

THE AVESTAN X^VARƏNAH-: A CHRONOLOGY OF PROPOSED ORIGINS AND
MEANINGS OF THE PAN-IRANIAN CONCEPT

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Abstract

The origins and meanings of the mysterious Avestan *x^varənah-* have captured the minds of Iranicist scholars for many years. Though commonly defined as ‘glory, splendour’ by those interested in translating the content of the Avesta, the primary meaning of *x^varənah-* has been thoroughly debated. This paper chronologically outlines significant claims regarding the etymological development of *x^varənah-*, the evidence provided for and against them, and the methods the researchers used to develop their theories. This paper also highlights doubts scholars have had toward *x^varənah-* as a word originating in Avestan. Av. *x^varənah-* does not adhere to Avestan sound changes brought on by the RUKI sound law of the satem Indo-European languages. The identification of *x^varənah-* as an outlier in Avestan phonological rules illustrates the potential for *x^varənah-* to have been considered a loan word adapted into Avestan some time after the split of the common Proto-Iranian language. Both linguistic and historical evidence will be drawn upon to demonstrate not only potential primary meanings but the relation Avestan *x^varənah-* has to the way in which its cognates are used across various other Iranian cultures as well as the ties it has as a religious concept to those described in the Vedic texts of the early Aryan peoples of India.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Av. *x^varənah-*¹ has been the subject of extensive and intensive scholarly research and debate for well over a century. The term has been exceptionally significant across Zoroastrian cultures appearing as early as the Avestan Gathas², with similar spiritually important cognates appearing throughout Iranian languages, yet its true underlying meaning and culture of origin have never been firmly established. Countless experts have made efforts to trace the etymology of Av. *x^varənah-* with the goal of uncovering its primary meaning, often basing their theories around how the word appears in the context the Avesta³ and subsequent Zoroastrian texts whilst substantiating them with the texts of the related Indo-Aryan traditions and languages. It is commonly glossed as ‘glory’ by parties interested in translating Zoroastrian texts, which has been the mainstream understanding of Av. *x^varənah-*, but even the ‘glory’ translation is controversial due to many differing opinions on the type of glory being described (i.e. personal glory, kingly glory, etc.).

Scholars have not only attempted to trace the etymology of *x^varənah-* as it appears in the language of the Avesta but have turned to consider the meanings of attested cognates across the Iranian languages and if the word has its origins, and therefore a meaning, within a language that had previously gone unconsidered in the history of the study of *x^varənah-*. This paper summarises the history of the investigation surrounding the underlying primary meaning of *x^varənah-* and the explanations of where

¹ Av. *x^varənah-* is also spelled *x^varənah* in Younger Avestan, with the initial *x^v-* representing a voiceless labialised fricative

² A collection of early Zoroastrian hymns written in Old Avestan, supposedly by Zoroaster himself (Humbach, 2000)

³ The primary Zoroastrian religious text

the term could have originated and gained the meaning that scholars now assume it to mean in the Zoroastrian context. After first establishing necessary background for the various Iranian languages that have been significant to the study of *xʷarənah-* and the cultures they were spoken in, this paper will outline important contributions to the understanding of *xʷarənah-* and its etymology chronologically before going on to outline the various theories regarding the cultural and linguistic origins of the word and where the modern understanding(s) may have developed.

Chapter 2: Iranian history and cultural context

The term *x^varənah-* holds importance across the Iranian languages from ancient to modern times, and necessitates an understanding of historical and linguistic contexts to properly discuss its origin and meaning. The appearance and usage of *x^varənah-* and its cognates is tied to the evolution of languages across the Iranian world and the cultural backgrounds of their speakers. From its Zoroastrian-aligned attestations in Avestan to the presence of cognates in both Western and Eastern Iranian languages across all stages of development, *x^varənah-* represents a mysterious yet significant pan-Iranian concept that has interested scholars for decades. Before the history of research done on *x^varənah-* can be examined chronologically the histories of the various significant languages that make up the Iranian language family must be established. In addition, an overview of the academic interest surrounding *x^varənah-* is required to understand why it has become a topic of debate and how scholars have traditionally attempted to approach understanding its potentially etymology, primary meaning, and origin.

2.1: Background, practices, and comparative methods

The Iranian languages, also commonly referred to as the Iranic languages, are languages that evolved out of Proto-Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. The Proto-Indo-Iranian language family developed into Proto-Iranian, Proto-Indo-Aryan, and Proto-Nuristani (Shinwari et al., 2024). This shared linguistic ancestry between Iranian and Indo-Aryan languages specifically becomes noticeable in early documents of archaic languages in each lineage (Jackson, 1892). The similarities found

in these texts have led many scholars across multiple fields to make use of the comparative method in attempts to uncover meanings, significance, and origin of many words.

Many of the scholars interested in uncovering the etymology and understanding the meaning of Av. *x^varənah-* have employed the comparative method as a means to uncover ancestral elements of the word in Proto-Iranian, Proto-Indo-Iranian, and Proto-Indo-European. The purpose of this practice is to then reverse engineer an underlying primary meaning from what is understood from the earlier elements that make up the *x^varənah-* found in the Avesta. Avestan does not have any attested daughter languages (Gippert, 2002), leading researchers to rely on cognates found in Vedic Sanskrit, Classical Sanskrit, and the other languages belonging to the Iranian language family. Due to the similarities Vedic shares with Avestan, it has become the standard language with which Avestan is compared to for a better understanding of the etymological origins of the Avestan lexicon (Gippert, 2002).

Avestan displays a great degree in common with Vedic. The usage of vowels remains similar, with Avestan having *e-* and *o-* in place of Sanskrit *a-* and making use of epenthetic vowels that aren't found in Vedic counterparts (Jackson, 1892). Voiceless stops *p*, *t*, *k* in Vedic are realised as spirants when preceding vowels in Avestan, and the Vedic voiced aspirates *bh*, *dh*, *gh* are realised as voiced stops in Avestan phonology (Jackson, 1892). The Vedic *s* is realised as Avestan *ṛh* word-internally and as *h* word initially (Jackson, 1892). The word-initial Ved. *s* and Av. *h* is of note to the discussion of Av. *x^varənah-*, as the initial *x^v-* seen in the word *x^varənah-* is derived from the Proto-Iranian **hy-*. The spelling of *x^varənah-* also appears as *hvarnah-* (Bailey, 1943), and in

one instance, *h_yarənah-* (Gnoli, 1999). These spellings are simply conventional choices and do not represent a difference from the standard *x^varənah-*. Many of the proposed etymologies rely on this observed sound change to find attested cognates in Vedic texts. Through the comparison of significant Avestan words to those attested in the Vedic texts, researchers (Bailey, 1943; Itō, 1975; Imoto, 1976; Gnoli, 1999) propose a common ancestor that can then be used to ground a primary meaning based what the root in the ancestor language is determined to mean and how the Vedic cognate is found to be used.

In some instances, cognates in Avestan and Vedic don't just bring to light the potential etymological origins of a word, but illuminate shared spiritual/cultural values that imply a degree of significance that originated before the divergence of the Iranian and Aryan languages and was maintained as they developed alongside the cultures of the speakers. One such example of this is Av. *haoma* and its cognate Ved. *sóma*. Both words are derived from the same source and refer to a sacramental plant-based drink likely made of pressed ephedra (Lubotsky, 2011). This juice, vital to Zoroastrian and Hindu beliefs to such a degree that the drink itself was deified in both cultures (Boyce, 2003; Brereton & Jamison, 2020). Despite the finer details such as taste (Falk, 1989) not being identical in descriptions across Iranian and Indo-Aryan sources, it is clear that they share an archaic Indo-Iranian source that survived in the languages as well as what is known of the spiritual practices of both cultures. The study of such shared spiritual beliefs and how they are realised across the cultures they arise in is known as comparative mythology. Myth, as described by Puhvel (1987), is the means by which a culture attains self-knowledge and self-confidence, can practice self-realisation, and

acts as the foundation relied upon by a civilisation to chart its future. The significance of myth when discussing the mysterious *x^varənah-* of the Avesta cannot be overlooked. A common ancestor highlights the undeniable significance the concept held across the Indo-Iranian cultures.

For the study of the Av. *x^varənah-*, the diffusionary and monogenetic practices (Puhvel, 1987) of comparative mythology are important to understanding the relationship to potentially related mythological/spiritual concepts across the Iranic and Indic world. The diffusionary tradition of comparative mythology is focused on how myths and traditions travel and spread across the territories (Puhvel, 1987). In the case of Av. *x^varənah-* and potentially related terms across the Indo-Iranic world the travel is not the spread of mythology on a global scale, nor the commodification of myth into fairy tales for outside observers (Puhvel, 1987), but rather the natural spread of the myth across the areas of Eurasia wherein Iranic and Indic peoples settled during and after the Indo-European migrations. The monogenetic approach centres around tracing myths found across various cultures back to a common point of origin. Due to the scale of the monogenetic approach to comparative mythology, there needs to be a great amount of foundational work available to provide an acceptable amount of variety in material (Puhvel, 1987). This approach has only found success when applied to myths of common Indo-European ancestry (Puhvel, 1987), and while that is applicable to the study of Indic and Iranic myths and their potential origins from a common Indo-European ancestor myth, it is not a recommended approach to comparative mythology for myths of non-Indo-European origin (Puhvel, 1987).

Assessing the similarities and differences between the motifs (Berezkin, 2023) surrounding the Av. *x^varənah-* of Zoroastrian tradition, its attested Iranian and proposed Indic cognates, and the etymologically unrelated but mythologically similar concepts found in other belief systems is necessary to uncovering the cultural origins of what *x^varənah-* had come to represent for early Zoroastrians. Trying to establish the etymology and primary meaning through comparative linguistics alone leads to complications, as there are many aspects of the Av. *x^varənah-* that align with various proposed Sanskrit words it can potentially share a common ancestry with. By supplementing the etymological evidence with comparative mythology practices, it will help to identify how exactly the proposed translations align with the documented practices and beliefs of distantly-related people groups.

2.2: Context and history of *x^varənah-* and its cognates

The word *x^varənah-* and its cognates appear across both Eastern Iranian and Western Iranian language families, despite their early separation from one another. The Iranian languages are also classified by the time period in which they were spoken. Old Iranian languages encompass the earliest languages, such as Avestan, Old Persian, Median, and Scythian. Middle Iranian denotes the next stage, encompassing languages such as Middle Persian, Parthian, Khotanese, and Sogdian. New Iranian are the languages spoken in the modern era, such as Modern/New Persian, Pashto, and Ossetian. All the aforementioned languages have an attested cognate of *x^varənah-*, but the concept of the *x^varənah-* as a whole is often simply referred to as it appears in the Avestan language due to Avestan's direct and unignorable link with the founding of Zoroastrianism.

Avestan is one of the oldest recorded Iranian languages, being spoken during the Old Iranian period from around 1500-400 BCE (Skjærvø, 2002). It is the language of the Avesta, the sacred book of Zoroastrianism, and has remained a liturgical language of Zoroastrianism long after it had stopped being spoken as a common tongue. It is in Avestan sources that *x^varənah-* in this recognisable form has been attested. Avestan has traditionally been considered an Eastern Iranian language, though arguments to amend the classification of Avestan have been made in accordance with its place amongst the developments that split Eastern and Western Iranian languages. Sims-Williams (1996) states that Avestan does not display the characteristics of later Eastern Iranian languages but rather appears have been a language spoken and recorded in the early stages of the Eastern and Western Iranian languages diverging and developing identifiable marked traits. Due to a lack of distinguishably Eastern or Western characteristics, Skjærvø (1989) and Sims-Williams (1993) classify Avestan as being representative of a Central group of languages in the Old Iranian period. As that may be, Lubotsky (1998) states that there is no evidence indicating that Avestan separated from the common Iranian language of the time before any other developing dialect. The language of the Avesta can be organised into two sub-groups, Old/Gathic Avestan and Young/Late Avestan (Skjærvø, 2002). Old Avestan is the language of the Gāthās, a collection of hymns and the oldest known Avestan text (Hoffman, 1987). This form of Avestan captures an earlier stage in the language's development, as it is defined by archaic Indo-European characteristics and closely resembles the Vedic Sanskrit of the Rigveda (Jackson, 1892). Contrastively, Young/Late Avestan in its final stages is more similar to Old Persian than it is to Old Avestan (Skjærvø, 2002). Young Avestan was spoken up until the beginning of the Achaemenid

Period where it was replaced by Old Persian as a common language of the newly established Achaemenid Empire (Skjærvø, 2002).

