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Patterns of Substitution in the Zoroastrian Sanskrit Translation of *Ogamadecā* Linguistic Features of Parsi Sanskrit¹

ABSTRACT: This study examines the Sanskrit translation of a text designated in the target language as *Ogamadecā*. The original Middle Persian text was based on selected quotations from Avesta with its title derived from the first word: *aogamadaēcā* ‘and we pronounce’. The result is a multi-layered document of intertwined grammar, vocabulary and syntax drawing from Indian and Iranian heritage. The analysis centers on systematic deviations from Pāṇini’s grammatical framework, with particular emphasis on substitution, a foundational principle in *Aṣṭādhyāyī* and a key mechanism in Pāṇinian linguistics. The methodological approach adopted here foregrounds phonological, morphological, and syntactic irregularities within the translation, thereby elucidating characteristic features of Parsi Sanskrit renderings. The structural clarity inherent in Pāṇini’s system is juxtaposed with examples drawn from *Ogamadecā*, accompanied by detailed commentary on the violated rules. This comparative perspective advances our understanding of Zoroastrian Sanskrit

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translations within their broader linguistic, cultural, and religious conditions, contributing to the study of Indo-Iranian textual transmission and the adaptation of classical grammatical norms in Zoroastrian setting.

KEYWORDS: Zoroastrian Sanskrit, Parsi Sanskrit, Pāṇini's Grammar, *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, substitution, *Aogāmadaēcā*, Old- and Middle Iranian linguistics, Sanskrit linguistics

The Sanskrit translation of *Ogamadecā* belongs to the long-standing tradition of rendering and commenting upon Zoroastrian literature. It is traditionally attributed to Neryosang Dhaval, who served as an editor of these translations. The precise dating of this corpus remains uncertain; however, most scholars situate his activity between the 12th and 14th centuries in Gujarat (Rezai Baghbidi 2012: 1). According to Goldman (2018: 6), this period can be narrowed down to mid-14th to mid-15th centuries CE. The structure of the text underwent significant modifications as a result of multiple layers of editorial and translational intervention, shaping its present form. These alterations become evident through comparative analysis of the Sanskrit version vis-à-vis its Middle Persian counterpart. Much of the observed ambiguity can be attributed to the translator's imperfect command of Sanskrit grammar, lexicon, and cultural context, although this is not the sole explanatory factor. The emergence of such translations of Middle Persian and Avestan literature was driven by broader socio-religious motivations. According to Palladino (2022: 26), the Sanskrit translations may have been the product of the acclimatisation of the Zoroastrian culture, a sort of academic exercise in order to master a language that was directly associated with Indian intellectual milieu. On another note, one principal impetus was the effort to consolidate the Zoroastrian community's position within the complex cultural and religious milieu of Western India, particularly Gujarat. The presence of numerous religious texts from diverse local traditions likely stimulated this translational enterprise, as Zoroastrians sought to articulate their doctrines in a form aligned with prevailing literary conventions. At the time, these conventions were largely shaped by Sanskrit treatises, whose stylistic

norms were selectively emulated by Zoroastrian clergy in their renderings of sacred texts, while retaining their characteristic practice of highly literal translation. *Ogamadecā* is of particular interest owing to its composition and thematic focus: It explores the destiny of the human soul following death in Zoroastrian doctrine. In this manner it is possible to correlate it with a lost *Hādōxt Nask*, especially in its structure: three phases of ascent to afterlife by the deceased: 1. the dereliction of the male soul *uruuan* during three nights; the appearance, at the third dawn, of the female soul *daēnā*; and the matrimonial dialogue of the two souls, their joint departure to the afterlife and the reception by Ahura Mazda (Kellens and Redard 2021: 69). Numerous technical terms of Avestan or Middle Persian origin are either translated into Sanskrit through semantic equivalence or adapted by direct Sanskritization of the original lexemes.

