



the framework of the Mazdean cosmology and theology. We can briefly recall that the *gumēzišn* concerns the ‘state of mixture’, the *mélange* produced by the irruption of Ahreman in the primordial good creation of Ohrmazd, when he pierced the heavens and entered the world.<sup>5</sup>

The mixture of the intermediate stage between the creation (*bundahišn*) and the final regeneration (*frašgird*) of the universe corresponds to a period of contradictions, struggles and of an inevitable dialectics between order and disorder. It is only within this mixed dimension that death is possible, although its negative impact is countered and balanced from the fact that immortality in the *gēnīg* dimension would imply also that of the demons.<sup>6</sup> But this inevitable condition is tempered from Ohrmazd’s promise that the good creatures will be resurrected, forgiven, and finally admitted into the eternal paradise of god.<sup>7</sup> In this respect, if the semantic field of the verb *gumēxtan*, and of its nominal derivatives is not strictly and absolutely negative, and this because the *gumēzišn*, within the economy of Zoroastrian theology, constitutes a useful and necessary trap against Ahreman forces and their chief, certainly the implications covered by its meaning do not immediately evoke a most positive image.

We can offer few examples based on typical Mazdean speculations: the fire with smoke (*ātaxš dūdōmand ān ī andar gumēzagīh*) is the one of the ‘mixture’, because it burns things consisting of mixed nature, while the one which burns without smoke (*a-dūd*) is that belonging to purity (*Dēnkard* 3, 376).<sup>8</sup> Perfection would be practically impossible within the mixed status, and it is for this reason that among human beings nobody can find (*Dēnkard* 3, 404)<sup>9</sup> persons attaining the quality of ‘pure gods’ (*abēzag yazdān*) or the opposite one of ‘pure deus’ (*nē-iz dēw abēzag*)’

There are too many other examples that could be equally presented, but the results would be mostly the same: the *gumēzišn* is and remains a state of contradiction and of fight, in which the two opposing ontological forces, originally belonging to a primordial universe, divided in two zones, one of light the latter of darkness (with a void in the middle), have been mixed for a limited period of time.

However, despite the inevitable impression of a negative nuance connected with the image of the ‘mixture’ between good and evil in itself, we must register a very rare, but

*Gumēzišn* is in a Manichean cosmological text (M 98 I R 8 ff.). MacKenzie (*ibid.*) noted also that “*gumēzagīh* ‘state of mixture’ describes a short stage in the development of an embryo, between the initial ‘seed state’ and that of a foetus, when the seed was supposed to change into blood”. For other usages, see again this brief article by MacKenzie.

<sup>5</sup>A. Panaino, *A Walk through the Iranian Heavens. Spherical and Non-Spherical Models in the Imagination of Ancient Iran and Its Neighbors* (Irvine, 2020, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), pp. 132–139.

<sup>6</sup>A. Panaino, ‘Mortality and Immortality: Yama’s / Yima’s Choice and the Primordial Incest (Mythologica Indo-Iranica, I)’ in A. Panaino & V. Sadoski, *Disputationes Iranologicae Vindobonenses, II* (Sitzungsberichte der ÖAW. Philosophisch-historische Klasse, 845. Band / Veröffentlichungen zur Iranistik, Nr. 65, Wien, 2013), p. 83–85, *passim*.

<sup>7</sup>For the universal mercy of Ohrmazd, see A. Panaino, ‘La ‘misericordia’ di Ohrmazd ed il perdono dei dannati secondo la trattatistica zoroastriana tardo-antica e medievale’, *Bizantinistica* XVII (2017), pp. 27–45; Idem, ‘Mazdeans and Christians Facing the End of the World: Circulations and Exchanges of Concepts’, *Entangled Religions* 11/2 (2020), DOI: 10.13154/er.11.2020.8441. With the term ‘good creatures’, I refer to the creatures who were fruit of a divine creation; for this reason, according to the later Mazdean ethics, all the human beings will be forgiven and nobody will be left within an eternal punishment.

<sup>8</sup>See J. de Menasce, *Le troisième livre du Dēnkart* (Paris, 1973), p. 337.

