Medical Fees and Compositional Principles in the Avestan Vīdēvdād*

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Introduction

Whenever one is confronted with the study of the compositional structure of the Avestan Vīdēvdād, one is surprised by the continuous presence of unexpected fragments within the main text: fragments that do not seem to belong to the place they appear in, neither thematically nor formally. One suspects that the peculiarities of the oral composition and transmission of such texts may be responsible for such cases.

The techniques for the oral composition and transmission of epics have been studied in considerable depth. By contrast, the techniques applied to hymnic poetry, which constitutes the main part of the extant old Indo-Iranian corpus, have scarcely been approached. A first and excellent attempt to approach them was carried out by P.O. Skjærvø (1994). Also, no attention at all has been paid to the techniques of oral composition and transmission of legal and doctrinal texts. Yet such texts as the Vīdēvdād and other legal Nasks were composed and transmitted orally. Similarly to the epic and hymnic texts, each performance here was also a recomposition of the text

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from Marhashi and, as Steinkeller has recently argued, this makes it very likely – in view of the inscribed vessel fragment with combatant snake and feline discussed above – that the stone in question is chlorite (Steinkeller, in press).

Conclusion

As the cuneiform sources on Marhashi attest, this was a country which, while it may have been distant from southern Mesopotamia, was nevertheless a reality. Its army and generals fought against Sargon, Rimush and Naram-Sin; its ruling family intermarried with the élite of Agade and Ur, exchanging diplomatic gifts; a contingent of its soldiers served the royal house of Ur; and its stones, most probably in the form of finished vessels, were familiar in Mesopotamia as well. The evidence summarized here – and in particular the inscribed chlorite fragment in Berlin – allow us to identify eastern Kerman (at least that portion which included Tepe Yahya and Jiroft) with Marhashi. Unlike Aratta, an alluring name perhaps but one which is attested only in a few pieces of tendentious literature written to glorify the Uruk legacy of the Third Dynasty of Ur, Marhashi was a real place, with real soldiers, fighting real battles and a ruling élite who were inter-married with two of the most powerful dynasties in the ancient world. Recent discoveries around Jiroft, which complement those made decades ago at Tepe Yahya, confirm the importance of the Bronze Age culture of southeastern Iran, a culture which we can now confidently associate with the land known to Sumerian and Akkadian scribes by the name of Marhashi.

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the data again. Some points, however, are worth emphasizing. Marhashi makes its first appearance in accounts of military operations in the Old Akkadian period, beginning with the founder of the empire, Sargon himself. Like Rimush, Sargon bore the epithet "slayer of Elam and Marhashi," and at least four high ranking Marhashians – Dagu, brother of the Marhashian king; Sidgau and Ul-xx, two generals of Marhashi; and Kumduba, a judge of Marhashi – were among the enemies defeated by Sargon in a campaign which Steinkeller believes was fought in southwestern Iran, but in which the Marhashians contributed troops as allies of Elam and Sherihum (Steinkeller 1982: 256). Sargon's son Rimush defeated a subsequent king of Marhashi named Abalgamash, and Sidgau, the general already defeated by his father, who was also captured. Again, the scene of this encounter seems to have been in western Iran. Finally, Hupshumkipi, king of Marhashi, is said to have participated in the general rebellion against Naram-Sin (Steinkeller 1982: 258) but thereafter we see the beginning of less hostile relations. A text from Nippur suggests that Sharkalisharri or his son went to Marhashi and married a Marhashian woman, and a delegation of Marhashians is attested at Nippur, perhaps related to the wedding (Westenholz 1987: 97; Potts 2002: 345).

During the Ur III period Marhashi and Ur enjoyed cordial relations and as I have written about this elsewhere (Potts 2002) a brief summary here may suffice. In the 18th year of his reign Shulgi's daughter married the king of Marhashi. Late in the Ur III period Ibbi-Sin dedicated a statue (possibly of a cheetah) in the likeness of an animal he had received as a gift from Marhashi. Other royal gifts were received at Puzrish-Dagan from Banana, called the "man of Marhashi" and possibly the very emissary who originally delivered the exotic animal presented to Ibbi-Sin. Marhashian soldiers under the command of a Marhashian officer called Simmu served at Ur for a number of years late in the reign of Shulgi and during the first five years of Amar-Sin's rule. A festival of the Marhashians was even celebrated at Ur, probably in the second year of Amar-Sin's reign (for full refs. see Potts 2002: 345-346).

