

Preface

In memoriam X. Tremblay
† 15. 11. 2011

The Avestan texts were probably composed in Eastern Iran between the second half of the 2nd millennium BCE and the end of the Achaemenid dynasty. But the oldest Avestan manuscripts date from the 13th/14th century and it is only from the 17th century on that we have numerous copies. Even if we assume a careful transmission process, it is obvious that the shape in which the Avestan texts appear in the manuscripts cannot be the original one. Therefore, the analysis of the transmission must play a central role in Avestan philology, for our understanding of the Avestan texts and the decision about the text that should be edited and form the basis for our linguistic, philological, religious or cultural analysis depend enormously on our view of the transmission.

In fact, the history of Avestan Studies in the 20th century has been conditioned by very different views of the transmission of the Avesta. ANDREAS's theory introduced a suspicion of the Avestan texts as transmitted in the manuscripts, and supposed that in practice interest in the Avestan texts and language decreased considerably. K. HOFFMANN, on the other hand, following and developing some ideas about the transmission of the Avesta by BAILEY, HENNING and MORGENSTIERNE, restored our confidence in the Avestan manuscripts and provided us with a method for the analysis of these witnesses that has proved to obtain positive results. This produced a strong revitalisation of Avestan Studies in the last quarter of the 20th century.

The only almost complete editions of the Avestan texts that we possess were published in the second half of the 19th century by N.L. WESTERGAARD¹ and K.F. GELDNER². Their shape and methodology reflect their conception of the transmission history. According to WESTERGAARD and GELDNER, the Avestan texts were composed basically before the Achaemenians and were transmitted orally and in writing until being collected at the time of the first Sasanian kings. This original is lost. There probably never were a lot of copies around, and some of the few available copies, even complete sections, were lost in the course of the islamisation of Iran. As a consequence, around the 10th century only a part of the original texts were available in one or very few copies in the region of Yazd

1 N.L. WESTERGAARD: *Zendavesta, or The religious books of the Zoroastrians*. Copenhagen 1852.

2 K.F. GELDNER: *Avesta. The sacred books of the Parsis*. Stuttgart 1886.

or Kerman. All our manuscripts derive from this copy. N.L. WESTERGAARD tries in his edition to reconstruct as far as possible the original Sasanian Avesta. K.F. GELDNER's edition had a similar purpose: "to arrive at the stage of the ultimate and final redaction of the text which took place, in part at least, a considerable time after the first Yezdegerd". In fact, they edited almost exactly the same text and with a very similar method.

A dramatic change was introduced by F.C. ANDREAS at the beginning of the 20th century³: according to him, the Avesta was written down in the Arsacid period in a Semitic script and the Sasanian version is the result of an erroneous vocalisation by priests ignorant of the correct pronunciation of the Avestan texts. Accordingly the manuscripts are faulty transcriptions in an alphabetical script of a former copy written in a consonantal script and the main tool for reconstructing the Avestan text is provided by a comparison with the Sanskrit. Nevertheless, the simultaneous refutation of ANDREAS's theory by W.B. HENNING, M. MORGENSTIERNE and especially H. BAILEY⁴ showed that the Avestan script is a phonetic script created for the reproduction of a phonetic reality and that the extant Avestan text is not the result of a poor vocalisation of a former Avesta written in another alphabet. The Avestan texts were transmitted mainly orally before being written down in the actual Avestan script and the manuscripts reproduce this oral performance of the texts. The basis for the work on the Avesta must therefore be the witness of the manuscripts.

This change of view should have led to a rediscovery of the importance of the Avestan manuscripts as our only witnesses of the Avestan texts and should have opened the way for research on the role of orality in the composition and transmission of the Avestan texts. Regarding the first, we had to wait for the works of K. HOFFMANN published successively from the sixties of the last century onwards. His analysis of the Avestan script drew some clear conclusions: the Avestan script is a phonetic script that has been created for the transcription of a text transmitted orally and, although many features of the original writing of the Avestan have already disappeared in the manuscripts, it is possible to reconstruct the shape of the Avestan texts in their Sasanian version (the Sasanian archetype) through a linguistic and philological analysis of the witnesses.

