

“INDO-IRANIAN SOURCES — THE CONCEPT OF CREATION IN ZOROASTRIANISM”**Sattarov Faxriddin Rustam o‘g‘li**

PhD (Doctoral Researcher), Termiz State University

ANNOTATION: This article analyzes Zoroastrian cosmological concepts, particularly the doctrine of the six (later seven) creations of the world. The study examines mythological ideas concerning the creation of plants, animals, and humans, as well as the religious and philosophical significance of Mount Harā, the Vourukaša Sea, the Tree of All Seeds (Harvisp-tokhm), the Gaokərəna Tree, Gāv ēvdād, and Gayōmard. The article also explores the relationship between Zoroastrian creation myths and ancient Indo-Iranian religious traditions, emphasizing sacrificial rituals and their cosmological functions. The study concludes that the interaction of mythological and religious concepts played a crucial role in the formation of Zoroastrian cosmology.

Keywords: Zoroastrianism, cosmology, Bundahišn, Gayōmard, Gāv ēvdād, Mount Harā, Vourukaša Sea, Gaokərəna, Tree of All Seeds, sacrifice ritual, mythology, doctrine of creation.

АННОТАЦИЯ: В данной статье анализируются космогонические представления зороастризма, в частности учение о шести (позднее семи) творениях мира. Рассматриваются мифологические представления о происхождении растений, животных и человека, а также религиозно-философское значение горы Хара, моря Воурукаша, Древа всех семян, дерева Гаокерена, Гав эвдад и Гайомарда. Особое внимание уделяется связи зороастрийских мифов о сотворении мира с древними индо-иранскими религиозными традициями, а также роли жертвоприношений в космогонических представлениях. Делается вывод о важной роли взаимодействия мифологических и религиозных идей в формировании зороастрийской космологии.

Ключевые слова: Зороастризм, космогония, Бундахишн, Гайомард, Гав эвдад, гора Хара, море Воурукаша, Гаокерена, Древо всех семян, жертвоприношение, мифология, учение о сотворении мира.

ANNOTATSIIYA: Mazkur maqolada zardushtiylikning kosmogonik qarashlari, xususan, olamning olti (keyinchalik yetti) yaratilishi haqidagi ta’limot tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda o‘simliklar, hayvonlar va insonning yaratilishi bilan bog‘liq mifologik tasavvurlar, Harā tog‘i, Vourukaša dengizi, Barcha Urug‘lar Daraxti (Harvisp-tokhm), Gaokərəna daraxti, Gāv ēvdād va Gayōmard obrazlarining diniy-falsafiy mazmuni yoritiladi. Shuningdek, zardushtiylikdagi yaratilish miflarining qadimgi hind-eron diniy an‘analari bilan bog‘liqligi, qurbonlik marosimlari va ularning kosmogonik ahamiyati tahlil etiladi. Tadqiqot natijasida zardushtiylik kosmogoniyasining shakllanishida mifologik va diniy qarashlarning o‘zaro uyg‘unlashuvi muhim o‘rin tutgani aniqlanadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: Zardushtiylik, kosmogoniya, Bundahišn, Gayōmard, Gāv ēvdād, Harā tog‘i, Vourukaša dengizi, Gaokərəna, Barcha Urug‘lar Daraxti, qurbonlik marosimi, mifologiya, yaratilish ta’limoti.

Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest monotheistic religions in human history, and its cosmological and anthropological concepts constitute an important source for understanding the religious and philosophical thought of the ancient Iranian peoples. The sacred texts of this faith, along with the Pahlavi sources, provide extensive accounts of the creation of the universe, the

