PRODS OKTOR SKJÆRVØ

THEMATIC AND LINGUISTIC PARALLELS IN THE ACHAEMENIAN AND SASSANIAN INSCRIPTIONS

A comparison of the Achaemenian and Sassanian inscriptions reveals some close thematic and linguistic parallels\(^1\). In the absence of any West-Iranian literary records from the time between the Old Persian and the Middle Iranian inscriptions we cannot tell whether the similarities are to be ascribed to some local (oral) literary tradition\(^2\), or to some exterior influence; however, it seems we have to accept as a fact that there must have been some kind of connection between the older and the younger inscriptions. This will become clear from the text passages presented in the following\(^3\). I have selected for comparison certain themes common to the Achaemenian and Sassanian inscriptions.

A. *Presentation of the king, his descent, and his realm*\(^4\)

Many inscriptions contain no more than this. In the longer inscriptions it usually serves as an introduction. In the Sassanian inscriptions

\(^1\) Ph. Gignoux (Journal Asiatique, 1979, 45f.) is to my knowledge the first to have pointed out one set of such parallels.

\(^2\) Cf. M. Boyce, Middle Persian Literature (Handbuch der Orientalistik I, IV Iranistik, 2 Literatur, Lief. 1) p. 31: ‘(...) only during (...) the Sassanian epoch (c. 224-652 A.C.) did Persian literature begin to evolve from an oral (...) to a written (...) form’, and ‘(...) a number of individual works [from the Sassanian period] appear to be simply oral products of considerable antiquity (...)’.


the royal generalities all conform to the same pattern, but in the Old Persian ones the patterns vary from king to king. Examples:

DB 1.1-13:

adam Dārayavaš xšāyaṭiya vaṣaṛka
xšāyaṭiya xšāyaṭiya ṣṭiyānām
xšāyaṭiya Pārsaiy xšāyaṭiya

 Sağ Pa 1:

ANE mzdyn ALHA ṣḥypwr
MLKYN MLKA
"ry"n W "ny"ry"n
MNW ṣyhr MN y"ztn
MLKYN MLKA "ry"n
MNW ṣyhr MN y"ztn

Vištāspahyā puṣa

Aršāmahayā napā
Haxāmanis[iya]

Similarly in AmH, which continues:

θātiy Arīyāramna xšāyaṭiya
iyam dahayāus Pārsā
taya adam dārayāmīy

(querque 1-2):

"ry"nḥḥṣr ḫtwy HWYm
W HHSNWm ḫṣṭr p)r}s (etc.)

DB: ‘I am Darius, the great king, king of kings, king in Pārs, king of lands, son of Vištāspa, grandson of Aršāma, an Achaemenian’. — AmH: ‘Arīyāramna the king says: This land Pārs, which I hold (etc.’).

— ŠKZ: ‘I am the Mazdean lord Šābuhr, king of kings of Iranians and Non-Iranians, whose seed is from the gods, son of the Mazdean lord Ardaxšēr, king of king of Iranians, whose seed is from the gods, grandson of the lord Pābag, the king. I am the ruler of Ėrānšahr. And I hold (the following) lands: Pārs (etc.’).

The chief differences between the Achaemenian and the Sassanian genealogies are: (i) in Old Persian, Agramazdā gives the king his power, whereas the Sassanian king is of divine descent; (ii) the Achaemenian king was king of Pārs and (other) lands, the Sassanian king was king of Iranians and Non-Iranians, and Pārs was only one part of the empire.

B. Description of the empire

The lists of lands or provinces belonging to the empire are variously introduced in Old Persian, cf.:

DB 1.13-14 imā dahayāva taya manā [pat]iyāiša vašnā Agramazdāha
[ad]amšām xšāyaṭiya āham Pārsa (etc.) ‘These lands which came to me, by the favour of Agramazdā, I was their king: Pārs (etc.’).

