LESSON 6

PHONOLOGY

Form of the text.

The extant text of the Avesta is an edited text. On one or several occasions during the oral transmission of the text editors worked to standardize it. The extant text does therefore not reflect a genuine oral tradition.\(^5\)

One feature of the edited text is the replacement of the ending -a with the ending -ó in the first members of compounds and fricatives with stops in initial position in the second member, cf., e.g., beside the expected form ahuraóšía-, the much more common type daénuóó.dáta-, bayóó.baxta, etc. Another is the restoration of word-final form for the expected sandhi form, e.g., in xšuáš.gáía- “six steps” instead of *xšuášgáía-., cf. dužóánti- “evil smell.”

Not all non-standard or “incorrect” forms are from the editors, however; many more are probably due to the reciters (transmitters) of the text and the scribes who wrote the manuscripts.

Anaptyxis

The Avestan ò is in most positions an allophone of /a/ (see Lesson 5). In addition, it is frequently used as an anaptyctic vowel.

“Anaptyctic” vowels are unetymological vowels inserted between consonants to “ease” the pronunciation. By far the most common anaptyctic vowel in Young Avestan is ò; occasionally a is used.

Anaptyxis (also called svarabhakti, a Sanskrit word meaning “sound-splitting”) is especially common, if not obligatory, after r in final position and before other consonants, as well as in the group nr. The exception is the group rs, although this, too, is occasionally written rs in the manuscripts.

Examples: aróóá- “side” (cf. Skt. aróóha-); aróóáa- “matter” (cf. Skt. aróóha-); káráóómi “and the form”; kóróóta- “done” (cf. Skt. kóróóta-); varóósa- “hair,” paróóna- “feather” (cf. Skt. paróóna-); váróóra “weapon for striking” (cf. Skt. vádáha-); aipidúuóqara- (for *dýnara-) “*clouded” (cf. dunóóman- “cloud”)

Note also that the sequence aroa is (1) frequently reduced to ra after r: *átóóra > átróó and átaróó, sometimes also after g; (2) replaced by ar (aroa) before r: báruóó but baróó, átróó < *átóóram, but átaróó.

Vowel changes. Dissimilation of ijj > aij > aiaé.

In the following cases the vowel preceding an epenthetic i was another i, and the original i was dissimilated to form the diphthong ai (ii > iij > aij > aij): bárváázdóó < *bárváázdóó < *bávzí-diís [cf. OAv. hušóóití- < hušíí-tí-].

A similar development is probably the origin of the apparent anaptyxis in the group ujj (see above) > uij > uai > uai or uoi (uuóóii), and in the prefix baéé instead of bió in baéé.aróózí “two fingers wide” < *báéé-< *báéí-tú-.

Consonant changes. Assimilation

When two different consonants come into contact, they may become “similar” to one another or completely identical. This phenomenon is referred to as (partial and complete) assimilation. Some common instances of assimilation in (proto-)Avestan are:

1. Unvoiced + voiced > voiced + voiced, e.g.,
   s + d > zd: *mas-dá- > mazdá-;
   ŝ + d > ẑd: duš-dá- > duždá-;
   Ŝ + b > Ŝb: niš-baróta- > nižbaróta-;

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\(^5\) In this sense it can be compared to the padapátha of the Vedic texts. The main difference between the Iranian and Indian tradition is that the Indian one has preserved both the original text and its padapátha, whereas—exaggerating—one might say that in Iran the original has been lost, leaving only the padapátha.
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\[ \dot{s} + z > \ddot{z}: \text{du\text{"u}s-zaotar} > \text{du\text{\`u}zaotar}. \]

2. Labial stop + labial stop > single labial stop:
   \[ p + b > *b > \beta: *\text{ap-bi\text{"a}ah} > \text{afl\text{"i}\text{"o}}. \]

3. Dental stop + s > single s:
   \[ t + s > s: \text{f\text{"u}ui\text{"a}nt-s} > \text{f\text{"u}u\text{"i}}\text{"a}s}. \]

