively, if HENNING's 'mumbler' were to be retained, the *karpan* would have been like the Vedic *adhvaryu*-, who recited in an undertone while performing his duties." According to SCHWARTZ (2013), "Gathic *karapan*- was an old term for priestly oral performers;" he insists on the connection with an Indo-Iranian stem like *kṛpá* "to make a plaintive sound, implore," attested alongside *kṛpáya*-, in Vedic, and reconstructs an hysterodynamic stem **kṛpan* and a proterodynamic stem */*kárpan*-, i.e., *karapan*. In the conspectus of the religious antagonists we must mention O.Av. *usig*-, m., designation of sacerdotal enemies, and comparable with Ved. *uśij*-, m. "desiring, striving hard" (MAYRHOFER 1956: 113; 1979: 170, sub *vāṣṭi*; cf. KELLENS/PIRART 1990, II: 226; see also LOMMEL 1939). See also BERGAIGNE 1878: 57; BARTHOLOMAE 1904: 406. In L.Av. (only Yt8.5), and in a negative context, we find the *kaēta*-s (Pahl. *kēd*), who probably were involved in astral divination (see PANAINO 1990: 31, 94f.; 1994); *kaēta*- from IE. **k^hoit-ó*- can be explained as a *nomen agentis* of an *a*-stem from the root *kait-/cit*- (Ved. *cet*-) "to perceive," as suggested by MALANDRA. Related to this stem are other Av. terms of uncertain meaning as *kaiiada*- and *kāidiia*- (*kaiiadiia*-). See MALANDRA 2009. Cf. also BARTHOLOMAE 1904: 428; 441f.; 463. About Av. *ṭkaeša*-, *a(i)niiā(ō)ṭkaeša*-, *a(i)niiō.varəna*-, see PANAINO 1992–1993.

2 Cf. BARTHOLOMAE 1904: 442f.; KELLENS/PIRART 1990: II, 230.

3 Cf. GRASSMANN 1996: 318ff; 2011.

4 KÖHLER 2011. Unfortunately, this study does not concern Av. *kauui*-.

5 Cf. Y 46.14 (*kauuā vištāspō*); Y 51.16 (*kauuacā vištāspō*); Y 53.2 (*kauuā vištāspō*). New important observations have been recently offered by PIRART 2022: 24. Cf. also KELLENS 2021: 91; 2022: 36f.

6 It is remarkable the occurrence of the two very pertinent feminine abstracts, which are also two OAv. *hapax legomena*, attested only in Y 32.15, of *kāuuītāt*-, f., "quality of *kauui*-" and of *karapō.tāt*-, f., "quality of *karapan*-" (*karapō.tāscā kāuuītāscā*). Cf. KELLENS/PIRART 1990: II, 229 and 230.

7 MAYRHOFER 1956: 187f.

8 Cf. also KELLENS/PIRART 1990: II, 230; cf. FRISK 1960: 890f.

9 DE VAAN 2008: 101.

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a derivation from **kouH-i-*;¹⁰ cf. Gr. θυο-σκόος “(priest) who observes the sacrifice”. SCHWARTZ,¹¹ furthermore, insists on the relation with Lydian *kaveś*¹² (if this was not already an Iranian loanword, as suggested by DUMÉZIL)¹³ and Gr. κοίης, κόνης (as “priest of the Kabeiroi in Samothrace,”¹⁴ according to Hesychius¹⁵ after Hyponax),¹⁶ emphasizing the etymological connection with the Ved. root *kū*, Gr. κοέω “perceive.”¹⁷ Thus, we can affirm that the semantic field denoting Av. *kauui-* appears, at least in Ancient (Eastern) Iran, as strongly linked to the sphere of power and authority (although the expression “royalty,” especially if compared with the Mesopotamian and Western Iranian framework, seems to be excessive and historically weak). The semantics of the Vedic stem, on the contrary, apparently presents clearer liturgical implications. The *kavi-* is doubtless a “sage,” an “expert,”¹⁸ who knows how to manage secrets and complex subjects; he can be a priest (although not compellingly), a ruler, and mostly a god (e.g., Varuṇa, Agni, the Maruts, Indra as Bṛhaspati).¹⁹