DPe 6-10 vašnā Agramazdāha imā dahayāva taya adām adaršīy hadā anā Pārsā kārā taya hacāma atārsa manā bājim abara Ūvja (etc.) ‘By the
favour of Auramazdā, these lands which I obtained with that Persian people/army, which feared me and paid tribute (are): Üvja (etc.)'.

DPh 4-5 ima xšaçaš taya adam dāravyāmiy 'This realm which I hold.'

DNA 16-20 vašnā Auramazdāhā im[a] dārayāvā tayā adam agar-
bāyār[m] apataram hacā Pārsā adamsā[m] patiyāxšayāiy manā bājim 
aba[r]a ha 'By the favour of Auramazdā, these (are) the lands which I 
seized beyond Pārs. I ruled them. They bore tribute to me'.

With these compare ŠKZ Pa 1 W HHSNWm hš[tr p]'rs (etc.) 'And 
We hold the lands Pārs (etc.)'; Pa 17 pty y'ztn pwšt ZNE 'wnt hštr 
YBOEm W HHSNWm 'with the help of the gods We claimed and hold 
these many lands'. Cf. also Pa 4 pty b'z HQAYMWt 'he (Philippus) was 
made tributary'.

Note the following close correspondences: agarbāyam: AHDt (grift);
bājim abara: pty b'z HQAYMWt (awestād); dārayāmiy, adāraya,
adāršiy: HHSNWm (dārām); vašnā Auramazdāhā: pty y'ztn pwšt.

A curious similarity is found between Darius's characterisation of the 
empire in DNA and that of Kirdēr in KKZ:

patikarā didiy taya[θ] gāhm barā*tiy a[v]dā xšnāsāhāy ada[taiy azdā 
martiya dārayapyi [hac]ā Pārsā partaram patiyājata 'Those lands which 
Darius the king held, — look at the sculptures which bear the throne. 
Then you will know, then it will be clear to you that the spear of the 
Persian soldier has gone far abroad. ... The Persian soldier has fought 
battles far away from Pārs'.

KKZ 11-12 PWNe 'nyln śtry ... AYK SWSYA W GBRA ZY MLKAn 
MLKA YHMNTWN 'ndwyk y śtrdstn (etc.) 'and in Anērān-šahr ... 
where(ever) the horses and men of the King of Kings have reached' 5.

Narseh in NPi describes the Persian empire in quite different terms:

NPi 44-46/41-43 §§92-93 (Middle Persian version reconstructed) ud 
Kuşān šāh ud ... ud abārīg šāhryār [...] pad pand ud] pāyēs ī amāh ēstēnd 
'And the King of Kuşān and ... and the other Princes (...) abode by 
Our (advice and) counsel' 6.

6 See Humbach and Skjærø, The Sassanian inscription of Paikuli, part 3.2 Com-
mentary by P.O. Skjærø., Wiesbaden, 1983, 120.
C. The ideal qualities of a good king and the state of the land under such a king

Such qualities are mentioned in the Old Persian inscriptions and play a prominent and important role in NPl in the discussion between Narseh and the dignitaries about who is most fit to become king.

In the Old Persian inscriptions the king is said to receive his realm (or ‘ruling power’ xšaçaḵ) from Auramazdā:

DB 1.11 vašnā Auramazdāha adam xšayabīya amiy Auramazdā xšaçaḵ manā [fr]ābara ‘By the favour of Auramazdā am I king. Auramazdā gave me the realm’.

In NPl the god-given attributes of kingship are more numerous. They are ‘realm’ (šahr), ‘rulership’ (šahr-xwadāyih), ‘royal splendour’ or ‘fortune’ (GDE = xwarrah), ‘throne’ (ALŠA = gāh), ‘diadem’ (dēdēm), and *honour (padixšar), all ‘given’ (dād) by the gods or ‘received’ (padirīf) from them:

NPl 8/7 §18 MP GDE W NPŠE ALŠ[A W] pthšly ZY nyd’k’n MN yzd’n MKBL[WN] ‘the royal splendour and Your own throne and the honour which Your ancestors received from the gods’.

