The House Of Song

Musical Structures In Zoroastrian Prayer Performance

Raiomond Mirza

Ph.D. Thesis, Ethnomusicology
School Of Oriental And African Studies, University Of London
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Abstract

This thesis uncovers the presence of musical structures within Zoroastrian prayer performance and articulates the details of these structures and also the way in which they are manifested and are passed down through generations.

Initial research included an amalgamation and examination of the few references to music in Zoroastrian prayer that there are to be found in existing literature. The bulk of the research involved travelling to different countries to make contemporary sound recordings of prayers and to conduct extensive interviews with priests. Archival recordings were also gathered as data for examination.

The evolution of the status and role of priests within the Zoroastrian community from antiquity to the present day as well as the training they receive is presented in order to understand the social as well as religious context within which Zoroastrian prayer is performed and taught.

A substantial body of evidence is provided in the form of musical notations of the prayers of over thirty men and boys as well as more than an hour of accompanying sound recordings. Interview data is also provided to illuminate the perspectives of the performers on their own material.

The musical analysis of the notations uncovers musical structures in Zoroastrian prayer, and an examination of interview data first reveals the mechanism by which these structures are manifested and transmitted and then synthesises the conclusions into a model for music making which operates to shape the sound of Zoroastrian prayer. The final analysis explores the age of these musical structures from the most recent and provable point of existence to a possibly ancient origin.

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Preface

I was born a Zoroastrian in Hyderabad, India and was raised in Montreal, Canada and so grew up speaking English, French and Gujarati, the language of Gujarat state in western India (I can understand Gujarati more than I can speak it). I was drawn to music from a very young age and was drumming by the time I was 2 years old. During my teens I was a drummer with various bands of diverse styles ranging from heavy metal to blues and jazz. My formal training in music however, did not come until I attended Concordia University in Montreal in my early thirties. By this time my musical interests had expanded into Western classical and electro-acoustic composition and I was composing music for film, television, theatre and multimedia projects.

It was also at Concordia that I was exposed to the religious music of the European renaissance and began to make a connection with and be curious about the prayer sounds of my own faith. My curiosity ultimately led me to the present study which began with a Masters of Music in Ethnomusicology at the School of Oriental and African Studies – University of London. For my masters degree I formally studied the music of South Asia and of the Middle East and gained my first fieldwork experience interviewing, recording and notating the prayers of a London-based Zoroastrian priest, Mobed Rustam Bhedwar. Some of this material was eventually included in my Ph.D. thesis. My masters work further expanded into the study of music (in ritual worship) of other religions, namely, Islam, Coptic Christianity and the Vedic tradition, and this involved fieldwork with priests and practitioners of each of those faiths.

For the interviews in this thesis it should be noted that although all responses are provided in English, the interviews with Persian priests were conducted via a translator, Mr Kamrān Daryush-Nejad, who along with his brother Kaivān acted as my guide in Iran. In India all interviews that I conducted were in

English (noted in interview excerpts by RM) but others were conducted in Gujarati (some in English and Gujarati) and were interpreted for me by my wife Nina, and once by my father-in-law Minoo Wadia (noted in interviews as NW and MW). Conducting interviews via interpreters often meant that questions were asked in two or three different ways to ensure that they were fully understood but this also ensured that the responses given were confirmed and re-confirmed.

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I would like to thank my father and mother, Khushroo and Minnie Mirza (who have diligently read every draft), my sister and brother-in-law, Dinaz and Alan Tomkiewicz, and my grandparents Nariman and Mahbahnoo Revitna, for reaching into their hearts and pockets and giving me their enthusiastic and unwavering support which began at the first mention of this study and which continues to this day. I am also grateful, for her immediate and unquestioning help, to my mother-in-law, Homai Wadia, and to my father-in-law, Minoo Wadia, for his encouragement and for shepherding me through my travels in India.

A big debt is owed to my supervisors, Dr Owen Wright and Dr Richard Widdess for their astute insights, encyclopaedic wisdom and fearless criticisms which gave this thesis a solid foundation and which pushed me to strive for layers of meaning that would have otherwise remained unexplored. I am also indebted to Dr Almut Hintze for virtually being a third supervisor and for tirelessly and eloquently stewarding me through the often difficult fields of Zoroastrian history and Avestan linguistics. Thanks are also due to Dr Keith Howard for encouraging me to come to SOAS in the first place and to Dr David Hughes for putting essential finishing touches on my manuscript. It must also be noted that this study would have never been started if it hadn't been for the inspiration and far-sighted encouragement of Dr Dennis Murphy, Concordia University, Montreal. A very special thanks is due to Mobed Rustam K. Bhedwar who never tired of answering questions, no matter how trivial.