Thus, KÖHLER²⁰ has recently shown that a unique fitting translation for *kavi-* results in something inappropriate for all the Ṛgvedic occurrences. This scholar is probably right when he assumes that the most fitting semantic connotation should be that of “Erkenner und Erzeuger von kosmischen oder rituellen Strukturen,”²¹ despite the fact that in the later tradition “Dichter” will be its essential meaning. The role of the word *kavi-* in liturgical contexts, in particular with close reference to the divine function of builder of rituals and their oral (i.e., poetic) organization, as focused on again by KÖHLER, underlines the particular implications of this title, and shows in a clearer way the origins of its Indian development. On the other hand, this description of the data presents us with an image in which the word *kavi-* assumes a very special mark of superior ability, mostly worth of gods and, secondarily, of priests and men who are asked to perform divine²² ceremonies in acts and words. This close association with the insight connected with the creative action of the divine beings results in something remarkable. In my opinion, the deepest capacity of being a “seer” or “insightful” actor, as represented by *kavi-*, is

10 The root could be also **(s)keuh1-*; cf. KÖHLER 2011: 10.

11 SCHWARTZ 2013.

12 MASSON 1950; GUSMANI 1964: 278 (sub *kave*).

13 DUMÉZIL 1989: 87, n. 7. Original French ed. DUMÉZIL 1986: 211 f., n. 2 (= 1995: 879 f., n. 1).

14 On this subject cf. PELISSERO 1997. Note that these priests were deputed to “the catharsis of the homicides,” as PETTAZZONI underlined (1937 = 1954: 66).

15 SCHMIDT 1867: col. 891.

16 Fragment 2, BERGK 1882: 752. Cf. also BADER 1988: 28, 4.2.2., who more precisely has κο(F)ίης. She mentions in addition to Lyd. *kaveś* «prêtre», also the “fém. *καύεις «prêtresse», lyd. grécisé καύης [...]”.

17 KÖHLER 2011: 11, also reminds OHG. *schouwōn*, “schauen”.

18 SCHWARTZ (2013) remarks that the basic sense of the Vedic stem *kavi-* should be “inspired/sagacious poet-priest,” stressing the fact that *kavyā-* “poetry” is an adjectival derivative of *kavi-*.

19 Cf. JAMISON 2007a: 119–147.

20 KÖHLER 2011: 212–220.

21 KÖHLER 2011: 220.

22 “Divine” because established by gods, and because, the rituals are, in their own turn, “creative” and foundational for the continuation of the reality and of the world.

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not necessarily separated from that of the poet, particularly if we consider that the language of the ritual is a creative *mantra*-, and both the god and the human priest (who basically finds in his divinity the model and the ideological foundation of his liturgical systems)²³ when using it, open the sacrificial path and meet together in another spiritual dimension. In other words, we must not forget the Vedic and Avestan rituals involved strong speculative aspects, as remarked, for instance, by KELLENS himself.²⁴ But coming back to the Iranian side of the problem, we must observe that the scholarly debate, mostly in recent times, and particularly in the context of the (Indo)-Iranological scholarship, has focused on two main lines of investigation in order to explain the particular situation offered by the Avestan data and their challenging contrasts with respect to the attested Vedic usage.

The first is that of postulating the antiquity of the religious and, so to say, “intellectual” meaning of the word, so that *kauui*- would basically signify “poet, priest” (e.g., GERSHEVITCH, BOYCE, SKJÆRVØ, KELLENS/PIRART)²⁵ or, contrariwise, as second alternative, the strictly political and/or historical authority of the secular *kauui*- as “prince, king, chief” (e.g., BARTHOLOMAE, CHRISTENSEN, HUMBACH, SCHMIDT, COLDITZ, SCHWARTZ)²⁶, with or without accepting a direct identification of the Avestan *kavi* Vištāspa with the (O.P.) historical Vištāspa, father of Darius I;²⁷ a third, intermediate, position, which tries to emphasize both aspects, joining them in a sort of “logical” hendiadys, has been sometimes suggested, and not without reasons (e.g., OBERLIES).²⁸ SOUDAVAR,²⁹ in his turn, insists on a “priestly” connotation for the word *kauui*-,

