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Article

The Continuity of the Political Phenomenon in Ancient Iranian Myths within the Gathas

Rohollah Eslami & Jamal Mokhtari

Abstract: The pivotal term "Khshatra/xšaθra" in Zoroaster's Gathas denotes power relations, dominion, and kinship. The Iranian sovereign embodies force and the amalgamation of the Amesha Spentas' attributes bestowed by Ahura Mazda. The inception of Iran's prosperity in the Gathas manifests through the emergence of the monarchical phenomenon of Shahanshahi. To establish the institution of sovereignty, power must first concentrate on earth, and to consolidate this institution, myths come into play. As myths transition into religion in the form of the true faith, power becomes concentrated. The terrestrialization of the sacred through the institution of monarchy characterizes the politics of ancient Iran. Shahanshahi is an institution that emerges upon the establishment of civilization. Zoroaster's mission summoned to civilization, development, and sedentarization, heralding economic-social transformation from pastoral to agrarian life. This research employs phenomenology to pose: How does politics manifest in Zoroaster's Gathas? Our hypothesis: The political phenomenon has a mythological foundation, continues the Amesha Spentas, and through myth's transition to the true faith, embodies in the monarchy shaping Iran's prosperity.

Keywords: Shahanshahi, Khshathra, Country, Amesha Spentas, Gathas, Prosperity

1. Introduction

The Avesta, the sacred scripture of Zoroastrians, consists of five books: Yasna (hymns and religious prayers), Visperad (religious ceremonies), Vendidad (regarding religious laws), Yashts (about myths and ancient Iran), and Khordeh Avesta (prayers, worship, and invocations). The Yasna comprises 72 chapters, 17 of which are called Gathas or Gaths. The reason for the dispersion of the Gathas within the Yasna is unknown. The Sassanid Avesta consisted of twenty-one books (Nasks), of which the extant Avesta constitutes about one-fourth (Pourdavoud 1974, 3).

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The Gathas, the most ancient part of the Avesta, are the five-fold utterances of the Zoroaster, the oldest portion of the Minu-i Khrat of the Avesta. Ibrahim Pourdavoud first translated Professor Bartholomae's German report on the Gathas in 1926 and published it in Bombay. Pourdavoud considers the Gathas a book that itself is a branch of Iranian studies, replete with its interpretations, thoughts, terminologies, and distinctive vocabulary (Pourdavoud 1998, 34). The Gathas are composed in five chapters titled Ahunavaiti Gatha, Ushtavaiti Gatha, Spentamainyush Gatha, Vohu xšaθra Gatha, and Vahishtoishtish Gatha, divided into 17 sections (Hāiti/Hāt/Hā), 238 verses (Vachastashti/Vachast), 896 stanzas (Afsmanpātman/Gās), and 5,560 words, constituting the most ancient portion of the extant Avesta from a linguistic and compositional standpoint.

The central question of this research is: How does the phenomenon of politics manifest in Zoroaster's Gathas? The hypothesis posits that the political phenomenon in the Gathas has a mythological foundation, continues the Amesha Spentas, and through the transition from myth to religion in the form of the Zoroastrian faith, finds embodiment in the Iranian political system, Shahanshahi, which shapes Iran's prosperity.

What is Myth?

Myth is the sacred primordial history, narrating the beginning of great eternal events, the origin of the cosmos, the origin of humans, the origin of death and life, and the like (Zaimaran 2000, 41). Myths recount human thoughts about existence. Myths are mirrors reflecting images across millennia, speaking where history and archaeology remain silent (Hinnells 1989, 7). The Avesta is our most important source on Iranian myths.

Myths have individual and social functions, with multiple material and spiritual actions that typically: 1. Have an ontological dimension, justifying the existence of the world and humans 2. Play an ideological role, justifying and consolidating governments and social structures 3. Have a moral and behavioral function, justifying rituals and individual/social relations 4. Have a class role, justifying and consolidating intra-class behaviors 5. Serve a psychological and therapeutic purpose (Bahar 2012, 372).