The text of the *Ogamadecā* is preserved through two lines of transmission: a Pazand version contained in a manuscript that also includes texts in Sanskrit and Old Gujarati, and a Pahlavi version derived from an early Pazand manuscript (JamaspAsa 1982: 9). In this paper, all fragments are cited from the critical edition prepared by Bharucha in *Collected Writings of the Parsis, Consisting of Old Translations of Avesta and Pahlavi Pāzend Books as well as Original Compositions with Various Readings and Notes; Part VI*, which is based on manuscripts M.L.H.L2 and E.M.U. A detailed description of the available manuscripts is provided by JamaspAsa in *Aogāmadaēcā. A Zoroastrian Liturgy*. *Ogamadecā*, as a text, is of considerable importance, as it preserves certain Avestan passages unattested elsewhere. The extant versions represent translations of the Middle Persian original. As is characteristic of such literature, Middle Persian translations of the Avesta exhibit strong influence from the source language in both vocabulary and syntax. This observation is crucial when analyzing the Sanskrit translation, since numerous linguistic features are transmitted across languages. The same holds for mistranslations, which have led to a shift in meaning in the very first word of the text and thus its title. The error first appears in Middle Persian, where the expected term meaning ‘and we pronounce’ is replaced by *rasam* ‘I arrive’, and

this misinterpretation is subsequently retained in the Sanskrit *āyāmi* ‘I come’.

An important factor in understanding the complexity of *Ogamadecā* is the multi-layered process of translation that culminated in the preserved version of the text. Its foundation consists of quotations from the Avesta. Twenty-nine fragments are attested in *Ogamadecā*, of which only five appear in Geldner’s edition of the Avesta, while twenty-four are new and predominantly composed in octosyllabic verse (Duchesne-Guillemin 1986: 145). These fragments were rendered into Middle Persian in a relatively indirect manner, involving certain modifications of the original meaning. A striking example of this process occurs at the opening of the text, which coincides with its title. The Avestan term *aogāmadaē* is formally the first-person plural present indicative of a root stem in athematic conjugation (Skjærvø 2007: 914), followed by the enclitic conjunction *-cā*. The form *aogāmadaē* derives from the root *aoj-* ‘to speak’, ‘to pronounce’, and is attested in cognate forms such as OAv. *aogādā*, YAv. *aoxta* < Ilr. *aug-dha* < *augh-ta* (Martínez and de Vaan 2014: 28). Notably, the translator substitutes the original term with the form *āyāmi*, derived from the root *yā-* prefixed with *ā*. This substitution significantly alters the meaning of the text from ‘we pronounce’ to ‘we come’. Numerous instances of such semantic, morphological, phonological, and syntactic transformations occur throughout the work. The aim of this paper is to investigate the patterns underlying these alterations and to demonstrate how some of them diverge from Pāṇinian rules, particularly those governing substitution. Broader insights into Zoroastrian Sanskrit can be extrapolated from the material presented in *Ogamadecā*. Selected forms exhibiting notable peculiarities will be juxtaposed with the relevant grammatical rules in order to highlight key differences and characteristic features of Sanskrit translations of Zoroastrian texts. The clarity afforded by Pāṇini’s model of rules provides a compelling rationale for employing this framework in the presentation of data. It is important to emphasize the connection between the Pāṇinian grammatical tradition and the text of *Ogamadecā*. Pāṇini’s grammar served as the normative model for the formation of Sanskrit grammatical structures; consequently, the

translators were required to rely on it both to produce a text conforming to established linguistic rules and to interpret the forms they encountered through this grammatical framework. Curiously, one of the principal motivations behind the emergence of the Pāṇinian tradition was the preservation of the language in its unaltered form. A comparable motivation may be observed among the Parsis, who employed this tradition in the translation and preservation of various Middle Persian and Avestan texts in Sanskrit. This raises a broader question concerning the Sanskritisation of Zoroastrian texts resulting from such translational practices, a phenomenon illustrated through several examples discussed in this paper. The material is organised into phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic categories, within which specific features are examined and compared with the corresponding prescriptions of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, accompanied by detailed description and explanation.

Substitution in Pāṇini's grammar is a process of replacement governed by specified rules. The most fundamental of these is A 1.1.49, according to which the element to be substituted is expressed in the genitive case, conveying the sense of "in place of X", while the right and left contexts of the substitution are indicated by items inflected in the locative and ablative cases respectively (Candotti and Pontillo 2004: 2). Many grammatical operations are explained according to this pattern when viewed from the perspective of the Pāṇinian tradition. It is important to note that all such transformations occur under specific conditions, determined primarily by phonological and morphological environments. A clear example is the emergence of long vowels as a result of the proximity of two short vowels of the same type at morphological boundaries, the so-called *savarṇa dīrgha*. Rule 6.1.101 states: *akāḥ savarṇe dīrghaḥ*, so an *aK* (vowels such as *a*, *i*, *u*, etc.), when followed by a vowel of the same type, is replaced by a long vowel; for instance, *upa + agni = upāgni*. In this case, the conditioning environment is the adjacency of two short, identical vowels. In the case of different vowels, e.g. *a + e*, a different rule applies. The result of substitution is a new vowel, a long *ā*. Pāṇini makes it very clear when a change occurs because of the hierarchy of rules that

apply. The more general operations are constrained by specific rules governing grammatical phenomena in particular contexts.