23 See my discussion (PANAINO 2022) on the ritual mimesis between priestly and divine ritual college.

24 Cf. KELLENS in HERRENSCHMIDT/KELLENS 1994.

25 According to GERSHEVITCH (1958: 92 f., 185 f.) the *kauui*-s would correspond to their Indian counterpart, i.e., *kavi*-, as composers of hymns, who in addition had assumed also priestly functions. GERSHEVITCH also suggested that in the case of Vištāspa, the title of *kauui*- would have been assumed by his family as a professional dynastic surname, because Zaratuštra would have never addressed his own protector with the class-name of the priestly enemies and hymn-composers (from his point of view, “hymn-mongers”). Cf. also BOYCE 1975: 11. SKJÆRVØ (2003, *passim*) simply translates *kauui*- as “poet” or “poet-sacrificer”. See again KELLENS/PIRART 1990: II, 230, who distinguish this name, assuming that it was a title, from the Vedic form. KELLENS (2005: 249) in the framework of a discussion concerning the “amphipolarité,” remarks that “*kauui*- est un titre éminemment positif lorsqu’il est attribué aux neuf compagnons de Zaratuštra”. Cf. DUMÉZIL 1986: 175, n. 2 (= 1995: 843, n. 2).

26 This, of course, was the basic interpretation at the times of BARTHOLOMAE; cf. also CHRISTENSEN 1923: 123: “Konge”; see in later times also HUMBACH 1991: I, 11; SCHMIDT 2003: 367–370; COLDITZ 2003: 67–76; SCHWARTZ 2013.

27 HERZFELD (1947) based, for instance, most of his arguments for the historical reconstruction of Zoroaster’s life on the assumption that the prophet would have converted the father of the future king of Persia; for the Russian debate about this subject, in particularly among Soviet scholarship, see ORANSKIĬ 1974 and cf. the Italian translation of the same contribution by OGNIBENE 2011: 294 f.

28 Cf., e.g., OBERLIES (1998: 410, n. 74), who translates *kauui*- as “Dichter-Krieger”. LOMMEL (1927: 171 f., particularly in n. 2), although he accepted an interpretation of Av. *kauui*- as “verstockte Fürsten,” underlined the fact that the Iranian *kauui*-s were too frequently mentioned together with *usij*-s and *karapan*-s, so that a certain relation with priestly functions cannot be denied. Furthermore, Lommel noted that the denomination of the oldest kings as *paraōāda*- should be compared with Ved. *purohita*-, “vorangestellt, der Vorgesetzte”, so concluding: “Der Gedanke an ein Staatspriestertum der alten iranischen Stammeskönige, den ich auf Grund dieser Betrachtungen immerhin für erwägenswert halt, bleibt also unerweislich”.

29 SOUDAVAR 2012.

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although he assumes that such a title would have been “extended to the *pārsā* line of the Achaemenids, and eventually, came to encompass all members of the House of Achaemenes.” A most recent study offered by Stephany JAMISON³⁰ has proposed some very important general remarks on the origin of the Indo-Iranian **kavi-*, which we can quote *in extenso*:

“On the basis of the Rigvedic evidence and keeping in mind the later developments, I would suggest that the earlier *kavi* of the Rig Veda, and indeed of Indo-Iranian, was the word-master associated with royal power. He was, in a slangy expression the king’s “go-to guy” for words, and since, as I have already discussed, words were considered to have special inherent power in Indo-Iranian culture, this would make the *kavi* a powerful figure at the court — not an entertainer or marginal dispenser of cultural harness verbal power for good or ill. He was the king’s right-hand man, his advisor in things spiritual and temporal. In the first instance, positing such a function gives us means of explaining the semantic development that occurred in Iranian. If the Indo-Iranian **kavi* was originally a prominent member of the royal entourage (whatever ‘royal’ meant in Indo-Iranian times), then it is not hard to see how this designation could be at some point interpreted as a royal title. Whether this happened in the pre-Iranian or the post-Avestan period I will not attempt to say, but it has been shown above that the word *kauui* in the Gāthās already inhabits the sphere of power, in its association with the words *xšaθrā* and *maga*.”