The Transition from Myth to Religion

Some mythologists believe that myth historically precedes religion. In other words, as the human thought developed, religious beliefs and faiths gradually formed when myths occupied the place of religious convictions for humankind. Some ethnologists argue that to understand myth, one must begin by investigating rituals. Human temperament during the performance of religious rites and ceremonies is unsuitable for pure contemplation and thought. In this state, humans have an emotional rather than rational disposition. Therefore, in human religious life, rituals are a more enduring and influential element than myth. Henri Bergson believed myths arise from

religious rituals (Bergson 1979, 200). Cassirer considered myth an interpretation of religious rituals (Cassirer 1998, 92). Myths manifest in religious rituals and rites, finding fundamental application there and thereby transcending history.

According to Schelling, the study of the philosophy of myths and revelation occurs empirically. On this basis, he emphasized that mythological religion and revelatory religion are both religions. According to Schelling's view, myth, rooted in the unconscious, represents a moment of divine life and logically precedes and paves the way for revelation, but is not revelation itself (Copleston 1993, 145-146). Mircea Eliade, a prominent scholar in the history of religions, considered myths the essence and substance of religion based on genuine and pure religious experience. Sacred experiences have imbued myths with a unique structure. Based on the phenomenological approach, Eliade believed that religion can only be understood in its own language and is considered a phenomenon-in-itself (having a sacred character) (Eliade 1963, 5). The phenomenology of religion deciphers religious subjects through rituals, myths, and beliefs, but does so on the basis of the sacred, which determines its theoretical structure (Allen 1987, 279). Ahura Mazda explains the reason for the creation of the world to Zoroaster thus: the destruction of the sinful devil is only possible through the creation of the world and the propagation of religion (Amoozgar and Tafazoli 2008, 185).

The Principle of Causality in Mythological-Religious Thought

In mythological thinking, nothing in the world happens by chance, and everything occurs according to the norms of human reason and existential necessity. Mythological awareness emphasizes causality and posits a cause for every singular phenomenon. According to Cassirer, mythological thought views animals seen in a particular season as the originators and cause of that season. From the mythological perspective, it is the swallow that creates summer (Cassirer 1998, 201). Müller believed that primitive humans, lacking advanced minds, essentially deified natural forces and then named them. Particularly in Greek myths, the name of a plant or animal was sometimes applied to a deity (Klimkeit 2000, 72).

In mythological-religious thought, events do not occur randomly; rather, every phenomenon has an underlying cause rooted in reason, necessity, and sacred forces. This causal thinking manifests in attributing natural phenomena like seasons to specific animals or deities. The mythological worldview imbues the cosmos with intentionality and divine agency behind all occurrences.

The Amesha Spentas and the Transition from Myth to Philosophy in the Gathas
The Amesha Spentas and Their Dispersion

What has attracted considerable attention in Avestan myths, especially Zoroaster's hymns, are the "Rays of Ahura Mazda" which are the arms of Ahura in acts of creation and power. These rays are called "Amesha Spentas" in the Younger Avesta. In Zoroaster's hymns, the Amesha Spentas are abstract beings, but not yet manifest physical entities. However, in later parts of the Avesta (Yashts, Yasnas, Visperad, Khordeh Avesta, and Vendidad), these rays are presented as beings that, in addition to their spiritual essence, also possess physical reality and are referred to as gods and goddesses.