Despite the significance of *xʷarənah-* in the Zoroastrian tradition and the widespread attestation of cognates throughout the Iranian language family, it is only attested once in the surviving Old Avestan sources (Gnoli, 1999). It makes a single appearance in the Old Avestan Gathas, attested in Yasna ⁴ 51.18:

*tām cistīm déjâmâspô
hvô-gvô ishtôish xʷarenâ
ashâ vereñtê tat xshathrem
mananghō vanghêush vîdô
tat môi dâidî ahurâ
hyat mazdâ rapên tavâ* (Jafarey, n.d)

Sage Jamaspa Hvogva has,
in his desire for illumination,
chosen that sovereignty,
the acquisition of good mind,
through righteousness.
He says: "Wise Lord, grant me
the supports which is Yours" (Jafarey, n.d)

It is in Younger Avestan texts, like that of the Yašts⁵, where *xʷarənah-* is found far more frequently. It is a major theme throughout many Yašts and appears in many forms. It can be found associated with divine beings, acting as a power-bestowing force, and belonging to legendary kings and heroes of a mythologized Iranian age (Gnoli, 1999)

Old Persian is another significant language of the Old Iranian period. It was a Western Iranian language that became a common tongue during the Achaemenid

⁴ Old Avestan religious texts dedicated to the Zoroastrian pantheon only accessible to priests (Hintze, 2014)

⁵ A collection of 21 Younger Avestan hymns praising Zoroastrian divinities

Period of Persia. Extant texts in Old Persian can be dated from the 6th to 4th century BCE, however the language was likely spoken for centuries prior to these known inscriptions (Skjærvø, 2002). The Old Persian equivalent of *x^varənah-* is *farnah-*, which is documented in proper names such as *Vindafarnah*, meaning ‘he who finds the *x^varənah-*’ (Gnoli, 1999; Skjærvø, 1994). This name corresponds to the attested Avestan name *viḍaṭ.x^varənah-* (Gnoli, 1999). Old Persian of the Achaemenid empire was influenced by Old Median, a Western Old Iranian language spoken by the Medes in modern-day Northwestern Iran (Skjærvø, 2002). Skjærvø (2002) describes Old Median as sharing “important phonological isoglosses with Avestan rather than Old Persian” and lacking in linguistic developments characteristic of Old Persian. While no Old Median texts have survived, the language of the Medes can be attested through loanwords found in Old Persian thanks to these notable distinctions and through foreign records containing Median names. It is through one of these documents that the Median cognate of *x^varənah-* is attested, appearing as components in Median proper names as *farnah-* (Gnoli, 1999).

Scythian was an Eastern Iranian dialect continuum spoken by pastoral-nomadic peoples of the Eurasian steppe during the Old Iranian period. Scythian and Saka, used by the Greeks and Persians respectively, were collective terms applied to the many distinct tribes and cultures including the Massagatae, Sarmatians, Sauromatians and Cimmerians (Foltz, 2020). While evidence points to the language(s) of the Scythians being spoken during the Old Iranian period, there have not been any primary sources that document the language of the nomadic Scythian peoples to date. The Scythian language/dialect continuum has only been attested in secondary sources and relegated

to isolated recordings of tribal, personal, and topographical names by non-Scythian speakers (Schmitt, 2018). Opposed to the Zoroastrian speakers of Western Iranian languages, the Scythian tribes of the first millennium were pagans with their own unique set of beliefs and values (Foltz, 2020). Animals played a central role in their religious beliefs (Alexeyev et al., 2017) and the Scythian tribes were dependant on domesticated animals for mobility, wealth, and military engagement (Foltz, 2020). The Scythian cognate of *xʷarənah-*, proposed by Lubotsky as *farnah-* (1998; 2002), likely reflected the distinctive values of the Scythians. Scythian *farnah-* indicates that the pan-Iranian word wasn't strictly a term based in Zoroastrian belief, but had a much wider application. Notably, the ancient Greek historian Herodotus recorded the existence of a 'Scythian-Greek hybrid' language, which has since been interpreted as a Scythian dialect with heavy Greek influences or a Hellenic dialect considerably influenced by Scythian (Schmitt, 2018). If Herodotus' account of this 'hybrid' language is to be accepted, it alludes to the possibility of Scythian speaking tribes encountering speakers of other languages and being influential enough to have an impact on their development. This potential becomes important in the discussion of the origins of Av. *xʷarənah-*, as it suggests that the word could have possibly been spread through contact of Old Iranian people groups.

Middle Iranian languages also play a major role in the discussion surrounding *xʷarənah-*, specifically those of Middle Persian, Parthian, and the various languages that fall under the Saka branch. The cognates and derivatives of *xʷarənah-* are referenced to illustrate their uses and meanings across the diverse cultures of the Middle Iranian period. Middle Persian, also known as Pārsīg, is a Western Middle Iranian language. It

is often also referred to as Pahlavi by scholars due to the Zoroastrian Middle Persian variety being written in the Pahlavi script. Middle Persian spoken from the end of the Achaemenian dynasty to the advent of Islam in the 7th century CE wherein it began to noticeably transition into Early New Persian (Paul, 2000). It held status as an official language of the Sasanian Empire (Schippmann, 1986). The Sassanids had installed Zoroastrianism as the state religion and the Avesta was transcribed into the Aramaic-based Pahlavi script (Cantera, 2015), making the Avesta more readily accessible to those in the empire who did not have knowledge of Older or Younger Avestan. The Middle Persian cognate of *x^varənah-* is recorded as *x^varrah* (Imoto, 1976) or *xwarrah* (Lubotsky, 1998) in Zoroastrian Pahlavi-based Middle Persian. The Zoroastrian Middle Persian *x^varrah/xwarrah* was also represented by the ideogram *GDH* in the Pahlavi script (Imoto, 1976). It has also been documented as *farrah*, written as *prh* or *frh*, in Manichaean Middle Persian (Lubotsky, 2002). Manichaean Persian is the variety of Middle Persian found in Manichaean religious writings, written using the Manichaean script. Zoroastrian Mp. *x^varrah/xwarrah* and Manichaean Mp. *farrah* have descendants in New Persian, realised as Np. *xorre* (Lubotsky, 1998) and Np. *farr(a)* (Gnoli, 1999) respectively.

The Parthian language was a West Iranian language (Emmerick, 2024) spoken in Parthia as the language of the Arsacid dynasty. It is known to some scholars as Middle Persian as well, though for the purposes of clarity it will only be referred to as Parthian whereas Middle Persian will denote the Pahlavi and Manichaean varieties of Middle Persian proper. The Parthian language had become dominant in Parthia after the Hellenic control was lost in the region as a result of Parthian revolts (Shahbazi,

1986). However, the Parthian language was had begun to be replaced by Middle Persian when the Arsacid Empire was overthrown by the Sassanids in the 3rd century BCE (Schippmann, 1986) and the number of speakers diminished when Middle Persian was implemented as an official language of the newly established Sassanian Empire (Paul, 2000). The Parthian cognates of *x^varənah-* are attested as *prh/frh* (pronounced as *farrah* or *farroh*) and appear in Manichaean Parthian sources (Korn, 2010; Lubotsky, 1998).

The Saka languages were Middle Iranian descendants of a fairly isolated Scythian language that settled in the northern side of the Taklamakan desert (Emmerick, 2009). Saka is categorised by Iranicists into two known languages, Tumshuqese and Khotanese, with both being spoken in what is now the Autonomous Xinjiang Region of northwestern China (Emmerick, 2009). Limited materials written in Tumshuqese have survived and what remains can only be roughly dated to the late 7th or 8th century (Emmerick, 2009). The Khotanese language, however, is highly attested through Buddhist scrolls and manuscripts written in the Kingdom of Khotan. These texts are predominantly doctrinal in nature, and the majority of religious texts found have been translations or loose retellings of Sanskrit source materials (Skjærvø & Emmerick, 2000). Surviving texts that are not directly linked to Buddhist religious beliefs and practices still contain Buddhist influences (Skjærvø & Emmerick, 2000), pointing to how deeply ingrained and influential Buddhism had been in the culture of the Khotan Empire. Av. *x^varənah-*'s Khotanese cognate *phārra* is deeply intertwined with the religious and spiritual beliefs of the Khotan Empire, with the accepted translation denoting the state of enlightenment reached by the Buddha that Buddhists aspire to achieve (Bailey, 1943;

Gershevitch, 1992). The Khotanese cognate is reflecting of the dominant beliefs and values of the Khotan Empire further supports the notion that the term was versatile enough to be adapted to meet the needs of the speakers and was not relegated to one particular long-standing belief system.

The Sogdians, another Eastern Middle Iranian speaking peoples, were located in the region corresponding to modern-day Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and thrived as a collection of individual settlements centred around the main city of Samarqand (Lee, 2020; Lurje, 2017; Vaissière, 2011). The Sogdian cognate of Av. *xʷarənah-* is attested as *prn/frn/fn*⁶ (Lubotsky, 1998), with different translations corresponding to the diverse Zoroastrianism, Christian, Buddhist, and Manichean (Vaissière, 2011) beliefs of the Sogdian peoples (Gnoli, 1999). Bactrian, an Eastern Middle Iranian language closely related to Sogdian, also has a notable cognate of Av. *xʷarənah-*. Bactrian *φαρ(ρ)ο* has been found written alongside imagery of divines and royals (Gnoli, 1999), falling more in line with traditional Zoroastrian-based translations that will be discussed in the next chapter.

A modern Eastern Iranian language has also found its way into the discussion on the meaning and origins of Av. *xʷarənah-*. Ossetian is a descendant of Alanian, itself a descendant of a Scythian language, and is only natively spoken in Georgia, South Ossetia, and the North Ossetia-Alania Republic of Russia. The modern Ossetian language is split into two dialects, the more widely spoken Iron dialect and the smaller and more conservative Digoron dialect. Cognates of *xʷarənah-* are found in both

⁶ Sogdian script was based upon the Aramaic abjad. Vowels did not appear in the script, but were pronounced

dialects, realised as *farn* in Iron and *farnæ* in Digoron (Gnoli, 1999). Both Iron *farn* and Digoron *farnæ* are translated as ‘peace, happiness, abundance, fortune’ (Gnoli, 1999), once again indicating that the term is subject to cultural interpretations whilst retaining an underlying meaning relating to some idea of fortune or ideal goal. The Ossetian cognates have become of greater importance to the academic conversation as scholars have begun to examine the possibility of *xʷarənah-* originating outside of Avestan altogether.

The majority of scholars interested in translating *xʷarənah-* have approached it under the assumption that it is a word native to the Avestan language. Most translators have focused their efforts on understanding *xʷarənah-* in the context of the early Zoroastrian tradition described in the Avesta, turning only to Sanskrit sources to support etymological claims and reconstructions of a common ancestor. This assumption has been examined and challenged in the relatively recent theories regarding the origin and translation of *xʷarənah-*, with a handful of experts finding reason to suspect that the phonetic realisation of the word in Avestan and the way in which it interacts with surrounding phonetic environments is indicative of it being a word originating in a different Old Iranian language that was loaned into Avestan (Lecoq, 1987; Lubotsky, 1998; Skjærvø, 1983). The non-Avestan origin theories still translate the word in a way that relates to broader spiritual beliefs, similar to how those who translate it under the assumption that it is Avestan do not leave Zoroastrianism out of the discussion. All the major theories discussed in this paper have proposed a translation that is not in some way tied to the belief systems of the relevant Iranian people group. There have been no mainstream theories that propose an entirely non-Indo-European origin for Av. *xʷarənah-*

, as prevalence across the Iranian world and its proposed cognates in the Indic languages indicate that it arose natively in a common Indo-Iranian tongue and developed naturally across the derived Indo-Aryan and Iranian languages as the speakers migrated and settled throughout Eurasia.

The historical and cultural contexts of the languages and civilizations in which they were spoken are crucial for understanding the meaning of the Av. *x^varənah-*. The presence of cognates with a comparative significance and cultural weight in both Eastern and Western Iranian languages emphasises the importance of the underlying concepts surrounding *x^varənah-*. Scholars have turned to Avestan to gain a deeper understanding of the word, meticulously tracing its etymology and meaning within the language to uncover its fundamental significance. This scholarly exploration of the etymology of the Avestan *x^varənah-* provides invaluable insights into the development of scholars' understandings of the cultural and religious importance of the term.

Chapter 3: Etymology and translations

Interest in the Av. *xʷarənah-* has been present since the 1800s, with scholars keen on discovering its primary meaning and how it relates to Zoroastrian beliefs and practices. This chapter will chronologically trace significant theories that have impacted the how understanding of Av. *xʷarənah-* has morphed and changed over time. Beginning with Bailey's proposal of *xʷarənah-* as denoting material and physical fortune in the 1940s and progressing through alternative propositions and interpretations relating to light, sustenance, glory, and abundance, this chapter seeks to illuminate the many efforts made by scholars across the years to better understand *xʷarənah-* through cultural and religious Zoroastrian narratives.