origins of natural phenomena, and the emergence of humankind and other living beings. In particular, the doctrine of the six (later seven) creations occupies a central place in Zoroastrian cosmology, presenting a systematic narrative of the creation of the sky, water, earth, plants, animals, and human beings. The complexity of beliefs associated with Harā has diverted our attention from the doctrine of the six creations. So far, we have examined three of these creations: the sky, water, and earth. The fourth creation was vegetation. In ancient times, various myths existed concerning the origin of plant life; however, according to the Bundahišn, the first green living thing grew at the center of the earth (perhaps at the foot of Mount Harā). It was a delicate stalk, “moist and milky,” without branches, bark, or thorns, yet it “contained within itself the potential and power of all kinds of plants.”¹ This intriguing entity appears to have been the product of speculative reflections by the priesthood and possessed no distinct name of its own; it was simply referred to as “the plant” (urvar). More widespread, however, was the concept of a gigantic tree that served as the source of the regeneration of all terrestrial vegetation. This tree was believed to grow in the midst of the Vourukaša Sea and is described in the Vendidad as “the well-watered tree upon which grow hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands of different kinds of plants.” In Yasht 12.17, it is referred to as the Tree of Saēna, because it is guarded by that great mythical bird. It also contains within itself the seeds of all healing plants and is therefore known as the Tree of All Remedies. In the Pahlavi texts, it is referred to by various names, including the Tree of All Seeds,² the Tree of All Healing³ and the Tree that Counteracts Harm.⁴ According to the Zoroastrian account of creation, when the Evil Spirit poisoned the primordial plant and caused it to wither, Amərətāt, the Immortal Being entrusted with the care of vegetation, crushed it into minute particles and dispersed its essence over the earth through the rain. From this essence all plants came into existence; and from their seeds—the first generations of vegetation—there grew in the Vourukaša Sea the great Tree of All Seeds. This appears to represent an attempt to reconcile ancient popular myths with the less picturesque doctrinal teachings of the priesthood. Thereafter, each year Tištrya carries the seeds from the tree in the waters and scatters them as rain, thereby renewing the life of vegetation throughout the world.

Near the Tree of All Seeds, in the Vourukaša Sea, there was said to stand another great tree of Iranian mythology, the “mighty Gaokərəna” (Yasht 1.30), known in Pahlavi as Gōkarn or Gōkart. In the Vendidad (20.4), it is mentioned as being surrounded by healing plants. In the Pahlavi texts, however, this tree is called the “White Hōm” and is described as “the chief of plants.” Whoever partakes of it is granted long life; it preserves those of “short lifespan” and bestows immortality upon the resurrected bodies of the dead.

In the mythology, there is some confusion between this Tree of Life and the Tree of All Seeds. The two stand close to one another, both are protected by the kar fish, and both are associated with healing plants. Behind these tree myths lie ancient Indo-Iranian conceptions. The Indians, for example, believed that on the southern side of Mount Meru stood the great Jambū tree—from which Jambūdīvā derived its name—which was associated with soma and immortality, as well as with medicinal herbs.

The fifth creation was that of animals, whose origin is traced back to the primordial bovine. The Mighty Created Bull, Gāv aēvō.dāta (Pahlavi: Gāv ī ēwdād), is described as “white, radiant like the moon, and as tall as three reed-lengths.” It was the first animal to inhabit the earth, but it

¹ Bundahišn I a.11 // Anklesaria B. T. Zand-Ākāsīh: Iranian or Greater Bundahišn. Bombay, 1956. P. 25.

² Anklesaria, B. T. Zand-Ākāsīh: Iranian or Greater Bundahišn. Bombay, 1956, pp. 79, 147, 193.

³ Anklesaria, B. T. Zand-Ākāsīh: Iranian or Greater Bundahišn. Bombay, 1956, p. 195.

⁴ West, E. W. (trans.). The Book of the Mainyo-i-Khard. In: Sacred Books of the East, Vol. 24. Oxford, 1885. P. LXII.37

was slain. According to the Zoroastrian myth—preserved only in the Iranian tradition—the Evil Spirit, Ahriman, killed it, just as he had caused the primordial plant to wither. A portion of its seed was then carried up to the Moon, which is consequently described as *gao-čiθra* (“having the seed of the bull” or “possessing the seed of cattle”). From this seed, after it had been purified in the Moon, all species of beneficial animals came into existence. Another portion of its seed fell to the earth, from which numerous kinds of useful plants subsequently grew.