Finally, two types of stone were associated specifically with Marhashi in cuneiform sources. One of these, known as *marhushu* or *marhashu*, certainly took its name from that of Marhashi itself (Steinkeller 1982: 251). The second, known as *duhshia*, was identified amongst booty taken by Rimush

Many of the elaborately carved chlorite vessels from Jiroft are decorated with scenes incorporating intertwined snakes with excised circular or lozenge-shaped depressions in which inlays, in various colours, appear. Included in this group are vessels, often tall beakers, showing felines in combat with snakes (e.g. Majidzadeh 2003: 76-91). The impressive number of such examples from Jiroft, coupled with their originality and stylistic and iconographic homogeneity, constitute strong arguments in favour of identifying eastern Kerman as the genuine home of this material. Equally important is the fact that similar material is known to have been carved less than 100 kms. away at Tepe Yahya (Kohl 1978; Lamberg-Karlovsky 1988). In short, these are not imports from another region; these are the artistic expressions of local artisans, displaying the vivid iconography of an important Bronze Age culture in southeastern Iran. What name can we give to this region, if not Aratta?

The answer is clear (Steinkeller, in press; Potts 2005). In 1913 the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin acquired a 12.5 × 16.5 cm (1-1.3 cm. thick) chlorite fragment (VA 5298) from an antiquities dealer in Paris which shows precisely the same sort of snake and feline combat scene just described (Klengel and Klengel 1980, Abb. 1) and which we can now identify as a local product of eastern Kerman, thanks to the evidence from Tepe Yahya and Jiroft. However, it was not until 1980 that H. and E. Klengel published the inscription on this piece which reads, "Rimush, king of Kish, the slayer of Elam and Marhashi" (trans. Steinkeller 1982: 254, n. 65). The Berlin fragment belongs to the by now well-known genre of southeast Iranian carved chlorite. It is emblematic of the material culture of Jiroft and as it was certainly not made in Elam, where there is no evidence for the manufacture of such vessels, it is reasonable to conclude that it comes from Marhashi. Eastern Kerman, at least that area in which Tepe Yahya and Jiroft are situated, can therefore be identified with considerable confidence with the ancient land of Marhashi.

Marhashi

Unlike Aratta, Marhashi has a tangible profile which is well-documented through a wide variety of cuneiform sources. More than twenty years ago the evidence on Marhashi was assembled and sifted in a masterful manner by P. Steinkeller (Steinkeller 1982: 246-264) and it is unnecessary to review all of

"real" than the seven warriors who escorted Gilgamesh (or the seven dwarfs, for that matter). In *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* we are told that these seven "know the way even to Aratta". Should we then start looking for the route which they followed? Clearly not, a point which Sauren stressed 30 years ago (Sauren 1974). As Michalowski noted in reference to the quest to discover the "real" Gilgamesh, "For some this is a serious enterprise, for others it is equivalent to the quest for King Arthur, for Roland, or the abominable snowman" (Michalowski 2003: 197). In the "matter of Aratta", those who would look for this land in Kerman, Seistan, Luristan or Azerbaijan are confusing the mental maps of ideologically driven, court-commissioned poetry, with the reality of placenames mentioned in economic and royal sources dealing with real people, real transactions and real towns besieged by real armies wielding real weapons. Aratta partakes of one reality only, a literary reality concocted to celebrate a brutally powerful political dynasty's links to the ancient and very real city of Uruk.

Recent discoveries in southeastern Iran

It is clear from a review of the Sumerological literature dealing with ELA and the "matter of Aratta" that scholars concerned with these compositions are not expending any energy trying to "find" Aratta. Indeed, few ever did. For the past 30-40 years most of the attempts to locate Aratta have come from archaeologists, not philologists. Had more archaeologists read and understood the arguments of scholars such as Alster, Vanstiphout and Michalowski, the issue ought to have been resolved long since. Unfortunately, such is not the case.

Recent discoveries around Jiroft (Majidzadeh 2003; Lamberg-Karlovsky 2004) in eastern Kerman, coupled with some uncritical journalism (e.g. Covington 2004; Lawler 2004), have revived the notion that Aratta was, after all, a "real" place. According to Y. Majidzadeh, the elaborately carved chlorite vessels and other objects illustrative of a flourishing Bronze Age culture in southeastern Iran support the identification of Jiroft with Aratta.

This suggestion, misguided for all of the reasons summarized above, is particularly unfortunate in that it ignores a far more interesting line of evidence which, I suggest, does in fact allow us to identify Jiroft and neighbouring sites like Tepe Yahya and perhaps Shahdad (and Bampur?) with a region well-attested in cuneiform sources, namely Marhashi.