In a footnote appended to these conclusions, JAMISON³¹ remarked that her presentation of the data could seriously clash with the one advanced by BRERETON,³² who, in an insightful article, partly inspired by an earlier suggestive research presented by JAMISON³³ herself (later developed in 2004),³⁴ offered a new key, if not useful for resolving this intricate subject, at least full of important ideas, which could help us in a more plausible reassessment of the problem. BRERETON has actually remarked that, if the Avestan *kauui-* is an expert and wise man, who could be both a priest or a ruler (these two categories in any case presume wisdom and *sagesse*), the Vedic sources very interestingly show that *kavi-* frequently occurs with *vedhās-*, “ritual expert,”³⁵ a usual designation also of the *viśpāti-*, “clan-lord” and *grhāpati-*, “house-lord.” But what is most striking in BRERETON’s approach is the fact that he supposes that **kavi-* was originally a designation of the “sacrificer,” the *yajamāna-*. In the analysis of BRERETON the role played by Agni has very relevant results. In ṚV 2,2,2, Agni not only plays the function of the seven priests, but also that of *grhāpati-*.³⁶ Thus, if the hypothesis that in earlier times the Ṛgvedic (but we could write the “Proto-Indo-Iranian”) sacrificer had a number of proper ritual functions, and he “was not simply

30 JAMISON 2007a: 137.

31 JAMISON 2007a: 137, n. 31.

32 BRERETON 2004: 332–342.

33 BRERETON 2004: 337, n. 32, was referring to a communication delivered by St. Jamison (and quoted in BRERETON’s article as JAMISON 2003) in April 2003 at the Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society, Nashville, and finally published as JAMISON 2007b.

34 Published as JAMISON 2007a: 119–150.

35 Cf. KÖHLER 2011: 191–197.

36 BRERETON 2004: 327f.

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the ritual patron and spectator that he largely became,”³⁷ the scenario then assumes a different perspective. Within this double position of lord-patron and priest would be found also a god like Indra, who, when he is *bṛhaspati-*, “functions as a priest”³⁸ and not as a simple (or later) *yájamāna-*. Furthermore, considering RV 1,164,1d: “I saw in this place [of three fires] the clan-lord who has seven sons” (*átrāpaśyaṃ viśpatiṃ sapatāpatram*),³⁹ it is most probable that the “seven sons” are nothing but the seven priests of the liturgy. Then, if, as we must underline following KRICK⁴⁰ and HEESTERMAN,⁴¹ that originally the *hóṭr-* was himself the “sacrificer” then, all the occurrences attesting⁴² that, for instance, Agni was *hóṭr-*, *viśpáti-* and *grhāpati-* (but also *kaví-*), would reflect a very archaic situation. Again, and very fittingly, BRERETON noted⁴³ that in RV 5,4,3, abc:

*viśāṃ kavīm viśpátim mānuṣīṇāṃ, śúcim pāvakāṃ ghṛtāprṣṭham agnīm /
ní hótāraṃ viśvavidāṃ dadhidhve*

“The *kaví* of the clans, the clanlord of (clans) of the sons of Manu, the blazing, pure, ghee-backed Agni — / him have you all installed as the *hótar* who knows everything.”