The discovery of the importance of the oral character and transmission of the Avestan texts, at least until they were written down in the actual Avestan script, as well as the new field of study of oral literature, inaugurated by MILMAN PARRY at the end of the twenties of the 20th century for the study of Homer, should have led inevitably to an intense study of the oral aspects of the Avestan

3 F.C. ANDREAS: "Die Entstehung des Awesta-Alphabetes und sein ursprünglicher Lautwert." In: *Verhandlungen des XII. Internationalen Orientalisten-Kongresses in Hamburg 1902*. Leiden 1903.

4 W.B. HENNING: "The desintegration of the Avestan studies." In: TPS 1942, pp. 40–56; G. MORGENSTIERNE: "Orthography and Sound-system of the Avesta." In: NTS 12 (1942), pp. 30–78; H. BAILEY: *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books*. Oxford 1943.

texts and to a substantial change of perspective. With the exception of the works of P. O. SKJAERVØ, however, no systematic analysis of the oral character of the Avestan texts and of its implications for Avestan Studies has taken place so far. Actually, the Avestan texts were composed orally, performed orally through centuries and written down on the basis of these oral performances; even after that the oral transmission has remained a fundamental factor. The extant Avestan texts are the final result of a long tradition of oral performance that has continuously remodelled these texts from the beginning until the very end of the transmission, although to different extents. Therefore, an analysis of the different aspects of their orality in comparison with other oral traditions must be an essential part of Avestan Studies. These aspects must be taken into account in all linguistic, philological or religious analyses of the Avestan texts.

The studies on orality have revealed that the compositional process of oral texts is different from the creation of a written text. Oral poets are trained in a tradition and each composition is a remake of former versions of the same or similar texts. The degree of change introduced in each performance of the text depends on the genre or purpose of the performance and on the vitality of the tradition. At any time the tradition provided the performer with poetic formulas that he could use again and again with minor modifications. Many of these Avestan formulas have parallels in the Vedic texts and in other poetic works of the Indo-European languages (especially in Homer). Thus this poetic oral tradition must go back to an Indo-Iranian and Indo-European common heritage. For this reason they have attracted the attention of many specialists like R. SCHMITT, B. SCHLERATH, G. NAGY, C. WATKINS, V. SADOVSKI etc., and their use in linguistic and philological argumentation has by now become a standard.

Apart from the formulas, there are greater text units as well that can be re-used and modified in each performance. P. O. SKJAERVØ calls them “unit blocks” in his contribution on the Zoroastrian oral tradition. They are an essential feature of the Avestan texts. Most of them consist, indeed, in the combination of different unit blocks, of which clear traces can be detected in the texts: irregular combination of two similar unit blocks into one, connections between blocks that reveal their character, etc. The long liturgy as it appears in the manuscripts is in fact a transcription of a crystallised performance in which heterogeneous elements have been combined at different times within a stable ritual structure. This ritual structure is already defined in the *Yašt*, as shown by J. KELLENS in his contribution to this volume. Different texts with different functions and of different genres were needed at the various moments of the ceremonies. We can imagine that the capacity for creating new texts in each performance with the tools provided by the oral tradition slowly decreased, allowing fixed texts with a small degree of variation to take the place of the former free compositions. But each performance preserved a degree of liberty to introduce changes, even if it decreased in the latest phases of the transmission.

The Old Avestan texts belonged to the earliest fixed texts and are at the very centre of the liturgy. However, even there we can still recognise in the manuscripts a certain variation. In the description of the liturgy found in the *Yašt*, different combinations of Old Avestan texts are mentioned instead of their traditional arrangement (see KELLENS's contribution): the five *Gāθās* alone; Ahuna Vairiia—*Yasna Haptañhāiti*—*Fšūšō Maθra*; or just Ahuna Vairiia. Rearrangements and variations of the Old Avestan corpus are still recognisable even in the extant variants of the liturgy: for instance, the process of segregation of the Ahuna Vairiia from the Ahunauuaiti *Gāθā* and the adaptation of the old Avestan texts to the structure of the Ahuna Vairiia; or the inclusion of the *Yasna Haptañhāiti* after the Ahunauuaiti *Gāθā*, and in some ceremonies after the *Vohuxšaθra Gāθā* as well. Different exegetical movements, and probably different ritual schools, introduced conscious rearrangements of the Old Avestan texts and similar movements can be supposed in the origin of the structure of the Old Avestan texts as we know them. In the context of an oral tradition this is a more attractive view of the arrangement of the Old Avestan texts than the alternative view of a singular composition by an individual composer and arranger. But this discussion is still not settled.