3.1: *xʷarənah-* as 'good things, fortune'

In Bailey's 1943 publication *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books*, the Avestan *xʷarənah-* and its cognates are described as a point of debate in scholarly Iranicist communities. Bailey argues that the *xʷarənah-* (also referred to as *farrah* and OIr. *hvarnah-* by Bailey) held the meaning of 'good things, fortune'. Bailey turns to the Yašts to support his proposed translation of *xʷarənah-*. Bailey first points to Yašt 17, also known as Aši Yašt or Hymn to Ashi, wherein the Av. *xʷarənah-* is found alongside calls to Aši to bestow earthly fortunes onto men that make offers to her (1943). Aši serves as a concept of fortune in Zoroastrian belief, originally an abstraction but later interpreted as a divinity in the Younger Avesta (Schlerath & Skjærvø, 1987). In Yašt 17. 6-14 the poet details the gifts to be received by male worshippers of Aši, including livestock, ornate furnishings, strong horses and camels, elaborate dress, wives adorned with fine

jewellery, sharp spears, swift arrows, and the ability to be a slayer of one's foes. The varied gifts from Aši are precluded by the phrase *aši dāθre vohu xʷarənō*⁷ translated by Bailey (1943) as 'O Fortune, bestowing good things'. Bailey proposes that *vohu xʷarənō* or *vahu hvarnah* must be interpreted as expressing a broad concept of 'good things', as it alone describes and unites the diverse blessings that follow (1943).

Other notable Iranian sources employ a usage of *xʷarənah*- that fits Bailey's interpretation, namely additional Avestan Yašts and the Greater Bundahišn. Bailey draws upon a passage from the Mihr Yašt 10.108:

kahmāi raēšča xʷarənasča
kahmāi tanvō drvatātəm
azəm baχšāni χšayamnō
kahmāi īštīm pouru. χʷāθraṃ
azəm baχšāni χšayamnō
kahmāi āsnraṃčiṭ frazaintīm
us apara bazəzayeni (1943)

On whom shall I, who possess them,
bestow riches, good things and on
whom health of body?

On whom shall I, who possess them,
bestow possessions giving abundant ease?

For whom shall I raise up
for the future noble offspring? (1943)

⁷ Av. *xʷarənah*- is subject to declensions due to Avestan's extensive grammatical case system

Bailey notes the common pairing of *rayi-* (*raēšča*) and *hvarnah-* (*x^varənasča*) in Iranian literary tradition. As seen in the above Mihr Yašt as well as the Yasnas, texts recited in religious ceremonies, the collocation of *rayi-* and *hvarnah-* ‘riches and good things’ are properties not only bestowed by divinities but possessed by them and worthy of worship: *ahē raya x^varənaŋhača tēm yazdi* ‘for his riches and good things I will worship him’. The theme of a divinely possessed *x^varənah-* is prevalent in Zoroastrian literature, with divine entities granting it to mortals in their favour. Yašt 17.22 describes Aši as bestowing *x^varənah-* onto Zarathustra ⁸upon learning he was the first mortal praise her (Darmesteter, 1883):

tanuye x^varənō
urunaēča darəyəm havaŋhəm (Bailey, 1943)

For the body good things
and for the soul long happiness (Bailey, 1943)

In Yašt 14. 41, Zarathustra states while making sacrifices to Verethraghna and communicating with Ahura Mazda⁹:

vərəθraynō avi imaṭ nmānem
gaosurābyō x^varənō pairi.vərənavaiti (Bailey, 1943)

Vr̥θagna in this house preserves
the good things with wealth in cattle (Bailey, 1943)

⁸ The founder of Zoroastrianism, also referred to as Zoroaster

⁹ The supreme deity and creator being of Zoroastrian belief

These passages in the Yašts outline that, while *x^varənah-* is possessed and distributed by divine forces, it is realised as a physical gift rather than a spiritual blessing. Yašt 17.22 makes note of a separation between Aši's spiritual gifts to Zarathustra's soul and the gifts to his physical mortal being. Similarly, Yašt 14.41 conflates the 'good things' bestowed upon Zarathustra by Verethraghna with the possession of many cattle. Verethraghna is the Zoroastrian personification of victory and is described in Darmesteter's 1883 translation as a being of great strength and the best at providing healing to those in need. His qualities of strength and health are described in Yašt 14.2 as a direct influence of possessing *x^varənah-* made by Ahura Mazda:

ahmâi paoiryô âjasat vazemnô
verethrakhnô ahuradhâtô
vâtahe kehrpa darshyôish
srîrahe mazdadhâtahe
vohu hvarenô mazdadhâtem
barat hvarenô mazdadhâtem
baêshazem uta amemca (Darmesteter, 1883)

Verethraghna, made by Ahura, came to him first,
 running in the shape of a strong, beautiful wind, made by Mazda;
 he bore the good Glory, made by Mazda, the Glory made by Mazda,
 that is both health and strength (Darmesteter, 1883)

Verethraghna's *x^varənah-* is still understood to affect his enhanced physical capabilities in war, administering healthcare, and feats of strength rather than otherworldly concepts outside the realm of mortal experience. Though physical strength

and good health may not be as material as the cattle Verethraghna bestows onto those who perform sacrifices in his honour, all can be observed by onlookers and interpreted as representative of the status of a wealthy and extremely fortunate man. This description of *x^varənah-* as affecting one's prowess in battle and health align with Bailey's translation of Yašt 17. 6-14, wherein the 'good things' bestowed upon men are not confined to material riches but extended to a mastery of weapons and victory in battle (1943). The prevalent description of *x^varənah-* as effecting one's physical well-being as well as its pairing with *rayi-* 'riches' support Bailey's proposed translation, as rather than referring exclusively to material wealth and making *rayi-* redundant, it points to a fortune-filled mortal life for men and physical capabilities for those who exist in the spiritual world.

Bailey traces the etymology of Av. *x^varənah-* by building off of his translation of 'good things, fortune'. The suffix *-nes-* and its derivatives are identified by Meillet as relating to notions of property, ownership, possession, and loans (1908). Meillet cites examples of this suffix in use across Indo-European languages, including Sanskrit *ápnas* 'riches', Old Icelandic *efni* 'materials, fortune', Greek *δάνοζ* 'money lent at interest', and Latin *mūnus* 'gift' (1908). A verbal base for *x^var-* (also realised as *hvar-* by Bailey) that interacts with the *-nes-* suffix in such a way to produce Bailey's proposed translation of 'good things, fortune' must be established. Bailey turns to the well-attested Iranian *hvar-* 'to take, desire to get' as the verbal base, adducing similar etymological processes across the Indo-European family such as Lith. *lōbis* 'goods, possessions' is related to Skt. *labhate* 'he gets'; Serbian *údes* 'ill-fortune' is derived from Old Slavic *desiti* 'to find'; Av. *aši* 'fortune' from *ar-* 'to get'; and Skt. *sampad-* 'wealth, prosperity'

from Skt. *padyate* ‘attains’ (Bailey, 1943). This *x^var-* ‘to take’ root is identified by Bailey in Avestan *ax^varəta-* ‘ungrasped’ and Modern Persian *māl x^vardan* ‘to take wealth’, as well as having the secondary meaning of ‘to take food’ in Avestan, Khotanese, and Modern Persian sources (1943). The act of taking as represented by *x^var-* is physical in nature, potentially pointing to the association of *x^varənah-* with the physical material realm in Zoroastrian beliefs.

This interpretation of the verbal base as ‘to take, desire to get’ combined with the possession signifying *-nes-* suffix lead Bailey to conclude that *x^varənah-* can be interpreted as ‘the thing gotten, the thing desired’, and more specifically as ‘good things, fortune’ in the context of the Avesta (1943). The Ossetian cognates, Iron *farn* and Digor *farnā*, are analysed by Bailey as retaining a meaning closer to the Av. *x^varənah-* due to a relative lack of foreign influence on the local beliefs and practices. While Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam were adopted by other Iranian groups, Scythian religious beliefs were preserved by the Alans and their Ossetic descendants. Despite attempts to convert the Alans to Christianity in the 10th century, the majority of the general Alanian populace maintained their Scythian-derived practices up into the late 18th century when Russian imperialist campaigns brought Orthodox missionaries to the Ossetians (Foltz, 2020). Due to this relative spiritual isolation, the Ossetian phrases *äldár, äldár, de 'zäd, de 'zäd, dä färny stām* ‘elder, elder, I swear by your angel, your angel, by your good fortune’ (Miller, 1927) and *mägúr ämä färnyg* ‘the poor and the rich’ (Miller, 1927) are characterised as preserving a meaning in line with the *x^varənah-* of the Avesta (Bailey, 1943). Miller’s translations as ‘good fortune’ and ‘rich’ align with the usage in Avestan texts, not only pertaining to material possessions and wealth belonging to humans but

to the concept of estimable good fortune held by one in a superior or divine position (as demonstrated through the Ossetian phrase's evocation of elders and angels).

3.2: *x^varənah-* as 'sun, light'

Despite the popularity of Bailey's translation of 'good things, fortune' as derived from *x^var-* 'to take', scholars did not reach a consensus on the word's true etymology or original meaning. One such scholar, Itō, favours an etymological explanation proposed over one hundred years prior. In his 1975 paper "Gathica XIII: Av. *ax^varəta- x^varənah-*", Itō presents evidence supporting the derivation of *x^varənah-* is derived from Avestan *hvar-* 'sun, sky, light'. He further examines the interpretations of *ax^varəta-*, an adjective commonly attributed to *x^varənah-*, as a means of illuminating its true meaning and significance in the Avestan tradition. Four proposed definitions of Av. *ax^varəta-* as applied to *x^varənah-* are addressed and disputed by Itō: 1. not shining; 2. unattainable; 3. not partaking in food; 4. inconsumable. All four interpretations realise the wortanlaut *a-* as a privative morpheme and thusly negating the base root's meaning.

Av. *ax^varəta-* as communicating 'not shining' is derived from *x^var-* 'sun' and the past passive participle (or PPP) suffix *-ta-* combined with the negating properties of the word-initial morpheme *a-* (Spiegel, 1873). The characterization of *x^varənah-* as 'not shining' or, as further interpreted by Itō (1975) and Hertel (1931), 'invisible'. Spiegel's interpretation stems from a passage in Yašt 19. 51, describing the *x^varənah-* as an object being retrieved from the sea floor by the divinity Apam Napāt after it had fled from King Yima (Boyce, 1986):

aētaṭ x^varənō frapinvata

avi zrayō vouru.kašəm
ā.dim haθra hangəurvayaṭ
apaṃ napā aurvaṭ.aspō
taṭ[ča] izyeiti apaṃ napā aurvaṭ.aspō
aētaṭ x^varenō hangrəfšāne yaṭ ax^varētəm
bunəm zrayaṅhō gufrahe
bune jafranəm vairyaṅəm (Itō, 1975)

This Khwarnah floated
 to the sea Vouru.kaša.
 At once grasped it
 Apam Napat of strong horse.
 For it longs Apam Napat of strong horse
 (saying): "This [*x^varənah-*] I will grasp which (is) *ax^vareta-*
 (in) the bottom of the deep sea,
 in the bottom of the deep waters." (Itō, 1975)

The position of the *x^varənah-* on the sea floor allows for the interpretation of *ax^vareta-* as denoting it as invisible, dim, or generally unobservable due to the depth at which it rests. The issue with this translation is found in other instances of *x^varənah-* being described as *ax^vareta-*. The application of *ax^vareta-* to *x^varənah-* exists in contexts beyond that of the *x^varənah-* lying in a presumably dark and deep sea, instead signifying that *ax^vareta-* describes part of the “essential character” (Itō, 1975) of the *x^varənah-* regardless of where it is physically located at any given moment.

The word *ax^vareta-* is translated by Darmesteter as ‘unattainable’ or ‘insaisissable’ in his 1892 work *Le Zend-Avesta*. Avestan *ax^vareta-* as describing something unattainable is based upon a misinterpretation of the Pahlavi *agrift*, itself a

mistranslation (Itō, 1975) rendered by the Sanskrit *agr̥hīta-* found in Sanskrit commentary (Bailey, 1943) . This translation has found favour in scholars due to the passages in 56-64 in Yašt 19, wherein the *x^varənah-* is said to belong exclusively members of Aryan nations and is unable to be captured by the Turanian warrior-king Frangrasyan. Despite his multiple efforts, great sacrifices, and magical powers (Yarshater, 1984), the enemy king cannot attain the *x^varənah-* for himself. Rather, in Darmesteter's translation of Yašt 19 (Darmesteter et al., 1989), the *x^varənah-* is given an agency of its own and it actively eludes the Turkic (Boyce, 1996) ruler each time he attempts to retrieve it. King Frangrasyan himself says *ax^varətəm x^varənō hangrəfšāne*, which is translated by supporters of this interpretation as 'I will attain the unattainable *x^varənah-*' (Itō, 1975).