<sup>9</sup>See J. de Menasce, *Le troisième livre du Dēnkart* (Paris, 1973), pp. 362–363.

thrilling, opposite example, which is most important from the theological point of view. A very significant passage concerning the role of time (Zurwān) in the process of liberation of the universe from the evil presence occurs in the first chapter of the *Bundahišn* (I, 41).<sup>10</sup> There we find the following statement:

*čē zamān-iz ī dērang-xwadāy nazdist dām ī-š frāz brēhēnūd čē a-kanārag būd pēš az gumēzišnih hamēyih ī Ohrmazd. kanāragōmand brēhēnūd az ān a-kanāragih, kū az bun-dahišn ka dām dād tā ō frazām kū ganāg mēnōg a-kār bauvēd, paymānag-ēw 12,000 sāl kū kanāragōmand ud pas ō a-kanāragōmandih gumēzēd ud wardēd kū dām-iz ī Ohrmazd abēzagihā abāg Ohrmazd hamēyīg bauvēd.*

“Actually, the time of the long-dominion was the first creation, which He (i.e. Ohrmazd) fashioned, so that it was limitless (or unlimited; *a-kanārag*) before the mixture (*pēš az gumēzišnih*), the eternity (*hamēyih*) of Ohrmazd. He fashioned from that limitlessness (or infinity; *a-kanāragih*) the one (having [temporal]) limits (*kanāragōmand*; i.e. the finite), so that from the primeval foundation (of the world, i.e. from the *bun-dahišn*), when the creation (*dām*) was created, until the end, when the Evil Mind (*ganāg mēnōg*) will be powerless (*a-kār*), (it will last) a measure of 12,000 years, which is limited (or finite), and then it will merge (*gumēzēd*)<sup>11</sup> and turn (*wardēd*) into limitlessness (or infinite; *a-kanāragōmandih*), so that the creation of Ohrmazd will become eternal (*hamēyīg*) with Ohrmazd”.

According to this paragraph, it will be the limited time (*Zurwān kanāragōmand*) itself to merge (*gumēzēd*) and turn (*wardēd*) into the infinite. In this context, we see that with the total defeat of Ahreman, who will be put in a powerless (*a-kār*) condition, a completely new kind of *gumēzišn* emerges. We must observe that this use of the verb is very rare not from the syntactical point of view, which is quite regular, but from the point of the general semantical context.<sup>12</sup> In fact, and very paradoxically, here *gumēzēd* does not imply as its immediate result a status of mixture and contrast. On the contrary, it seems to correspond to a sort of complete dissolution of the limited time within the eternal, unlimited time of god. This example is very informative, because from it we can deduce that the idea of *gumēzišn* preserved an intrinsic semantically neutral hue. Furthermore, we infer that the limited time of the *gētīg* dimension was not simply discontinued, while the eternal time started again, but that the

<sup>10</sup>See F. Pakzad, *Bundahišn. Zoroastriische Kosmogonie und Kosmologie*. Band I. *Kritische Edition* (Tehran, 2005), p. 18; cf. also C. G. Cereti & D. N. MacKenzie, ‘Except by Battle: Zoroastrian Cosmogony in the 1<sup>st</sup> Chapter of the Greater *Bundahišn*’, in *Religious Themes and Texts of Pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia: Studies in Honour of Gherardo Gnoli on the Occasion of His 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2002*, C. G. Cereti, M. Maggi, and E. Provasi (ed.), (Wiesbaden, 2003), pp. 31–59, in particular p. 38 (edited as par. 42). K. Rezaia, *Die zoroastriische Zeitvorstellung. Eine Untersuchung über Zeit- und Ewigkeitskonzepte und die Frage des Zurvanismus* (Göttingen, 2010), p. 245, edits this passage as *Bundahišn* 1, 42. See also the new translation by D. Agostini and S. Thrope, *The Bundahišn. The Zoroastrian Book of Creation. Edited and Translated* (Oxford, 2020), p. 9.

<sup>11</sup>I thank Professor Bruce Lincoln, who very kindly offered (mail of September 15<sup>th</sup> 2020) me a better English version of the most important passage of the present quotation, by noting that: “[i]n English, ‘merge’ suggests the full disappearance of the entity that is encompassed by another larger and more powerful one (as with business mergers), while things that are ‘mixed’ with others may retain some of their original identity, as with mixed materials, metaphors, or populations. The preposition *ō* also strikes me as significant, signalling that finite time was mixed (or merged) ‘into’ infinite time, rather than ‘mixed up’ with it in the messy, contradictory, internally unstable sort of mixture that most usage of *gumēxtan* and *gumēzišn* implies. The latter is the form of mixture that characterises finite time of the long dominion, while the former—i.e. merger into and harmonious encompassment—is that characteristic of boundless time.