The distinctive features of this myth in its Zoroastrian version have often been emphasized by scholars. It is likely that, in its original polytheistic form, the primordial bovine died as a sacrificial victim, and its death was understood primarily as a creative and beneficial act, giving rise to all other good creatures and plants. It may therefore have served as the prototype of the sacrifice performed during Mithra’s autumn festival, a rite intended to ensure the renewal of life in the following spring through the flourishing of pastures and the increase of livestock.

In the Zoroastrian version, however, although the death of the primordial bovine produced beneficial consequences, the act itself was regarded as evil, having been brought about by the Evil Spirit. Even in what appears to have been a more coherent form of the earlier pagan mythology, the growth of plants from the seed of the slain animal merely duplicates the creation of vegetation described in the fourth creation. This is undoubtedly an ancient inconsistency that arose through the systematization and combination of different mythological traditions. According to the *Bundahišn*, the Primordially Created Bull lived on the banks of the *Veh Dāiti* River, while on the opposite shore stood *Gayō.marətan* (Pahlavi: *Gayōmard*), the legendary First Man.⁵ He is also sometimes referred to in the Avestan texts simply as *Gaya* (“Life”); however, his full name signifies “Mortal Life” or “Life Subject to Death,” thereby distinguishing him from the “immortal life” of the gods (Vedic *amartya-gāya*). *Gayō.marətan* is described as “radiant like the sun, four reed-lengths in height, and equal in breadth to his height.” This intriguing figure has often been compared with the Vedic *Martāṇḍa*, whose name may be interpreted as “the Mortal Offspring” or “the Mortal Seed.” Like *Gayō.marətan*, he occupies an intermediate position between gods and human beings, for he was regarded as a semi-divine being.⁶ Like *Gayō.marətan*, *Martāṇḍa* is described as “radiant like the sun, with a height equal to his breadth.” It was believed that “all human life was destined to arise from his seed.” The close parallels between these two figures strongly suggest that they derive from a common Indo-Iranian myth, one that sought to explain the origins of humankind through different mythological formulations. The conception of *Martāṇḍa* as the last of the *Ādityas* further connects this myth with the ancient Ahuric (Asurian) religious tradition, indicating its roots in a shared Indo-Iranian religious heritage.⁷

In the Zoroastrian version of the myth, however, *Gayō.marətan* is slain by the Evil Spirit. His seed is then purified by the Sun; a portion of it is preserved by *Nairyō.sanha* (Pahlavi: *Nēryōsang*), while the remainder is entrusted to the earth. After forty years, a rhubarb plant emerges from the ground and gradually develops into *Mašya* and *Mašyānag*, the first mortal man and woman. Through them, all humanity comes into existence, giving rise to the generations that inhabit *Xvaniraθa* (*Khvaniratha*), and in particular, according to Yasht 13.87, to “the family of the Aryan people, the lineage of the Aryan nations.” Thus, they become the progenitors of the human race.

Both *Gayōmard* and the Primordially Created Bull are said to have been fashioned from the earth. Their seed, however, derived not from water but from fire, whereas water was regarded as the source of all other forms of life.⁸

⁵ Hoffmann, Karl. “*Martāṇḍa* und *Gayōmart*.” *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft*, Vol. 11, 1957, pp. 99–100.

⁶ Christensen, Arthur. *Les Types du Premier Homme et du Premier Roi dans l’Histoire Légendaire des Iraniens*. Stockholm, 1917.

⁷ Hoffmann, Karl. “*Martāṇḍa* und *Gayōmart*.” *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft*, Vol. 11, 1957, p. 98.

⁸ Hoffmann, Karl. “*Martāṇḍa* und *Gayōmart*.” *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft*, Vol. 11, 1957, pp. 99–100.