Those who support the translation of *ax^vareta-* as 'unattainable' do so on the grounds of the proposed etymology of *x^var-* 'take' and the privative *a-* morpheme. Bailey finds this explanation sufficient, as the root *x^var-* translated as 'take' provides the basis of his theory on *x^varənah-*, as well as it being "clear that *ax^vareta-* belongs to these particular legends in which it is inaccessible or at least difficult to attain" (1943). An issue arises with the words the Pahlavi and Sanskrit commentators used to portray concept of *ax^vareta-*. Pahlavi *agrift* and Sanskrit *agr̥hīta* only indicate that something is not attained rather than inherently unattainable. The concept that the *x^varənah-* is unattainable, either in general or by non-Aryan people groups, would be expressed instead as *agīrišnīg* (Itō, 1975).

The third translation Itō disputes is *ax^vareta-* as 'not partaking in food'. Outlined by Herzfeld in 1938, he describes *ax^vareta-* as deriving from *x^var-* 'to eat'. Herzfeld

relates this to a fire burning without fuel. A fire without the need to consume fuel or ‘eat food’ is commonly seen as a comparison to the *xʷarənah-* and its shine in Parsi tradition (1938). Itō argues that, despite this imagery’s association with the *xʷarənah-*, there is no known tradition that explicitly outlines that the *xʷarənah-* itself does not to burn fuel or that its ability to shine without a fuel source is an essential quality (1975). Furthermore, *axʷareta-* if accepted as deriving from *xʷar* ‘to eat’ can only mean ‘not eaten, what has not been eaten’. To express a meaning of something being entirely non-consuming and inherently uneatable would be realised through Av. *axʷar-*, *axʷarant-*, or **axʷarəti-* (Itō, 1975). These same critiques are levied against Gnoli’s 1974 interpretation of *axʷareta-* as meaning ‘inconsumable’. The construction of the word if analysed through this definition does not indicate an inalienable and unchanging state of being for the *xʷarənah-*, nor does the idea of an inconsumable or non-consuming *xʷarənah-* appear throughout Avestan tradition.

A new etymology and translation are proposed by Itō, with its basis in a comparison of passages in Yašt 19 and the Bundahišn¹⁰ (1975). As previously mentioned in the case of ‘not shining’, the *xʷarənah-* is described as *axʷareta-* when in the depths of the Vouru.kaša sea. The Bundahišn also details the *xʷarənah-* as lying at the bottom of the sea, the Kayānsay or Kašaoiia sea, and glowing like a lamp. This proves significant as the Kayānsay is commonly identified with the Vouru.kaša sea (Panaino, 2013) and the events unfolding in both are sometimes referring to the same subject matter (Duchesne-Guillemin, 1972). The Bundahišn of Middle Persian Zoroastrian tradition describes the Kayānsay sea as having a mountain in the centre

¹⁰ A compilation of Zoroastrian cosmography and cosmogony written in Middle Persian (MacKenzie, 1989)

and being associated with the *fravašis* (Panaino, 2013), supernatural beings with great power aiding Ahura Mazda (Boyce, 2000). The connection to the *fravašis* and the mountain found in the centre of the lake are qualities of the *Vouru.kaša* sea in the Avestan *Yašts* compiled at least 900 years prior to the *Bundahišn* (Hintze, 2014; MacKenzie, 1989). Itō agrees that these two separate passages are referring to the *x^varənah-* in the same context, and that the adjectival *ax^vareta-* must mean ‘shining, illuminating, brilliant’.

A root associated with the concept of *x^varənah-* emitting light is identified in the Avestan root **x^var-*, meaning ‘shine’ or ‘illuminate.’ Itō arrives at this etymology by reinterpreting and recontextualising the word-initial *a-* morpheme. The initial *a-* in *ax^vareta-* does not function as a privative morpheme denoting negation of the root, but rather a case of *a-* prosthesis that has been confidently attested in the Avestan corpus (Itō, 1975). Itō points to Avestan words affected by *a-* prosthesis including *a-haxta-* ‘qualified’ and *a-svar-* ‘early morning’, both identical in meaning to their counterparts *haxta-* ‘qualified’ and *svar-* ‘early morning’ (1975) that are lacking the *a-* in initial position. The negative form of *a-haxta-* requires a privative prefix of its own, resulting in the construction of *an-ahaxta-* ‘unqualified’ (Itō, 1975) and further demonstrating that initial *a-* does not imply negation universally. Attestations of *haxta* and *svar* alongside their counterpart with the prothetic *a-* support the construction of a theoretical **x^vareta-* (or **x^varta-*) lacking the prothetic. Avestan **x^vareta-/x^varta-* is the PPP of **x^var-* ‘shine, illuminate’, a verb form commonly found being used as an adjective in Indo-Iranian languages. PPP as an adjective can be seen in Av. *rāšta* ‘righteous, right’ < *raz-* ‘arrange’; OP. *rāsta-* ‘righteous’ < *rad-* ‘arrange’; and OInd. *pr̥ṣṭá* ‘near’ < *spṛs* ‘touch’

(Itō, 1975). The Av. *ax^vareta-* must then have the meaning of ‘shining, illuminating, brilliant’. Further evidence of this meaning can be attained through Indo-Aryan cognates, with Av. **x^var-* leading Itō to establish the OInd. **svar-/svr-* with its PPP being the attested Vedic *sūrta-* ‘shining’. The relationship between **svr-* and the PPP *sūrta-* is reflected elsewhere in Indic sources through formations such as *dhvr-* : *dhūrta-* and *śr-* : *śūrtá-* (1975).

With the translation of *ax^vareta-* as ‘shining, illuminating, brilliant’ and the establishment of Avestan **x^var-* and its Old Indic cognate *svr-/svr-*, Itō revisits the analysis of Av. *x^varənah-* and OInd. *sūrya-* through this new lens. OInd. *sūrya-* has traditionally been analysed as deriving from the noun *svâr-* ‘sun, light’, but with the establishment of *svr-/svr-* it becomes possible to interpret *sūrya-* as a primary derivative of the basal *svr-*. With this interpretation, *sūrya-* has the adjectival meaning of ‘shining’ before taking on the meaning of ‘sun’ (1975). Itō’s establishment of *svr-/svr-* eludes a criticism lobbied at former attempts to establish a meaning related to the sun. Previous attempts have only been to posit *x^varənah-* as being related to Skt. *svâr*, and at most a denominative of **havanh* which itself is only attested in Avestan though gen. sing. *xvəng* (Bailey, 1943). This derivation *svr-/svr-* : *sūrya-* is supported by patterns in Vedic including *jr-* : *jūrya-*, *hvṛ-* : *hūrya-*, and *vṛ-* : *vūrya-*. Itō recognises similar patterns throughout Avestan with the application of the suffix *-nah-*, which he details as being more productive in Old Iranian than in Old Indic. Some Avestan words matching the *x^var-* : *x^varənah-* pattern are *var-* ‘cover’ : *varənah-* ‘colour’; *raēk-* ‘leave behind’ : *raēxənah-* ‘inherited possession’; *rap-* ‘assist’ : *rafənah-* ‘assistance’; and *par-* ‘fill’ : *aspərənah-* ‘perfection’ (1975). Each of these examples demonstrates the occurrence of

an epenthetic schwa, although its insertion is not inherently required when the morpheme *-nah-* is present. Additionally, this pattern illustrates the process by which verbal bases can be nominalised in Avestan. Given that *-nas-* is less productive in Old Indic than *-nah-* is in Old Iranian, Itō proposes that *súrya-* represents the equivalent of *xʷarənah-* (Itō 1975), differing only by the lack of the Old Indic suffix *-nas-*.

To reinforce the association between *xʷarənah-* and both the sun and the concept of brightness or illumination, Itō refers to religious texts and beliefs within both the Iranian and Indic traditions. In the Rig Veda¹¹ VII 88, 2, the rishi¹² Vasishtha outlines his desire for an initiation ceremony to take place where one would be able to see *svàr yád áśman* ‘the sun in the rock’ which parallels the phrase *asmō.xʷavant-* ‘having (looked) the sun in the rock’ found in Hāḍōxt Nask¹³ 237 (1975). The realm of Ahura Mazda is called *xʷəng-darəsa* ‘sun-seeing’ in Avestan tradition, whereas the realm of Mitrā-Varunā and Yama is called *svar-dṛśa* ‘sun-seeing’ in Indic tradition. Finally, in both the Arda Wiraz Namag and the inscriptions of the Sasanian priest Kardīr, both men reference encounters with men emanating a solar-like light (Itō, 1975) while their souls journey to the sun-seeing realm of Ahura Mazda (Gignoux, 1986).

3.3: *xʷarənah-* as relating to ritual food

A year later in 1976, Imoto of Osaka University published a paper in favour of a different translation of *xʷarənah-*. Drawing upon the same root *xʷar-* ‘to eat’ that Herzfeld did in his translation of *axʷarəta-* ‘not partaking in food’ (1938), Imoto finds evidence in

¹¹ A collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns

¹² A rishi, or *rṣi*, is an enlightened sage in the Hindu tradition

¹³ The book of scriptures, sixth of the seven Gathic nasks (Kellens, 2002)

Zoroastrian sources that point to *x^varənah-* as denoting a type of vigour or power one gains through eating sacramental food associated with deities. Imoto does not entirely reject alternative translations, acknowledging that these interpretations may still be valid in different contexts, but questions the etymology detailed in previously suggested claims and their validity as a primary meaning. The Av. root *x^var-* ‘to eat’ can be found in attested derivatives such as Av. *x^varəθ-* ‘a thing eaten, food’; *x^varəti-* ‘eating’; *x^varəna-* ‘eating, drinking’; and *x^varənah-* which had been translated as ‘food’ by Bartholomae in the 1873 publication *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*. Imoto’s proposed etymology is in direct conflict with Bailey’s, as Bailey claims that Modern Persian *x^vardan* ‘to eat, to drink’ can be traced back to the root *x^var-* ‘to take’ that took on the secondary meaning of ‘taking food, taking water’ (1943) at a later stage. Despite this, both Imoto and Bailey agree that *x^varənah-* alludes to something of the earth, be it Bailey’s earthly rewards of fortune and health (1943) or Imoto’s vigor gained through the physical consumption of food (1976).

Yašt 1.22 is identified by Imoto as containing evidence that the *x^varənah-* alludes to more than physical fortune, but to powers that alter and stimulate nature. In the passage, the *x^varənah-* stands alongside *ama-* ‘attack power’, *aojah-* ‘power, force’, *vərərθra-* ‘defense-attack power’, and *zāvar-* ‘physical strength, physical power’ (Imoto, 1976). The worship of the *x^varənah-* is directly linked to feats of great strength and power. Like Bailey, Imoto recognises the relationship between *x^varənah-* and *rayi-* ‘riches’ in Avestan tradition but questions the accuracy of simply treating them as derivatives of *x^var-* ‘to take’ and *rā-* ‘to give’. Both Av. and OInd. *rā-* denote a human making an offering to a god or a god bestowing something upon a human, whereas Av. and OInd. *dā-* is used to denote the general act of giving (applying to both humans and

the supernatural) as seen in the OInd. *dāna-* and *dhana-*. The original meaning of Av. *rā-* and *rayi-* is to be interpreted as a ritual act of giving from both human and divine, reflected in Av. *draonah-* and Pahl. *drōn*. The word *draonah-* designates the portion of an offering meant for a deity during a ceremony where men and the divine would commune over sacramental food. The later Pahl. *drōn* retains the traditional meaning, translated as ‘sacramental bread at the ritual’. Yasna 11.7 details the sacrifice of an ox for Haoma¹⁴ (Imoto, 1976) and Yasna 11.10 confirms that there is a relationship between a human making a sacrifice and a divinity bestowing gifts in return.

7. thwâshem â gêush frâthweresô tañcishtâi haomâi draonô, mâ-thwâ haomô bañdayât ýatha mairîm bañdayat ýim tûirîm frangrasyânem madheme thrishve ainghâ zemô pairishhvaxtem ayanghahe! (Mills, 1887)

7. Quick, cut off then Haoma's portion, gift of flesh for doughty Haoma! Heed lest Haoma bind thee fettered, as he bound the fell Turanian Frangrasyan (the murderous robber) fast in iron close-surrounded in the mid-third of this earth! (Mills, 1887)

10. pairi-tê haoma ashâum ashavâzô dadhâmi imâm tanûm ýâ mê vaênaite huraodha thwaxshâi haomâi madhâi havanguhâi ashavastâi, pairi-mê tûmcit dayâ haoma ashava dûraosha vahishtem ahûm ashaonâm raocanghem vîspô-hvâthrem! (Mills, 1887)

10. To thee, O holy Haoma! bearer of the ritual sanctity, I offer this my person which is seen (by all to be) mature, (and fit for gift); to Haoma the effective do I offer it, and to the sacred exhilaration which he bestows; and do thou grant to me (for this), O holy Haoma! thou that drivest death afar, (Heaven) the best world of the saints, shining, all brilliant. (Mills, 1887)

Imoto suggests that *x^varənah-* is extremely similar in meaning to *rayi-*, with them both being used to describe what one party gives and the other takes in this ceremonial sharing of a meal between human and divine (1976).