I am particularly grateful to all the Zoroastrian priests and student priests who took the time to participate in this study and generously let me into their precious and noble world. I also thank the Daryush-Nejad family, Keki, Aban, Anihita, Kamrān and Kaivān for taking me into their fold and being my guides in Iran.

For their generous support, I thank The Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, The Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, The Dastoor Dr. Sohrab H. Kutar Benevolent Fund, The World Zoroastrian Organisation, The World Zarathushtrian Trust Fund, The British Institute of Persian Studies and the generous and philanthropic Mr Mehraban Zartoshty.

To my wife, Nina, who supported me in every way through years of study and research, who actively participated in the completion of this work by translating for me during interviews, who travelled to small villages in India with me, who read and re-read endless drafts and helped me type when I was too tired, who gave me the freedom to follow my dream and a home to come back to, thanks seem inadequate, but I give them from the bottom of my heart.

Chapter 1 Overview of Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest prophetic religions in the world. It has influenced Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam and was the state religion of vast Persian empires: Achaemenian (558-330 BC), Parthian (ca. 250 BC – 224 AD) and Sasanian (224 – 651 AD). The purpose of this chapter is to provide an abbreviated outline of the main points of the religion that are relevant to the present study. All the information herein (except where marked) has been taken from the following sources.

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1.1 The Prophet

The prophet Zoroaster[1] is thought to have been born somewhere in North East Iran. This is extrapolated from the fact that some of the later sacred texts make geographical references to areas in Eastern Iran and also from assumptions

[1] Zoroaster is the Greek version of Zarathushtra. For the sake of simplicity only one, the more common Greek name, will be used in this study.

regarding the migration of early Iranian populations from the north to the south (Boyce 1987: 2).

The date of birth of the prophet is subject to debate and the range goes from 570 BC to 6000 BC. This question is tied to the dating of the sacred texts that he is believed to have composed. The collective sacred texts are known as the Avesta, taken from the language in which they were composed, Avestan. It is thought that Avestan ceased to be used commonly and became fossilised around the 4^{th}-3^{rd} centuries BC.

The complete liturgy was of course formed over a considerable period of time and much of it was not composed by Zoroaster. As such the liturgy is divided into older and younger material. Some place the older texts around the $7^{th} - 6^{th}$ centuries BC (Gnoli 2000: 165) and others such as Boyce argue for an earlier date, 1500 - 1000 BC. On balance, there are two main factors that persuasively indicate that the older material dates from approximately 1500 - 1000 BC — relative chronology and linguistic similarities. First, the language of the younger texts (Younger Avestan), can be dated to approximately the sixth or seventh centuries BC, and the references they contain indicate that the older works should have predated them by some centuries. Second, there are linguistic similarities between the language of the older texts (Older Avestan) and the Vedic Sanskrit of the Ṛg Veda which dates from around 1500 -1000 BC. Also, Avestan is most certainly not Persian. The two languages are distinct and therefore if the older material was composed as suggested by some during the early Persian empire (600 BC) it would certainly seem incongruous for it to exclude the Persian language altogether, which it does. On the whole, therefore, it seems convincing to place the lifetime of Zoroaster at around 1500-1000 BC.

1.2 Cosmology

Zoroaster is thought to have been born into a priestly family and to have initially followed the polytheistic and pagan practices common to nomadic Indo-Iranian tribes of south central Asia. Broadly speaking this would have involved a class of priests performing rituals on behalf of a lay community by paying tribute/worship to a specific deity "daeva" for a specific benefit.

The worship of "daevas" is also thought to have embodied a might-is-right ethos popular among conquering migrant people of the time. The appearance of Zoroaster coincides with a partial departure from these traditions and so it is thought that the religion he founded would have been in some ways opposed to earlier practices.

The word daeva which had previously meant "gods" came to mean "devils" in Zoroastrianism (Kreyenbroek 2001: 4). Following the appearance of Zoroaster the pre-existing pantheon of pagan deities seems to have been re-configured to bring two opposing forces to the fore, Endless Light and Endless Darkness. Also relatable to Zoroaster is a cosmology in which the world is a battleground on which good and evil fight until evil is eventually conquered.

In this battle, all things in creation belonged either to the force of Endless Light, Ahura Mazda or the force of Endless Darkness, Angra Mainyu. Human-kind stood out as an exception: a "good" creation but one that was nonetheless uniquely vested with the ability to make a moral choice. The role of humanity within this cosmological battle was clearly defined and centred strongly on free will. Humans as well as spirits had to choose between truth and deceit. Each individual had to choose to help Ahura Mazda fight evil and would be held responsible for this choice after death. A righteous soul would, after death, pass over the Cinvat Bridge (bridge of The Separator) into "The House of Welcome". The deceitful soul would fall into a hellish abyss.