NPl 26/23 §53 Pa [...]ztn GDE W h[štr]-hwtyϕy OL LN YNTNt ‘that the gods had given Us the royal splendour and the rulership’.

Cf. also the following Manichaean text (M 729, Boyce, Reader cr 10): pdyr’y xwy pwsg dydm ’c pydr ’ghrmzdbīy ‘you shall receive helmet, garland, diadem from Ohrmizdbay’ (rewards after death).

The qualities of a good king and the state of the land under a good king are seen in the following Old Persian passages:

DB 4.37-40 tuvam kā xšayabīya ha]ya aparam āhay hacā draugā daršam patipayauvā mart[iya haya drau]jana ahatīy avam ufraštam parsā yadīy avatā man[iyāhāyi] dahayāušmai duruvā ahatiy ‘You who shall be the next king keep yourself strongly protected from the Lie. The man who is a liar, punish him well if you think, “May my land be healthy!”’.

DPe 19-24 yadīy avatā maniyahay hacā aniyanā mā [ta]rṣam imām Pārsam kāram pādiy yadīy kāra Pārsa pāta ahatiy hayā davais[tajm šiyātī axṣatā hauvciy aurā’ nirsātīy abiy imām viṭam ‘If you think thus, “May I not fear another!”, then protect this Persian people. If the Persian people is protected, then for the longest time peace unbroken will descend upon this house’.

7 See K. Hoffmann, MSS, VIII, 1956, 9 (Aufsätze 2, 390 ff.).
DNb 1-13, 45-49 baga vazarka Auramazdā ... haya xradum utā aruvastam upariy Dārayavaun xšāyašiyan niyasaya ... taya rāstam dauš[fā] amiy miša nā[ry] dauš[tā] amiy ... taya rāstam ava māṃ kāma marṭiyan drauṣyanam niyay dauš[fā] ... utā āvnrā taya Auramazdā [upad]r[ī]y mā[m] niyasaya utādiṣ atāvam barta[nail]y vašna Auramaz-dāhā tayamaiy kartam imaiši āvnrābiši akunavam ‘A great god is Auramazdā ... who bestowed wisdom and activity upon Darius the king. ... I like that which is right. I do not like wrongness. ... I wish for that which is right. I do not like a man who lies. ... And the skills which Auramazdā bestowed upon me and which I could carry, by the favour of Auramazdā, what I did, that I did with these skills’.

With this compare the following passages from the Paikuli inscription:

NPi 33/30 § 68 (cf. 34/31 § 70, 36/33 § 73):

MN śhpwr[y ...............] W PWN yzd’n krtk’ly[tl]y
MN śhpwr MLKA r’sṭstr W pty y’zt[m] ............
[y]wp Ś[PY]R W AHR ZNE ’yr n-śtry NTL[WNtwmy W drwdstly]
[........................]
’twky d’śtry W pl[m’ny]
[........................] pl[rmytn]
‘than King Śābuhr more righteous and more officious in the service of the gods, or better, and (who) hereafter may be able to keep this Ėrānsahr more protected (and healthier) and to govern (it)’.

NPi 39/35 § 78:
[................. drwd’sṭly [W N]TLWNtwmy YKOYMWNt
’y’n-hštr ’dyn dr[w]yštsr W NTR[st] .................]
‘Ėrānsahr will then stay healthier and more protected’.

NPi 39/36 § 79:
[.................] yzd’n l’sty-kltk’n [.................]
ZK MNW pty y’zt[m r’sṭ-[krtkny ... hw]nr’wnt HWYt
‘this one who performs the most correct acts with respect to the gods (... and who is virtuous (or: skilled)’.