<sup>12</sup>I must underline that Nyberg, *Hilfsbuch des Perhlevi*, II, p. 86, sub *gumēxtan*, carefully registered this occurrence.

philosophical characterisation of time was much more complex and deeper in the Mazdean theology. As I have shown in another work,<sup>13</sup> Ohrmazd never stopped his eternal time (an act which would be logically and intrinsically absurd), but fashioned forth the limited one, which existed within the *gētīg* creation as a parallel dimension. We must remark that for the second period of 3,000 years of the creation *mēnōg*, when more precisely the *gētīg* was created, but provisionally suspended, within the *mēnōg*,<sup>14</sup> the time, although limited, continued to run. The world and the heaven were immobile, but the chronocratories (i.e., the astrological temporal domination) of the Zodiacal constellations moved forward millennium after millennium despite the apparent absence of motion.<sup>15</sup> With the irruption of Ahreman, limited time started to become visible, not to exist properly, because its existence had been already enacted by Ohrmazd! From the general point of view, Ohrmazd, maintaining his place in the highest paradise, remains, until the last fight, when he will descend on the earth, within an untouchable, unmixable, and eternal dimension. Very differently, it was Ahreman to enter the *gētīg* dimension (with its time and limits), so abandoning the infinite spaces of his primordial kingdom of darkness. This asymmetry shows the ontological distance existing between the two cosmic Primordial Beings, and the superiority of Ohrmazd with respect to Ahreman. One was directing a war from an eternal and untouchable position, with an army both *mēnōg* and *gētīg*, the latter was a dangerous creature self-imprisoned because of his own ignorance within a limited dimension and with an army only *mēnōg*!

Then, the final *gumēzišn* of the limited time with the eternal unlimited one presents us with a very subtle speculation, in which the two divine aspects of time are synthesised with a fusion. Although they exist and advance in parallel for 12,000 years, with the radical transfiguration of the world occurring with the *frašgird*, they finally mix together into a restored unity similar to the primordial one, with the difference that now the eschatological time will remain in its state of perfection without the enactment of any alternative time. Thus, we observe a kind of *gumēzišn* completely different from the one with which we are normally acquainted and that we usually know from our manuals, but its qualitative importance seems to me a worthy homage to my friend and colleague François de Blois, with whom I have shared many scholarly interests in the common passion for the legacy of the Iranian intellectual heritage. We could say that the dialectics of time will be concluded with a merger, in which the time itself becomes unified in a post-human divine eschatological existence.

An appropriate appendix to the present discussion concerns the origin of the choice of the word *gumēzišn* for the doctrinal concept of ‘mixture’ in the intermediate phase of fight. This doctrine was already Avestan,<sup>16</sup> although the focus was placed on the demonic invasion and

<sup>13</sup>A. Panaino, ‘Light, Time, Motion and Impulse in the Zoroastrian Pahlavi Texts’, *Iran and the Caucasus* 24 (2020), pp. 243–285.

<sup>14</sup>On this intermediate step, usually not considered with due attention, see already M. Molé, ‘Le problème zurvanite’, *Journal Asiatique* 247 (1959), pp. 431–469, and now A. Panaino ‘Le *gētīg* dans le *mēnōg* et le système chiliadique mazdéen selon la réflexion de Marijan Molé’, in *Entre le mazdéisme et l’islam. Journée d’étude internationale autour de l’œuvre de Marijan Molé*. (Paris, 24 juin 2016), S. Azarnouche (ed.), forthcoming.

<sup>15</sup>See in particular Panaino, ‘Light, Time, Motion and Impulse in the Zoroastrian Pahlavi Texts’, p. 261, *passim*.

<sup>16</sup>The idea of the irruption of Ajra Mainiiu is in fact well stated in the Young Avestan texts, where it is connected with the beginning of the astral motion, and with the millenary tradition. See J. Kellens, ‘Les saisons des rivières’, in *Kontinuität und Brüche in der Religionsgeschichte. Festschrift für Anders Hultgård zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 23. 12. 2001*, M. Stausberg in Verbindung mit O. Sundqvist und A. van Nahl (eds), (Ergänzungsbände zum