“*kaví-* and clanlord on the one hand and *hótar* on the other” appear “as complementary roles both fulfilled by Agni.”⁴⁴ Then, BRERETON remarked:

“Elsewhere, *kaví* appears in other contexts and with terms other than clan- or houselord that nonetheless mark the *kaví* as the sacrificer. An example is 4.15.3 *pári vājapatiḥ kavír, agnir havyāny akramīt / dádhad rátnāni dāsúṣe* ‘Agni, as *kaví* and lord of victory’s prize, strode around the oblations, granting riches to him that serves’. The *vājapati* ‘lord of victory’s prize’ is Agni as a sacrificer who received the reward of the sacrifice and distributes rewards to the ritual participants.”⁴⁵

In our attempt at reconstructing an Indo-Iranian socio-religious environment from which we could explain both semantic directions assumed by the stem **kavi-*, I think that the one proposed by BRERETON is very seminal. In fact, the **kavi-* as expert and knower of secret things, ritual (and social) rules, magic spells and formulas, should have been essentially an authoritative actor, in condition to behave, on the divine level, as a wise-god, creator of foundational structures of the cosmic order, as KÖHLER underlined in his study, and, on the human dimension, as a “sage-priest” and a “sage-ruler.” With regard to the second (human) aspect, if we concentrate our focus on the earliest periods, in which the “sacrificer,” lord of the house and/or the clan, was also in the position to perform the solemn functions of *hóṭr-/zaōtar-* (*ṣhāṭar-*, “he who usually pours down the libations”),⁴⁶ we can gain

37 BRERETON 2004: 330.

38 BRERETON 2004: 330.

39 BRERETON 2004: 331f.

40 KRICK 1982: 56.

41 HEESTERMAN 1993: 144ff.

42 BRERETON 2004: 332.

43 BRERETON 2004: 333. Cf. KÖHLER 2011: 40, 269.

44 BRERETON 2004: 332f.

45 *Ibidem*.

46 Cf. MINARD 1949: 123, §346a; 1987: 108f., §265b; CALAND 1908: xiii; RENOU 1954:

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a new perception of the data. It is the leader's ritual and social authority, based on his (earlier) extended competence and expertise in sacred and profane things, which can explain not only the two apparently opposite directions assumed by Ved. *kavi-* and Av. *kauui-*, but also the (apparently) contradictory statements concerning the Avestan situation. Here, in fact, an "authoritative" person is frequently mentioned together with other (disqualified) priests or, in any case, operators of ambiguous activities of socio-religious character, such as *karapan-s* and *usij-s*.⁴⁷ Furthermore, this title, despite the fact that it was attributed to negative authorities, was nevertheless offered to the pious Vīštāspa as well. If we start from the assumption that **kavi-* designated a foundational quality of the "sacrificer," regardless of the fact that he was of warrior or of priestly origins, then, a subject who was in most cases a highly relevant person (if not the most prominent) in the social hierarchy, as in the evident case of the examples of Indra and Agni just offered above, we find a fitting and plausible background explaining the reasons behind results later attested.

Thus, we can reconstruct the process of semantic evolution as follows: when the profane power of the (political) authority gained a higher status, but at the same time the "lord" lost part of his extended religious functions in favour of his own chaplain and his assistant priests, the term **kavi-* became in India a (restricted) designation of the court-poets, while, in Iran, it assumed an honorific value distinguishing the "clan-lords" that patronized the sacrifice and supported their own priests. This was, for instance, the case of Vīštāspa, who shared and underpinned