The religion that Zoroaster fashioned was therefore designed to provide humanity with the material as well as spiritual tools with which they could fight evil, specifically, prayers, the ultimate purpose of which is to strengthen Ahura Mazda's spiritual force within the material world, and the knowledge that humans had free will and were responsible for the choices they made in the great battle.

The fundamental creed of the religion — humata, hukhta, hvarshta (good thoughts, good words, good deeds) is accompanied by the expectation that each individual will apply these basic virtues throughout life.

Yasna 36 – stanza 4

We approach you
With good mind
With good truth
With the actions and words
Of good perception.
(Hintze 2002: 47)

Yasna 36 – stanza 5

We revere, we invigorate you,
O Wise Lord,
We approach you with all good thoughts,
With all good words,
With all good deeds.
(Hintze 2002: 47)

Yasna 30 - stanza 2

Listen with your ears to the best things.
Reflect with a clear mind - man by man for himself - upon the two choices of decision, being aware to declare yourselves to Him before the great retribution.
(Insler 1975: 33)

There are, therefore, no ten commandments specifying which are good and bad thoughts and deeds. There are some broad directives which designate Good as being that which strengthens the material world which is the creation of Ahura Mazda (God), and this is accomplished by fighting disease, pollution and other similar elements which are the products of Evil. However, while these "directives" are generally meritorious, they are often accompanied by quite specific purity laws which, along with topics such as intermarriage and conversion (which are related to purity considerations), are by no means

uniformly interpreted by all Zoroastrians. Indeed these can be regarded as the most divisive and volatile issues in the community today. These subjects are, however, outside the parameters of this study. In essence each person must grapple with their own choices of Good and Evil and must take responsibility for these choices without a priest interpreting scripture as a moral road map.

1.3 Religious Texts

It is known that the majority of the liturgy has been lost over time (Kellens 1989: 35). The scriptures that survive today are those that were committed to writing around the 4th-6th centuries AD, after a long period of oral transmission.

The liturgy can broadly be separated into five divisions[2]:

Inner Rituals
1. The Yasna
2. The Visperad
3. The Vendidad

Outer Rituals
4. The Yashsts
5. The Khordeh Avesta

The first three constitute the texts of "inner rituals" which may only be performed inside a fire temple by fully initiated priests. The last two are devotional texts which can be recited anywhere by any Zoroastrian.

The Yasna consists of 72 chapters of texts from different ages, being divided into the Older Avestan and the Younger Avestan portions. The older is considered the most important of all the liturgy as it contains the five Gathas (which translates as hymns) which are thought to have been composed by the

[2] See Appendix D for a table outlining liturgical works, their languages and approximate dates.

prophet himself following divine revelation (1500-1000 BC). These compositions convey "lofty ideas in noble verse"; an inquiry for truth. Their content is often obscure and metaphorical and yet also contains passages of "clear vision and clear presentation" (Gershevitch 1968: 17). The younger chapters of the Yasna date from the 6th- 4th centuries BC and are thought to have been the work of priests. The religious tone of these chapters is different to the older material as in them, Zoroaster is already a figure who lived in the distant past.

The Visperad contains 24 texts of praise. Most are in praise of the Yasna and so the Visperad texts are never recited on their own, but are inserted in between chapters of the Yasna. For example, Visperad 13 is in praise of Yasna 31-34[3]. The Visperad was composed by priests of later generations, not the prophet himself. It is thought it came about in order to elongate the liturgy. The language is Younger Avestan and it probably dates from the late Achaemenian period, the early centuries BC.

The Vendidad (also known as the Videvdad) is a "law book" of sorts and contains prescriptions for purity which are intermingled with mythological material. In sharp contrast to the Gathas, which employ a variety of expression and are accorded high literary respect, the Vendidad is considered didactic, employing, as it does, a question and answer catechismal device. In contrast to the works of the prophet, which are often abstract and only specific in exhorting the virtues of "truth" and the "good mind", the Vendidad poses questions of purity and also of a legislative nature which are then answered with quite specific prescriptions and punishments. It was composed by priests in late (Younger) Avestan, the latest parts perhaps in the early Parthian period, 250 BC - 224 AD. It was not originally performed as a ritual but was probably incorporated into the Yasna ceremony not only to preserve it within the oral

[3] For the rest of this thesis the word "chapter" will be implied wherever the word Yasna is followed by a number. Therefore Yasna 31-34 means Yasna chapters 31-34 etc.

tradition but also, as with the Visperad, to make the prayers even longer. The Vendidad ceremony as it is now called contains The Yasna + The Visperad + The Vendidad, and is the longest of all ceremonies. It begins at midnight and lasts about nine hours. It is recited on festive days and annual feasts of obligation called gahambars.