the beginning of the motion of the astral bodies after the impulse of the Frauuašis.<sup>17</sup> The fight against the creatures of Ahreman was clearly strong, but in my opinion the full recognition of the special role of the intermediate period became most evident with the development of the millenarian doctrine. Thus, we can easily infer that the full development of the idea of *gumēzišn* was inevitably connected with a speculation about time. For the same reason, we cannot be astonished when we find that the same category (through a pertinent use of the verb *gumēxtan*) was adopted in order to classify the definitive incorporation of the limited time within eternity. If at the moment, a precise Avestan correspondent term for the cosmologic phase later designated by *gumēzišn* is unknown, I think we can reasonably guess that it should have been something like *raēθβa-*, n. 'mixture',<sup>18</sup> or a variant of this stem, perhaps with a prefix such as *haṇi*, *vi-*, etc., as we can infer from the different attestations of the verb <sup>2</sup>*raēθβa-*, 'to mix'.<sup>19</sup> Actually, this verb, which concerns the act of mixing in many ways, also in the ritual framework, with reference to the ingredients of the ritual (N. 43,1-2; 44,1-2),<sup>20</sup> is translated in Pahlavi with *gumēxtan* (so, for instance we find the correspondence *raēθβaiti* : *gumēzēd* or *haṇi.raēθβaṇiti* : *gumēzēnd*). The mixture of dead matter with the living one is well expressed in the Pahlavi translation of *Vd. 10,1*:<sup>21</sup> *kē az ōy rist ō ōy zīndag abar gumēxtēd* "(the Nasu) who mixes up the dead with the living". The corresponding Avestan text runs as follows: *nasuš* [...] *yā haca irista upa juuantəm upa.raēθβaiti* "the Nasu [...] who enters from (what is) dead into what is living". Another fitting example is the one of *Vd. 18,62*,<sup>22</sup> where the Pahlavi text is: *ḡeh* [...] *kē šusar ō ham gumēzēd ī dahmān a-dahmān* [...]. "Jeh [...] who mixes up the semen of the faithful with that of the unfaithful [...]". The Avestan *Vorlage* has: *jahi* [...] *yō* [for *yā*] *xšūδrā* *haṇi.raēθβaiiēiti dahmanaṇi adahmanaṇi* "Jeh [...] who mixes up the semen of the wise and ignorant ones". These occurrences simply concur to show that <sup>2</sup>*raēθβa-* and *gumēxtan*, as well as *raēθβa-*, 'mixture' and *gumēzišn* were considered correspondent terms. We can also suggest that a verb *\*māez-* (+ *vi-*) 'to mix' was not current in Avestan, or that its presence was covered by YAv. <sup>1</sup>*māez-* (MP. *mēz-*) 'urinate'<sup>23</sup> and OAv. <sup>2</sup>*māez-* 'to foster, to take care for',<sup>24</sup> a situation favouring the use of <sup>2</sup>*raēθβa-*, a verbal form, which seems to have been the fruit of a linguistic innovation.

What is certain is that with the determination of a clear chronological chiliadic sequence, the weight of the 'mixture' became a very sensible matter, and the central role of that phase

Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 31; Berlin – New York, 2001), pp. 471-480. Idem, 'Structure de l'espace-temps dans le mazdéisme ancien', in *The Past in the Past. Concepts of Past Reality in Ancient Near Eastern and Early Greek Thought*, H. M. Barstad—P. Briant (eds.), (Oslo, 2009), pp. 37-45.; Panaino, 'Light, Time, Motion and Impulse in the Zoroastrian Pahlavi Texts', pp. 269-277.

<sup>17</sup>See again Kellens, 'Les saisons des rivières', pp. 472-473; Panaino, 'Light, Time, Motion and Impulse in the Zoroastrian Pahlavi Texts', p. 270.

<sup>18</sup>Chr. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Strassburg, 1904), Col. 1482.

<sup>19</sup>Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, Cols. 1482-1483. See Cheung (*Etymological Dictionary of the Iranian Verb*, pp. 309-310), who remarks that this verbal root has no clear Indo-European origins, and no Vedic correspondences.

<sup>20</sup>F. M. Kotwal and Ph. G. Kreyenbroek, *The Hērbedestān and Nērangestān. II: Nērangestān, Fragarad 2* (Studia Iranica, Cahier 2, Paris, 2003), pp. 184-185, 190-191.

<sup>21</sup>M. Moazami, *Wrestling with the Demons of the Pahlavi Widēwdād. Transcription, Translation, and Commentary* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 297-298.

<sup>22</sup>Moazami, *ibid.*, pp. 420-421.