¹⁴ Haoma as a divine personification of haoma, a sacred plant used in a ritual drink (Boyce, 2003)

Imoto turns to Pahl. *x^varrāh* to further demonstrate the connection between food, gods, and the distribution of power. Pahl. *x^varrāh*, cognate with Av. *x^varənah-*, is depicted as *GDH* in the Aramaic ideograms used to in the Pahlavi script. The usage of *GDH* to denote *x^varrāh* leads Imoto to suggest that they represent equivalent concepts in both languages. The Aramaic *GD* or *GD'* spanned several meanings, including coriander, grain, luck, fortune, Gad, and Tyche. Gad and Tyche are both deities associated with water and fortune, with the Greek interpretation of Gad also being associated with fertility. Both Gad and Tyche's association with corn and grain is visually represented by a winged ring or disk, itself sometimes stylised as a bird or bird-like creature with splayed wings. The *x^varənah-* is depicted as both a ring and as having the ability to take the form of a bird. The *x^varənah-* appears as a ring that is being granted to Darius the Great by Ahura Mazda as a symbol of investiture (Itō, 1975). In its bird form the *x^varənah-* appears in Yašt 19, where before evading capture from Frangrasyan in the Vouru.kaša sea, it first transforms into a bird to fly away from King Yima who had previously possessed it (Darmesteter, 1883). Such avian representations of the *x^varənah-* are common in Iranian sources, with the motif appearing not only in text but in physical remains and artistic works such as on Sasanian crowns, reliefs on royal tombs, and as part of artistic representations of Ahura Mazda (Itō, 1975). Depictions of the *x^varənah-* as winged rings and birds, combined with associations between the Aramaic counterpart *GD/GD'* and imagery of winged disks representing grain, leads Imoto to theorise that these two concepts are depicting a singular idea of a spirit or power bestowed through sacred food (1976). Finally, Imoto does not agree with Itō's understanding of *ax^vareta-* as 'shine, brilliance' instead interpreting it as also deriving from *x^var-* 'to eat'. However, like Itō and unlike Herzfeld, Imoto does not interpret this

word to denote something inherently uneatable but rather something simply not yet eaten; 'fresh', or the 'first fruits'. Sacrificial 'first fruits' are seen associated with the *x^varənah-* in the *Kār-Nāmag ī Ardašīr ī Pāpagān*¹⁵, wherein it is revealed by a priest that a large ram following Ardashir is the representation of the royal *x^varənah-* the future founder of the Sassanid Empire is lacking (Imoto, 1976; Cereti, 2011), as well as in the records of Herodotus 1.86 where the prisoner Croisus is being offered by Cyrus as a victory sacrifice after a war over Sardis (Herodotus, 484-425 BCE/1920; Imoto, 1976). The *x^varənah- ax^vareta-* is understood by Imoto to be the powers granted through sacramental food as it is being bestowed upon one deserving for the first time (1976).

3.4: *x^varənah-* as 'glory'

Lecoq in the 1987 paper *Le mot farnah- et le Scythes* returns to the idea that *x^varənah-* is derived from *x^var-* 'sun' and the possessive suffix *-nah-*, literally translating to 'something that one possesses or holds from the sun' but being understood as meaning 'splendeur, gloire, majesté' associated with sun and fire rather than adhering to a literal interpretation of the physical sun like Itō. This interpretation has gained the support of many scholars over the years and has become the default translation of *x^varənah-*, but there remains a debate about what sort of glory *x^varənah-* is specifically referring to. Some scholars favour an interpretation of kingly or royal glory, some prefer the concept of a divine glory, and others argue for the interpretation of a personal or individual glory (Gnoli, 1999).

¹⁵ A Middle Persian tale recounting the deeds of the Sassanian king Ardashir

The translation of *x^varənah-* as ‘glory’ rather than as a word referring to the sun is supported by the attested Avestan adjective *x^varənaŋ^vaŋt-* ‘glorious, resplendent’, itself suspected to be derived from the Proto-Iranian **h₂arnah₂ant-* of the same meaning (Gnoli, 1999). A constructed Plr. **h₂arnah-* is proposed by Skjærvø (1983) as a direct precursor to Av. *x^varənah-*. The Buddhist Sogdian¹⁶ and Khotanese cognates of *x^varənah-* have been translated as generally denoting ‘high position’ (Gershevitch, 1992) and more specifically as ‘position of the Buddha’ or ‘state of enlightenment’ in religious contexts (Bailey, 1943), further supporting a sense of majesty or glory inherent to one in a royal, divine, or praiseworthy position. The term had also been passed into the Armenian tongue and realised as *p’arḳ’* which has meanings including ‘glory, honour, celebrity’ and ‘fortune’ as well as other translations developed through other external influences. Gnoli is opposed to Bailey’s interpretation of ‘good things, fortune’ as the primary meaning of *x^varənah-* and instead suggests that concepts of ‘fortune’ were secondary etymological developments (1999) born out of the original meaning of the word as ‘glory’. A primary meaning of ‘glory, splendour’, and in some cases ‘shine, luminosity’, are now favoured by scholars over that of Bailey’s ‘good things, fortune’ (Itō, 1976; Gignoux, 1976-1977, Jacobs, 1987; Skjærvø 1989).

It is noteworthy that the meanings shine, glory, and fortune are often simultaneously articulated in other languages, with a single word encapsulating all three meanings. Examples of this in Indo-European languages can be seen in Latin *illustris* ‘bright, shining, distinguished, highborn, prominent’ and Welsh *gwogawn* ‘glory, brightness, plenitude, honour, distinction’. Both examples demonstrate that a single

¹⁶ As opposed to the usage in Manichaean Sogdian

word can contain meanings that allude to a physical brightness, a high status, and by an extension of status, having an abundant fortune.

3.5: Non-Avestan origins of *x^varənah-*

A more recent etymological development and translation was proposed by Lubotsky (1998; 2002). Whereas other interpretations have always analysed *x^varənah-* as a word of Avestan origin, Lubotsky (1998; 2002) approaches *x^varənah-* as the Avestan realisation of a borrowing from a language or dialect pertaining to the larger Scythian language continuum. Lubotsky suspects that *x^varənah-* was borrowed into Avestan because of the abnormal ways in which the word is attested in certain environments. Due to developments relating to the RUKI sound law¹⁷, which affected the development of the satem Indo-European languages, Avestan compound words with the latter element beginning with *x^v-* are normally realised as *-š(.)x^v-* after *i*, *u*, or *r*. This law can be seen in action in attested Avestan words such as *paitiš.x^vana-* ‘disturbing sound’; *mainiiuš.x^varəθa-* ‘reared on supernatural food’; and *pairiš.x^vaxta* ‘surrounded on all sides (Lubotsky, 1998). This sound law does not come into effect when *x^varənah-* is found as the latter half of a compound, appearing unaffected by the RUKI rule in attested compound words such as *aiβi-x^varənah-*; *pouru.x^varənah-*; *paouru.x^varənah-*; and *viṇḍi-x^varənah-* (Lubotsky, 1998). A similar phenomenon occurs when *x^v-* follows *-ā*, with it realised as *-ṛ^vh*. This change can be seen in the words *āṇ^vharəna* ‘dish, bowl’ and *haṇ^vharəna-* ‘cheek’, with both words containing *x^varəna-* ‘to

¹⁷ IEur. *s > *š / _ {*r, *r̥, *k, *g, *gh, *u, *u, *j, *j} (Skjærvø, 2006)

eat' with an x^v - to $-ŋ^vh$ shift. This sound change is not found to occur in words that have $x^varənah$ - as an element of a compound. In the words $ušta$.- $x^varənah$ -; $vīspō$.- $x^varənah$ -; $barō$.- $x^varənah$ -; and $haomō$.- $x^varənah$ - the x^v - remains unchanged rather than being realised as the $-ŋ^vh$ that appears elsewhere in the same environment (Lubotsky, 1998). The fixed nature of Av. $x^varənah$ - within compounds indicates that it did not naturally develop within the framework of the Avestan phonological system, instead being adopted into the language at a later stage and therefore devoid of the expected change that characterises native Avestan words. Based on this evidence, Lubostky (1998; 2002) suggests that Avestan $x^varənah$ - is borrowed from the Scythian *farnah*-, a word belonging to the *f*-initial Scythian dialects. This possibility is supported by the Avesta, as it makes a direct reference to the existence the Sarmatians¹⁸ (Abaev & Bailey, 1985). This acknowledgment of the Sarmatians indicates that Avestan speakers had knowledge of the Scythians at the very least and possibly exchanged aspects of their culture and language with the nomadic Iranian tribes.

Evidence for a $*p > f$ phonetic shift in Scythian languages is observable in both the present-day East Iranian Ossetic language and foreign records documenting Scythian names. The $*p > f$ shift affected Ossetian, as seen through words such as *fidæ/fyd* 'father' < Proto-Iranian. $*pHtā$, *fyd* 'meat' < Plr. $*piHtú$, and *æfcæg* 'neck' < Proto-Indo-Iranian $*Hápsas$ (Mallory & Adams, 2006), and had likely been present in the Ossetian's ancestral language Alanian. Lubotsky (1998) claims that this $*p > f$ shift can be traced all the way to Greek inscriptions in Southern Russia and Ukraine of Sarmatian names dating between 1st century BCE and the 3rd century CE. Some names in these

¹⁸ One of the numerous Scythian groups

inscriptions have both *p*-initial and *f*-initial variants, with πουρθαιος and πιδος (pourthaios and piðos) found in the western inscriptions of Pontic Olbia and Berezan being contrasted with φουρτας and φιδας (fourtas and fiðas) as attested in sources found in the eastern Greek settlement of Tanais. Both Lubotsky (1998) and Bielmeier (1989) take the contrast in anlaut found in western and eastern inscriptions as an indication that the **p > f* shift seen in Ossetian and Alanian had occurred early enough in the history of the Scythian languages that the Greeks had recorded two dialects when documenting Sarmatian names.

With the establishment of the **p > f* shift being dialectical in nature, Scythian *farnah-* would have a *p*-initial counterpart which can thusly be interpreted as deriving from the theoretical Plr. **parnah-*. Lubotsky supports **parnah-* by analysing Skt. *pārīṇas*, stating that it is “not only the same morphological formation, but ... has the same range of meanings” (1998). The Skt. *pārīṇas* ‘abundance, fullness’ is a derivative of the Proto-Indo-European **peIH₁-nos-* which is comprised of the PIE root **peIH₁-* ‘to fill’ and the PIE suffix *-nós-* denoting property or possession. The realisation of **peIH₁-nos-* into Iranian would be **parnah-* with the loss of the laryngeal *H₁* in inlaut. Sanskrit *pārīṇas* is only attested in the Rig Veda a total of fourteen times. It appears eleven times as a simplex, once in the adjectival or neuter form *parīṇasá-*, and twice in the compound *gōparīṇas*. Of the eleven times as a simplex, four appear as part of the formula *rāya pārīṇasā*. This asyndetic pairing is a typical Indo-Iranian formula and is reflected in Avestan (*ahe/mana/āṇhąm*) *raiiia xvarənarhaca* as well as the aforementioned *raēšča xvarənasča* discussed by Bailey (1943). Another simplex is found in the Hymn of Maruts 1.166.14, where it is directly associated with the concept of a power granting military

power or superiority. This connection with military strength and superiority is directly reflected in the Avestan *airiianəm xʷarənō*, the *xʷarənah-* of the Aryan peoples that granted them a level of superiority and favour.