In Mazdaist cosmology, the Amesha Spentas are the manifestations of Ahura Mazda and his agents in the creation, nurturing, and protection of the world, divided into masculine and feminine groups, and hierarchically positioned below Ahura Mazda (Lajvardi 2017, 2). The Amesha Spentas refer to the group of seven mentioned in the Gathas. "Asha/Aša" means truth, righteousness, divine law, and purity, repeated 180 times in the Gathas. "Vohu Manah" or "Vahishto Manah" means good/best disposition, repeated 130 times in the Gathas. "Khshathra/xšaθra" means kingdom/dominion. "Armaiti" means patience, humility, devotion, and love. "Haurvatāt" means wholeness and health. "Ameretat" means immortality and everlastingness. Today, we call these words Ordibehesht, Bahman, Shahrivar, Spandarmad, Khordad, and Mordad, which are the names of six months and six days of the thirty-day month. In the Gathas, these words sometimes denote Ahura Mazda's attributes, sometimes refer to a specific angel/deity, and sometimes this distinction is difficult (Pourdavoud 1998, 102). Ahura Mazda created the Amesha Spentas from six sources, with himself as the seventh. Of the Amesha Spentas, he first created Bahman (Bahar 2012, 37). Ahura Mazda bestowed names upon time and the deities/Amesha Spentas. The number of Amesha Spentas also corresponds to the seven foundations of heaven and the seven foundations of material creation (Bahar 2012, 69). In the Gathas, Zoroaster speaks of seven beings (Amesha Spentas) who are the sons and daughters of Ahura Mazda (Hinnells 1989, 12). Each of these Amesha Spentas in the spiritual realm is a manifestation of one of Ahura Mazda's attributes, and in the material world, the nurturance and care of one of the elements is entrusted to it. For example, Bahman is the embodiment of Ahura Mazda's sacred thought, wisdom, and knowledge, and in this world, he protects beneficial animals and quadrupeds. Ordibehesht is the manifestation of the Creator's truth and righteousness and in the physical realm is the guardian of fire (Pourdavoud 1998, 103).

None of the Gathas mention the Amesha Spentas by name, and it is only after the Gathas, in the *Yasna Haptanghaiti (seven chapters)*, that this group is referred to by this name: "Thus do we worship the good, male and female, the Amesha Spentas, who are ever-living and ever-giving, who are the counterparts of Vohu Manah, both male and

female" (Yasna 39, 3). Here, the superiority of Vohu Manah over the other six Amesha Spentas is emphasized. Zoroaster, too, at the beginning of the Gathas (Yasna 28), desires above all else to please Vohu Manah and the soul of creation: "For the praise of the Creator, the Holy Wisdom, I stretch out my hands, desiring above all, O Aša, to please Vohu Manah and the soul of creation" (Pourdavoud 1998, 131). One of the very important topics related to the Amesha Spentas that is alluded to in the Gathas and more explicitly emphasized in other parts of the Avesta is the connection of each Amesha Spenta with a part of the material world. From the very beginning in the Gathas, there is an implicit connection between Vohu Manah and the cow, Aša and fire, Armaiti and the earth, Khordad and Amordad with water and plants (Lajvardi 2017, 4).

Another group are the angels called deities (Izads). After the six great angels mentioned above, there are 24 other angels whose names are given to one of the 12 months or 30 days of the month, or for whom a celebration is held during the year. In the spiritual realm, Ahura Mazda himself is at the head of the deities, and in the physical world, Zoroaster is the leader of the deities (Pourdavoud 1998, 104). Each deity has a distinctive function that distinguishes it (Rezai Rad 1999, 126). Some important deities include: Azar (ātar), Aban, Khorshed, Mah, Sraosha, Rashnu, Faravahar, Bahram, and Arshtat. In the Gathas themselves, three deities are mentioned: Azar (meaning priest), Sraosha (meaning obedience/submission, the angel who accounts for people's merits and sins on the Day of Resurrection), and Ashi (the angel of sovereignty and wealth) (Pourdavoud 1998, 105).

The Convergence of the Amesha Spentas in the Gathas as Good and Evil (Dualism)

One of the major characteristics of Iranian myths in the 12,000-year mythological history of Iran is dualism. Regarding the origin of creation, Mehrdad Bahar recounts: "In the beginning, there was Ahura Mazda and Ahriman" (Bahar 2012, 31). In ancient Iranian religions, no being is found to be spoken of alone, and an opposing counterpart is invariably created for it. Opposing each of the seven Amesha Spentas are Ahrimanic demons, which ultimately converge into the two forces of good and evil, or Ahrimanic-Ahuraic. "Angra Mainyu" or Ahriman, the leader of the demons, stands opposed to "Spenta Mainyu" or Ahura Mazda. The Gathas state: "In the beginning, two twin spirits emerged in thought: one of goodness and the other of evil. From these two essences, the wise choose truth and righteousness, while the ignorant do not. Thus, Spenta Mainyu embodies the force that enhances and augments the world, whereas Angra Mainyu represents the force that diminishes or destroys it." (Bartholomae 1974, 105). Zaehner considers the essence of Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu to be truth and falsehood, respectively (Ashtiani 1987, 147).