Pāṇini's grammar provides mechanisms for addressing complex phenomena that might otherwise be interpreted as belonging to a different linguistic variety. Such is the case with certain rules employed to account for Vedic forms. According to Kiparsky, Pāṇini's system was organised on the basis of Classical Sanskrit structure, and almost always Vedic peculiarities are derived by "patch-up rules" added to those established for Classical Sanskrit (Kiparsky 1979: 56). These rules can be understood as extensions of the system for the specific purpose of describing Vedic. However, this does not resolve issues posed by other varieties of Sanskrit, which were not described by Pāṇini and exhibit forms that contradict rules applicable to the Classical language. For every linguistic variety differing from what can be considered standard Classical Sanskrit, a new set of particular rules would need to be formulated to account for the peculiarities found in the given source. Since general rules apply universally unless superseded by specific ones, such a model would be necessary to provide a comprehensive and accurate description of Zoroastrian Sanskrit. This observation is particularly relevant to *Ogamadecā*, where numerous forms diverge from Pāṇinian norms and cannot be explained by the existing framework, thereby necessitating a systematic analysis of substitution patterns and other deviations.

Although the Sanskrit translators of *Ogamadecā* were likely somewhat familiar with the grammatical tradition of Pāṇini's system, they either deliberately or inadvertently circumvented certain rules. This inclination is evident in their general preference for forms that conform to established grammatical tradition; however, as the examples below indicate, their adherence to Pāṇinian rules was not absolute. A clear illustration is the conjugation of certain verbs according to classes other than those recognized in classical Sanskrit. Part of this tendency can be attributed to the decision to maintain practices employed in translating Avestan texts into Middle Persian, such as retaining Avestan syntax or avoiding the translation of technical terms. Similarly, in the Sanskrit version, certain names are preserved in their Avestan forms to maintain

proximity to the original, while other terms are translated on the basis of perceived similarity between Avestan and Sanskrit words. Although these sometimes derive from the same root, their meanings in the two languages differ significantly. This results in portions of the translation being unintelligible without prior knowledge of the original, thereby undermining the purpose of translation from the perspective of modern translation theory. Furthermore, the grammar is frequently unclear or erroneous, despite evident efforts to approximate Classical Sanskrit. This is observable, for instance, in the use of compounds unattested in the Middle Persian original and in the replacement of certain native terms with Sanskrit equivalents that are often poorly suited to the context (e.g. *ātman* for MP *ruvān*).

These deviations, particularly in the domain of substitution, form a crucial part of the analysis presented in this study, as they illustrate how Zoroastrian Sanskrit negotiates fidelity to the source text with the constraints of Pāṇinian norms. Among the peculiarities of *Ogamadecā*, the first that strikes the reader is its lack of conformity with standard orthographical conventions. The translators imitate Avestan orthographic practices, such as the use of digraphs for certain diphthongs. In devanagari written Sanskrit, *au* and *ai* are represented by औ and ऐ respectively, yet throughout the text there are forms combining signs for consonants with inherent vowels followed by separate vowel symbols. Such examples appear in sources including the facsimile of manuscript K 42, the same used by W. Geiger in *Aogemadaêcâ. Ein Pârsentractat in Pâzend, Altbaktrisch und Sanskrit* (1878) and in E. Bharucha's critical edition in *Collected Writings of the Parsis, Consisting of Old Translations of Avesta and Pahlavi Pâzend Books as well as Original Compositions with Various Readings and Notes*.