I think there are several good reasons for doing so. Vanstiphout, echoing Alster, has underscored the presence in ELA of "folk motifs ... carriers of essential themes in the poem, or mechanical means in the narrative process ... out of which the poem is created" (Vanstiphout 1983: 39). But to emphasize just how embedded Aratta was in a literary, as opposed to a geographical, reality, it is helpful to look at another Uruk tale, *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* (Version B). We enter the text at the point when Gilgamesh seeks the assistance of Utu, the sun god, in reaching the cedar forest.

> 29-33. Utu of heaven put on his lapis-lazuli diadem and came forward with head high. In his hand Gilgameš, the lord of Kulaba, held a holy staff before his nose: "Utu, I want to set off into the mountains! May you be my helper! I want to set off into the Mountains of Cedar-felling! May you be my helper!"
>
> 34-50 (4 lines missing). The first ... The second ... The third ... The fourth ... The fifth ... The sixth beats at the flanks of the mountains like a battering flood. The seventh flashes like lightning, and no one can deflect its power. These shine in the heavens, but they know the routes on earth. In heaven they shine ..., raising ...; on earth they know the way even to Aratta. They know the destructive weather like the merchants. They know the mountain crannies like the pigeons. They will guide you through the mountain valleys (http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcslmac.cgi?text=t.1.8.1.5.1#).

The damaged portion of the second paragraph above can be reconstructed, in part, on the basis of Version A. The "first", "second" and so forth, up to the "seventh" are references to seven "brother warriors," each of whom "is a metaphorical one pointing out his abilities as guide and protector of the traveler" (Civil 2003: 78). The relevant portion of Version A goes as follows:

> The first, their eldest brother, has lion's paws and eagle's talons. The second is a ... snake, ... The third is a dragon snake, ... The fourth blazes with fire ... The fifth is a ... snake, ... The sixth {(1 ms. adds:) a shackle that ... the rebel lands in the hills,} beats at the flanks of the mountains {like a battering flood} {(1 ms. has instead:), floodwater that destroys all}. The seventh ... flashes like lightning, and no one can deflect {it} {(1 ms. has instead:) its power}" (http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcslmac.cgi?text=t.1.8.1.5#).

Given the fact, as noted above, that the name Aratta *never* occurs in any non-literary text, it is, I think, likely, following the arguments of Alster, Vanstiphout and most forcefully, Michalowski, that Aratta was no more

'epics' ... And yet, in recent years, much energy has been spent in attempts to identify the exact location of that city and to reconstruct historical details on the basis of the Uruk epics (Cohen 1973; Hansman 1978; Majidzadeh 1976, 1982, to mention only some" (Michalowski 1986: 133).

Vanstiphout has described ELA and the other Lugalbanda stories concerned with what he calls "the matter of Aratta" as, "a distinct genre in Sumerian epic poetry" consisting of "a challenge-and-contest between rulers effectuated by messengers, and making the outcome of the supremacy contest dependent on (a) speeches extolling the virtues of either party, and (b) on the outcome of heavily symbolic action contests" (Vanstiphout 1983: 39). Michalowski has recently shown that these texts must be seen as propaganda vehicles for the powerful Third Dynasty of Ur. His observations, which call for a radical re-interpretation of the genre, deserve to be quoted at length. He notes, "The short century during which Sumer and Babylonia were dominated politically by the regime led by the kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur left in its wake a remarkable literary imprint that resounded for centuries. As part of a broader program of social and intellectual homogenization, the officers and scribes of King Ur-Namma and his son Shulgi discarded almost all the existing narrative and poetic literature of the land, and commissioned new texts to replace the epics and poems that had previously been current. Part of this radical censorship was undoubtedly motivated by a specific ideological goal: to control all written formulations of collective political memory... The crown produced blatantly propagandistic texts such as the *Sumerian King List* ... as well as complex poetic narratives centred on a small number of emblematic characters that exploited the Uruk origins of the royal family. These poems, often called epics by scholars, provided the core of the foundation narrative of the new state embodied in the legendary and mythological deeds of three ancient kings of the city of Uruk, Enmerkar, Lugalbanda, and Gilgamesh" (Michalowski 2003: 195-196).

Michalowski's views force us to reconsider a story like ELA. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that the geographical names mentioned in it are entirely fanciful, nor that Aratta is a "mythological invention" as he called it in 1986. Real places may certainly figure in mythological stories. After all, nobody would seriously dispute the fact that Uruk, also mentioned in ELA, was a real place. Why then reject the existence of Aratta, as Michalowski has proposed?