175–176; MYLIUS 1995: 142f. Originally the *hótṛ-* was "he who pours down (in the fire)," while only in later times this designation was reinterpreted and understood as referring to the priest "who raises an invocation". Cf. SEN 2001: 168. KELLENS/PIRART (1990: 32) exactly translate *zaōtar-* as "prêtre libateur". Cf. BENVENISTE 1948: 25; OLDENBERG 1917: 386f.; MINKOWSKI 1991: 21, *passim*. For Pahl. *zōt* < *zwt* >, "first officiating priest", *zōtīh* < *zwtyh* >, "office of *zōt*," and *rāspīg* < *l'spyk* >, "second officiating priest," see MACKENZIE 1971: 99, 71. It is worth recalling two remarks advanced by Benveniste about Ved. *hótṛ-* and Av. *zaōtar-*. The first (1948: 16) is as follows: "On voit en outre la différence de conception qui sépare des noms traditionnellement fixés, sous la forme *-tr-* ou *-tṛ-* selon les cas, dans des emplois d'apparence uniforme. Par exemple certains noms d'offrants tels *hótṛ* caractérisent le sujet comme pratiquant (habituellement) un acte, non comme voués à une fonction: ainsi aussi *sthātṛ* « conducteur du char », ou *ástṛ* « archer ». Par contre, les noms d'officiants tels que *vanditṛ*, *yaštṛ*, *pavītṛ*, relèvent de la fonction proprement dite"; (1948: 25) "On peut hésiter sur *zaōtar-* en face de v. *hótṛ-*; ce peut être, comme en védique, une forme à valeur de participe (cf. *ibid.*: 16) ou un nom d'agent qui correspondrait à **hotár-*. Au point de vue avestique en tout cas, *zaōtar-* est sur le plan de *staōtar-* et des autres noms d'agent". For a history of the problem and further discussions, see the superb monographic study by TICHY (1995: 17–30 and *passim*). In particular about *hótṛ-* (as akrotonical nomen agentis), see again TICHY (1995: 35, 49, 55ff., 59, 138f., 164, 199, 286, 329, 344, 375). For the comparison between Ved. *hótṛ-*, Av. *zaōtar-*, and Old.Germ. **gudjan*, (< **gh(e)w-d-*, enlarged form < **gh(e)w-*), see HAUDRY 2009a: 67ff.; 2010b: 247ff.. In some respects, according to Haudry (*ibidem*), who follows KRICK (1982: 449 and n. 1221), the *hótṛ-*, originally external to the cult (see RENOU 1947: 8), was nothing but the *yajamāna-*. In the same framework we can also consider the Av. stem *zaōtar-*, who in his function of heroic sacrificer, as attested in the later Avesta, is closer to the Germanic **gudjan*, as the *guðija* in the Norwegian runic inscription of Nordhuglen (about 400). About the possibility that Kati *wutō*, *utō* and Prasun *wutā*, *utō* derive from *hotṛka-* (as assumed by TURNER 1989: I, 819, n° 14176), see WITZEL 2004: 608; cf. also KATI *īstikavan*, "priest," from *īstihék*, "to praise a god".

47 According to LUBOSTKY (2001: 303), Skt. *usij-*, Av. *usig-* < **uśig-*, m., "sacrificing priest," should belong to a list of loanwords later entered in the Indo-Iranian framework from an earlier substratum.

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Zaraṭuštra's new ritual as his *yazəmna*- and (social) supporter. With close regard for the Iranian area, I do not see special difficulties in reconstructing a framework in which a tribal leader, lord of a territory and chief of a clan, might patronize the most important rituals as the main *yazəmna*-. In doing so he should have been trained according to a secular consuetudinary ritual tradition, and most probably also through a kind of special initiation, which, as in the case of the Indian *dīkṣā*-, gave him a higher qualification. In this way, he could even join the archaic divine and human functions of a *kauui*-. This situation could equally explain why these secular lords were named as *kauui*-, and why such a prestigious title was attributed to them, despite the fact that it is highly improbable that they were still in condition to compose liturgical poetry. At this proposal, we must cautiously recall that JAMISON's reconstruction of the semantic history of the word *kavi*- in the Indian context is partly different, in particular when she assumes that:⁴⁸

“the king and his kavi of Rigvedic times were, in my view, separate individuals, but the eloquence and intellectual skill of the kavi were only in service of the king and the kavi could be subsumed in the larger royal aura.”

My perplexity with regard to this interpretation is due to the fact that the postulated exchange of persons and functions between the “king” and the **kavi*- (in his proper quality of court-poet and speaker) does not consider the divine implication of the title, and the double possibility of exchange, firstly from the gods to the powerful social authorities, secondly from the god to their priests, within the processes or ritual mimesis.⁴⁹ Furthermore, it necessarily presupposes that, at least in Iran, the aura of the *kauui*- should have covered that of the royal person, a solution that, in my opinion, would result in something peculiar, and in any case not supported by any historical (or mythological) evidence. A variation of this scenario might postulate the occurrence of a progressive decay of the “royal” prerogatives in favour of his “intellectual” staff, so that the *kauui*-s, from a liturgical function, thanks to their superb mastery of the sacred word and speech, would have acquired a higher rank and a sort of public authority, so that *kauui*- became the common denomination of a politically powerful man, a sort of prince, thanks to the ascent of a social category of (former) “royal” collaborators. Although we can offer this and similar speculations, as I noted before, we do not dispose of any positive historical evidence. In the darkness of this proto-historical scenario I only dare to suggest that BRERETON's explanation has the patent advantage of restricting the semantic game within the limits of the activities played by the *yájamāna*-/ *yazəmna*-, for a period in which the “sacrificer” and the *hótr*-/ *zaōtar*- were probably not yet sharply distinguished as it happened later. It is within this archaic dimension, when the social leader⁵⁰ and