A clear instance of non-adherence to orthographical norms is the form *ganāmainio* (spelled as गनामइनिओ instead of गनामैय्यो). This reflects direct influence from Avestan orthography, which employs digraphs to denote diphthongs. The form *ganāmainio* corresponds to Middle Persian *gannāg mēnōg* 'Foul Spirit', 'Evil Spirit' (MacKenzie 1971/2014: 35), ultimately derived from the Avestan term for 'spirit': *aka mainiū* 'Evil Spirit' (Bartholomae 1904: 1138). Another factor

may relate to phonetic differences between the Sanskrit diphthong *ai* and its Avestan counterpart. From a diachronic perspective, Avestan preserved certain original Indo-Iranian diphthongs, whereas Sanskrit reduced them to monophthongs such as *e* and *o*. It is plausible that Zoroastrian translators employed a sound slightly different from the Sanskrit *ai* and therefore preferred the Avestan orthographic convention for representing *ai*. This strategy, intended to distinguish Sanskrit *ai* from Avestan *ai*, resulted in divergent spelling practices. Another explanation for this orthographical phenomenon is, to some extent, the influence of regional Prakrits, which frequently employed similar spelling conventions. Their significance as the basis for certain orthographic norms, together with their relevance for Old Gujarati spelling, may have contributed to the manner in which some words are written in the Sanskrit translation of the *Ogamadecā*. Such practices, however, create discrepancies between forms preserved in the text and the rules codified by Pāṇini. One relevant rule concerns vowel changes governed by well-known *sandhi* operations. Rule 6.1.84 states: *āt guṇaḥ*, meaning that when the first word ends in *a* and the second begins with a vowel, the two sounds coalesce into the *guṇa* of the initial vowel of the second word. This rule governs external *sandhi* and is based on the principle of avoiding hiatus wherever possible. In the case of *ganāmainio*, the spelling employed should have triggered a change of the adjacent vowels *a* and *i* into the *guṇa* of *i* namely *e* to prevent hiatus. Yet the Avestan orthographic convention prevailed, producing a form with a clear hiatus despite the Middle Persian equivalent *mēnōg* with *ē*.

The translators also employed a term resembling the Sanskrit word *manyu* ‘spirit’ (Monier-Williams 1899: 786), a frequent strategy in the text whereby Avestan vocabulary is rendered through forms selected for their similarity to Sanskrit. *Ganāmainio* further illustrates divergence from Pāṇini’s rules, as another sequence of adjacent vowels fails to conform to *sandhi* norms. Specifically, Rule 6.1.78 (*ecaḥ ayavāyāvah*) is disregarded: *i* does not change to *y* before *o* in final position. According to this rule, *i*, *u*, *ṛ*, *ḷ* should be substituted by *y*, *v*, *r*, *l* before vowels, yet *Ogamadecā* preserves *mainio* instead of *mainyo*. This reflects another Avestan orthographic feature, where double

i denotes *y*. In *ganāmainio*, multiple vowels remain unchanged to semi-vowels despite adjacency, contravening the expected transformations prescribed by the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. The persistence of local orthographic tradition thus produced forms such as *ganāmainio* in Zoroastrian Sanskrit. Other examples of similar spelling conventions include *īajda* Av. ‘yazata’², *cinuadpula* MP *činwad puhl* < Av. *cinuuat.pərətu-* ‘činwad bridge’³, and *sausīūsa* ‘saošyant’⁴. These orthographic anomalies, combined with deviations from Pāṇinian *sandhi* rules, underscore the complex interplay between inherited Avestan practices and Sanskrit grammatical norms.

Another phenomenon worth noting is the presence of non-canonical consonant clusters that are foreign to Classical Sanskrit. Given the precise lists of stems in the *Dhātupāṭha* and suffixes in the grammatical tradition, it is possible to determine from these positive rules which clusters are permissible and which are alien. While foreign words and certain names could enter Sanskrit texts, they were typically Sanskritized to conform to the criteria of permissible clusters. In Zoroastrian Sanskrit, however, this practice is not consistently observed, as numerous names borrowed from Avestan or Middle Persian appear in forms closely resembling their originals. A striking example is *gvahmana* ‘Bahman’⁵, a form unattested in Middle Persian, where the word occurs as *vahman*, while New Persian uses *bahman*. This form derives from Avestan term *vohu manah* ‘good thought’, who is one of six beings begotten by Ahura Mazda and named as *aməša spənta* ‘bountiful immortals’. According to Narten they were treated not only as abstract beings but they were often personified in Avestan text (Narten 1982: 38). Particularly Vohu Manah is attributed to take care of all the beneficial animals created by Ahura Mazda (Boyce 1975: 203). The Sanskrit

² A type of being worthy of sacrifice in Zoroastrianism. See: Bartholomae 1904: 1279–1280.

³ A bridge used by a soul to cross to paradise or to fall into hell. See: Tafazzoli 1991: 594–595.

⁴ An eschatological, saviour figure in Zoroastrianism. See: Malandra 2000.