Each oral performance reaches a different equilibrium between repetition and innovation, and in the ritual performances these two elements are probably not combined in the same way as in entertainment literature. Whereas variation is an essential feature of the latter, stability is one of the features of ritual texts. Free texts conditioned by the ritual moment became crystallised sections of the liturgy at different times. Although several parts of the liturgy remain open to different alternatives to this very day, the number of alternatives has been continuously decreasing. Some of the fixed sections of the liturgy do indeed reveal their origin as variants of one concrete ceremony. Thus, the list of the *ratu* of the *Wīspērad* originally belonged to the disappeared *Bayān Yašt* ceremony. It became, however, standard for the different *Wīspērad* and intercalation ceremonies.

At different times, elements of different origins and dates became standard texts of the ceremony. For instance, the dialogic version of the Ahuna Vairiia is probably a ritual instruction about the way this prayer is to be recited when it has to be recited only *once* (and not repeated) in different ritual circumstances. Nevertheless, it entered the standard performance of the ceremony through the teaching in the priestly schools and today is part of the text of the ceremony.

Despite different processes of crystallisation, the texts have always been exposed to a certain degree of conscious and unconscious change. Even in the final transmission periods in the 18th and 19th centuries in India, we still find few changes in selected parts of the text (e.g. new dedicatories or modifications of the old ones, little exegetical changes, etc.). In fact, we are shifting from a picture of the Avestan transmission in which each text was composed *once*, transmitted more or less *unchanged*, then written down *once*, and where its dif-

ferent copies in the manuscripts derive from only *one* copy, to a more open view of the Avestan transmission. It is likely that even during the last stages of the transmission some manuscripts were not copied from other written sources, but transcribed to the dictation of a priest or created on the basis of the ritual knowledge of the priest copying the manuscripts. Even when there is a written source, the newly created manuscripts are a compromise between the written source and the ritual performance of the specific time and place. Thus we must stop considering manuscripts just as a more or less apt tool for reconstructing the “original” text of a Zoroastrian ceremony, but take them as a witness of the performance of this ceremony at a certain time and place. If the manuscript is a faithful copy of an original 100 years old, it will witness the state of the ceremony at that time. If it is strongly influenced by the actual performance, then it will be a reliable witness of the performance of its own time. Traditionally, the criterion for judging manuscripts was only how faithfully it reproduces the oldest possible shape of the single words according to our linguistic criteria, not its value as a witness of the way the ceremony was celebrated at its time, and of the conscious changes introduced into it and the reasons behind these changes. Some manuscripts are valuable “records” of the oral performance of the Avestan ceremonies, even though they might show aberrant readings if we compare them with our reconstruction of the corresponding *Sasanian* forms.

In the studies of orality the performance is an essential element. Oral texts exist only through their performance and it is only through it that they can be understood. If the analysis of the written texts has recently seen the rise of the artefactual or material philology, the studies of orality could lead to a performative philology. In the Avestan texts, the role of the performance is indeed central. Almost all Avestan texts preserved in the manuscripts are ritual texts performed in the different Zoroastrian rituals. However, until recently the Avestan texts were considered to be remnants of the Great Avesta described in the *Dēnkard*, a collection of religious writings of diverse character: theological, philosophical, sapiential, legal, etc. The texts as they appear in the manuscripts were parts of the Great Avesta reorganised on “liturgical reasons”. Their ritual character was just a (rather unlucky) circumstance of the transmission, but did not reflect the true nature of the texts, which were intended for higher destinies.

Actually, the vast majority of the Avestan texts are proper ritual texts that can only be understood as the text of a ritual performance. J. KELLENS and A. PANAINO have deeply changed our view of the Avestan transmission, stressing the ritual character of the Avestan texts transmitted in the manuscripts and their independence from the Great Avesta described in the *Dēnkard*. Their arguments are included in this volume. Our Avestan texts are not liturgical rearrangements of texts of the Great Avesta that survived the loss of the greatest part of this work, but an independent ritual collection. In fact, the texts of the manuscripts are just transcriptions of some ritual performances or, most likely, compositions conceived as guides for the proper ritual performance at a time

when the oral tradition was in eclipse so that priests had to look to the written texts for help in the instruction of other priests.