Yashts are texts dedicated to 22 individual deities[4]. Each has its own calendar day on which it is to be performed. There are two basic types of Yashts: legendary and hymnic. The first consists primarily of stories of a particular deity and the second directly praises a deity's qualities. The language is Younger Avestan and the earlier passages are generally dated from the 6th century BC with later passages thought to be from the 3rd –4th centuries BC. Much of the material is probably rooted in a secular tradition of heroic poetry from the Indo-Iranian period (which pre-dates the religion) that then became "Zoroastrianised", probably by priests.

The Khordeh Avesta (Little Avesta) is a collection of texts commonly used as prayers. These include most significantly: the kusti[5] prayers which are a private devotional practice; the 101 names of God; The Five Gahs—prayers dedicated to divinities presiding over the five watches of the day; Siroze—formulas of daily praise of divinities; Afringan—blessings which are for happy as well as funerary occasions; and Niyayeshn—litanies of praise dedicated to the natural world. Their language is Younger Avestan with some quotations from the older Avesta interspersed with Pazand (Middle Persian written in Avestan script[6]). The Khordeh Avesta is a collection of existing prayers and texts in different languages, resulting from priestly activity over a long period.

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[4] As noted earlier, prior to Zoroaster there was a pre-existing pantheon of deities from which, in his cosmology, two were brought to the fore. Others still remained as part of the schema of Gods but were now positioned more as qualities of the supreme God, or as helper figures.

[5] The kusti is a sacred lamb's wool cord that is ritually untied and retied around the waist accompanied by specific prayers. Its seventy two threads correspond to the seventy two chapters of the Yasna. The Sudre, a thin white shirt made of cotton, is considered to be a protection against extraneous evil. In orthodoxy, all Zoroastrians are required to wear these articles of clothing.

It is important to expand on the point that the Gathas (Hymns) were "composed" by Zoroaster. Here "composition" stems from an oral culture "in which texts existed only as events, performances by performers" (Skjærvø 1994: 206). The creative activity of composing involves a performer drawing on an inventory of formulas and metrical and compositional patterns. By combining the traditional constituents in a new way, he created a "unique, unprecedented hymn" (Hintze 2000: seminar 4 pg 2).

Different parts of the Gathas also contain different literary styles. For example, the central portion of the Yasna ceremony, the Yasna Haptanghaiti, has the same language as the Gathas but instead of following a syllable counting metre as the Gathas do, uses a variety of rhythmic patterns. Parallels for the rhythmic patterns and rhetorical figures used in the Yasna Haptanghaiti are found in Vedic and Early Latin and Umbrian prayers and liturgies as well as Old Irish invocations and Old Hittite funeral verses (Hintze 2002: 32 ref Watkins 1995: 229-38).

When Avestan ceased entirely to be a current language, the practice of "composition" as described above would also have disappeared. Texts were simply committed to memory and performed by rote.

Unfortunately, there is no information which addresses any tonal or melodic aspects of these "Hymns", the Gathas. The way the words were put together is known but not the musical manner in which the words were rendered into sound, if indeed they were rendered as music.

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[6] Old Persian gradually developed into Middle Persian from the late Achaemenid period on, ca 480 – 380 BC.

1.4 Rituals

In addition to the rituals associated with the Yasna, Visperad and Vendidad there are other various rituals for blessing houses and giving thanks (Jashans) for the consecration and purification of bull's urine (Nirangdin). The urine, "Nirang", is one of the most potent purifying substances in Zoroastrianism and the ritual is highly complex and takes nine days. Funeral rituals are divided into those which prepare the body for disposal and those which are performed for the soul of the deceased. There are various purification ceremonies, and very importantly, there is the Navjote, the initiation of children aged seven to eleven into the faith.

1.5 Temples of Worship

It is thought that early Zoroastrians worshipped in the open, with temple practices probably developing in the Achaemenian period (558-330 BC). The primary purpose of the temple was to house a sacred fire. In Zoroastrianism, fire represents divine purity, and when Zoroastrians pray in a temple or at home they face a flame or some other source of light. Also, as a mark of respect for the fire's purity, priests wear masks that cover their mouths when performing rituals in proximity to a sacred fire. All fires in a temple must be fed at the commencement of each of the five Gahs (watches) of the day.

There are three grades of fire. The highest is the Atash Bahram which is consecrated from sixteen different kinds of fire. The second and third respectively are the Atash Adaran and the Atash Dadgah. The last is the only one that may be tended to by lay people but it must be consecrated by priests. For reasons of ritual purity the first two must only be served by priests, who are expected to maintain a high standard of religious purity.

When a ritual is performed outside a Temple a small temporary fire is created in an urn used specifically for this purpose.