⁵ One of the Amesha Spentas. Av. *Vohu Manah*. See: Narten and Gignoux 1988: 487–488.

translation of *Ogamadecā* thus provides an intriguing instance of instability in the alternation between $v > b$ and $v > g$. In New Persian, numerous examples of these changes occur, such as Middle Persian *vafr* ‘snow’ > New Persian *barf* ‘snow’, or Middle Persian *varg* ‘wolf’ > New Persian *gorg* ‘wolf’. The conditioning environment for these shifts in New Persian remains unclear: both Middle Persian words exhibit the structure $_vV$, yet yield b and g respectively in the modern language. The form *gvahmana* attested in *Ogamadecā* not only introduces an unexpected cluster into Sanskrit but also represents an unusual development of a word otherwise known with initial v or b . While the precise circumstances underlying the emergence of gv in this example merit further investigation, the occurrence of such an unanticipated cluster underscores the broader tendency of Zoroastrian Sanskrit to preserve foreign phonological patterns rather than fully assimilate them to Pāṇinian norms. This phenomenon, alongside orthographic and morphological anomalies, forms part of the evidence analyzed in this study to illustrate the interplay between inherited Iranian features and the Sanskrit grammatical system.

There are additional types of consonantal clusters occurring in borrowings from Middle Persian or Avestan, which include j as a rendering of Middle Persian or Avestan z . Sanskrit frequently employs this sound to represent z , which is absent from its phonological system yet widely attested in Iranian languages. It remains uncertain whether Zoroastrians in India during the time of Neryosang Dhaval, continued to pronounce z in a manner inherited from Middle Persian, or whether it had already shifted to j , although Gujarati employed by the Parsis does in most cases retain z in the pronunciation. In the translated texts, names such as *Ahura Mazda* appear in their Sanskritized forms, for example *ahurmijda*. Pāṇini enumerates the elements of the Sanskrit phonological system in the *akṣarasamāmnāya*, thereby providing a positive description of its full inventory of sounds. Translators attempting to convey Iranian names in Sanskrit were constrained by this system and ultimately chose to render z as j . The consonantal clusters resulting from this decision are often alien to the classical language and even to its earlier stages. Words such as *īajda* exemplify

this phenomenon: not only do two vowels occur at the beginning of the word, but the medial cluster *-jd-* is also highly atypical.

Among the morphological irregularities characteristic of Zoroastrian Sanskrit, one may note the occasional use of a noun with an atypical gender or a verb belonging to a conjugation class other than that generally employed in Classical Sanskrit (Rezai Baghbidi 2012: 5). Such forms occur frequently in *Ogamadecā*, together with instances of case usage diverging from standard practice in order to convey a grammatical function, as well as words entirely lacking case endings. The latter phenomenon most commonly pertains to proper nouns borrowed from Avestan or Middle Persian, where translators were uncertain which declensional paradigm to apply. A recurrent example in the text is *aṃgramainio* ‘Evil Spirit’, which in *Aog.* 90 appears in the aforementioned uninflected form, despite functioning as the direct object of the sentence, where one would expect the accusative case. The case ending is thus omitted, although elsewhere in the text Avestan *mainiiu* is generally declined according to the *-a* declension, as in *deva*. The omission of the accusative for a direct object constitutes a clear violation of Rule 2.3.1 (*karmaṇi dvitīyā*), which prescribes the use of the second case (accusative) for the word denoting the object upon which the action is performed. In place of the expected accusative, an uninflected form directly based on the Avestan original is employed.

Instances of lack of concord between nouns and adjectives, as well as pronouns, are also attested. This phenomenon can be partially explained by the disappearance of case and gender in Middle Persian, which made it difficult for translators to determine the appropriate gender assignment in a language such as Sanskrit, where these categories are obligatory. A notable example occurs in the *Ogamadecā* form *tasmin tanau*, where *tanū* ‘body’ is predominantly treated as a feminine noun belonging to the *-ū* declension, while *tasmin* represents the masculine locative form of the pronoun *tad*. *Aog.* 2 states: *sānaṃdas tasmin tanau yad iha vartitaṃ sviya ātmanaḥ* ‘Happy is (a man) who in this body acts according to his soul’. From this sentence, it may be inferred that the intended case is locative. The lack of agreement

