

ALMUT HINTZE

Avestan

Introduction – Part 4: Avestan manuscripts



MUYA —
The Multimedia Yasna Project

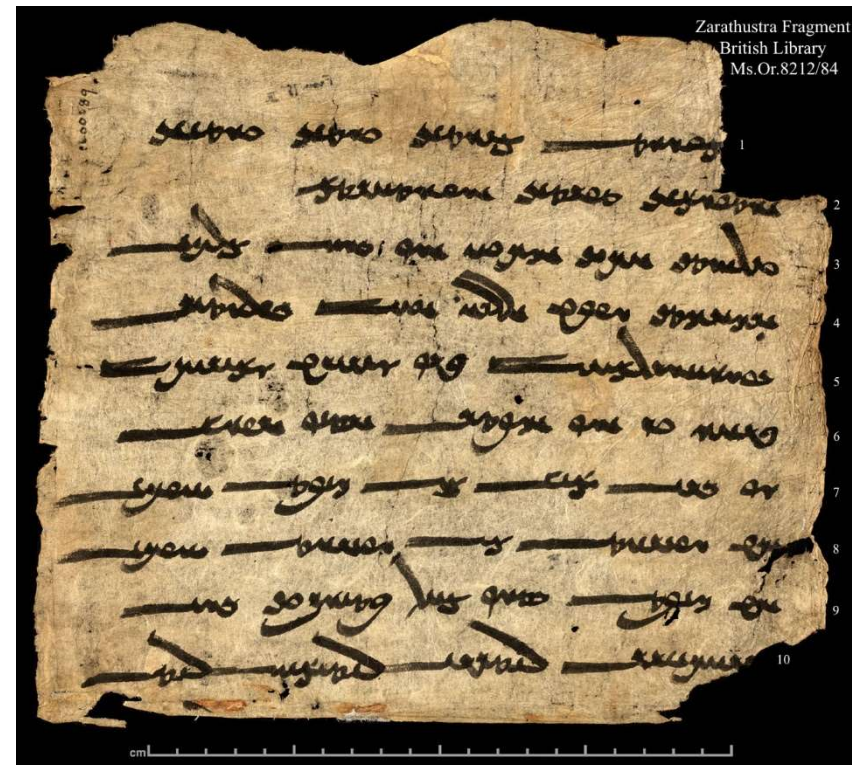
Roadmap

- The written Avesta
- Types of manuscripts

The Sogdian *Ašam Vohū*

- Unique witness of a lost Eastern Iranian recension
- Pre-dates earliest Avestan mss. by more than 400 years
- Avestan written in Sogdian script (not Avestan script!)

Dunhuang, ca. 800 CE
British Library Ms. Or. 8212/84



Types of Avestan manuscripts

- Liturgical: the Avestan recitation text with ritual instructions in Pahlavi or Gujarati
- Exegetical: Avestan text accompanied by a translation in Pahlavi or Sanskrit

Liturgical manuscripts

- Avestan recitation text in black ink
- Sāde ‘pure’
- Ritual instructions in Pahlavi or Gujarati written in red ink



Iranian Yasna Sāde ms. Arundel154 of the British Library, London
Avestan with ritual instructions in Pahlavi written in red ink
No colophon, but copied before 1646, when the ms. was given to the British Library
Copyright: The British Library

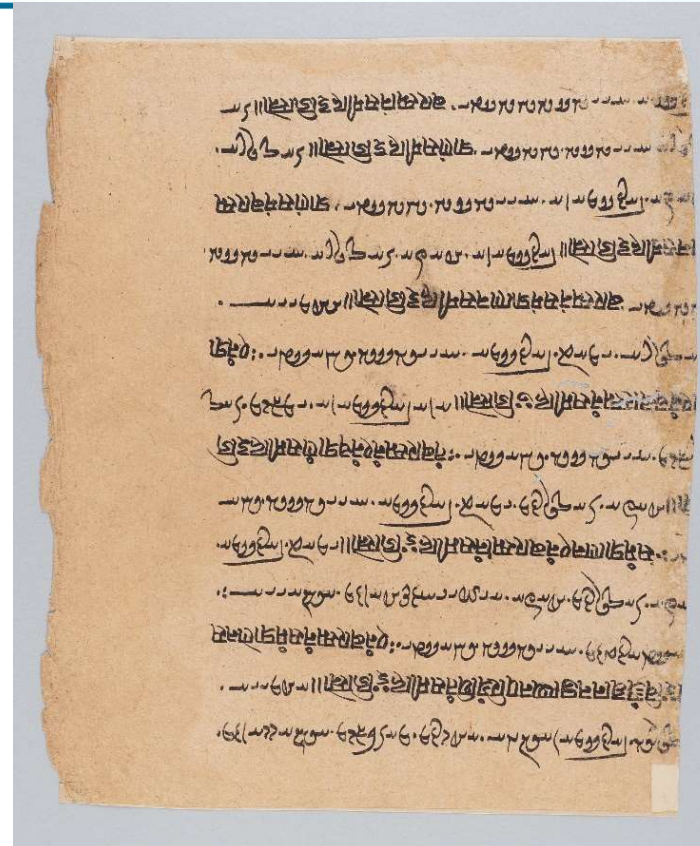
Iranian and Indian manuscripts

- Iranian mss.: written in Iran or are Indian copies of mss. written in Iran
- Indian mss.: written in India and copied from Indian mss.
- Ultimately the Indian mss. also descend from Iranian mss.