Consonant changes. Spriantization of stops

When \( p \) and \( t \) comes before a suffix or an ending beginning with \( i, u, r, n, \) or \( m \) they change to \( f \) and \( \theta \), e.g.: \( \text{ast\text{"u}u\text{"a}iti\text{"a}} \) “bony,” but \( \text{ast\text{"u}uu\text{"a}ithi\text{"a}} \), \( \text{ha\ddot{a}} \) “being,” but \( \text{ha\text{"a}ithia} \) “real,” \( \text{dp\text{"e}} \) “water,” but \( *\text{af\text{"u}u\text{"a}nt} \) “full of water,” \( \text{\ddot{x}\ddot{a}pa} \) “night,” but \( *\text{\ddot{x}\ddot{a}f\text{"i}\text{"o}} \). This change did not take place before \( i, u, u \) when the \( p \) or \( t \) was preceded by an original long vowel, diphthong, or another consonant (not counting \( \text{\text{"a}s} \)), e.g., \( \text{d\text{"a}\text{"i}\text{"i}a} \) “lawful,” \( \text{ma\text{"a}\text{"i}ia} \) “mortal man” < *\( \text{m\text{"a}r\text{"a}thi\text{"i}a} \), but \( \text{m\text{"a}r\text{"a}thi\text{"i}u\text{"u}} \) “death.”

When a \( p, a, k \), or a \( g \) come before an ending beginning with original \( *s \) they change to \( f \) and \( x \), and the \( *s \) becomes \( \dot{s} \), e.g., \( *\text{\ddot{a}p-s} > \ddot{a}\dot{f}s \) “water” and \( *\text{\ddot{v}\ddot{a}k-s} > \ddot{v}\dot{a}\ddot{x}s \) “voice,” \( \text{drugs-s} > \text{dru\text{"u}x\text{"a}} \) “deception,” \( *\text{nap\ddot{a}t-su} \) (stem \( \text{nap\dot{a}\text{"t}-} \) > \( \text{na\ddot{f}\ddot{s}u} \) “among the grandchildren.” A final \( s \) or \( z \) is lost before the ending, which becomes \( \dot{s}: *\text{spa\ddot{s}-s} > \text{spa\ddot{x}s} \) “spy,” \( *\text{\ddot{b}rz-s} > \text{bar\ddot{x}s} \) “high.”

NOUNS

Consonant declensions: stems

Stems ending in consonants take more “regular” endings than stems ending in vowels, but their declension is complicated by “ablaut.” Case forms that use the full or lengthened grade are commonly referred to as “strong” cases, while case forms that use the zero grade are referred to as “weak” cases.

The strong cases are the sing. nom., voc., acc., and loc.; the dual nom.-acc.; and the plur. nom. The other cases are weak cases.

In addition to the changes in vowel length, the final consonant of the stem also frequently changes. Pay particular attention to such changes in the paradigm below.

Consonant declensions: endings

Consonantal stems can end in almost any consonant. In Indo-Iranian (and Indo-European) masc. and fem. consonantal stems formed their nom. sing. (1) by lengthening the last vowel of the stem and dropping the final consonant, (2) by adding the ending \( -s \) (\( -\dot{s} \) after \( f \) and \( x \)), or (3) by both lengthening the vowel and adding ending \( -s \) (\( -\dddot{s} \)).

As long final vowels were shortened in Avestan, type (1) forms its nominative by simply dropping the final consonant of the stem.

In types (2) and (3) the ending \( *-\dddot{s}/*-\dddot{\ddot{s}} \) combined with the final consonant of the stem to produce various “irregular” form.

The nom.-voc. plural ending is \( -\ddot{o} \) (\( -\text{\`as}^o \)) for both masc. and fem. nouns. Not infrequently, however, the thematic ending \( -\dot{a} \) is found in the manuscripts.\(^6\) The nom.-voc. plural, like the nom. and acc. sing., typically requires the strong stem.

Neuter consonantal stems take no endings in the nom.-acc. singular. The nom.-acc. plural is formed variously in the various declensions.