NPi 40/37 § 81:
[................................. pl]hwyhy W plz’nykyhy (...)
MN[ ] y’zt[m prksywt HWYt [W pty ..........] prznkpy ......
‘(whom) the gods have favoured (and who by) his/Your fortune and wisdom (...’)’.

NPi 41/38 § 85: (Pa) [ ... p’srm k’t]ry prmytn W dwśmnyn ptyshw YNTNtn ‘(who is able) to govern the affairs (or: the people) of the Persians and answer the enemies’.
Cf. also the Manichaean text BT XI 1692-6 byd wʼxtg kw šhr pnj ʼyr pd brhm nxšg ʼ(š)tyd, ʼyw (k)w xwdʾy (wzrg u hynzʾwr) ʾ(c) ʾndr mʾnyd ky (šhr prwrzyd )[w[dl dwšmy[yyn] ʾ(d)bʾ(r)g dʾryd ʿFerner ist gesagt, daß das Reich durch fünf Punkte von glücksbegünstigter Art ist. Erstens, daß ein großer und mächtiger Herr drinnen wohnt, der das Reich pflegt und den Feinden *Widerstand leistet*. (W. Sundermann.)

Note the close correspondences druvā: *druyistar, *druwištistar; kāra pārsa: Pārsān kār; pāta: *pāđtom, *pāđistar; rāstam daušta: rāštistar, rāšt-kirdagān; ūnvarā: *hunarāwand; xraṭhum: frazānāg.

D. Restoration and consolidation of the state religion

This theme is touched upon by Darius in DB 5.15-20 and is dealt with at length by Xerxes in XPh. It plays an important part in the inscriptions of Kirdēr.

XPh 35-41 utā dʿtar aitā dahayāva āha yadātaya paruvam daivā ayadiya pasāva vašnā Auramazdāhā adam avam daivādānām viyakanam utā patiyyazbayam daivā mā yadiyaiśa yadāyā paruvam daivā ayadiya avādā adam Auramazdām ayadāy artaaçā brazmaniya ʿAnd in these lands there were some places where formerly the daivas were worshipped. Then by the favour of Auramazdā I destroyed that sanctuary of the daivas and proclaimed, “The daivas may not be worshipped!” Where formerly the daivas were worshipped, there I worshipped Auramazdā according to Truth, with barsom in the hands’.

KKZ 9-10 W ʾhlmny W ŠDYAn LBA snʾhy W bštyhy QDM YHMTWN W kyšy ZY ʾhlmny W ŠDYAn MN ʾṭry ODYTN W wbʾply ʾklylyd… W wzdysy gwkʾnyhy W glsty ZY ŠDYAn wyšwpwyhy W yzdʾn gʾsy W nšdmy ʾklylyd ʿAnd Ahrimen and the devils there befell great blows and torment, and the faith in Ahrimen and the devils left the land and was rendered unworthy of belief. (…) And the idols were destroyed and the abodes of the devils were dismantled and turned into a place (or: throne) and residence for the gods’.

KKZ 14 W KBYR ANŠWTA ZY ʾnstwʾn YHWWN ZK ʾstwʾn YHWWN W KBYR ZK YHWWN MNW kyšy ZY ŠDYAn dʾṭry APš MN LY klty ZK kyšy ZY ŠDYAn ŠBKWN APš kyšy ZY yzdʾn OHDWN ʿAnd many people who were unbelievers, those became believers. And many were those who believed in the devils, but by my

8 My translation of artaaacā brazmaniya follows that of K. Hoffmann (in lectures).
work they relinquished the faith in the devils and took the faith in the
gods'.

Note the lexical correspondence viyakanam: gwk'nyhy.

E. Statements about the inscriptions themselves

These passages contain some of the most striking parallels between
the Old Persian and the Sassanian inscriptions.