Exegetical manuscripts

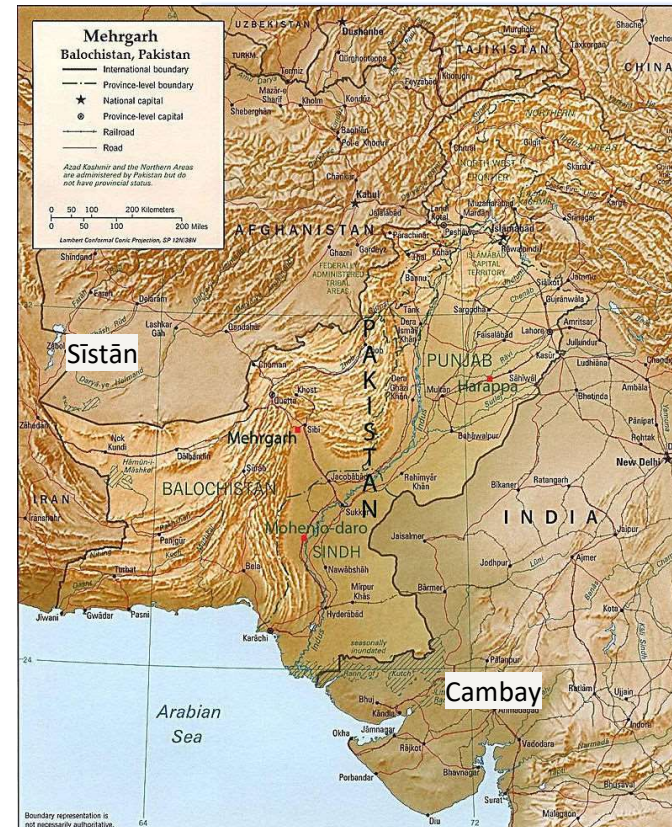
- Avestan text alternating with its Pahlavi or Sanskrit translation and interpretation
- Indian mss.: written in India and copied from Indian mss.
- Ultimately the Indian mss. also descend from Iranian mss.

The Sanskrit Yasna ms. S1
Copyright: Columbia University Library



Mihrābān Kayhusraw

- Copied some of the oldest extant Av. mss.
- Descendant of a priestly family of Sīstān, Iran
- Invited by Čāhil, son of Sangan, a wealthy Parsi merchant of Cambay in Gujarat



Mihrābān Kayhusraw's mss. of the Yasna, 1323 CE

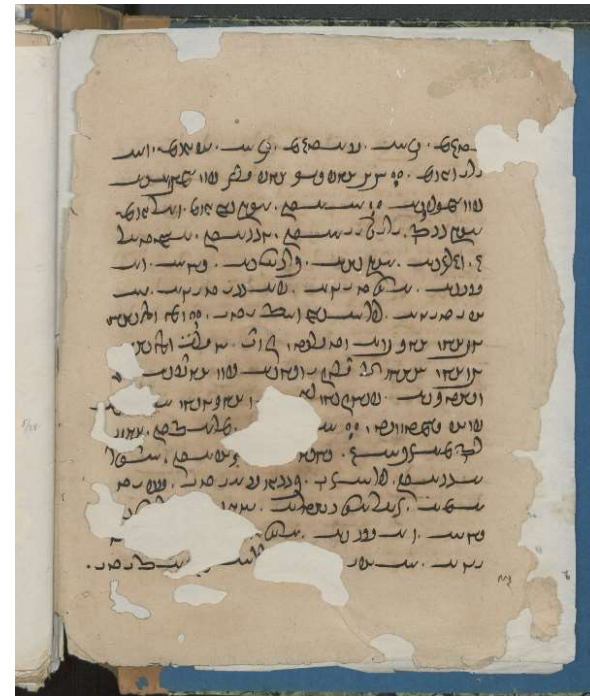
- Ms. J2, the Bodleian Library, Oxford
- Ms. K5 in the Royal Library of Copenhagen

Fol. 3v of the ms. J2,
Bodleian Library, Oxford



Mihrābān Kayhusraw's mss. of the Vidēvdād

- Ms. L4, British Library, London
- Ms. K1 in the Royal Library of Copenhagen



A page of the ms. K1

Westergaard's and Geldner's editions of the Avesta

- Niels Ludvig Westergaard (1854) and K.F. Geldner (1886–1896) prioritised exegetical mss. because of their old age and their accessibility in libraries in Europe
- Avestan text of the Visperad, Vidēvdād and Vištāsp Yašt is presented as it appears in the bilingual manuscripts by simply omitting the Pahlavi translation
- Ritual directions are barely if at all recorded
- Few, although important, manuscripts of the Iranian ritual tradition are used

New editions of the Avesta under preparation

- More mss. especially of the Iranian traditions are now available
- London: edition of the Yasna ritual
- Berlin: edition of the Long Liturgy