Accordingly, our texts must be understood and edited as ritual texts. KELLENS has recently started a complete translation of the long liturgy in which he tries to fully understand its ritual character and the ritual coherence of the text.⁵ He does not limit his translation to the text of the standard ceremony but includes the variants of the WĪsperad ceremony as well, albeit only the additions and variants that appear in GELDNER, that is, the WĪsperad sections according to the Pahlavi manuscripts. Further variants of other ceremonies, like the substitutions of *hāuuani*- by other formulas in the intercalation ceremonies, appear (based on BROCKHAUS's diplomatic edition) only rarely in KELLENS's work. Furthermore, the ritual directions which are included in the liturgical manuscripts and indicate the performative context of the Avestan recitative have remained practically unknown until today. WESTERGAARD and GELDNER's editions did not include them either in Pahlavi or in Gujarati. The editions of the Iranian and Indian long liturgy printed in India and containing the instructions have not reached the West nor been used by Western scholars with the lucky exception of J. DARMESTETER, who indeed incorporated the translation of the Gujarati ritual directions in his translation of the Yasna. Modern editions of the ritual texts, however, continue the old practice of not including the ritual directions, thus hiding the true character and performative context of the Avestan texts, many parts of which (especially the repetitions in the long liturgy) are only understandable with a view to the ritual actions they accompany.

Since the processes of crystallisation are crucial for the constitution of the Avestan texts as we know them, they have received special attention. SKJAERVØ and KELLENS have tried to reconstruct the history of the different processes of crystallisation of the Avestan corpus. In this volume A. PANAINO offers his own view regarding this process in the first part of his paper. Unfortunately, other aspects of the oral composition or performance of the texts are less present in the Avestan bibliography and have not sufficiently changed our understanding of the Avestan texts. Only P. O. SKJAERVØ has systematically worked, starting from the nineties of the 20th century, on the oral character of the Avestan texts and the implications that this oral character should have in our study and understanding of the Avesta. His ideas are summarised in his contribution on the Zoroastrian oral tradition. Sadly, this is the only contribution to the volume focussing on the orality of the Avesta, but this fact reflects the lack of active research in this field. Yet orality has conditioned the Avestan texts from their very composition until the last stages of transmission in the 18th and 19th century.

While the discovery that the Avestan texts were transmitted orally has produced only a limited research on orality, K. HOFFMANN's analysis of the Avestan script and his view of the Avestan transmission have served as a stimulus for in-

5 J. KELLENS: *Études avestiques et mazdéennes*. Paris 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011.

tense activity in other fields. His method for reconstructing the *Sasanian* shape of the Avestan texts on the basis of the evidence found in the manuscripts, together with his new transliteration of the Avestan, has been almost universally adopted. Inspired by the work of K. HOFFMANN and J. NARTEN, there has been an intense editorial activity with regard to single Avestan texts during the last 30 years the results of which are described by A. HINTZE in her article “On editing the Avesta”.

Actually, some of the views on the Avestan transmission proposed by HOFFMANN have been the object of scholarly debates in the last years. HOFFMANN and NARTEN postulated a first writing down of the Avesta with the actual script around the 4th/5th centuries CE using chiefly palaeographical arguments: a sarcophagus in Istanbul dated by DE MENASCE around 430 CE already contains the Pahlavi cursive which was the basis for the creation of the Avestan script. Actually, the sarcophagus has turned out to be of a much later date (around the 9th to 10th centuries), so that this argument is invalid. But even today there is still no agreement between researchers. On the one hand, there is no certain evidence for the existence of a written Avesta in the Sasanian period, and Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian sources insist on the oral transmission of the Avestan texts. On the other hand, CERETI has shown on the basis of numismatic evidence that the Pahlavi cursive is of earlier origin than traditionally assumed. The different positions in this debate are represented in this volume by the contributions of K. REZANIA, X. TREMBLAY and A. PANAINO.

Another question raised by HOFFMANN’s method is probably more fundamental than the dating issue, viz. the linearity of the transmission. K. HOFFMANN shares with N. L. WESTERGAARD and K. F. GELDNER a very similar view: our manuscripts go back to several hyparchetypes for the different collections, which go back directly to the Sasanian archetype. The differences between the texts as they appear in the manuscripts and the contents of the Avesta as described in the *Dēnkard* are attributed to the misfortunes of the Zoroastrian community after the Islamisation and to rearrangements of the remnants according to liturgical principles. As already mentioned, today this view has changed thanks to the works of J. KELLENS and A. PANAINO. Our manuscripts contain basically the instructions for the right performance of a series of liturgies and rituals celebrated in Sasanian and Post-Sasanian times. The status of both collections of Avestan manuscripts (the long liturgy and the short liturgies) and their connection to the Great Avesta are discussed in the contributions of A. PANAINO, A. CANTERA (“Building trees”) and G. KÖNIG (“Nask Bayān”).