The nominative singular

The nom. sing. ending \( -\dot{s} \) is found with masc. and fem. nouns and adjectives with stems ending in labials

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\(^6\) This is not necessarily a genuine linguistic feature of a late stage of Avestan; it can simply be errors on the part of the scribes.
(p), velars (k, g), or sibilants (s, z [historically < *tš, dž]).

Consonant stems ending in velar stops (k and g), labial stops (p), and sibilants (s, z)
These stems take the nom. sing. ending -š.
The vocative = the nominative.

Sing.
Nom.-voc. vāxš druoxš āfš spāš barš
Plur.
Nom.-voc. vācō drujo āpō, apasca spaso bāraχō

Notes:
Thematic forms such as nom. plur. vāca are also found.
Note the shortening of the long ā in āpō ~ apasca “and the waters.”

c-stems. Relationship terms
Most words denoting family members are c-stems. Their declension differs slightly from that of the agent nouns (see Lesson 4) in -tar-. The word nar- “man” is declined like the family terms. Examples (nar- “man,” pitar- “father,” mātar- “mother,” duyda “daughter,” x’aľha “sister,” brāta “brother”):

Sing.
nom. nā pita brāta māia duyda x’aľha
voc. narō pitarō - - -
Plur.
nom.-voc. narō pitarō - mātarō - -

WORD FORMATION
Compounds. 1
Compounds as well as their individual elements can be all kinds of words (nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and other compounds). Some common types of Avestan adjectival compounds are the following:

noun + noun: baršmō.zasta- “with barsom in the hand” < baršman- + zasta-;
adjective + noun: tīži.dāra- “with a sharp blade” < tīžō + dāra-;
noun + verbal noun or adjective: varšrajan- “obstruction-smashing” < varšra- “obstruction” + jan- “to smash,” mazdaĭnasna- “Mazdā-sacrificer, Mazdayasnian” < Mazdā- “Ahura Mazdā” + yasna- “sacrifice,” paoiriiō.fradāta- “first brought forth,” ahurašṭa- and mazdašṭa- “established (created) by Ahura Mazdā”;
adverb or prefix + noun/adjective: hurodē- “beautiful” < hu- + raođa- “growth, stature”; huvaršta- “well done” < hu- + varšta-; aibī.gāma- “year” < aibi- prefix + gāman- “step, going.”  ųri.zafan- “with three mouths” < 祢- + zafar- “mouth,” 祢.kamaršē- < 祢- + kamaršē- “head”;
verb + noun: frādat.gaēθa- “who furthers the world of living beings” < frāda- “to further” + gaēθa- “world of living beings.”

Note that adjectival compounds whose second member is an ā-stem, themselves become regular al/ā-stem adjectives, e.g., m. frādat.gaēθa-, f. frādat.gaēθā- (< gaēθā- f.).
The final vowel of the first member usually becomes ē, whether it as an a-, ā-, or an-stem (see the examples above).
Some adjectives have a special form when used as the first member of a compound, e.g., țiği < țigra- “sharp.”

Note that āp- takes the form afš- in compounds, which becomes afš- before voiced consonant: afš. tacin- "with running water," afš. dāna- "containing water" (Y.42.2).

When a word with initial h- is used as second member of a compound, a prosthetic a is prefixed and h > th: ašo. aghan- “winning aša” < *aša-(ŋ)han-; airime. aphad- (= armaēšad-) “sitting in peace.”

**PRONOUNS**

**Demonstrative, relative, and interrogative pronouns in the nominative**

The pronouns and “pronominal” adjectives have several forms that differ from those of the nouns. In the nom. note the neut. sing. in -ī (cf. Eng. *that*) and the masc. plur. in -ē (cf. Eng. *they*).

| The demonstrative pronoun ima- “this”: | The demonstrative pronoun auua- “that”: |
| masc. | fem. | neut. | masc. | fem. | neut. |
| Sing. | aēm | im | imat | hau | hau | auua | auua |
| Plur. | ime | imā, imāsō | imā | auue | auua | auua |

