

Avestan *āsītō.gātu-*

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1. The quasi-hapax *āsītō.gātūm* is found in Y 62.5 (= Yt 19.39), in a description of *ḥam.varəiti-*, something like 'Valour', the main feature of which is alertness:

<i>nairiiām pascaēta ḥam.varəitūm</i>	'[Give me] further the manly Valour,
<i>ərəδβō.zəṇgām ax^vafniiām</i>	with upright shanks, without sleep,
<i>āsītō.gātūm jayāurūm</i>	<i>āsītō.gātu-</i> , vigilant.'

2. The analysis of *ax^vafniiām* 'without sleep' and *jayāurūm* 'vigilant, awake' is uncontroversial, but the other two epithets have been interpreted in various ways. Usually, *ərəδβō.zəṇga-*, literally 'with upright shanks', is taken to indicate "the posture of the watchful servant" (Gershevitch 1959: 210), which is no doubt the most probable solution, cf. further Yt 10.61 *miθrəm ... jayauruuāṇḥəm ərəδβō.zəṇgəm zaēnaḥuṇtəm spasəm taxməm viiāxanəm* "Mithra [we worship], who stands watchful with upright shanks, the challenging watcher" (Gershevitch). Geldner's suggestion (1881: 522) that *ərəδβō.zəṇga-* means "die beine hinauf, in die höhe gezogen habend, d.h. der länge nach auf dem lager, bett u.s.f. liegend" is improbable. The Sanskrit parallel which he adduced, viz. *ūrdhvājānu-* (cf. also MS KS *ūrdhvājñu-*¹) '(sitting) with knees pointing up', describes a sitting posture with knees in a vertical position and does not have the general implication "auf dem boden sitzend". Moreover, both Avestan *ərəδβa-* and Sanskrit *ūrdhvā-* specifically denote a vertical position, so that 'with shanks in a vertical position' can only refer to a standing posture.

Geldner's other argument concerned an apparently parallel construction in the next line, but, as we shall presently see, the construction of the next line is different. In spite of the fact that Geldner's suggestion found some cautious acclaim of Gershevitch (1954: 210), it seems clear that *ərəδβō.zəṇga-* means 'with vertical shanks' = '(always) on the feet'.

3. The epithet *āsītō.gātu-* was translated 'with quick pace' (cf. Darmesteter: "vite levée"), until Geldner (op.cit.) pointed out that Avestan *gātu-* never has this meaning and that *āsita-* cannot be derived from *asu-* 'quick'. He suggested to take *āsita-* as a ptc. of *as-* 'to achieve' and translated

¹MS 1.10.9 (149.18-20) *ūrdhvājñur āsīnaḥ yajati. ūrdhvājñavaḥ hí pásávaḥ pásúsu réto dádhaty. átho ūrdhvājñur hí prajāpatiḥ prajā āsṛjata* 'He sacrifices sitting with his knees up. For the cattle put the semen in the cattle with their knees up (i.e. standing?). For Prajāpati produced the creatures with his knees up.'

the compound 'der sein lager (ruhesitz und dergl.) erreicht, aufgesucht hat; ruhend, ausruhend'. Since Geldner's analysis of *āsita-* is also morphologically impossible, Bartholomae derived *āsita-* from *ā-√sī-* 'to lie'. The meaning of the compound remained the same: 'auf dem Lager ruhend'. This analysis of *āsītō.gātu-* has become canonical and is found in all handbooks and translations. The derivation from the root *sī-* must be correct, considering the fixed collocation *√sī- + gātu-* (acc.) 'to lie on a couch', attested in V 3.25 *starəta gātuš saiiamanō* 'lying on the spread couches' and in an unclear passage Yt 5.102 *gātu saite x^v aēui.starətəm*.