Another similarity between the Av. *xʷarənah-* and Skt. *pārīṇas* is that it is possessed by divine beings and is capable of being bestowed upon humans who worship them. This is outlined in Rig Veda 8.21.7-8ab:

nūtnā id indra te vayam ūtī
abhūma nahi nū te adrivaḥ
*vidmā purā **parīṇasaḥ*** (Lubotsky, 1998)

We, of the new generation, are dependent on your help, Indra.
We have known your *pārīṇas-*, not (only) now, but also before,
o master of the pressing stones (Lubotsky, 1998)

This passage indicates that the *pārīṇas* bestowed unto humans by gods is beneficial by nature, in this case being seen as help from Indra. It is further evidenced by Rig Veda 1.133.7a *vanoti hi sunvan kṣayam parīṇasaḥ*, indicating that a devoted follower wins a house of *pārīṇas*. A similar sentiment is reflected in Yašt 60.7 with the phrase *mā yauue imaṭ nmānəm xʷāθrauuat xʷarənō frazahī* ‘may the comfort-bringing *xʷarənah-* never leave this house’, with the aspect of comfort being maintained in the Ossetian cognate *farn* ‘happiness, peace, prosperity’. However, as the passage Rig Veda 1.133.7 continues, it indicates that the *pārīṇas* given to the worshipper brings more than just homely comfort and peace. Rather the *pārīṇas* lets the receiver gain the ability to smite adversaries, have endless wealth, and have access to an abundance of food:

*vanoti hi sunvan kṣayam parīṇasaḥ sunvāno hi śmā yajaty ava dviṣo
devānām ava dviṣaḥ*

sunvāna it siṣāsati sahasrā vājy avṛtaḥ

sunvānāyendro dadāty ābhuvam rayim dadāty ābhuvam (Wilson, 1866)

Offering libations, (the worshipper) obtains a (safe) asylum; offering libations, he destroys his prostrate foes; (he destroys) the enemies of the gods; abounding with food, and unsubdued (by adversaries), he hopes to attain, when offering libations, infinite (riches), for Indra grants to him who offers libations whatever there is (that he desires); he grants (him) accusative related wealth (Wilson, 1866)

This passage again alludes to the same concepts associated with the *airiianəm* *x^varənō*, namely the military superiority and strength bestowed upon those who are deemed as holders of the *x^varənah-*. This passage's reference to an abundance of food is characteristic of the *x^varənah-* and the *pārīṇas*. The compound *góparīṇas* is roughly translated as 'abundance of milk', and in Yašt 18.1 Ahura Mazda tells Zarathustra that *azəm daḍāṃ airiianəm x^varənō gaomauvaitim pouru.vəθβəm* 'I have created the Aryan *x^varənah*, full of milk, full of pastures'.

From the usage of *pārīṇas* in Vedic texts and the similarities it shares with the *x^varənah-* of Avestan tradition, Lubotsky (1998; 2002) posits that *x^varənah-/farnah-* has the primary meaning of 'plenty, abundance, dominion, control over a territory'. A nomadic society such as the Scythians would place a great amount of importance on the possession of a large amount of territory (Lubotsky, 1998), with 6-7 horses requiring one square kilometer of viable pasture in the Eurasian steppe.

Scholars have invested decades worth of research into attempting to trace the etymology of Av. *x^varənah-* in hopes of coming to a concrete conclusion regarding the

word's primary meaning. The traditional approach to uncovering the underlying meaning of *x^varənah-* has been based on how it appears in Zoroastrian texts, and that the Avestan word used in the context of Zoroastrian beliefs is representative of its original meaning and origin. Scholars mostly engaged with the similarities between the Av. *x^varənah-* and potential Sanskrit cognates, turning their attention to overlap in Hindu tradition to justify their proposals for the word's history and primary meaning. Focus had rarely been shifted to other Iranian cognates and investigating what insights they may hold about the Iranian concept of *x^varənah-* until scholars began to propose that the word was not of Avestan origin and that the true meaning was hidden in an etymology traced back to a language that Avestan adopted the word from.

Chapter 4: Cultural origins of the *x^varənah-*

To find the meaning of *x^varənah-*, scholars have consistently analysed and reanalysed Avestan texts. Nevertheless, some researchers suggest that finding the true definition requires examining languages beyond those found in the Avesta. The question of the origin and contemporary understanding of *x^varənah-* captured the interests of scholars and has become a source of debate. A number of experts believe that *x^varənah-* as has been understood by Iranicists may not be the true meaning of the Avestan word. Rather, it has been morphed by the various cultures who practiced Zoroastrianism and produced their own translations of the sacred texts. Some scholars have even come to challenge the notion that *x^varənah-* originated in the language of the Avesta to begin with, offering evidence in support of the theory that it was loaned into Avestan through contact with other Iranian languages. Cognates of *x^varənah-* are attested across a range of both eastern and western Iranian languages, some with varying definitions that do not align with the proposed etymologies of Av. *x^varənah-*. Cognates such as the Buddhist Sogdian *prn/frn/fn*¹⁹ and the Khotanese *phārra-* are documented as referring specifically to the enlightened state achieved by the Buddha (Bailey, 1943; Gershevitch, 1992), reflecting the beliefs and values of the predominantly Buddhist kingdoms in which those languages were spoken. The Manichean Sogdian *prn/frn/fn* is translated as 'luck', with the term having several meanings in the same language based on the religion of the speakers (Gnoli, 1999). If cultural and religious values are capable of altering the meaning of cognates found in various languages, it

¹⁹ Sogdian script was derived from the Aramaic abjad. Vowels did not appear in the script, but were pronounced

can be assumed that the adoption of Av. *x^varənah-* into Iranian languages spoken by later civilisations may result in a meaning more reflective of their contemporary Zoroastrian beliefs and societal standards rather than one unchanged from the original Avestan meaning. If the word entered Avestan via another Iranian language, it is again possible that it may have originally conveyed meanings or values distinct from those scholars have linked it with based on available information in Avestan Zoroastrian sources.

4.1: Relation to Sanskrit and Indo-Aryan tradition

As has been acknowledged by many scholars interested in the etymology and meaning of Av. *x^varənah-*, there is a considerable amount of overlap between Indo-Aryan traditions and those described in the range of Zoroastrian texts. The similarities between Zoroastrian and Hindu beliefs have been called upon by many interested in the meaning of *x^varənah-* to appeal to shared Indo-Iranian cultural ideas that support specific translations. A shared background influencing religious and cultural developments is central to the debate on the origin of Av. *x^varənah-* as well, as determining when and how the concept entered the Avestan, and later Persian, zeitgeist is paramount to the understanding of whether it originated amongst them or was introduced through contact with outside Iranian people groups.

The similarities observed between Avestan *x^varənah-* and Vedic *śrī-* suggest that the concepts represented by *x^varənah-* may have existed to some extent prior to the divergence of the Indic and Iranic populations. If *x^varənah-* is understood as representing a concept of royal splendour or glory, as supported by Lecoq (1987),

Skjærvø (1983), Gnoli (1962; 1999), and Jacobs (1987), then it is comparable to the usage made of *śrī-* in Vedic sources in India. Ved. *śrī-* was another way of referring to the concept of Skt. *svaṛṇa/suvarṇa*, itself representing an idea similar to that of Av. *x^varənah-*. The concept of *svaṛṇa/suvarṇa* is described by von Stietencron (2001) as a “kind of subtle, luminous substance that could be conferred on a deserving person by a God or by ritual action”. The receiver of the *svaṛṇa/suvarṇa* would be granted the ability to know and achieve things that others around them could not and given a golden radiance symbolic of a king or a powerful victor. This *svaṛṇa/suvarṇa*, or *śrī-*, can be further divided into three functions. These three functions are defined as *tejas-* ‘fiery splendour’, *indriya-* ‘Indra-power’ and *rūpa-* ‘beauty’ (af Edholm, 2017) and serve as individual facets of the broader idea of charisma or *śrī-* (von Stietencron, 2001). The three functions of *śrī-* were once possessed by the purāṇic²⁰ Indra but he came to lose them, reflective of the Zoroastrian belief pertaining to King Yima’s tripartite loss of the *x^varənah-*. Great kings ruling over the heavens and the earth both losing their *x^varənah-/śrī-* in threes indicates a shared mythological concept that predates the separation of the Iranic and Indic Aryan peoples (Von Stietencron, 2001).

The connection between Vedic *śrī-* and Avestan *x^varənah-* deepens with later developments of *śrī-* in Hindu beliefs leading to the conception of the goddess *Śrī*, known also as *Lakṣmī*. One of the forms of the goddess *Śrī* is known as *Rājyaśrī* ‘royal splendour’ and is characterised as “the epitome of beauty, the bright giver of prosperity and the spouse of the kings” (af Edholm, 2017). The goddess and her links with a sense of prosperity, physical brightness, and the divinity associated with rule of kings are not

²⁰ Of the *Purāṇas*

far from the various translations of *x^varənah-* as proposed by scholars such as Bailey (1943), Itō (1975), and Gnoli (1999). *Rājyaśrī*'s embodiment of royal splendour is semantically linked to Ved. *vārcas-* 'splendour'. If *vārcas-* is interpreted literally it denotes an intense solar brightness, as seen in the attested phrase *hāritvatā vārcasā sūryasya* 'the golden splendour of the sun', but it is also applied figuratively in the realm of politics. The figurative political usage takes on a meaning of 'charismatic glow' and is applied to people of prestige (Proferes, 2007). Further connection can be drawn between Ved. *vārcas-* and the Avestan cognate *varəcah-* 'power, energy' (Bartholomae, 1904). The Avestan *varəcah-* is commonly linked to *x^varənah-* and is employed to convey its luminous powers, but it has also been attributed to the mythological kings that have been blessed with the *x^varənah-*, the bright moon, and the divine being Tištriia who represents the brightest star in the sky (Davis, 1945). The various concepts both Ved. *vārcas-* and Av. *varəcah-* had come to be associated with possibly indicate that this connotation with physical brightness and abstract royal splendour or charisma existed for millennia due to a shared basal Indo-Iranian belief.

Neriosangh, a Parsi²¹ practitioner of Zoroastrianism, translated Middle Persian Zoroastrian texts into Sanskrit. Amongst these translations of the Gathas into Sanskrit, Neriosangh equated the Middle Persian *x^varrah* (Mp. cognate of Av. *x^varənah-*) with the Sanskrit *śrī-* (af Edholm, 2017). Though this may seem to be confirmation of the theorised cultural link between Avestan *x^varənah-* and Vedic *śrī-*, Neriosangh's works do more to call into question the accuracy of his Middle Persian source material than to confirm that these Indic and Iranian concepts had co-existed and remained unchanged

²¹ A Gujarati descendant of Persians who fled Iran during the Arab conquest

(Humbach, 2000). It is up for debate whether Middle Persian *x^varrah* carried the same underlying cultural meaning that *x^varənah-* had for speakers of Older Avestan, and some of Neriosangh's translations have outlined how cultural understandings and beliefs may have changed in the time between the authoring of the Avestan Gathas and the Middle Persian translations of the Sassanian Empire. The Avestan word *aša-* 'truth' was rendered as *ahlāyīh* 'truthfulness' in Middle Persian translations, which was then translated by Neriosangh into Sanskrit as both *dharma-* 'foundation' (Brereton, 2004) as well as *punya* 'religious merit, virtue' (Davids & Stede, 1921-1925). The former translation does apply to the concept of a greater foundational religious truth, but the latter has connotations associated with the impact actions can have on an individual's reincarnation in Hindu (Klostermaier, 1986) and Buddhist (Tanabe, 2004) traditions. Neriosangh also translated the Middle Persian *ahlaw* 'truthful' into Sanskrit as both *punyaṭman* 'of meritorious soul' and *mukṭatman* 'of emancipated soul' (Humbach, 2000). These translations make it impossible to deduce whether the Avestan *x^varənah-* and the Sanskrit *śrī-* actually held similar meanings. It may imply that the Middle Persian *x^varrah* that Neriosangh translated carried with it a meaning unique to Sassanid culture, one that did not apply to the original Gathic Avestan understanding and is therefore not accurately reflected in the meaning of Skt. *śrī-*. Despite these translations potentially not being representative of pre-Sassanid culture, there is historical evidence that a concept of royal charisma or splendour was present in older Iranian empires.

4.2: *x^varənah-* as represented in Persian civilisations

The general concept of the *x^varənah-* as compared to Ved. *śrī-* existed in the Achaemenid Empire of Persia. The Achaemenid Persians had a concept of charismatic

kingship, comparable to the Indic royal charisma. The Persian idea of charismatic kingship did not play a central role in Achaemenid culture however, as it does not appear in any of the documented Achaemenid inscriptions detailing the divine investiture of the king by the favour of Ahura Mazda. Rather, the conception of *xʷarənah-* was that of a spiritual force that encouraged all beings to live out the duties expected of them. It was attained through study by priests and bestowed upon the Aryans peoples as a whole. The *xʷarənah-* of the Aryans was said to have blessed the Aryans not only with the strength to overcome foes, but to provide them with land full of milk and pastures (Lubotsky, 1998). There was also a *xʷarənah-* of the Kayanian²² dynasty, known as *kauuaēm xʷarəno*, which acted as less of a royal splendour but more as the force bestowed upon the kings which allowed them to rule (Gnoli, 1999). A passage in Yašt 19 contains Ahura Mazda encouraging all mortals, not just heroes and royals, to seek the *xʷarənah-* in order to find success in their lives (Gnoli, 1999).