The alleged dependence of the manuscripts from the Great Avesta that according to the information in the *Dēnkard* included a Pahlavi translation of the Avestan texts, as well as the earlier dating of the Pahlavi manuscripts for the *Yasna* and the *Wīdēwdād* has led to the traditional assumption that the liturgical manuscripts were dependent on the exegetical ones. In the new context of independent collections for the Great Avesta and for the ritual Avesta this conclusion seems less convincing. In his contribution to this volume, J. J. FERRER

conclusively refutes one philological argument for the dependence of the liturgical manuscripts on the exegetical ones. Some Avestan quotations that appear as arguments of authority in the digressions of the Pahlavi translation of the *Wīdēwdād* are at times included in the liturgical manuscripts. These additions have been traditionally explained as wrong additions made when the Avestan text of the liturgical manuscripts was extracted from the exegetical ones. Actually, they do not appear in the Iranian manuscripts, but are the consequence of one or several Indian collations of the liturgical manuscripts with the exegetical ones.

Actually, it is likely that, if there has been a Sasanian archetype and its contents were those described in the *Dēnkard*, this archetype has no direct influence on the constitution of the Avestan manuscripts as we know them. Unfortunately, the date at which the ritual descriptions started to be written down is unknown and only partially connected with the real date of the invention of the Avestan script, since it seems likely that the Avestan script was not created for writing down the single rituals, but the Great Avesta or parts of it. So a discussion about the convenience of editing the texts of our manuscripts in their *Sasanian* shape would be advisable, since we lack evidence whether the ritual texts have ever been written down in this form. I address this problem briefly in my contribution on the edition of the Avestan texts.

Furthermore, the single hyparchetypes for the different texts are put in question with different arguments in two contributions to this volume by X. TREMBLAY and myself. HOFFMANN provided philological evidence for the existence of a hyparchetype of the long liturgy and later HUMBACH did the same for *Wīdēwdād* and for the *Xwardag Abastāg*. The philological evidence is beyond doubt (there are some readings that are clear errors of the written transmission and are shared by all manuscripts of one or several classes). However, it remains doubtful whether the evidence is sufficient for reconstructing a historical fact. In my contribution “Building trees” I try to show that some aberrant readings are shared by groups of manuscripts that cannot all go back to the same written source and that even transmission errors can spread to manuscripts of different origins through the ritual practice. The manuscripts show indeed a great uniformity, but this may reflect a uniformity in the ritual performance which the manuscripts would at the same time reflect and contribute to create.

Even though K. HOFFMANN gives the manuscripts back the importance that they lost as a result of ANDREAS’s theory, only very little work has been done on the Avestan manuscripts in the last 130 years. Two big collections of Avestan manuscripts were published in the 20th century: 1. a selection of the Copenhagen Avestan and Pahlavi manuscripts published by A. CHRISTENSEN between 1931 and 1934; and 2. a selection of Avestan and Pahlavi manuscripts of different collections published in facsimile by the Asia Institute of the Pahlavi University, Shiraz. These two collections have facilitated the usage of a few Avestan manuscripts by K. HOFFMANN and other researchers, as well as the compar-

ison of the data provided by GELDNER with the originals. Notwithstanding, K. HOFFMANN's work is based mainly on the data provided by GELDNER, since the number of manuscripts accessible to him were still very small.

A former student of K. HOFFMANN and J. NARTEN, A. HINTZE, realised the importance of a direct utilisation of the manuscripts and travelled to India while working on her edition of the Yašt 19. She was able to locate the important manuscript of the Yašt F1 which was published years later by K. JAMASPAŠA. More recently she has reproduced in facsimile (together with F. KOTWAL) another important manuscript, containing the Yašt and Xwardag Abastāg, E1. In Iran K. MAZDAPOUR has undertaken the task of locating, preserving and publishing as many Avestan manuscripts available in Iran as possible. For the time being, two manuscripts have been published (one Xwardag Abastāg and one Wīspērād Sāde) and others are in progress.