The dualistic thought existed among the Iranians and the Indo-Iranians before Zoroaster, but its form and expression are unique to Zoroaster himself. His dualism is a monotheistic one (Ashtiani 1987, 145). The Gathas state that these two twin Spirits are

not independent beings but exist in relation to each other and are creatures of Ahura Mazda (Yasna 30:3).

Dualism does not mean the worship of two gods, but rather a twofold conception, as no Mazdaist worships Ahriman (Rezai Rad 1999, 66). Spenta Mainyu means sacred wisdom, and Angra Mainyu means wicked wisdom, both being creatures of Ahura Mazda.

Hertel considers Spenta Mainyu and Ahura Mazda to be one and explains Angra Mainyu as the twin brother of Ahura Mazda, arguing that in the Gathas, apart from Ahura Mazda, there is no creator, and Ahriman never creates (Ashtiani 1987, 148). According to the Gathas, Ahura Mazda is the father of Spenta Mainyu (Rezai Rad 1999, 61). Orthodox Zoroastrians understand the term "Mazda-created" to mean that the attribute of creation belongs solely to Ahura Mazda, and it is not permissible for him to share this attribute with other ahuras (Rezai Rad 1999, 42).

The transition from polytheism to the dissolution of other deities into one supreme deity (henotheism) and ultimately to monotheism is a general process in the evolution of myths and religions (Rezai Rad 1999, 48). Each of the Amesha Spentas, who have separate personalities in other parts of the Avesta (Yasna, Yashts, Vendidad), are considered abstract attributes of Ahura Mazda in the Gathas (Dhalla 1998, 33). Zoroaster's important act was to invalidate all the gods before him, whom he refers to as "demons" representing delusions, superstitions, and misguidance, and to establish the true religion with the worship of Ahura Mazda and the three principles of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. Aša is a concept that immediately comes to mind after the realization of good and evil and finds its meaning in relation to them. In the Gathas, Mazda can be known only through good thoughts, words, and deeds in the light of Aša: "Now I want to look upon that domain which is (the place of) good thought and good deed and good word, after having known Mazda Ahura through Truth [Aša]" (Yasna 45:8). Aša is an eternal and enduring creed upon which the survival of the world and human felicity in both worlds depend (Mojtabai 1973, 32).

The Gathas mark the transition from polytheism to monotheism. It was with the advent of Zoroaster that monotheism was established (Mashkoor 1984, 71). In the Gathas, there is no trace of the dizzying multitude of Vedic and Mesopotamian gods; it is Ahura Mazda who reigns supreme in the spiritual world (Rezai Rad 1999, 49). Monotheism among the Iranians can be considered the beginning of their political life.

The Phenomenon of Politics (Shahanshahi, Country, Prosperity)

The concept of politics has undergone at least three fundamental transformations in the history of Iran: ancient Iran, Islamic Iran, and contemporary Iran (Mahmoudizadeh 2013, 2). In ancient Iran, politics was based on the absolute obedience of the subjects to the ruler, and any disobedience or non-compliance was considered a religious and ethnic deviation (Ahmadvand and Eslami 2017, 22). The intertwining of Zoroaster's teachings of good and evil with the daily life of people gave

these teachings a high potential to empower the political order (Ghahremani 2014, 4). The only term that can bear the meaning of politics in Iranian culture is the concept of *Shahriari (kingship)* and its tradition of kingship. Examining the semantic field of kingship and its position in the Gathas reveals Zoroaster's critique of the previous society and political system, his proposal and vision for an ideal society and political system, and the link between religion and power (Mahmoudizadeh 2013, 6). In ancient Iran, the concept of state and governance only finds meaning through the institution of kingship (Ahmadvand and Bordbar 2019, 1). The hymns of the Gathas are replete with Zoroaster's aspiration for the advent of an ideal, justice-spreading, and truth-championing king. In the Gathas, the king is both the political ruler and the religious leader. The terrestrialization of the sacred through the institution of Shahanshahi characterizes the politics of ancient Iran.