48 JAMISON 2007a: 137, n. 31.

49 See PANAINO 2022.

50 SCHMIDT (2003: 369) has underlined the fact that in the tradition of the Yašts the kauuis, in particular Haōsrauuah and Vištāspa, appear as warriors with their weapons, and do not show special poetical attitudes. SCHWARTZ (2013, *passim*) remarks that the Avestan personal name in *kauuā*- “shows that the Mīr. meaning “martial, hero,” etc. was not based on a remote legendary history but is a linear semantic development of the OIR. word. Pahlavi shows two developments for the reflex, *kay*: (1) The dynastic title, attested kd on

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the priest still shared many of their (later divided and separated) ritual duties, that I would prefer to locate the beginning of the forthcoming amphibolic use of **kavi-*: a denomination fitting for every expert and respectful person involved in higher social and religious performances, without a sharp class (or functional) distinction. Later, inner historical conditions would have determined the radicalisation of the two main semantic polarities involved by this stem, one toward a more political context, the other one toward the dimension of the court-poetry and religious functions. A reconstruction of this kind is more pertinent and fitting for the Iranian situation, where the role of the *yazəmna-* was not so clearly defined,⁵¹ as it was in the Vedic context. On the contrary, we must recall that particularly in Iran it is not always simple to separate and distinguish the cases in which the *yazəmna-* properly was a “sacrificer,” strictly corresponding to the R̥gvedic *yájamāna-*, then, a person not necessarily of sacerdotal line, offering in his own interests or for his own (and his own family’s) sake, the sacrifice, or if he was just and simply the offering priest at work in the ritual. This kind of formulary limbo could offer a good reason also for a simple explanation of the semantic evolution assumed by the Av. stem *kauui-*. In that framework, in which it was not (yet?) sharply distinguished between the exact and exclusive prerogatives of the *yazəmna-* as “priest” from those of the *yazəmna-* as “sacrificer” (of non-priestly origin, but admitted to the ritual), we can probably find another archaism, where the Avestan trends do not really show real evolutions, but, paradoxically, still maintain a very conservative attitude. Thus, if we consider this background, we can also explain in an easier way how it was possible that in the Iranian context the qualities of being a *kauui-* might be attributed to a social leader, who in certain occasions had the compelling duty to patronize sacred rituals with their officiating priests, paying them the due *dākṣiṇā-* and receiving the expression of gratitude through the usual *dānastuti-*.⁵² It is, in fact, evident that the role played by Vīštāspa with regard to Zaratuštra was that of a patron, who took part in his liturgies, and who received the ritual traditional *laudatio* by the Iranian prophet, who, in exchange, expelled not only the demons, but also the hostile clans and their lords (plus other ambiguous subjects like the *usij-*s and the *karapan-*s operating in the entourage of Zoroaster’s and Vīštāspa’s antagonists). Within the context of this intriguing game among three subjects, Zaratuštra, Vīštāspa and, of course, Ahura Mazdā, already detected and discussed by MOLÉ,⁵³ but deeply analysed also by HINTZE,⁵⁴ the exchange of services and gifts was essential, according to the most archaic rules of the sacrificial Indo-Iranian tradition.

coinage as part of a late Sasanian “Kayanid” revivalism, cf. the royal names Xusraw and Kawād; (2) the meaning “hero,” attested for /kay/ with synonym /ya/ “hero, champion” in Greater Bundahisn 75.15 and 177.10 kd’n W yl’n.” Schwartz continues his pertinent discussion about Man. West Iranian *kāw* “giant,” Man. Sogdian *kw-*, *qw-* “giant”, Chr. Sog. *kwy* “hero,” and he confers also to Khwarezmian onomastics, showing in conclusion that “Avestan *kauui-* refers not to a priest, but to a local ruler or warlord, whence its Middle Iranian cognates meaning “champion or ‘hero’”. On these matters, see now PIRART 2022: 24.