DB 4.40-43 ṭātiy Dā[raya]v[aṣ] xšāyaθiya ima taya adām akunavam
vašnā Auramazdāha [ha]m[a]yāyā θardā akunavam tuvam kā haya
aparam imām dip[i]m ṭastīsam viakh laya manā kartam varnavatām ṭuvām
mātaya dra[u]ga[m] maniyyahay 'Saith Darius the king: This is what I did.
By the favour of Auramazdā, in one and the same year I did it. You
who shall hereafter read this inscription, believe that which I have done.
Do not think it a lie'.

DB 4.45-50 ṭātiy Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya vašnā Aura[mazdāhā] uṭā-
maiya aniyašciy wasiy astiy kartam ava ahayāyā d[t][p][y]a naiy nipištan
avahayarādīy naiy nipištan māt[ya] haya apaṭram imām dipim pati-
paršātīy avahayā parav θadā[taiy] taya manā kartam naiš[im] ima varna-
vātaiy duruxtam maniyyā[taiy] 'Saith Darius the king: By the favour of
Auramazdā and Me much else has been done. That has not been
written in this inscription. It was not written lest he who shall hereafter
read this inscription, to him what I have done seem too much and he do
not believe it but think it a lie'.

With this we can compare the following:

ŠM W nywyhy klt[y] [ZY TNE L]A Y[KTYBWN BR]A ZNE 'ndy M[N]
H[NA] krt[yy KTYBWNtn AY]K MNW AHR YHWWN ZK
ŠM W [...] Pa 16-17 W LN AHRNS ŠGYA hštr YB0t W ŠGYA ŠME
W ṬBpy OBDt ME TNE LA KTYBt byš ZK 'wnt MN ZK krt[yy KTYBm
AY MNW BATR MNN YHYE ZNE ŠME OBpy W
hwtywpý ME LN YDOE[d] 'And We claimed many other lands, too, and
did deeds of much renown and valour which are not written here.
However, We ordered this much to be written for the reason that he
who comes after Us shall know this Our renown and valour and rule'.

KKZ 16-17 APm PWN NPŠE BYTA AHRNc klt[k]n ZY yzd'n
gwnky gwnky KBYR klt[y] ZYM HT QDM ZNE n'mky YKTYBWN
HWE ADYN KBYR YHWWN HWE BRAm ZNE n'mky OLE r'dy
YKTYBWN AYK MNW pl'sty ODNA p'th[s]ly ... 'ywpt AHRN n'mky
HZYTm ZK YDOYTm AYK ... 'And at my own expense I did much
other various service to the gods which if it were written in this inscription, would be too much. However, I wrote this inscription for this reason, that he who in future time sees deeds and letters (etc.), he should know that ...'.

F. About following the example of the author of the inscription

Of course, the author of the inscription himself was a good and religious man, favoured and helped by the gods, and the reader is exhorted to follow this example. Cf.:

DB 4.72-76 yadiy imām dī[pi]m vaināh[ay] imaiwā patikarā naiydiś vikanāḥay utātaiy yāva taumā [hātiy] paribarāḥdiś Auramazdā ṭuvām dauśtā biyā utātaiy tau[mā] vasiy bi[y]ā utā dargam jivā utā taya kunavāhāy avatāiy Auramazdā ucāram kunaūtuv 'If you see this inscription and these pictures and do not destroy them but protect them as long as you can, then may Auramazdā be your friend and may you have much family and may you live long and whatever you may do, may Auramazdā make it easy for you'.

With this passage compare:

ŚKZ MP 35 AYK MNW AHR LNE MROHY YHWWN ZK yzt'n hwplst'ly W hwk'mktly YHWWNd AYK OLEc yzt'ny ZNE-'wgtw hdbry YHWWNd cygwn LNE YHWWN; Pa 29-30 'ws ſwgwn LN 'pr y'zttn CBW W krtktyn twhšywm W y'zttn dstkrt HWYm W pty y'zttn 'dywrpt ZNE 'wnt hšt YBOt W HHSNNt ŚME W ḌBP Š YHYEn W dstkrt OBDwnt LHwys MNW BATR MN LN YHYE W pryhv HWYt LHwys 'pr y'zttn CBW W krtktyn twhšywd AYK y'zt 'dywr YHYEn W dstkrt OBDwnt (translation of the Pa.): 'Now as We exert Ourselves in the matters and the service of the gods and are the creature of the gods, (therefore) with the assistance of the gods did We claim and hold all these lands and do deeds of renown and valour. Also he who comes after Us, and who is of good fortune, he too should exert himself in the matters and the service of the gods so that the gods may assist him and make him their creature'.