Note:

_aēm < *ajam, im (im) < *iJam (cf. OInd. ayam, iyan)._ The pronoun _huuō “he (you) there”_ (nom. sing. masc.) is only found in quotations from Old Avestan.

| The relative pronoun ya- “who, which”: | The interrogative pronoun ka-λci- “who, what?”: |
| masc. | fem. | neut. | masc. | fem. | neut. |
| Sing. | yō, yasō | yā | yā | kō, kasō, ciš | kā | κατ, κιτ |
| Plur. | yōi, yaēō | yā | yā | kaiia, caiio | - | (κα?) |

Notes:

The mss. frequently have (wrongly) yō for yōi.

The form _kaiio “which?”_ is thematic (Y.19.18, N., FO.).

The form _caiio_ is also used as neut. plur. (Y.2.39, 8.12).

With negation the interrogative pronouns (especially those in e-) become indefinite pronouns: nōt ciš “no one,” mā ciš “(let) no one.”

The forms _κατ, κίτ_ correspond historically to Latin _quod, quid._

**Pronominal adjectives**

Pronominal adjectives include vispa- “all” aniiia- “other,” nom. plur. masc. vispe and aniiie. Note that vispa- has neut. vispe, while aniiia- has neut. aniiiat.

**Pronominal adverbs**

Note the following “correlative” pronominal adverbs (cf. Lesson 17). Note also that, although the forms are symmetric, not all the meanings are:
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iθa “in this way” aθa “thus” auωaθa “in that way” yaθa “as, like” kαθa “how?”
iθra “here” aθra “here, there” auωaθra “there” yaθra “where” kuθra “where?”
iθa “here” aθa “then” auωaθa “there” yaθ “when” kua “where?”

Notes:
The forms in a- are the “unmarked” (“neutral”) ones, while those of i- and auωa- point clearly to “here” and “there.”
There is no YAv. *yaθa, but Old Avestan has yadā “when?”

VERBS

The middle
Avestan verbs can be “active,” that is, take the active endings we have already seen, or “middle,” that is, take the “middle” endings.

Verbs can have active and/or middle forms. Some verbs have only active forms, some only middle forms, and some both active and middle forms. Only in the third group can the middle forms have a special function, different from that of the active forms.

Intransitive verbs usually have only active or only middle forms, while transitive verbs can take both active and middle forms. If they do, then most often the distinction between the two forms is “active ~ passive”; more rarely the middle denotes that the action is being performed in the interest of the subject. Occasionally the middle forms of a verb have the same meaning as the active ones, especially in the case of verbs of motion.

Examples:

1. Middle verbs without active counterpart: maniia- “to think,” yaza- “to sacrifice,” etc.

The imperfect-injunctive middle
Paradigms (aog- “to speak,” hunao-hunu- “to press (the haoma),” ā. pərəsə- “to converse,” yaza- “to sacrifice”):

Sing.
1 - e (-e) aparə̀se
2 - ŝa *hunuša - aŋa yazaŋa
3 - ta hunuța aoxta - ata yazața

Plur
2 - - aŋaŋa yazaŋaŋa
3 - - aŋa yazaŋa

Note: Very few athematic forms are attested. No 1st plur. forms are attested.
The imperative middle  
Paradigm (dāraiaīa- “hold”):  

Sing.  
2 -aqt'ha yazaqt'ha  
3 -aqtam yazaqtam  

Plur.  
2 -aqt'om dāraiaqt'om  
3 -aqt'om yazaqt'om  

Note: No athematic forms are attested.  