However, there are several problems. First, the construction 'lying on a couch [and still] awake' is rather strange within the whole context. We expect *āsītō.gātu-* to belong to the semantic field of 'watchful, alert'. Secondly, this is the only example of *ā + sī-* in the Avesta, which is, admittedly, a minor point (cf. Skt. *ā-√sī-*). Thirdly, if *āsita-* means 'lying', the bahuvrīhi compound *āsītō.gātu-* can only mean 'of a "lied on" couch' = 'whose couch has been used', from where there is no way to get to 'lying on a couch'. Since there are some misunderstandings concerning the Sanskrit and Avestan bahuvrīhi compounds with *ta*-participles as a first member, a short digression is in place.

4. As pointed out by Wackernagel 1905: 276, Sanskrit bahuvrīhi compounds with *ta*-participles as a first member show ambiguity in respect to the agent of the action. For instance, Vedic compound *rātā-havya-* 'of presented offering' allows of two interpretations: either the referent has presented the offering himself (he then is the sacrificer), or the offering is presented by somebody else, and the referent then is a deity. Both meanings are attested in the R̥gveda.² From the fact that the referent is often the agent of the action, we may not, however, draw the conclusion that "diese Komposita [sind] den alten Komposita mit verbalem Vorderglied und dem Synthetika gleichwertig; z.B. für v. *vājam-bharā-* "den Preis davon tragend" S. *vāja-bhṛt-* einerseits und v. *bharad-vāja-* n. pr. anderseits wäre auch *bhṛta-vāja-* denkbar" (Wackernagel ibid.). The essential difference between the two types is that bahuvrīhi compounds with *ta*-participles refer to an action in the past or to the result of this action, whereas the other type describes an action being carried out in the present.

In Bartholomae's dictionary we often find such imprecise renderings of compounds with *ta*-participles, and Duchesne-Guillemin plainly states in his book on Avestan compounds (1936: 170): "le mot qualifié par le composé est sujet du procès exprimé par le 1^{er} t.: ainsi *dātō.saoka-* signifie, non pas seulement «ayant profit donné», mais «par qui du profit est donné», c.-à.-d. «qui donne du profit»..."³ This is not the case, however. For instance, Av. *dātō.rāzah-* does not

²For instance, in 4.7.7c *rātā-havya-* refers to Agni, in 7.35.1b to Indrāvaruṇā, whereas in 1.118.11c and 2.25.1b this term refers to the sacrificer; cf. especially the formula *nāmasā rātāhavya-* 'bringing offerings with homage', attested five times.

³As was convincingly argued by Kellens (1974: 195), Av. *saokā-* is derived from the root *suc-* 'to shine' and means something like 'lustre'.

mean "qui fait les lois" given by Duchesne-Guillemin, but 'of the established Law' = 'he who has established the Law'. Similarly, *frakərəstō.frasāna-* means 'of caused destruction' = 'he who has caused the destruction' and not "qui produit la destruction", etc.

5. Let us now return to *āsītō.gātu-*. If *āsita-* is the *ta*-participle of *sī-* 'to lie' with the preverb *ā-*, the compound cannot mean 'auf dem Lager ruhend' (Bartholomae) or 'qui occupe la couche', but only 'whose couch has been used', which does not make sense in the given context. The solution of the problem is rather simple. We must assume that the length of the initial *ā-* is unetymological, the compound being **asita-gātu-* 'of "unlied" couch', i.e. 'who never sees his bed'. In this way, we get four epithets of *hām.varəiti-*, referring to her alertness: *ərəðβō.zəngam ax^vafniiām āsītō.gātūm jayāurūm* 'always on her feet, without sleep, never seeing her bed, vigilant'. We can thus add *āsītō.gātu-* to the fairly long list of polysyllabic words with unetymological long *ā* in the first syllable (cf. Kuiper 1939: 35ff., Oettinger 1983: 354ff., Hoffmann – Forssman 1996: 56), e.g. *hātām* /hataam/, *āiia zəmə*, *Xštāuuaiiō*, *āθrauuān-*, *ārmaiti-/aramati-/*, *kāuuaiias-cā*, *srāuuahiieiti*, etc.

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