The point was elaborated by Xerxes:

XPh 46-56 tva kā haya aparā yadi-maniyāiy śiyāta ahanīy jīva utā mātra ārtāvā ahanaiy avanā dātā paridīy taya Auramazdā niyaštāya Auramazdām yadaisā ārtacā brazmāniyā martiya haya avanā dātā pariyaita taya Auramazdā ništāya utā Auramazdām yadatāiy ārtacā brazmāniyā hauv utā jīva śiyāta bataviy utā mātra ārtāvā bataviy 'You
who shall be hereafter, if you think, "May I be happy while alive and may I become blessed when dead!", then behave according to the law which Auramazdâ established. Worship Auramazdâ according to Truth, with barsom in the hands. The man who behaves according to the law which Auramazdâ established and worships Auramazdâ according to Truth, with barsom in the hands, he will both be happy while alive and blessed when dead".

With this statement we can compare the following one by Kirdër:

KKZ 18-19 (KNRb 13-22) W MNW ZNE n’mkty HZYTNt W ptpwls’t ZK PWN yzd’n W MROHYn W NPŠE lw‘n l’ty W l’sty ’yw YHWWN ZK-wgwn cygwn ANE YHWWN HWEm AYKš LZNE ’stwndy tny hwstlwbyhy W ’p’tyhy YHMTWNt APš OLE ’stwndy lw‘n ’lt’dhy QDM YHMTWNt; KNRb 20-22 W MNW klkpky HWE W QDM klkpky TBw SGYTNt OLE LZNE ’stwndy ... ’lt’dhy QDM YHMTWNt cygwn LY krtyn YHMTWN ‘And he who sees this inscription and reads it, may he be generous and truthful towards the gods and the lords and his own soul like I have been, so that this osseous body of his may have fame and prosperity, and yon osseous soul of his may have blessedness’; ‘And he who does well and practises good deeds, may this osseous ... have blessedness like I Kirdër had’. (Cf. footnote 1.)

The linguistic parallels in the passages quoted above under E and F are quite striking:

OP:

utāmaiya aniyaśetiy vasiy astiy
kārtam ava ahayāyā *diptyā naiy
nipištam mātaya ... paruv
θādayātaity

MP-Pa:

(SKZ) *u-n *aniz was ...
kar *i *ēdar né nibišt;
(Pa) ud amāh aniz was ...
kird ēē ēā né nibišt;
(KKZ) u-m ... aniz kirdagān
... was kard i-m agar abar
ēn nāmag nibišt hē ēg was
būd hē

(KKZ) bē-m ēn nāmag ōy rāy
nibišt kē kē frāstar zamān
... nāmag wēnād ān dānād
(and:)
kē ēn nāmag wēnād ud
pahibursād

(SKZ Pa) pad yazadān
adyāwarīt im āwand xsāhr
wxāśīt ud dird
(and:) vašnā Auramazdāha ima xšaçaṁ
dārayāmīy
(and:)
imā dahayāva tayā adam adarṣīy

yadiy ... Auramazdā ḏhvām
dauštā biyā

(ŠKZ) ōy-iz yazad ēnōwōn
hayār *bawānd čiyón man būd;
(Pa) kū yazad adyāwar ahānd

To conclude this far from exhaustive survey I should like to point out two further, interesting lexical correspondences.