Despite the lack of a specific royal *xʷarənah-* attested in inscriptions, there exists ties between the legitimisation of Achaemenid royalty and the links *xʷarənah-* has to fire, the sun, and prestige in Zoroastrian text. In Plutarch's *Vita Alexandri*, King Darius III of Persia is told by Teireos that his family only lacked the light of Darius' countenance when taken by the Macedonians (Plutarchus, 46-119/1973). Gnoli (1999) identifies this translation as the *fōs* of Darius, likely referring specifically to Darius' "luminous charisma". The Achaemenid sovereigns, as well as the mythical great Kayanian kings, were believed to have a victorious fire that assisted in victories over the foes of the Persian people. This motif of victorious fire continues into the Sassanid period, with the

²² A legendary Persian dynasty said to have ruled prior to the Achaemenids (Skjærvø, 2002)

establishment of fire temples in Zoroastrian belief. The fires in these temples were idiomatically said to have been established *pad varahrānīh* ‘victoriously’ and represented the defeat of spiritual foes to Zoroastrians (Boyce, 1982). Boyce (1982) outlines the description of Darius III’s Persian army given by Quintus Curtius Rufus in his compilation *History of Alexander* (ca. 41/1946). Rufus (ca. 41/1946) notes that the 260 Persian soldiers who were following the victorious fire were accompanied by a bejewelled golden chariot dedicated to the gods, a remarkably large horse known to the Persians as the ‘horse of the sun’, and a symbolic statuette of a golden eagle or falcon. The bird of prey appears as an embodiment of the *xʷarənah-* in Zoroastrian beliefs, with the *xʷarənah-* fleeing from King Yima in the form of a bird in Yašt 19 (Darmesteter, 1883) and the many physical depictions of the *xʷarənah-* as a bird in reliefs and artistic works throughout the various Persian empires (Itō, 1975). The golden splendour and fortune, the noted presence of a being tied to the sun, and the inclusion of the eagle on the divine chariot point to a familiar conceptualisation of *xʷarənah-* that existed as far back as the Achaemenid dynasties and as recently as Neriosangh’s translations of Middle Persian.

Alexander the Great’s conquest in Persia in 332 BCE led to the fall of the Achaemenid Empire and gave rise to the Hellenistic period of Persian history (Martinez-Sève, 2003). It was during the Hellenistic period that the Kayanian *xʷarənah-* became associated with royal glory and splendour due to influence from Greek cultural and religious exchange. The Hellenic *τύχη βασιλέως* ‘fortune of the king’ had become associated with *xʷarənah-* as Hellenic-influenced beliefs stated that Mithra would dispense a victory-granting *xʷarənah-* upon a sovereign who would be elevated beyond

his fellow mortals and admired as an equal of the gods (Cumont, 1996). This belief was reflected in the Roman conception of *fortuna regia* and, while debated (Tuplin, 2009), the Seleucids, Bactrians, Pontic Greeks, and Cappadocians equated *τύχη* with a form of *x^varənah-* that was honoured as a bestower of divine glory (Cumont, 1996). These Hellenic influences continued into future Zoroastrian states that arose after the Hellenistic period of Persia. The Parthians successfully overthrew the Seleucid²³ rulers and founded the Parthian Empire; subsequently, the Sassanid Ardashir I defeated the Parthians and established the Sassanian Empire (Shahbazi, 2005). The existence of a *x^varənah-* as granting royal glory in the Hellenic Seleucid Empire likely influenced the beliefs of the Sassanid Zoroastrians, leading to the identification of Middle Persian *x^varrah* with an inherent royal splendour or fortune rather than simply a force that can influence all Aryans in fulfilling their duties (Gnoli, 1999). This interpretation appears throughout other Iranian-speaking civilisations formally under Hellenic influence, with the Kushans²⁴ minting coins that feature images of kings and divine beings with flaming shoulders and the Bactrian word *φαρ(ρ)ο* (cognate with Av. *x^varənah-*) engraved into them (Gnoli, 1999). It is in the Sassanid period that the imagery of a ram first becomes tied to the *x^varənah-* in Persian culture (Gnoli, 1999), found alongside its more traditional representations as a bird and ring/disk. The motif of the ram in Sassanid culture stems from the *Kār-nāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pānagān*, a short written narrative outlining the rise, conquests, and rule of Ardashir I (Cereti, 2011). In the *Kār-nāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pānagān*, Ardashir is fleeing from the Parthian prince Ardawān after being

²³ A Hellenic Empire, founded by a companion of Alexander the Great

²⁴ Kushan dynasty ruled Bactria, Central Asia, and Northern India until succeeded by the Sassanids (Bivar, 2009)

locked away for killing an onager that Ardawān wants to claim as his own trophy. Whilst in pursuit of Ardashir, Ardawān learns from some travelers that the Sassanid had been seen on the run on horseback. The travelers also tell Ardawān that a large ram had been following Ardashir's horse. Ardawān requests that his high priest interpret the meaning of the ram following the fugitive Sassanid, to which the priest confirms that the ram represents the royal *x^varraḥ* in pursuit of but not yet joined with Ardashir. After another day of pursuit, Ardawān is informed that the large ram had now been spotted upon the back of Ardashir's horse. The high priest then informs Ardawān to give up the chase, as when the ram and Ardashir shortly meet Ardawān will no longer be able to defeat him. What follows is a tale of Ardashir defeating Ardawān in battle, and subsequently prevailing over the Kurds and the warlord Haftānbōxt (Cereti, 2011). It is this story of the *x^varraḥ* invested in Ardashir appearing as a ram that Cereti (2011) cites as the source of the common Sassanid iconography of a ram adorned with ribbons.

4.3: Analysing *x^varənah-* through Scythian tradition

The motif of the *x^varənah-* in the form of a ram is not unique to Sassanid culture, however, and is potentially found in Scythian animal style art. Early Scythian animal style art of the 7th-6th century BCE has depictions of griffin-rams and birds of prey with a ram's horns (Ivantchik, 2018). These chimeric animals are seemingly uniquely Scythian in nature, and they have not been found depicted elsewhere. As Ivantchik (2018) notes, other fantastical chimeric animals only begin to appear in later Scythian art due to influence from Near East and Hellenic cultures. The ram-headed bird or griffin-ram hybrid were possibly representations of a mythical *farnah-*, its mystical nature

manifesting in a hybrid animal that differed from the common every-day ungulates, beasts of prey, and birds (Ivantchik, 2018; 1999) that Scythian art tended to depict.

The animals present in Scythian animal style art were representative of the three main castes that made up the common Scythian hierarchical system. The highest caste consisted of the warriors and kings. Known as the warrior class, the warriors and rulers were associated with the celestial realm of Scythian mythology and were artistically represented by a bird of prey (Ivantchik, 2018; 1999). The association of royal and martial power with a heavenly origin is echoed in Zoroastrian beliefs, with the *x^varənah-* being bestowed by a heavenly figure and granting the receiver strength, martial prowess, and luxury items as described in luxury items as described in Yašt 17.6-14 (Bailey, 1943). The intermediary class was made up of priests who were associated with the earthly level of Scythian cosmology, a realm represented by ungulates in Scythian art (Ivantchik, 2018; 1999). The lowest of the Scythian classes, the producers, were associated with the underworld and animals such as snakes, fish, and beasts of prey (Ivantchik, 2018; 1999). A hybrid animal being used to depict *farnah-* is supported by the associations the various animals had with the previously mentioned Scythian caste structure. A bird-ram hybrid would be associated with both the heavens and the earth of Scythian cosmology and tied to the classes of warrior-kings and priests alike.

A mystical *farnah-* tied to the heavens and the earth is echoed in the works of scholars investigating the Avestan *x^varənah-*, with their identifications and translations of the word relating a relationship between the spiritual and the physical worlds. The *x^varənah-* of Zoroastrianism is identified involving a ritual regarding sacramental earthly food (Imoto, 1976) as well as bestowing a worshipper with earthly fortunes such as

riches, livestock, and food (Bailey, 1943). These facets of the *xʷarənah-* represent the earthly and priestly aspect of Scythian cosmology, with a focus on physical consumable rewards and rituals. These scholars have also identified aspects of *xʷarənah-* that would align closely to the Scythian warrior-king caste, such as its relationship to the sun (Itō, 1995) and supernatural beings (Boyce, 2000; Panaino, 2013), its ability to grant strength and martial ability (Bailey, 1943; Darmesteter, 1883), and its association with the status, sovereignty, and the legitimisation of power (Darmesteter, 1883; Gershevitch, 1992; Gnoli, 1999; Lecoq, 1987). All of these qualities combined result in a concept similar to that proposed by Lubotsky's (1998) translation, with an upper class representing inherent rule and martial strength combined a lifestyle reliant on the control of abundant land and animal resources.

The notion of control over large areas of land was crucial to the development of Scythian culture and civilisation. Evidence points to nomadic Scythian culture developing as a result of climate change in the Eurasian steppe, with the changing environment resulting in an expansion of viable grazing space (Cunliffe, 2019). It was at this time that more people groups pursued nomadic lifestyles, leading to an increase in competition for nomadic peoples and the formation of larger and more structured communities. These larger societies allowed for increased influence in the steppe and secured access to larger swaths of territory, and by proxy, larger herds with greater yields (Cunliffe, 2019). The formation of larger nomadic communities coincides with a marked increase in sheep, goats, and horses in the historical record between 1200 and 800 BCE (Cunliffe, 2019). This very early expansion and the impacts of climate change on the viability of animal husbandry for nomadic steppe peoples aligns with cultural

values encapsulated by Lubotsky's (1998) translation of *farnah*-. Expansion into pastoral land and an increase in herd size is representative of the 'plenty, abundance' facet of Lubotsky's (1998) proposed translation, whereas the ability to hold the land with the increase in competition and manage the ever-growing Scythian communities through the caste system tie directly to the 'dominion, control over a territory' aspect of the translation.

More similarities between Scythian culture and the depictions of *x^varənah*- throughout Zoroastrian texts can be found in the founding myths of the Scythian peoples. The Scythian foundation myth was documented by Herodotus' *The Persian Wars*. According to Herodotus the Scythians believed that their civilisation was founded by a man named Targitaus, the offspring of Zeus and Borythenes (Herodotus, 484-425 BCE/1973). It's likely that Herodotus equates Zeus and Borythenes with the Scythian Papaios and Api respectively (Ustinova, 1999). Targitaus had three sons named Leipoxais, Arpoxais, and Colaxais. Three golden objects consisting of a battle-axe, plough with a yoke, and drinking cup (Ivantchik, 1999) fell from the sky and were sought out by the three brothers. When Leipoxais and Arpoxais attempted to handle them, the objects set themselves ablaze. Colaxais, however, was able to hold the objects without them being set alight and claimed them for himself. The claim to the golden objects led Colaxais to be named ruler of the land by his brothers, and his lineage became that of the highest Scythian rulers (Herodotus, 484-425 BCE/1973). Those that claimed to be descendants of Colaxais were known as the Paralatae tribe, who have been commonly referred to as the Royal Scythians (Herodotus, 484-425 BCE/1973). The flaming golden objects of Scythian legend is not dissimilar to various interpretations of the Av. *x^varənah*-

as shining and closely associated with fire, nor is it in conflict with Lubotsky's translation of *farnah-* as relating to dominance and control. Ivantchik (1999) correlates the recognition of three golden objects in Scythian myth to the three times the *x^varənah-* flees from King Yima in Yašt 19, itself identified with the three functions of *šrī-* by Neriosangh in his translation (af Edholm, 2017). The possession of these three objects being used to legitimise the rule of the Paralatae tribe and their claims to territory reflects that of the *x^varənah-* as royal glory or splendour that is attained by a ruler and ensures their rule is both legitimised and successful.

With the evidence pointing to the existence of a concept similar to that of Av. *x^varənah-* in Scythian culture, Lubotsky (1998; 2001) turns to the idea that *x^varənah-* can be traced back to Scythian language and culture. This hypothesis is supported by Lubotsky's proposal of *x^varənah-* being derived from Scythian *farnah-* < Plr. **parnah-* (1998; 2001) and stems from the difference in anlauts in Avestan *x^varənah-* and its Iranian cognates. Avestan, Zoroastrian Middle Persian, and Modern Persian all have cognates of *x^varənah-* that are attested with an *x^v-* initial anlaut. Cognates in other Iranian languages across the Iranian territories are attested as having an initial *f-* in anlaut, as seen in Bactrian *φαρ(ρ)ο*; Sogdian *prn/frn/fn*; Old Persian *farnah-*; Parthian and Manichaean Middle Persian *prh/frh*; Khotanese *phārra-*; Modern Persian *farr(a)*; and Ossetian *farn/farnæ*. It has traditionally been assumed by scholars that the initial *f-* found across the majority of Iranian languages was the result of a Plr. **x^v- > f-* sound change that exclusively effected the Median language. The Median theory states that Med. *farnah-* had been borrowed into the Old Persian lexicon and was subsequently disseminated and adopted across the various Iranian people groups through the cultural

outreach of the Achaemenid Empire. In 1983, Skjærvø disputed the Median theory and argued for why it was not plausible. Skjærvø's first criticism of the Median theory was that it was not possible to substantially prove that *farnah-* was a word native to Median, or that the **x^v- > f-* sound change was a development that exclusively affected the Median language (Lubotsky, 1998).