<sup>23</sup>See Cheung, *Etymological Dictionary of the Iranian Verb*, p. 179.

<sup>24</sup>Cheung, *Etymological Dictionary of the Iranian Verb*, pp. 261-262, sub voce *\*mai-z-*.

assumed a special meaning within the economy of the Young Avestan / early Pahlavi religious cosmology. This process generated a new terminology with the following adoption of the verbal root of *gumēxtan*, the name *gumēzišn* and other related words, which, despite their neutral and empirical meaning, assumed a new semantic force with reference to a crucial moment in the world history. This space/temporal category, referring to the state of mixture, marked an evolved, mature, step of the Mazdean doctrine, but the remarkable importance of the temporal category is well recognisable in the special semantic re-determination of this terminology, so that the image of the mixture/merger was preserved even for the final step of human history.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the end of limited time was conceived as a *confluence* within the uninterrupted current of the eternal river of Zurwān, because in this perspective *tempus non fugit, sed stat*, as the Spanish Baroque poet Luis de Góngora y Argote (1561–1627) stated in the framework of his *Medida del tiempo por diferentes relojes*, particularly in a famous poem entitled *Reloj por las estrellas*, writing:<sup>26</sup>

Si quiero por las estrellas, saber, tiempo, dónde estás. miro que con ellas vas, pero no vuelves con ellas. ¿Adónde imprimes tus huellas que con tu curso no doy? Más, ay, qué engañado estoy, que vuelas corres y ruedas;	If I want to know the stars' time, where are you? I see that you go with them, but you don't return with them. Where do you imprint your footprints since I can't find them along your orbit? But, oh, how deceived I am, that you fly, run and roll;
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<sup>25</sup>I must mention some very pertinent additional ideas, which integrate my recent considerations about the philosophical dimension of time within the Mazdean tradition, which Bruce Lincoln (mail of September 15<sup>th</sup> 2020) has kindly sent to me: "In addition to treating Boundless Time (i.e. Eternity) as durative, such that it encompasses Time of the Long Dominion (i.e. Finite Historic Time), I have found it useful to distinguish two aspects of the former, which could be termed Primordial Eternity and Eschatological Eternity. There are two points where that yields intriguing results. First, it helps establish the homology between space and time within the Zoroastrian imaginary, given the distinction between the boundless above inhabited by Ohrmazd, the boundless below of Ahri-man, and the finite space between them that becomes their battleground. Second, it suggests a homology between the nature of the cosmos and the life of an individual, since the time allotted to any life is finite, filled with a mixture of good and evil, and characterised with strife, in contrast to the absolute peace and tranquility of the infinite time that preceded that person's birth and the infinite time that will unfold after his or her death". I fully agree with this statement, which shows the complexity of the representations of time and offers a pertinent variant in the interpretation of the facts. This discussion, of course, should involve a reflection on the actual determination of the primordial eternity before Ohrmazd enacted the limited one, because this phase (a period or a simple instant?) concerns the dramatic theological problem of the existence of God before His creation: a very famous Agustianian subject, for instance, well developed in the 11<sup>th</sup> book of the *Confessions*. Actually, we are in facing a conundrum: when Ohrmazd was in the boundless eternity (on the opposite side of the universe against Ahreman deep down in the abyss), how much time did he need in order to realize the existence of the Antagonist and the disposition of a parallel limited time-span? Long or very short this undeterminable 'moment of eternity' represented the Primordial time, which, from a human perspective, should be reconciled with the Eschatological Eternity. From the point of view of the timeless abstraction (and then from that of Ohrmazd's intangibility and perfection) eternity was undivided and indivisible, but the necessary reconciliation with the provisory enactment of the limited time, gave the way for a new sublime mixture, in which two apparent different forms of eternity were definitively unified.

<sup>26</sup>See *Poeti dell'età barocca*, Antologia a cura di G. Spagnoletti et alii, I, *La poesia barocca in Italia, Spagna e America spagnola, Portogallo e Brasile*, Milano, 1961), pp. 158–159. The English translation here given in order to help those who are not conversant with early 17<sup>th</sup> c. poetical Spanish, is taken from, with some little changes, the web-site <http://eljineteinsomme2.blogspot.com/2007/11/luis-de-gongora-por-las-estrellas.html>, accessed September 16<sup>th</sup> 2020.

tú eres, Tiempo, el que te quedas,    you are, time, the one who stays,  
y yo soy el que me voy.                    And I'm the one who's leaving.

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