Some years ago, I started the Avestan Digital Archive (<http://ada.usal.es> or <http://www.avesta-archive.com>) whose principal aim is to locate, digitise and make available online as many Avestan manuscripts as possible. The first six years of work on the project have shown that the implicit statement that it is impossible to get together as many manuscripts as GELDNER did is false. GELDNER used around 135 manuscripts. The Avestan Digital Archive has already digitised around 120 and published online 34 manuscripts, but many more still await their digitisation. The huge amount of manuscripts planned to be made accessible can be published reasonably only in a digital form, since this procedure is more affordable for editors and users alike and besides allows an easier use of the manuscripts than does the reproduction in printed facsimiles.

But the work on the manuscripts cannot be limited to their reproduction. First, we need lists of the available manuscripts of each text. The catalogues of the different libraries must be checked in search of Avestan manuscripts and those that are not included in them have to be brought to light. Accordingly, complete lists of the Yasna and Wīdēwdād manuscripts are included in this volume. Nonetheless, even before publication of the present volume new manuscripts of both text types have emerged and updates of the lists must appear in the near future.

In this context, descriptions of the collections available in the libraries and of their history seem appropriate. In recent years, F. KOTWAL and D. SHEFFIELD have catalogued the manuscripts that have arrived at the Meherji-rana Library after the catalogue of B. N. DHABHAR (1925). This new catalogue is available online (<http://www.meherjiranalibrary.com/home/collections>). A general description of the history of this Library and its collection is presented in this volume by F. KOTWAL with the assistance of D. SHEFFIELD. P. O. SKJAERVØ has been cataloguing manuscripts not included in the Catalogues of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, but the results have not been published yet. U. SIMS-WILLIAMS describes three collections (THOMAS HYDE's, SAMUEL GUISE's and BURJORJI SORABJI ASHBURNER's) of the British Library in the present volume.

Obtaining information about the Avestan manuscripts available in Iran is also fundamental. Iranian manuscripts are clearly underrepresented in the editions of WESTERGAARD and GELDNER, although they are often more conservative than the Indian ones and should play a decisive role in the edition of the Avestan texts. Thanks to the efforts of K. MAZDAPOUR, an important number of Iranian manuscripts of the Avesta have been discovered recently in Iran and we hope that this number will increase considerably in the future. In this volume, the contributions of K. MAZDAPOUR and F. JAHANPOUR present some of the past years' new findings in Iran.

The first and last analysis of a significant number of manuscripts was done by GELDNER. Actually, he did not intend to make an analysis of each single manuscript and of the history of the transmission. His analysis was purely instrumental for the editorial process and depended on it. Thus the Prolegomena to his edition are the compilation of his observations made during the editorial process and not a preliminary or independent analysis of the manuscripts. Moreover, his methodology for the analysis of manuscripts, when not relying on the data of the colophons, is not particularly adequate for the Avestan transmission, since it does not take into consideration the deep interrelationship between written and oral transmission even within the written transmission. Thus, a new analysis of the Avestan manuscripts and their interrelations is a pending task for Avestan philology. Some methodological remarks are made in my article "Building trees", where a few new tools for the analysis of the relationship and dependences between manuscripts are also introduced. J. MARTÍNEZ PORRO tests this method against the copies of the exegetical *Wīdēwdād* manuscript L 4.

As long as the manuscripts are not generally accessible, the basic philological tools for the analysis of the manuscripts and of the Avestan written transmission will continue being a desideratum of Avestan philology. There is actually neither an Avestan codicology nor palaeography nor exhaustive catalogues of Avestan manuscripts. Nor are the colophons of the Avestan manuscripts accessible; etc. Unfortunately, these aspects are not contemplated in this volume. The relevant research is in such an early stage, if it has started at all, that it has been impossible to include contributions on these issues.

These pending tasks must complement another desideratum of Avestan philology: a new edition of the Avestan texts. The new methodology developed by K. HOFFMANN for reconstructing the shape of the Avestan texts through philological and linguistic analysis of the readings attested in the manuscripts have stimulated an intense editorial activity over the past years. Despite the obvious improvement with regard to GELDNER's edition, these editions remain dependent on it in all aspects but the system of transliteration and the selection of the single readings. They reproduce the text of WESTERGAARD and GELDNER with an occasional different selection of the reading accepted in the text and with rare emendations. So they keep editing basically the text of the Pahlavi manuscripts with occasional readings from the liturgical ones. The apparatuses

reproduce GELDNER's often in a more orderly fashion and sometimes enlarged by additional readings of some other manuscripts used by the editor. Still, since they are based on GELDNER's apparatus, they replicate its deficiencies.