Zoroaster considered the gods of pastoral and nomadic life to be the same demons that symbolized falsehood and transgression. This protest against the old religion provided a basis for the formation and justification of a specific political institution in the form of a centralized power embodied in the institution of Shahanshahi (Rajaee 2011, 98). In the Gathas, the request of the "Soul of Creation" (the guardian of beneficial animals) to Ahura Mazda is the origin of the tradition of Shahriari. The "Soul of Creation," which is translated into Persian as "Cow," lodges a complaint at the court of Ahura Mazda about the harm and torment inflicted by evil humans upon beneficial animals, and seeks a strong "Shahriar [king/sovereign]" through whose radiant law the rights of animals would be respected. Zoroaster humbly introduces himself and offers his religion for the improvement of the world's conditions (Pourdavoud 1998, 117-119). "Zoroaster desires above all else to please Vohu Manah and the Soul of Creation" (Yasna 28:1). "O Mazda, the Soul of Creation is a complainant at your court" (Yasna 29:1). "Then Mazda asked Aša: 'Do you know of a judge for the Soul of Creation who would bring it peace?'" (Yasna 29:2). "Aša answered the Creator: 'There is no mighty helper for the Soul of Creation'" (Yasna 29:3). "Then Ahura Mazda himself said: 'For you, there is no righteous one who would act according to the sacred law'" (Yasna 29:6). Zoroaster then offers himself to Ahura Mazda: "Zoroaster said: 'Yes, O Mazda, I have realized that you yourself can arouse him'" (Yasna 29:10). "So, O people, accept me, so that the group of followers may receive instruction" (Yasna 29:11). Justice was so important to the Iranians that the selection of Diyako, the first King in Iranian history, was for no reason other than his sense of justice. Hushang was the first to establish justice, and hence he was given the title "Pishdad" (Rezai Rad 1999, 299-302).

Shahriari is an institution that emerges upon the establishment of civilization (Rezai Rad 1999, 257). A society at the pastoral stage has not yet attained civilization, and Zoroaster's critique of pastoral life and his encouragement to establish an agricultural way of life was aimed at organizing society within a specific territory as a political unit, which is necessary for the institution of sovereignty. Centuries later, Ibn Khaldun also proposed the idea that the transformation of human life from nomadism to rural and urban living leads to the development of a civic disposition in societies,

ultimately necessitating the existence of a ruler or sovereign, prompting the selection of a sovereign. Marx also considered the "Asiatic mode of production" to have led to the emergence of Eastern civilization, characterized by an agriculture-based society with an irrigation system that takes shape within a centralized government. Similarly, in the Gathas, Zoroaster first seeks centralization through an agricultural system to establish his ideal political system of kingship.

In the Gathas, Zoroaster states that the Soul of Creation chose the diligent husbandman, who loves the pure disposition, as the judge, stipulating that the non-husbandman (tent-dweller), no matter how much he strives for the pure disposition, shall not benefit from Ahura Mazda's message: "And the brilliant wisdom that left the Cow free to choose its refuge with the husbandman or the non-husbandman" (Yasna 31:9). "Of these two, it (the Cow) chose the diligent husbandman, who loves the pure disposition, as its master and judge; the non-husbandman, no matter how much he strives for it, shall not benefit from your praised message" (Yasna 31:10). Zoroaster's mission was to summon to civilization, development, and sedentarization. He may have been one of the earliest heralds of the economic-social transformation from pastoral to agricultural life for tribes. With the establishment of agricultural units (villages), civilization emerged (Rezai Rad 1999, 271).