51 See PANAINO 2004: 101.

52 About the *dākṣiṇā-* and the *dānastuti-* in the Old Avestan framework, see PANAINO 2004: 101–105.

53 See MOLÉ 1963: 163; and 1960: 156f.

54 See HINTZE 2000: 138f.; and again PANAINO 2004: 102f.

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Before concluding this contribution, I would like to insist on one striking evidence. According to the later Avestan tradition, as, for instance, that attested in Yt5.108:⁵⁵

<i>tqm yazata</i>	“Kauui Vīštāspa worshipped her
<i>bərəzaiðiš kauua Vīštāspō</i>	(i.e., Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā)
<i>pašne āpəm Frazdānaōm</i>	with exalted insights
<i>satəm aspanqm aršnqm</i>	on the shore of the water Frazdānu
<i>hazaṇrəm gauuqm</i>	(offering) a hundred male horses,
<i>baēuuarə anumaiianqm.</i>	a thousand bulls,
	ten thousand rams”.

Here, the kavi Vīštāspa possesses the full right of offering (animal) sacrifices, and so he performed them. This means that an Av. *kauui-* had (or at a certain moment was considered as worthy of assuming) both functions, that of clan-lord and that of sacrificer, in his own interests and in that of his community. Thus, Vīštāspa plays not only the role of a *yájamāna-* according to the standard Ṛgvedic sense, but also an actual sacrificer, and this is an important item of evidence that we cannot deny or reject, although my arguments do not depend just on this attestation, but on the wide series of considerations presented above to the reader’s attention. Furthermore, we cannot forget that the Indo-Iranian **kavi* was given with a special knowledge of secret and esoteric origin, and that, in his “priestly” quality, he possessed the function of a mediator as well, as confirmed by Vedic literature, and fittingly observed by Fr. BADER.⁵⁶ The “politicization” of the *kauui*-role in Iran does not represent a violent deviation, but its attestation confirms the fact that the highest social “authority” (I prefer this moderate term instead of that of “kingship”, at least for the earliest phases of the Indian and Iranian societies) was in close relation with the power of the gods and the function of the priests. In that framework some aspects of the priestly domain were shared by the social leaders, but, at the same time, these “characters” embodied or mirrored divine powers.⁵⁷ Then, the Iranian development was just one of the expectable results of this archaic net of symbolic and historical relations, while, for instance, in the Greek and Latin contexts, the derivatives of the same root “tended towards legal meanings,” as very cautiously remarked by DUMÉZIL.⁵⁸ It is within this complex and intriguing cultural dimension that we should try to explain the, apparently peculiar, semantic history of the Indo-Ir. **kavi-* and its particular Iranian evolution.

55 See LOMMEL 1927: 34 and 42; WELLER 1938: 100 and 149; MALANDRA 1983: 128; PIRART 2010: 78–79; LECOQ 2016: 369–370. Cf. also HINTZE 2013: 25. A parallel Avestan sentence can be found in the Yašt 9, 29; Yašt 17, 52.

56 See BADER 1989: 28, about the knowledge of the enigmas attributed to the Vedic *kavi-*, and the remarks concerning the meaning of the root **keu-*. Cf. RENOU 1953: 180–183; DUMÉZIL 1986: 172–176 (= 1995: 841 f.).

57 See again the discussion in PANAINO 2022.

58 DUMÉZIL 1989: 87, n. 7: “Lat. *cautor*, “guarantor,” also *causa*, “alleged motive, trial,” etc.; Gk. *κοῖον* “pledge”. Original French edition: DUMÉZIL 1986: 211 f., n. 2 (= 1995: 879 f., n. 1).

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