A new edition of the Avestan texts is therefore needed, but it must be made on the basis of the manuscripts and not of GELDNER's edition. A new collection and a new analysis of the manuscripts and their reciprocal relations must be carried on. Besides, the liturgical character of the texts must be seriously taken into account. Hence the basis for establishing the text must be the liturgical manuscripts and the edition must reproduce the way in which the Avestan texts are presented, i. e. including the ritual directions that contextualise the text and including the different ritual variants that appear in the manuscripts. The features of the new edition must in fact be decided on the basis of a completely new analysis of the transmission of the Avestan texts.

In September 2009 I organised a conference in Salamanca under the title "Poets, priests, scribes and librarians: the transmission of the holy wisdom of Zoroastrianism" as a midterm conference of the *Societas Iranologica Europaea*. The idea was to bring together people working on the transmission of the Avesta, of its Pahlavi translation and of the Pahlavi books, for they share similar problems. The conference was meant to present the state of the art of the different issues related to the transmission of the Zoroastrian texts and to promote the debate about the most controversial points. Furthermore, it aimed at drawing participants' attention to the necessity of searching and making available the Avestan manuscripts to the scientific community and of initiating a new reflexion and debate about the edition of the Avestan texts, its methodology and perspectives.

In the years since the conference, scholar activity has increased, especially such activity as pursues the final goal of a new edition of the Avestan texts that is not based on the data presented in GELDNER's edition but on the autopsy of the manuscripts. Teams from the School of Oriental and African Studies (London) and of the Universities of Bologna, Berlin (FU), Frankfurt a. M. and Salamanca are working together on a joint future project "Corpus Avesticum" intended to lead to a new printed as well as electronic edition of the Avestan texts based on the witnesses of the manuscripts and their systematic analysis.

In the present volume, I have included some of the papers presented at the Salamanca conference and some preliminary works done in the context of the Corpus Avesticum project. The criterion for the selection of the papers read at the conference was not their quality, for in this case further papers would have been included, but their thematic relevance. The main idea was not to publish a proceedings volume, but a thematically coherent book in which relevant contributions about the different subjects connected with the transmission of the Avesta are collected. Accordingly, some subjects that were not addressed at the conference have been dealt with afterwards in the course of discussions with some participants of the Corpus Avesticum project when trying to define the features of the new edition and to do the necessary

preliminary work. I have for my part summarised the reasons why a new edition of the Avesta is necessary in two talks I gave in London and Cambridge (May 2011) at the invitation of A. HINTZE. An extended and modified version of them is included here in the paper “Why do we Really Need a New Edition of the Zoroastrian Long Liturgy?”, in which I also offer some thoughts about the still open questions regarding the edition of the Avestan texts. Furthermore, M. Á. ANDRÉS-TOLEDO and myself have prepared a complete list of the known manuscripts of the *Wīdēwdād*, and A. HINTZE has done the same for the *Yasna* manuscripts. Also, since my presentation in “Building trees” focusses mainly on the transmission of the long liturgy and its relation to the Great Avesta, G. KÖNIG has written a paper on the special problems presented by the short liturgies that offers new approaches and opens new perspectives.

The present volume has been organised thematically under different headings: the oral composition and the writing down of the Avestan texts; the manuscripts and their analysis; the edition of the Avestan texts and the transmission and edition of the *Zand* and other Zoroastrian texts. Although it consists of contributions by different authors with different interests and perspectives, I have tried to present a coherent panorama of the work in progress and to raise a discussion about a number of questions concerning the transmission and edition of the Avestan texts. I must thank all the authors for their generous contributions, for the fruitful discussions during the conference and thereafter. Special thanks go to MARIA MACUCH for accepting this volume into the series *Iranica* and to CLAUDIUS NAUMANN for producing a coherent layout out of the motley individual contributions. The publication of this volume has been possible through the funding granted by the Spanish Ministry of Science to the Avestan Digital Archive.

I would like to close this preface with the mention of X. TREMBLAY who sadly passed away between the celebration of the conference and the publication of this volume. His manuscript was one of the latest to arrive and unfortunately he died before he could read the proofs. None of the participants will ever forget his presence at the conference in Salamanca, September 2009, because of his numerous learned contributions and his strong and extraordinary personality. With his death Iranian and Indo-European Studies lose one of their most promising scholars. This volume is dedicated to his memory.

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