The transition from the traditional pastoral society and its transformation, like any transformation, had its opponents, and Zoroaster was no exception. "From the very beginning, one has raised his voice with measured words, and the other has caused an uproar with false speech; Armaiti has hastened from one to the other, admonishing the one who is still in doubt" (Yasna 31:12). "None of you should listen to the words and judgment of the lie-worshipper, for he will bring need and corruption to the house, clan, town, and village" (Yasna 31:18). "Since you have set out to inflict the worst harm upon people, you must be called friends of the demons, who are far from good thought, fugitives from the will of Mazda Ahura, and apostates from the sacred law" (Yasna 32:4). "May your curse, O Mazda, be upon those who, with their own teachings, turn people away from good deeds, and upon those who sacrifice the cow with joyful cries; among them are Grehma and his followers, who are fugitives from truth, and the Karapans and their rule, who are inclined to falsehood" (Yasna 32:12). Zoroaster considers Aša as an offering to Ahura Mazda instead of sacrificing: "Zoroaster, in gratitude, offers his soul and the choicest good thought, good deed, and good word, with whatever humility and excellence he has, at the court of Mazda and Truth" (Yasna 33:14). In the Gathas, the names "Kari," "Karapan," "Aosij," "Bandvah," and "Grehma" are mentioned among Zoroaster's adversaries (Razi 1965, 39-41).

Country/ Kešvar

The term xšaθra is employed in the Gathas with three connotations: "xšaθra vairya" (desirable dominion), "hu-xšaθra" (the righteous ruler), and "dužxšaθra" (the evil ruler). However, its political aspect, "xšaθra vairya," denotes the ideal sovereign

(Mahmoudizadeh 2013, 19). Xšaθra (meaning realm and kingdom) is the central term in Zoroaster's Gathas for designating relations of power, domain, and sovereignty. In the Gathas, xšaθra symbolizes kingship and political might, capable of assuming either a virtuous or wicked state (hu-xšaθra or dužxšaθra) (Mahmoudizadeh 2013, 10). In the political thought of Iranian kingship, the apex of the power hierarchy is occupied by the possessor of Aše, endowed with "xšaθra vairya" (the embodiment of authority), and this Amesha Spenta is charged with upholding the best system of governance (Ahmadvand 2019, 6). The Iranian king is the manifestation of might and the amalgamation of the Amesha Spentas' qualities, bestowed by Ahura Mazda: "May Ahura Mazda grant him all the supreme power and sovereign authority, with truth (Aša), righteous rule (Xšaθra), and good thinking (Vohu Manah), to the one who is his friend in thought and deed" (Yasna 31:21). The Iranian king, embodying Spantā Armaiti (the personification of humility and gratification), is imbued with Ārmatōy (humility) (Ahmadvand and Eslami 2017, 52-58). The earthly xšaθra of the king emulates the celestial dominion of Ahura Mazda through the intermediacy of the Amesha Spenta Shahrivar (Rezai Rad 1999, 318). In the Gathas, the king is merely an agent of the ordained teachings, not a deputy or representative of the divine counterpart.

Xšaθra in the Gathas is occasionally employed in a non-political, celestial sense (paradise), bestowed upon those who perform the most virtuous deeds: "O Mazda, may the precious good dominion (paradise) be given, as the reward of the truthful person, to whoever performs the most virtuous actions with zeal" (Yasna 51.1). Moreover, Ahura Mazda's celestial dominion (paradise) is the recompense for those who adhere to truth: "And when the punishment for these deceitful ones arrives, then, O Mazda, may You establish Your dominion at last for those who entrusted the lie into the hands of truth" (Yasna 30:8).

Prosperity

In the thought of Iranian kingship, the prosperity of the city hinges upon a sovereign who wields authority, endures eternally, and enjoys the people's satisfaction, derived from the Amesha Spenta "Haurvatāt" (meaning perfection and eloquence) (Amoozgar 2006, 73). The inception of Iran's prosperity in the Gathas coincides with the manifestation of the notion of Shahanshahi, when Gēuš Uruuan (the soul of the Cow, the guardian of beneficent animals) laments the oppression, violence, and bloodshed inflicted upon people before Ahura Mazda's throne, pleading for a capable sovereign under whose aegis the world would be subdued and the earth made bountiful through cultivation, husbandry, and the nurturing of beneficent quadrupeds. Gēuš Uruuan desires not an admonishing prophet whom the world does not heed, but a mighty king. When Zoroaster presents himself before Ahura Mazda's throne, Gēuš Uruuan finds solace: "O Ahura, now we have a supporter at last" (Yasna 29:11). To encourage his people toward agriculture and prosperity, Zoroaster hails Ahura Mazda as the father of farmers and the earth as his daughter (Pourdavoud 1998, 525): "O Mazda, who created

the world anew, the father is the truthful farmer of good thought, and the earth is his daughter of virtuous deeds" (Yasna 45:4).