1.6 The Post-Empire Zoroastrian Community

Following the fall of the last Zoroastrian empire to invading Moslem forces in the seventh century A.D., the Zoroastrian population began a steady decline. There are currently fewer than 150,000 Zoroastrians in the world (Boyce 1987: 226). This can be attributed to early persecution, forced conversion and, latterly, issues surrounding inter-marriage and prohibitions against converting into the religion.

The early tenth century saw an exodus of Zoroastrians from Iran to India and the community thus had two major cultural bases until the mid to late 20th century, when there was further emigration to England, North America and Africa. Currently the Zoroastrians of India are found mainly in the towns of Udvada, Navsari and Surat in Gujarat, and their largest community is in Bombay. They are often referred to as Parsis (from the language of the first immigrants from Iran, Farsi). The main Zoroastrian population centres of Iran are in Tehran and the towns of the Yazd region, as well as in Isfahan and Shiraz.

Chapter 2 References to Music and Sound in Zoroastrian Prayer Performance

One of the more curious features of the topic discussed here is that there is no mention of music either in the Zoroastrian canon or in the existing scholarly literature.

Research into Zoroastrianism has focused on virtually every aspect of the religion except sound production. Authors have catalogued and delved into its history, texts, people and have even explored its rituals, apart, that is, from discussing exactly what sounds the priests are making when they perform prayers. Contemporary scholarly works refer indifferently to recitation, chanting and singing, without any discussion of what these terms might mean.

"The priest must **recite** the holy words with utter devotion and attentiveness" (Kotwal and Boyd: 1977:37-38).

"In the Yasna ceremony, Ahura Mazda, Amesha Spentas and the Yazatas are invoked and worshipped by **chanting** the sacred Manthras, by performing the ceremonies with ceremonial implements, and dedicating the consecrated offerings and libations" (H. Mirza 1987: 414).

'"After a declaration that the singer is going to **sing** the praises of Ahura Mazda and of Good Thought as well as the joys which can be seen through the lights, he asks people to open their ears..." (Hintze 2001: Seminar 6, pg 1).

2.1 Translations From Ancient Texts

It could be that the contemporary use of all three terms (recite, chant, sing) has its origins in translations of ancient texts.

To begin with there is the fact that the central texts of the liturgy whose composition is attributed to the prophet are the Gathas, a term usually translated as hymns. The explicitly musical nature of the word 'hymn' could itself lead to such labels as "singing" and "songs". Also of note within the Gathas themselves is the expression "the House of Song", a metaphor for heaven. "I shall try to turn Him hither to us by praises of reverence, for I have just now, knowingly through truth, seen the Wise One in a vision to be Lord of the word and deed stemming from good spirit. Yes, let us set down His glories in the House of Song." Yasna 45.8 (Insler 1975: 77)[7].

The verbal root *gā*, 'to sing' from which the Avestan noun Gāthā is derived, is also a compelling indicator of the presence of music in the liturgy. *Gā* also reappears in *fragāthra*, 'the singing of prayers', in Yasna 19.21 and 55.7 (Hintze 2002: 143-144). Moreover, there is the fact that the words "sing"and "chant" are found in translations of ancient Greek accounts of the religion.

"The earliest account of the religion of the Magi among the Greeks is to be found in the *Histories* (1.131-132) of Herodotus (?485 - ?425 BC)...After having made this arrangement, one of the Magi who is present sings a theogeny, as they call the incantation...". (Haug ca 1878: 6). In another translation of this passage, "sing" is changed to "chant" (Godley 1926: 173). The ancient Greek word in question is ἐπαείδει (*epaeidei*, to sing a song[8]).

After Herodotus, Strabo's[9] is considered as one of the most important Greek accounts of the Iranian religion. In *Geography* (15.3.15) we find "They (Magi)

[7] This has also more recently been translated as "House of Welcome" with the proviso that in a broader context this could be taken to include the act of song in the welcoming of the soul into heaven (Kellens 1974: 28).

[8] Original Greek text taken from Godley 1926: 172. Translation and transliteration by Professor Geoffrey Waywell, Institute Of Classical Studies, University Of London, personal interview Nov 25 2002. Same for footnotes 8 and 10 on this page.

[9] A Greek geographer born ca 60 BC who observed rituals of the Persians in Cappadocia (DeJong 1997: 121).

enter these (temples) by day and chant for almost an hour in front of the fire, holding a bundle of rods, wearing felt head-gear which falls down on both sides so that the cheek-pieces cover the lips". (Zaehner 1961: 169). An alternate translation reads that the Magi "make incantations" (Jones 1934: 177).