KUR.RU in an Early Dynastic text from Abu Salabikh (OIP 99: 247 5'), which "may have to be interpreted as an arratta aratta-<ta>", P. Michalowski argued, "but in view of the fact that this place name in this Abu Salabikh text is found mentioned together with Adab, ki-en-gi, and Uruk, I would prefer to interpret it as a writing of the city Šuruppak" (Michalowski 1988: 161).

If the evidence of the proto-cuneiform economic text from Uruk is discounted, then we are left once more with nothing but literary attestations of Aratta. The interpretation of this evidence is important for the entire discussion of Aratta's location.

Epic geographies

In contrast to those authors cited above who have tried to identify the physical location of Aratta, most students of Sumerian literature writing today would reject the very notion that ELA or, for that matter, the Gilgamesh cycle, can be read in such a literal fashion. As Bendt Alster wrote over 30 years ago, "Most scholars who have dealt with the Enmerkar and Lugalbanda texts seem to agree that they intend to draw a more or less historically correct picture of the state of things at the time of these rulers. However, I believe that nothing could have interested the poets less than this. The texts consist of widespread structural patterns, motifs, and poetic devices, which could as well have been applied to any other famous ruler" (Alster 1973: 107, n. 2 (cont. from p. 106)). As H.J.L. Vanstiphout has noted, with specific reference to ELA and the related stories concerning Uruk, "we are dealing with highly sophisticated, complex and subtle consciously literary products" (Vanstiphout 1983: 38). For Michalowski who, as noted above, rejected the reading Aratta on which its identification in the proto-cuneiform texts from Uruk was based, "The Enmerkar and Lugalbanda stories are paradigmatic representations of the superiority of the culture of Sumer... They concern the rivalry between Uruk, the epitome of a Sumerian city-state and a far-away land called Aratta. The latter city, far to the east of Sumer, is a negative correspondent of Uruk and is, most implausibly, sacred to Inanna... There is not a single reference to this city in any Sumerian administrative text and the only occurrences outside of the Uruk cycle are found in literary contexts that are clearly derivative. The most plausible conclusion is that Aratta never existed at all, that it is a mythological invention with little or no meaning outside the plot of the Uruk

years later this proposal was rejected by Y. Majidzadeh, in part on the grounds that ELA never mentions the crossing of a desert (only mountains). Instead, he located Aratta in Kerman, specifically in the vicinity of Shahdad, where a rich cemetery was excavated by A. Hakemi. "In place of a legendary land of Aratta", he wrote, "we can visualize a specific area and begin to see the interaction of Sumerian and Early Iranian civilizations in the finds from excavated sites" (Majidzadeh 1976: 113).

Not long after Majidzadeh wrote this, Margaret Green published an Archaic text from Uruk, datable on palaeographic grounds to the Uruk III period (Nissen 1985: 229) or c. 3000 B.C., which seemed to offer another piece of evidence suggesting that Aratta was perhaps more real than legendary. She pointed to the presence, in seventeen proto-cuneiform herding texts, of the ligature KUR + RU, accompanied on three occasions by the geographical determinative KI. As Green wrote, "On philological grounds, this could be the logogram either for Šuruppak, written in the Early Dynastic period with the phonetic determinative SU, or for Aratta, written with LAM or LAM × KUR" (Green 1980: 10). Green went on to suggest a series of specious arguments: "To choose between Šuruppak and Aratta requires demonstrating relations between that city and Uruk or a significant role of that city in animal husbandry ... the tradition of an intimate relation between Uruk and Aratta – as sister cities under the patronage of Inanna and as rivals for a position of leadership – is well known from Sumerian literature... Aratta's approximate location in the mountains to the east of Mesopotamia places it in an area notable for pastoralism... A final piece of evidence in favor of an identification as Aratta is the subscript of text no. 21 [W20494, 6], which is unique in not including any professional title. It reads EN-LAM × KUR-KUR + RU-KA, perhaps to be understood as 'the lord of Aratta'" (Green 1980: 17).

The significance of Green's contribution lay not in identifying the location of Aratta – in fact she didn't even venture a suggestion – but in offering the first attestation of Aratta outside of the literary corpus since, up until her publication, no mention of Aratta had ever been found in a lexical, royal, religious or economic text. While admitting the difficulties associated with the signs read as Aratta, H.J. Nissen cautiously endorsed Green's hypothesis in 1985 (Nissen 1985: 228-229) but several years later, in commenting on a similar case, namely GAL LAM × KUR.RU LAM ×