between the governing noun and the deictic pronoun creates a discrepancy in reference between the two elements. The expected pronominal form agreeing with *tanū* should be *tasyām* rather than *tasmin*. According to Pāṇini's rules, this form is derived from *tad* following 7.2.102 (*tyadādīnām aḥ*), which prescribes the substitution of *aḥ* for nominative singular endings of *tyad* and related pronouns, and subsequently applying the rules of feminine declension beginning with 4.1.3 (*striyām*). For the locative, it is necessary to form *tasya* and add the locative ending *-ām*, while observing the relevant *sandhi* rules. The translators of *Ogamadecā*, however, employ *tasmin* rather than *tasyām*, thereby departing from the normative rules governing feminine pronominal declension. The reason for this change may be attributed to the influence of Prakrit on the Sanskrit forms used during the period, particularly given that the text belongs to a category of works situated outside the canon of classical literature.

Beyond nominal irregularities, the text also exhibits verbal forms constructed in ways inconsistent with the rules set forth in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. Although many Avestan verbs share structural similarities with Sanskrit, the translators of *Ogamadecā* did not exploit these correspondences. Rather than employing vocabulary derived from cognate roots and conjugated according to established classes, they introduced defective and unattested forms. A salient example is the form *pratigrhṇāt* in *Aog.* 12. From the context of *tathā anaśvarāt-manah hastaṃ pratigrhṇāt* 'then may he take the hand of the deceased' it is evident that the intended root was *grah-* 'to grab' 'to take'. Normatively, one would expect the third person present optative conjugated according to class IX, namely *pratigrhṇīyāt*, rather than *pratigrhṇāt*. From a grammatical perspective, *pratigrhṇāt* is incorrect because class IX forms employ the infix *-nā-* in strong forms and *-nī-* in weak forms (Mayrhofer 1978: 82). The optative is derived from weak forms and should therefore contain the *-nī-* infix rather than *-n-*. Another striking example is *akāri*, the third person singular aorist passive of *kṛ-*, attested in *Aog.* 59: *prthivyāḥ madhye lohadhātughaṭitam rājagṛhaṃ akāri* 'in the middle of the earth he built an iron palace'. The use of the aorist in this sentence is correct within Classical Sanskrit, where

it functions as a narrative tense for an unspecified past event. Historically, the aorist was employed to denote a pure action, neutral with respect to aspect, in contrast to the imperfect, which conveyed durative action (Kuryłowicz 1987: 318).

In their attempt to render Zoroastrian technical terminology, the translators of *Ogamadecā* frequently adapted Middle Persian or Avestan words to Sanskrit phonology and, in many cases, preferred linguistic calques over culturally established equivalents in the target language. This strategy becomes particularly problematic in the case of the word *deva* in *Ogamadecā*. Rezaī Baghbidi observes that Parsi Sanskrit generally avoids using *deva* in the sense of ‘god’, as Iranian religious tradition associates this term primarily with ‘false gods’ or ‘demons’ (Rezaī Baghbidi 2012: 6). Nevertheless, *Ogamadecā* contains an instance where *deva* is employed to denote ‘demon’, a choice that is misleading given the semantic range of the term in Sanskrit and its deep cultural and religious associations within the Indian tradition. Historically, *deva* was the original Indo-Iranian term for ‘god’, cognate with Latin *deus* and ultimately derived from a root meaning ‘shine, be bright’, but Zoroaster condemned this class of beings following the doctrinal shift from polytheism (Gnoli 2004: 98). According to the *Gāthās*, Avestan *daēuuas* were reproached for their inability to exercise proper divine discernment and for having embraced bad religion alongside the good, initiating their rejection and demonisation (Kellens and Herrenschildt 1993: 599). *Daēuuas* have chosen their bad purpose as stated in Y. 30.6 *The daēvas chose not rightly, because blindness came upon them as they consulted...* (Boyce 1975: 201). In later Zoroastrian literature, they are portrayed as malevolent beings. Consequently, the decision to retain *deva* as ‘demon’ in Sanskrit translation, rather than substituting it with a culturally appropriate term such as *piśāca* ‘demon’, further obscures comprehension for Sanskrit scholars. As noted earlier, these translations often remain unintelligible to readers lacking prior knowledge of the original text; a difficulty that frequently stems from the translators’ lexical choices.