The Zoroastrian faith embraces worldly life and the cultivation thereof, which is why it accepts a stratified society, with each stratum possessing its own Farr (divine glory) and duties to fulfill (Zaehner 1996, 220). Aša upholds the cosmic and political order. The prime emblems of the cosmic order on earth, which form the foundation of political thought in Iran, consist of the utopia, the ideal king, and the tripartite social structure with each stratum's distinct occupation (the most palpable manifestation of the heavenly order on earth) (Rezaei Rad 1999, 136). The class system and distinct occupations are prominent features of Shahanshahi system, controlling the people's potential for extremism and insurrection. The class structure enabled individuals to employ their aptitudes and capabilities to maximum benefit. The tripartite structure of social classes in ancient Iran resembled Plato's ideal society. In his book *Plato's Utopia and the Ideal Shah in Iran*, Fath Allah Mojtabai identifies truth as the hallmark of sovereignty and governance among Iranians, which kings frequently emphasized in their inscriptions (Mojtabai 1973, 68). The king's Farr depended on preserving and safeguarding divine justice and its social aspect, the class structure. This class structure was a crucial factor in the stability and enduring foundation of power in ancient Iran. The class structure of ancient Iran was a significant element in preserving and producing power. In the Gathas, Zoroaster attributes his inability to advance his work to the alienation of the three estates (nobles, spiritual leaders, and farmers): "The nobles and the spiritual leaders keep me at a distance, the farmers do not gratify me" (Yasna 46:1).

In the Gathas, Zoroaster considers worldly and otherworldly prosperity contingent upon adherence to good thoughts, good deeds, and good words—a motto pervasive throughout the Gathas: "O Mazda, I ask You, who holds the earth below and the heavens above that they do not fall? Who created the waters and the plants? Who joined swiftness to the winds and the clouds? O Mazda, O Good deed" (Yasna 44:4). Conversely, he views falsehood as the source of harm and detriment, an impediment to prosperity and a cause of ruin: "Now, you must all heed this, for he is manifest: let not the wicked teacher ruin life again, that deceitful one who turned to the *Druj* worshiper [Evil Religion] with his tongue" (Yasna 45:1).

Conclusion

Xšaθra (meaning country and kingdom) is the central term in Zoroaster's Gathas for designating relations of power, realm, and statecraft. In the Gathas, xšaθra symbolizes kingship and political might. The only term capable of bearing the semantic weight of politics in Iranian culture is the concept of Shahriari or the tradition of kingship. Examining the semantic field of kingship and its position in the Gathas reveals Zoroaster's critique of the preceding society and political system, his proposal for an ideal and desirable society and political system, and the link between religion and power. In the Gathas, the request of the Soul of Creation (the guardian of beneficent

animals) from Ahura Mazda marks the origin of the tradition of kingship. Shahriri is an institution that emerges with the advent of civilization. Zoroaster's critique of pastoral life and his encouragement toward an agricultural existence led to centralization and the emergence of civilization. Prosperity also hinges upon the advent of a mighty and powerful sovereign. The Zoroastrian faith embraces worldly life and its cultivation, which is why it accepts a stratified society, with each stratum possessing its own khvarenah/farr (divine glory) and duties to fulfill. The class system and distinct occupations are prominent features of Shahanshahi system, controlling the people's potential for extremism and insurrection. Worldly prosperity is tantamount to otherworldly prosperity. The Iranian king is the manifestation of might and the amalgamation of the Amesha Spentas' qualities, bestowed by Ahura Mazda, and the coalescence of the Farr of kingship and the good religion in its entirety within a single individual. When these two Farrs unite in a single person, Ahriman is utterly destroyed. Rendering the sacred earthly through the institution of kingship is a characteristic of ancient Iranian politics.

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