Other translations of Strabo (*Geography* 15.3.14) use the word "sing" instead of chant. "Then they arrange the pieces of meat on a myrtle or laurel, the Magi touch it with slender wands and sing invocations, while pouring out a libation of oil with milk and honey...". (De Jong 1997: 126). In these two passages from Strabo the ancient Greek reads 1). ἐπάδουσιν (*epaidousin*, they sing songs) and 2). ἐπωδὰς ποιοῦνται (*epoidas poiountai*, songs they make[10]).

Another celebrated Greek traveller, Pausanias[11] (ca. 143-176 A..D.) wrote about the fire-worship of the Magi in his *Graeciae Descriptio* (5.27.5-6) "To this room he first repairs, puts dry wood upon the altar, puts on the tiara and then sings the invocation of the god, reading it from a book, in a language utterly unintelligible to the Greeks." (Haug ca 1878: 11). Pausanias used the word ἐπάδει (*epaidei*, sings a song[12]). It must also be noted that in the very next line of the same passage, Jones and Omerod use the verb "recite" instead of "sing" even though the same original Greek word, ἐπάδει is used both times (Jones & Omerod 1926: 546).

It seems therefore, that translators of ancient languages, Greek as well as Avestan[13], use the words sing, chant and recite interchangeably for literary considerations (such as avoiding repetition of the same word) without any regard for the musical implications inherent in each term. This is specifically an issue of translation. The original Greek and Avestan words are

[10] Original Greek texts taken from Godley 1926: 172.
[11] It is thought that both Strabo and Pausanias borrowed from Herodotus in their works, but the extent to which this was done as well as the question of which passages may have been borrowed is a matter of debate.
[12] Original Greek text taken from Jones and Omerod 1926: 546.

unambiguously rooted in words which mean "sing" (*aeidein* and *gā*). However, as to what exactly Herotodus meant by the word sing is also not unequivocally clear. It is known that "the Greeks of the classical age had three modes of delivery: speech, song and an intermediate range that we now tend to call recitative"[14]. Nonetheless, without straying into the debate of trying to define song, chant or recitation, it can be stated that whatever song and recitative might involve, Herodotus and other Greek writers were, in their descriptions of Zoroastrian prayer performance, clearly not referring to speech[15]. This pushes the phenomena they were describing towards something more musical, including singing and chanting.

The reason for all this speculation regarding terminology is that there are no detailed analyses of the sound of Zoroastrian prayer performance to be found. One conclusion might be that for three thousand years Zoroastrian priests have been singing and chanting but nobody has ever really taken note of how they do it. If one were to make the broad distinction that singing and chanting are not speech and that both fall generically under the heading of music, then it becomes all the more notable that there are no comprehensive works, or parts of works that address ritual sound production with a view towards understanding what, if any, musical structures, rules or practices may be involved. An exception is the excellent 1960 work of Lars Hartman who performed a solfege-notation[16] analysis of the prayers of one Iranian priest. The value of this work is considerable and has been drawn upon in this study. However it was not intended as anything other than a surface reading of the general melodic tendencies contained in one performance from one priest, so the study limits itself to that scope.

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[13] Dr Hintze attested in a personal interview (October 2002) that this also occurred in Avestan translations, her own included.

[14] Professor Michael Silk, Professor of Greek Language Literature, King's College London, November 27, 2002, via email.

[15] Professor Michael Silk, Professor of Greek Language Literature, King's College London, November 27, 2002, interview.

[16] Professor Hartman simply wrote, using solfége, the letters "A" "B" "C" etc above words to indicate the notes on which those words were pitched.

With the exception of Hartman's valuable contribution, most observations on sound production are simply a few scattered, casual asides. One example of this can be found in Boyce 1982: "Indeed, Xenophon (5th century BC) says that 'always at the break of day Cyrus chanted a hymn', and the sonorous rendering of the obligatory Avestan prayers could well have sounded as such to Greek ears" (Boyce 1982: 214). This is, however, not intended to be anything more than an offhand supposition by Boyce that what she knew of Zoroastrian prayer performance could have sounded like chanting to a 5th century Greek.

2.2 18th 19th and 20th Century Accounts

Later literature is unforthcoming, and it is striking that, for whatever reason, the convergence of encyclopaedic writing and orientalist interests that resulted in increasingly detailed explorations of Asian and Middle Eastern musical traditions generally during the 18th and 19th centuries failed to produce any comparable account, indeed any account, of Zoroastrian musical practice.

A small degree of detail can be found in the work of A.V. Williams Jackson who visited Iran and India between 1901-1903. During his visit to the city of Yazd, Jackson was granted the rare privilege of entering a private Fire Temple.