A clear example of a linguistic calque in *Ogamadecā* is the compound *anaśvarātman*, consisting of *anaśvara* ‘imperishable’ and *ātman*

‘soul, self’. This is a direct translation of Middle Persian *anōšag-ruwān* ‘immortal soul’, often employed as a *bahuvrīhi* compound meaning ‘one possessing an immortal soul’. It occurs in *Aog.* 103: *asya anāśvarātmanaḥ svargasamṛddhiḥ bhūyāt* ‘may this deceased possess the riches of paradise’. In the text, this term is used to describe the fate of the soul after death and, in most contexts, could be replaced by a conventional Sanskrit term for ‘deceased’. Nevertheless, the Middle Persian calque predominates throughout the translation, with only rare exceptions such as *muktātman* for ‘deceased’. Numerous other examples illustrate this tendency, including *duṣṭajñānin* ‘one who has wrong knowledge’, an epithet of Angra Mainyu modelled on an Avestan expression of equivalent meaning, and *prabhūtamṛtyu* ‘full of death’, corresponding to Avestan *pouru-mahrkō*. Such vocabulary is distinctive to Zoroastrian Sanskrit and does not occur in other works of the classical tradition, rendering the text less accessible to readers familiar only with the standard corpus. In addition, certain literal translations of Avestan passages preserve the original syntactic structure, making the Sanskrit version appear opaque despite the common descent of the two languages, both originating from the Indo-Iranian branch.

Avestan passages exhibit features characteristic of Young Avestan syntax, although many entered *Ogamadecā* through Middle Persian translations that preserved much of their original structure. Long sentences with multiple subordinate clauses, repetitions, and enumerations exemplify the source language’s syntactic patterns. The frequent use of formulaic language reflects the text’s ritual function, as it was often recited during funerary rites and had to be memorised by the officiating clergy. Formulaic descriptions of Mithra, Angra Mainyu, or Yima are well known throughout Old and Middle Iranian literature and occur repeatedly. Rather than substituting these terms with Sanskrit equivalents, the translators retained the original expressions wherever possible, sometimes at the expense of clarity for readers of Sanskrit. Certain passages are repeated with only the acting character altered, a structure also found in Avestan *Yashts*, such as the hymn to Anahita, where different mythical rulers offer gifts to the goddess, who either accepts or rejects them. A similar pattern appears in

Ogamadecā, where figures such as kings Kahoś (Av. *Kauui Usa*, Per. *Key Kāvus*), Aprakaśa (Av. *Fraŋrasyan*, Per. *Afrāsyāb*), and Dahaka (Av. *Aži Dahāka*, Per. *Zahāk*) commit various renowned or heinous deeds yet fail to escape death. For each of these characters, formulaic passages recur, such as: *samaṃ svīyena mṛtyunā pratidvamdvitum na śaktaḥ* ‘similarly he was unable to defy his own death’, repeated after the description of their actions.

The language of *Ogamadecā* constitutes a distinctive variety of Sanskrit that diverges in numerous respects from the normative idiom codified by Pāṇini. These deviations arise primarily from the translators’ dual objective: to preserve the rich Zoroastrian tradition transmitted through Middle Persian versions of the Avesta, while simultaneously conforming, at least in part, to the conventions of the target language. In practice, this balancing act produced a hybrid register marked by orthographic, phonological, morphological, and syntactic irregularities, compounded by the extensive incorporation of Iranian vocabulary adapted to Sanskrit phonology. Although the translators were exposed to traditional Sanskrit pedagogy and sought to employ forms associated with scientific, philosophical, and religious discourse, they frequently adhered to a principle of literalness. This approach often conflicted with the grammatical norms recognised by Sanskrit scholars of their own time, resulting in declined and conjugated forms that would have been considered erroneous within the linguistic tradition. Many such forms violate Pāṇini’s substitution rules, undermining the systematic coherence of the language and creating significant obstacles to comprehension. In some cases, entire passages remain opaque without prior knowledge of the source. Uncharacteristic consonant clusters, foreign vocabulary and syntax often imitating Avestan result in general obfuscation of the translated text. Consequently, the reader faces different than usual challenges in area of comprehension of a text written in Sanskrit. Despite these challenges, Zoroastrian Sanskrit offers invaluable material for philological inquiry. Its peculiarities illuminate the cultural and religious dynamics of the Parsi community in India, their strategies of linguistic adaptation, and their efforts to safeguard doctrinal integrity within

a new socio-cultural environment. The study of this corpus not only enriches our understanding of Indo-Iranian linguistic interaction but also sheds light on processes of translation, identity formation, and textual transmission that shaped the continuity of Zoroastrian tradition into the modern era.

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