SYNTAX  

Uses of the middle:  

1. Exclusively middle verbs  

āqṭ Zarahuṣṭrō aoxta “Then Zarathustra said.”  
iḍa hō maśiiō maniiata “In this way the man thought.”  
iḍa mē tum hām.caraj'ha Aṣi srirē dāmīdāte “In this way dwell with me, O beautiful Aṣi ...!”  

fra.dauuata vi.dauuata fra.maniiata vi.maniiata  
Aurator Mainiūš pouru.mahrkō  
Indrō dāeuus Sāuru dāeuuō “The Evil Spirit full of destruction chattered this, chattered that, took hope, lost hope (?), (as did) the dāeuua Indra (and) the daeuua Sāuru.” (Y.V.19.43)  

yaqt hē tum us.zaliṇja tum orazuuno Zarahuṣṭra “... that you were born to him, you, O upright Zarathustra.” (Y.9.13)  

Yimō hē viṣata pātacā ṭrātacā “Yima was ready to be guardian and protector for him.”  

Karosāniš yō raosta yō dauuata “Karosāniš who wept and chattered” (Y.9.24)  

2. Middle with passive function  

kasciś iḍa nōśīt vaeṇata “Nobody was seen here.”  
yadha Miṭrō hubarastō barata (after Y.t.10.112) “When Miṭra was well treated.”
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varziliatamca iða vohu vāstrīta

“And let good pastures be produced here!” (Vr.15.1)

Note: Neuter plural subjects may take a singular verb.

3. Reflexive, etc., middle

mażdaiasna barəsmo.zasta hištanta

“The Mazdaians stood with barsom in the hands.” (Yt.5.98)

apō hištanta frašatā afraxšatiaiñeis

“The waters stood forth (created) without swelling forth.” (after Yt.13.55)

θritisō.zoma hanjasanta

“300 winters came together (passed).” (V.2.8)

dāt yat tum Zarathustra varasāsca�.रा.ज.त.इ.ि.ग.ह varasāsca pairi.brināhga srwāca upa.θarasaŋha

“Then when you, O Zarathustra, combed your hair, trimmed your hair, and cut your nails...” (V.17.4)

Note: varasā is the acc. plur. of varas- “hair” and srwāca the nom.-acc. plur. of srū- “nail”; in these nouns the acc. plur. is the same form as the nom.

EXERCISES 6

1a. Write in transcription and Avestan script the nom. sing. and plur. (where appropriate) forms of the following nouns and adjectives:

karap-. sriro-, mašia- ašxāhak-, arzu-. zaotar-, spas-. pauru-, Haraiti- barəz-.

1b. Translate into Avestan and write in transcription and Avestan script the nom. sing. and plur. forms of the following nouns, adjectives, and pronouns:

this/that brave son, this/that well-shaped daughter, this/that Ahurian house.

2. Write in transcription and Avestan script the imperfect-injunctive middle and imperative middle forms of bara- “to carry,” upa.θarasa- “to cut.”

3. Transcribe and translate into English:
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4. Translate into Avestan:

1. Let the priest say forth the Yaθā ahū vairiō to us.
2. O tawny haoma, be my protector!
3. Thus said Ahura Mazda: Let this earth increase! Let these plants grow!
4. Then that earth increased; it went apart. All went forth, both men and animals, large and small.
5. Then a son was born to him, splendid Yima with good herds. Then a girl was born to him, good, pretty, (and) beautiful.
6. A voice was heard, saying: That is my dear daēnā, the Mazdaian, Zarathustrian (one).
7. That Lie was lost. Those demons howled. Those demonesses ran away.
8. Who is this young woman who came running?
9. Who is that villain who ran away?
10. Which are those acts which are badly done?