> From the anteroom I entered the large oblong chamber or chapel, adjoining the sanctum sanctorum in which the fire was kept. My ear at once caught the voice of the white robed priests who were chanting in the presence of the sacred element a hymn of praise sung by Zoroaster of old...The door was open and I stood within a few feet of the fire so as to listen, but I made no attempt to see the flame, as I knew such a step would be regarded as a profanation and might bar the way to other privileges which I wished to enjoy...The voice of the *zot*, or officiating priest, was high, nasal and resonant, and his intonation was so rapid that he had to pause at times to catch his breath; while his assistant, the *raspi*, chanted in a lower key or accompanied his recitation in a nasal minor key with great rapidity of utterance...The intonation of both the priests was

> loud and resonant and more swift than that of the Parsi Dasturs I had heard in Bombay and Udvada... . (Jackson 1906: 367)

The issue of sound production does receive an insightful aesthetic, if non musical examination by Williams and Boyd in their book *Ritual Art and Knowledge*. "...the sound space of manthric chant is not structured like that of a musical score. It is more like the simple, direct bell-sound of the mortar[17], unmediated by a prior structure" (Williams & Boyd 1993: 43). Apart from the fact that the authors do not examine prayer sound with regards to pitch, rhythm, melody or other musical criteria (which was probably not their purpose) their study is also notable in that it most clearly expresses the assumption that the sound of Zoroastrian prayer simply "is what it is" . They, and almost all others who have ever contemplated Zoroastrian prayer, seem to accept, prima facie, the sopund of Zoroastrian prayer without examining its structures or origins. They never ask why it sounds the way it does.

2.3 Images and References To Music

There are some works that claim to point to historical material on the music of Zoroastrian ritual, but these lack verifiable sources.

Jean During provides a typical example of this in his introduction to *Le Repertoire-Modele De La Musique Iranienne - Radif De Tar Et De Setar De Mirza 'Abdollah*. "Under the Achaemenids, music served an important function in worship as well as in courtly entertainment. The bas-reliefs clearly depict groups of singers, players of trigonal harps (*chang*) accompanied by large tambourines, as well as long necked lutes and double-flutes". (During 1991; 59) The bas-reliefs to which During refers are the Persian rock carvings of Taq-

[17] A mortar and pestle are used in the high Yasna ceremony which was the subject of Williams' and Boyd's study.

e-bustan[18] featuring King Khusrau II (ruled 591-628 AD) hunting accompanied by a group of female musicians. The images prove the existence of court music, not music used in ritual worship.

Image 1

Detail of Khusrau II. (Sarre 1923: 87)

And

Image 2

Another example comes from Amnon Shiloah in his book *Music in The World of Islam.* In the chapter dealing with pre-Islamic music, Shiloah writes that "Music in al-Hīra flourished under the direct impact of the highly refined and

[18] Near the city of Hamadan, 400 km south west of Tehran.

strictly organised art music of the Sasanians. We have fairly rich information about the music in their Zoroastrian state church" (Shiloah 1995: 7,8).

Unfortunately further investigation revealed that the original sources for "this fairly rich information" were various authors of the 8th – 10th centuries AD[19] whose references to music do not extend to prayer performance.

In *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (1989: 398), Mircea Eliade quotes the Swedish author H.S. Nyberg who "considers that the Gathic term *maga* is proof that Zoroaster and his disciples induced an ecstatic experience by ritual songs intoned in chorus in a closed, consecrated space" (Nyberg 1938: 157, 161, 176). Eliade goes on to note that this position was attacked by the majority of Iranists. As of yet, no source material has been found to support this claim.

An equally fanciful reference to music in worship is found in the *Early Zoroastrianism* lectures of James Moulton. "The Gathas were much better preserved and the verse form is relatively less often interrupted by misspelling, and practically never by interpolation. They were doubtless kept from injury by constant repetition with traditional music: if the music was wanting in the recitations of the Later Avesta, the wholesale accretions of prose glosses is accounted for." (Moulton 1913: 15). Unfortunately, Moulton does not clarify the meaning of "traditional music". Nor does he elaborate on the use of the word "music".

Apart therefore, from the words rendered as "sing" and "chant" in ancient Greek accounts there are no explicit textual "footprints" directly placing music in a Zoroastrian ritual. If we turn to archaeology we find an equal lack of