In NPi 28/25-26 §§ 58-59 ‘Take (OHĐWN = gīr) and bind (OSLWN/ASRW = band) Wahnām and ... bring (HYTYW = *āwāy Pa) him bound (ASRT = bast) to Our court! And *Bayšābuhr ... bound (OSLWN = bast) Wahnām and brought (HYTYWT = ānid, Pa HYTYT = *āwāst) him bound (bsty) ... to Our court’. With this we can compare Old Persian DB 1.82 basta anayatā, 2.73 agarbi[yar] anayatā, 2.88 agarbāya anaya abiy mām, and further Avestan Vid 19.29 bastam vādatieiti. We see that the MP and Pa here faithfully continue the Old Persian and the Avestan respectively. The expression is also known from Manichaean texts: *girwēd *bandēd ‘he takes and binds’ (M. Boyce, BSOAS, XIII, 1951, 913).

My final example is the following: In KKZ the death of a king is reported by the formula kū X šāhān šāh ō bayān gāh šud ‘When King X went to the place/throne of the lords’. In XP 32-34 Xerxes says about his father yathāmaiy pītā Dārayavaus gāθavā asīyava ‘When my father King D. went gāθavā’. This phrase is translated by Kent as ‘... went away from the throne’. K. Hoffmann rejected the interpretation of gāθavā as ablative and suggested the translation ‘D. ging ordnungs-
gemäß’, i.e. ‘er starb eines natürlichen Todes’ 9. In my opinion the comparison with the Middle Persian expression suggests that we should translate the Old and Middle Persian expressions as follows: ‘When my father went to his (allotted) place (in the beyond)’ and ‘When King X went to the (allotted) place of the lords (i.e. the kings 10).

9 K. Hoffmann, Corolla Linguistica, (Festschrift Sommer) 1955 = Aufsätze 1, 55 n. 8.
10 Cf. the expression ōy bay-awēšān bayān ‘His Majesty’ and ašmāh bay/bayān ‘Your Majesty’ e.g. in NPX. Of course, the possibility that bayān gāh means ‘the place of the gods’ cannot be excluded.
Conclusion

The preceding short survey should have made it clear that the Sassanian inscriptions reveal affinities with both their 700-year-older pendants in Old Persian and their contemporary Manichaean texts. Still more parallels are to be found in the later Pahlavi literature. I feel reasonably sure that this can be accounted for by assuming the Sassanian and Manichaean authors both drew upon a common store of literary phrases and expressions. This may have been part of an early Sassanian literary corpus, written or oral, with roots perhaps reaching back into pre-Achaemenian times. As a matter of fact, A. Christensen inferred from the evidence of Greek authors that the Achaemenians possessed a royal epic. If that is true, then it is not improbable first that Darius and his successors were acquainted with this literature and made use of it in their inscriptions; and secondly that it may in some form or other have been preserved down to early Sassanian times. It is unlikely to have survived in its entirety, but parts of it may have been preserved under certain circumstances, e.g. in ritual recitations connected with coronation ceremonies, or even in the remains of the royal chronicles which we know to have existed and which were used for the composition of the late Sassanian Book of Kings.

Of other literary traditions in south-western Iran we have no certain evidence. The later Pahlavi literature is all of it Zoroastrian, and it seems a hopeless task to try to determine what in it may be of local origin. Nevertheless, it seems possible to me that some of the old material found its way into the didactic literature. We know that Old Persian teachers used to introduce myths of the 'good deeds of gods and great men' into their teaching. Such literature was apparently known to the prophet Mani, as is indicated by the Manichaean text quoted above (p. 598). This text describes five things which make the land happy and five things which bring it ill-fortune and destruction. This kind of enumeration is typical of the wisdom literature. It does not seem to be too far-fetched an assumption that Darius, Xerxes, Šābuhr, Narseh, and Kirdēr all may have used literary language and formulas which they had so to speak learnt in school.

12 See M. Boyce, Middle Persian Literature, 58f.