Humanity constituted the sixth and final creation among the visible and distinct created beings. There was, however, a seventh creation: fire itself. Although visible and perceptible, fire was regarded as permeating the other six creations, being “distributed within each of them.” Not only did the seeds of living creatures—animals and human beings—originate from fire, but fire was also believed to flow through the veins of the earth, keeping the roots of plants and the sources of water warm and vital during winter. It was further manifested in lightning across the sky and, most prominently, in the Sun itself.⁹ All things partake of the nature of fire, sharing in its warmth and radiance. This radiance is believed to derive from the fire that comes from the “Endless Light, the realm of Ahura Mazda,” which is situated beyond the confines of the heavens.¹⁰

According to the Bundahišn, fire is the last of the seven creations.¹¹ However, fire was not always counted in this way. In the ancient Farvardīn Yašt, where the other creations are repeatedly mentioned, fire does not appear in the list. It is therefore possible that its classification as one of the creations represents a matter of later interpretation. The fully developed doctrine may have held that this element entered the six creations as their vital force once they had come into existence, for in the beginning everything was static: the sun lay motionless in the night, the earth remained inert, and the waters were without movement. The primordial plant, the Primeval Bull, and Gayō.marətan existed in stillness at the center of an empty world.

The pagan doctrine appears almost certainly to have emphasized a different conception, one in which there were three primordial sacrifices. These sacrifices were probably performed by the gods themselves, as is the case in Vedic mythology.¹² In the present Zoroastrian version of the creation narrative, where the pagan perspective has been clearly transformed, the withered primordial plant is pounded and its essence is entrusted to the waters, from which all other plants come into being. This parallels the living ritual in which the dried haoma is crushed and its essence is mixed with water so that its beneficent power may be distributed to all vegetation.

Similarly, the mythological Bull is slain, and from it the entire animal kingdom is generated; and the death of the mythological First Man gives rise to humankind. These accounts appear to preserve myths of ritual prototypes in which sacrificial acts were performed for the purpose of bringing all living beings into existence. Among these sacrificial motifs, human sacrifice may well have diminished considerably by the closing stages of the pagan period.¹³ Nevertheless, animal sacrifice persisted into later periods and, in certain contexts, continues to be practiced among Brahmanical and Zoroastrian communities in India and Iran. The ritual preparation and offering of soma (haoma) has likewise survived as an enduring religious observance and is still regularly performed.

References / Bibliography

1. Boyce, Mary. *A History of Zoroastrianism*. Vol. I: The Early Period. Leiden: Brill, 1975.
2. Anklesaria, B. T. *Zand-Ākāsīh: Iranian or Greater Bundahišn*. Bombay: Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha, 1956.
3. Darmesteter, James (trans.). *The Zend-Avesta*. Part II: The Sirozahs, Yasts and Nyāyis. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883.
4. West, E. W. *Pahlavi Texts*. Part III. *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 24. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885.

⁹ Anklesaria, B. T. *Zand-Ākāsīh: Iranian or Greater Bundahišn*. Bombay, 1956, p. 25.

¹⁰ Anklesaria, B. T. *Zand-Ākāsīh: Iranian or Greater Bundahišn*. Bombay: Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha, 1956. p. 23.

¹¹ Anklesaria, B. T. *Zand-Ākāsīh: Iranian or Greater Bundahišn*. Bombay: Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha, 1956. p. 39.

¹² Lévi, Sylvain. *La Doctrine du Sacrifice dans les Brāhmaṇas*. Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1898. pp. 13–35.

¹³ The Histories. Herodotus. *The Histories*. Translated by A. D. Godley. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1920–1925. Book VII, §§114, 180.

Journal: <https://ifsmrc.org/index.php/aijrm>

5. Christensen, Arthur. Les Types du Premier Homme et du Premier Roi dans l'Histoire Légendaire des Iraniens. Stockholm, 1917.
6. Hoffmann, Karl. "Märtānda und Gayōmart." Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft, Vol. 11, 1957.
7. Lévi, Sylvain. La Doctrine du Sacrifice dans les Brāhmaṇas. Paris, 1898.
8. Gershevitch, Ilya. The Avestan Hymn to Mithra. Cambridge University Press, 1959.
9. Widengren, Geo. Die Religionen Irans. Stuttgart, 1965.
10. Lommel, Hermann. Die Religion Zarathustras nach dem Awesta dargestellt. Tübingen, 1930.