VOCABULARY 6

aduuara- < ā.duuara-
ādā: then
afroξšieĩnĩ-, fem. of afroξšiĩaŋt-: not growing
forth
aį̂jī.ɡāmā-: year
apiduũuŋma-: *clouded
airime.ajhaď- = armaē.šaď- < ṿhād: sitting in peace
and quiet
aog-/aοj-/ mid.: to speak, say
apa.jasa- < ṿgam/jam, mid.: to get away
apṛeṣa- < ā.paṛeṣa-
aṛēa-: side
aṛēa- n.: matter
armaēšaď- = airime.ajhaď- < ṿhād: sitting in peace
and quiet
astuuɑŋt-: having bones, osseous
ašaŋhāk/c- m.: following Order, in accordance with
Order
ašo.arhan-: winning, earning Order
auuãa-: there
auuaθa: in that way
auuaθra: there
aζa- < ṿaζ: to lead, take (away)
ā.duuara- (aduuara-) < ṿduar, mid.: to come
running
afọnt-: full of water
aporaĩi- f.: clearing of debt, atonement
baē.arazu-: two fingers wide
bara- < ṿbar mid.: to be treated
barasman- n.: altar grass, barsom
barasmō.zasta-: carrying barsom in the hands
brātār-: brother
ciďa-: fine (penalty)
daďuuiatāz-: daēuua-sacrificer
daaua- < ṿdaο ( < *daθ “deceive”?), mid.: to speak
(used of evil beings)
dātiĩa- < dātã-: according to the law
dāmiĩtā- (dāmi.dātã-, dāmi.dātã-): set in place by
the *Web-holder
dařaiĩa- < ṿdar: to hold
daɾā-: blade
driyi-, f. driui-: poor
dunman- n.: cloud
du˝dah-: who gives evil gifts
du˝gaiĩiti- f.: evil smell
du˝zaotar-: bad libator
fracara- < ṿcar act., mid.: go forth
fra.dauua < ṿdaο, mid.: to chatter
frađita- < fra.dađa-: brought forth
fra.maniia- < √ mana mid.: to think ahead, hope, take courage (?)
fra.mrao-/mru-: say forth
fra.sautua- < √ ša(t)iio: to go forth
frādāt.gātha-: furthering the world of living beings
haca- < √ hak/hak mid.: to follow
hanjasa- < √ gam mid.: to come together
Haptō.iringa-: Ursa Major, the Big Dipper
ham.čara- < √ čar mid.: to dwell together (with)
ham.rāzaiia- < √ raz, mid.: to straighten, comb; stretch (oneself)
hubarāta-: well-treated
hunao-/hunu- < √ hao/hu, mid.: to press
Indra-: name of an old god (cf. Olnd. Indra)
ītha: in this way
īthra: here
kāsā: when?
karaśāni-: name of a mythical villain
kufrā: where?
kuuā: where?
mātār- f.: mother
marašītu- m.: death
napāt-, nap- (nafār-): grandson
nūma, nāma < nāman- n.: by name
niptrār-: protector, guardian
niž.barā- < √ bar: to take out/away, remove, get rid of
nižbarāta-: past part. of < niž.barā-: taken away, removed
paca- √ pak/pac-: to cook
pairi.brīna- < √ brač/brī: to cut, pare
pait.aog- < √ aog/aog mid.: to answer
pitar- (patar-): father
raod-: to wail, howl; cf. uruṭa-
Sāuru (stem form uncertain): name of a dačuua (cf. Olnd. Sarva)
spas- m.: spy
sruia- < √ srua/sru mid.: be heard
srū- (plur. sruij [sruui]) n.: nail
star- (plur. stārō) m.: star
tiyra-: pointed, sharp
tiži.āra- < tiyra-: having/with a sharp blade
θrātar-: protector, savior
thīsatō.zama-: a three-hundred-year (winter) period
uitiiaojana-, uitj aojana-: thus saying
uruṭa- < √ raod/rud (ruθ) mid.: to wail, howl
us.zaiia- < √ zā, mid.: to be born
vak- √ vac- m.: word, speech
varāšāria- < √ varād: to increase, enlarge
varāsa- n., varasā- (plur.): hair
varārajia-: obstruction-smashing, victorious
varāzīia- < √ varz: to work, cultivate
visa- < √ vaēs mid.: to declare oneself ready (to be)
vī.dauua- < √ dao mid.: to ramble on (about) (?)
vī.maniaa- < √ man mid.: to think better of, lose courage, be distraught (?)
vī.nama- < √ nam, mid.: to bend aside, to spread out, to go apart
xšapan-, xšafr- f.: night
xšuuaš.gāiia-: distance of six steps
x’ahnar- f.: sister
yafrā: where
zaotar-: libator; the chief officiating priest
zasta-: hand
zā nom. sing. of zam- f.: earth