Cognates of *xvarənah-* featuring an initial *f-* are found throughout the Iranian linguistic sphere, whereas forms beginning with *x^v-* are documented solely in Avestan, Middle Persian, and Modern Persian. This distribution suggests that the Avestan term was likely adopted into both Middle Persian *x^varrah* and Modern Persian *xorre* (Lubotsky, 1998). This is supported by the existence of *f-* initial forms in Manichean Middle Persian *prh/frh* and Modern Persian *farr/farra* (Gnoli, 1999), suggesting that the influence of Avestan through shared religious beliefs led to Persian borrowing *x^varənah-* rather than it already having a native *x^v-* initial cognate. With the evidence pointing to *farnah-* not being a central concept within the culture of the Achaemenid Empire, both Skjærvø (1983) and Gnoli (1999) do not find it convincing to claim that the Old Persian *farnah-* carried enough importance for it to be borrowed into all surrounding Iranian languages to a degree that it completely replaced local cognates. This lack of importance given to *farnah-* suggests that initial *f-* did not arise from Achaemenid cultural exchange, rather that the initial *f-* was already present in the cognates found in other languages.

Skjærvø proposes two alternative solutions to the Median theory that could explain the difference in anlauts and the frequency at which initial *f-* is attested. Skjærvø's first solution relies on his proposal of *x^varənah-* being traced back to Plr.

**h_yarnah-*. This solution states that Plr. **h_yarnah-* > *farnah-* across the Iranian languages due to a process of dissimilation wherein *h_y > f* and *h > h*, with the exception of Avestan as initial *h_y-* had become *x^v-* early enough in the language's development. Dissimilation being the root cause of **h_yarnah-* > *farnah-* would indicate that either Avestan separated from the Common Proto-Iranian language, for which there is no evidence of (Lubotsky, 1998), or that all *f-* initial languages would have experienced a convergent *h_y - h > f - h* dissimilation (Lecoq, 1987; Lubotsky 1998). With Avestan splitting from the Common Proto-Iranian early being an impossible option, the idea of a congruent dissimilation process occurring across all other Iranian languages becomes the only remaining solution for Skjærvø's first proposal. Convergent dissimilation is nonetheless dismissed as a viable explanation by Lubotsky, stating that "a dissimilation of the type **h_yarnah-* > *farnah-* can be a sporadic development at best, especially if we take into account that the newly arisen *fə-* is a unique sequence in most of the Iranian dialects" (Lubotsky, 1998). With Skjærvø's first proposed explanation of the contrast in anlauts being dismissed, his second solution must be analysed. The second solution suggests that *farnah-* was borrowed into Avestan and adapted to the phonological system. The initial *f-* found throughout the Iranian languages became realised as *x^v-* in Avestan due to the phonetic structure of Avestan not allowing for *f-* in anlaut. Lubotsky (1998) identifies this solution is correct, and that the distribution of initial *f-* across the Iranian world are indicative of it representing of an underlying of the word that would have been found in a Common Iranian language. A substitution of /f/ for /x^v/ or /x^w/ is not uncommon and is attested across various languages when adopting loanwords including an /f/. South Russian dialects substitute an /x^w/ for Standard Russian /f/ in loans like South Russian *x^wábr'ika* 'factory' < Standard Russian *fábrica* < Latin *fabrica*

and South Russian *xʷanár* ‘lantern’ < Standard Russian *fonár* < Greek *φανάριον* (Lubotsky, 1998). This occurs in the Middle Welsh realisation of Latin *Februārius* ‘February’, attested as *Chwefror* with an initial /xʷ/ (Lubotsky, 1998). This phenomenon is also seen when loans enter non-Indo-European languages, with Finnish *sohva* ‘sofa’ < Swedish *soffa* and Finnish *kirahvi* ‘giraffe’ < Swedish *giraff* (Lubotsky, 1998).

A second piece of evidence towards *xʷarənah-* being adopted into Avestan through a loan rather than a word native to the language is how it interacts with the surrounding phonetic environments in which it appears. As previously discussed in Lubotsky’s (1998; 2002) analysis of the etymology of Av. *xʷarənah-* and Scy. *farnah-*, the behaviour of the *xʷarənah-* in specific RUKI-impacted environments is an outlier in the Avestan language. The RUKI sound law causes Av. *xʷ-* to be realised as *-š(.)xʷ-* in environments where it is preceded by *i*, *u*, or *r*, but attested compounds containing *xʷarənah-* as a second element in these specific phonetic environments do not display a *-xʷ- > -š(.)xʷ-* shift. The initial *xʷ-* of *xʷarənah-* also lacks the characteristic sound change *xʷ- > ŋʷh-* when following *-ā*, remaining unaffected in compounds by a universal Avestan sound rule. The lack of standard changes expected to be present in these environments demonstrates that the initial *xʷ-* of *xʷarənah-* was not derived from Plr. **hṷ-* (Lubotsky, 1998). Due to *xʷarənah-* appearing to completely avoid rules that nearly universally impact Av. *xʷ-*, it is more likely to have originated outside of the Avestan language and be loaned into the lexicon after the sound laws had been established and applied. A markedly foreign loan word would likely not be subject to the rules impacting native Avestan words. Lubotsky (1998; 2001) puts forth the notion that *xʷarənah-* was adopted into the Avestan language through the Scythian word *farnah-* meaning ‘plenty,

abundance, dominion, control over a territory'. This suggestion is supported by evidence of a concept with features similar to that of the Zoroastrian *x^varənah-* existing in Scythian culture and mythology prior to significant foreign influence.

The purported myths of the Scythian tradition as documented by ancient historians and the necessary development of values that helped them thrive as nomadic peoples of the steppe lend credence to Lubotsky's theory of *x^varənah-* entering Avestan as a loan from a Scythian dialect. A similar cultural meaning supports the viability of Avestan speakers simply adopting the word into their phonological system and the unique behaviour of *x^varənah-* in specific linguistic environments points to the possibility of it not originating in the Avestan language, and therefore not complying with the rules of how Plr. **h₂* is realised as Av. *x^v-*. If the theory of a Scythian origin is accurate, all but Lubotsky's (1998, 2001) proposed etymology would be rendered highly unlikely as they are all grounded in the assumption that the etymology and primary meaning of *x^varənah-* can be traced back to an Avestan root word such as *x^var-* 'sun' or *x^var-* 'to take'.

Chapter 5: Discussion

If Av. *x^varənah-* is truly Avestan in origin, its primary meaning has been clouded by how it has evolved in the culture of the Zoroastrians. All of the scholars who have used the Avesta to trace the etymology of *x^varənah-* have established their theories in documented Zoroastrian beliefs, making it difficult to determine an underlying meaning when all that have been proposed clearly display an aspect of the word documented throughout the holy texts. While the use of the comparative method is evidently beneficial to the theories of the word's primary meaning, it offers very little in support of any theory's accuracy when only relatively recently have experts begun to consider the possibility that Av. *x^varənah-* may not be reflective of the word's origins and original form.

The proposed link between the Avestan root **x^var-* 'shine, illuminate' and the Old Indic **svar-/svr-* 'shine' (Itō, 1975) suddenly becomes less convincing if *x^varənah-* was borrowed into Avestan and the alleged links to Indic words found based on the phonetic realisation of *x^varənah-* is mere coincidence. Any perceived etymological relationship between Av. *x^varənah-* and OInd. **svar-/svr-* 'shine' loses its potential significance when there is likely reason to believe that Av. *x^varənah-* is in reality a loan from an *f-* initial Iranian language (Lubotsky, 1998; 2002). The possibility that Av. *x^varənah-* was simply an adaptation of Scythian or Median *farnah-* into the Avestan phonological system not only invalidates the many etymological insights provided by scholars who have investigated Av. *x^varənah-* under the assumption that it is a native Avestan word, but reveals that the true underlying primary meaning may not be present in the texts of the Avesta at all. Rather, as encountered with the translations from Avestan to Middle

Persian and Middle Persian to Sanskrit (af Edholm, 2017; Humbach, 2000), the primary meaning may not be represented in the Avesta as the culture and values of the Avestan speakers were applied to a word of foreign origin with a definition similar to but not fully aligned with the Zoroastrian belief system. Research promoting an origin for *x^varənah-* outside of Avestan, or even acknowledging that Avestan's initial *x^v-* anlaut is an outlier amongst all Iranian cognates, such as Lecoq (1987) and Lubotsky's (1998; 2002) works are relatively neoteric and radical to the ongoing discussion. They point to a new line of thought that must be fully explored in order to do justice to the long-standing drive to truly understand *x^varənah-* for what it meant to the Iranian peoples of the past.

With the potential for dismissing an Avestan origin altogether, the question of whether *x^varənah-* is Indo-European at all is important to consider. With the prevalence of *x^varənah-* and its respective cognates across the Iranian languages, as well the many potential etymological roots that have been established with Sanskrit (for both Avestan and Scythian origin), it does not seem likely that it was loaned into the pan-Iranian lexicon from an outside non-Indo-European language. Such a possibility would require the word to be loaned into Avestan at a stage wherein the initial *x^v-* would remain unaffected by the sound changes caused by the RUKI rule, while also being prevalent enough to have not only spread across the vast Iranian territory but be culturally significant enough across all the Old Iranian people groups to maintain a cross-cultural relation to spiritual concepts of status, brightness, and glory. The concepts *x^varənah-* has been associated with throughout Zoroastrianism align too closely to Indic beliefs and traditions to be coincidental, indicating that these beliefs date back to a unified Indo-Iranian culture. It is improbable that all Iranian cultures that later developed would

be devoid of a *x^varənah-Ifarnah-* word until it was introduced from a hypothetical outside source.

It is my opinion that *x^varənah-* is likely not a word native to the Avestan language. The evidence of Av. *x^varənah-* behaving differently than other attested Avestan words with an *x^v-* anlaut, the improbability of an initial *f-* convergently developing across all other Iranian languages, and the confirmation that other languages of the Old Iranian period like Median and Scythian had contact with the Avestan speakers all point to a reality in which *x^varənah-* was adapted to Avestan phonology as a loan from a different Iranian language. It is, however, not clear which Old Iranian language could have influenced Avestan and whether the word loaned into Avestan is not just a loan from another Iranian language itself. If it is the case that *x^varənah-* originates elsewhere, it does not diminish the work done by scholars analyzing its usage in the Avestan language throughout the years. Whether their proposed etymologies are not reflective of the genesis of *x^varənah-*, their analyses on what it signified to the Avestan-speaking Zoroastrians and how it often resembles Indic concepts is extremely valuable and further brings to light the versatility of *x^varənah-* in Iranic cultures.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The etymology and origins of the Av. *x^varənah-* have been disputed subjects for Iranicists for many decades. Many scholars have attempted to determine the primary meaning of the word, with proposals ranging from translations such as ‘good things, fortune’, ‘sun’, and ‘powers bestowed through sacramental food’ based upon context given within the Zoroastrian texts to concepts of ‘royal glory/splendour’ more in line with the later Iranic cultures influenced by conquering Hellenic peoples and the concepts of ‘abundance, plenty, dominion, and territorial control’ characteristic of the nomadic values that may have played a part in Scythian cultures. Evidence exists for all theories based on how *x^varənah-* appears to be used in the context of Zoroastrian beliefs with no definitive means to conclude which of its uses is representative of the primary meaning, if any of its appearances in Avestan represent the word in its most basal state at all.

With more recent calls to analyse *x^varənah-* and its cognates from more than a Zoroastrian and Avestan perspective, future work must investigate potential etymologies of cognates in *f-* initial Iranian languages under the assumption that the primary meaning can be traced back to a word that was simply loaned into the Avestan lexicon and adapted to fit the cultural values and religious beliefs of those early Zoroastrians. Care must be taken to acknowledge that later Zoroastrian Iranians, such as the Sassanids of the Middle Iranian period, would have applied their own unique cultural lens to the teachings of the Avesta and cannot be relied upon for an accurate representation of what *x^varənah-* had meant in the earliest Zoroastrian uses and any potential cultures that Avestan speakers adopted the word from.

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