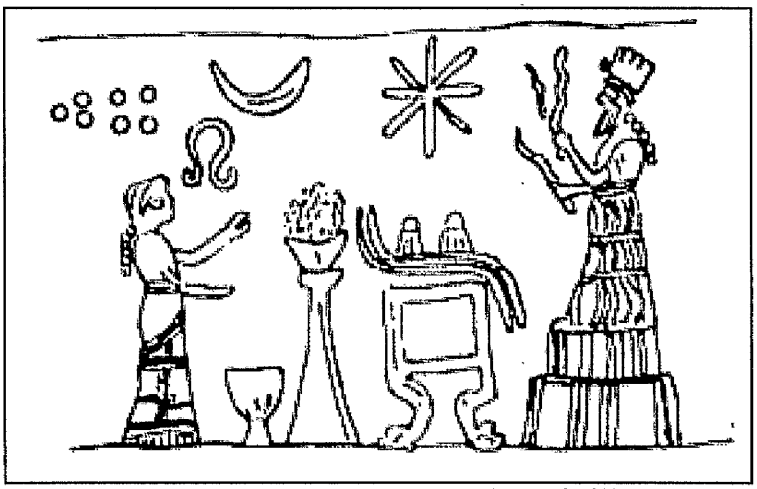
[19] Ibn Khurradadhbih (ca. 850 AD), Al-Jahiz (ca. 776-868 AD), Al-Kindi (800-873 AD), Masu'di (b. ca. 895 d. 957 A.D.), Yunus ibn Sulaiman al-Katib (d. ca. 765).

evidence in major sites such as those at Persepolis and Susa. Mary Boyce notes that:

> It is a striking fact that among all the calmly dignified figures carved on the walls of Persepolis, of kings and princes, court officials, army commanders, imperial guardsmen and tribute-bearers of many nations, there is none that can be identified as that of a priest ... What is certain is that there is no trace among the sculptured scenes on the terrace of any representation of a religious observance. Nevertheless, various features of its buildings and sculptors have led some scholars ... to interpret the terrace-complex as 'the embodiment in stone of a whole New Year ritual system with various ceremonies, processions and rites.... (Boyce 1982: 107)

There has not yet therefore been any evidence of music in a religious context in these ruins. However, stepping outside the well-trodden Zoroastrian path yields some interesting if not conclusive results which deserve mention. Richard Dumbrill's *The Musicology and Organology of The Ancient Near East* reveals an image (figure 3) that is so Zoroastrian in nature and content that its date and location are worth questioning and verifying. It also encourages further research of archaeological material.

Image 3



(Dumbrill 1998: 412)

The location of this picture (Tyre, Lebanon) places it outside a Zoroastrian setting. However that is simply the place it was found, not necessarily its point of origin. The date Dumbrill cites, 1500-1000 BC, places it at the very

beginnings of the religion and well within the context of the traditions that preceded it. The man looks uncannily like a Zoroastrian priest holding *baresman* (bundle of twigs held by an officiating priest) and tending a fire. The musically noteworthy element in this image is the depiction of a woman possibly playing a drum next to the fire. Also, the presence of the seven celestial bodies is directly Zoroastrian in nature. The picture brings together elements that are found in other Zoroastrian images. Compare the head, arms and overall posture of the man to the images and descriptions of priests and other male figures in images 4 – 11 which are examples of actual Zoroastrian archaeology.

Image 4

"In the jambs of a stone window-frame belonging to one of the rooms of the complex (post Achaemenid building at Persepolis) were found the reliefs of a male and female figure with raised hands and barsom bundle. Herzfeld considered the male figure to represent the *fratada*, keeper of the fire." (Poroda 1962: 180)

Image 5

Two Magi performing sacrifice 5th century BC (Briant 1992: 93)

Image 6

Detail of Fravashi (Farohar), a winged image of God from Persepolis 5th cent BC. (Briant 1992: 19)

Image 7

7th century AD "seal depicting 'Veh-Shabuhr, Mogbed (priest) of (King) Ardakhshir Khvarrah'." (Sarre 1923: 145)

Image 8

Sasanian stamp seal. "A man stands in right profile before a flaming altar. He is a priest, for he raises the ritual barsom (a bundle of sticks) towards the altar. He is bearded, has straight bound hair and wears a long coat…" (Brunner 1978: 65).

Image 9

Sasanian Stamp Seal. Two priests flank a fire altar each raising a barsom. The figure on the left is as in the preceding, but it is clear that he is ungirded. The figure on the right wears a similar long coat but is girded. He has a long braid of hair and wears a sort of turban (Brunner 1978: 65).

Image 10

Zoroastrian Priests and altar. Reverse side of Sasanian coin featuring head of King Narseh (ruled 292-302 AD) (Sarre 1923: 143)

Image 11

Early Eighteenth century Iranian priest. (Jackson 1906: 69) (Picture from Hyde 1760: 374)

It can be suggested that there is a visual continuity running through the above ancient depictions of Zoroastrian priests and religious male figures, a continuity that can even be seen as late as the 18th century—the long hair, the full beard, the head dress, the long coat, the overall posture relative to an altar of fire and the holding of ceremonial sticks, baresman. The male in the picture from Dumbrill belongs typologically within this continuity. If one perceives, therefore, that the male in Dumbill's picture is a Zoroastrian priest performing a ritual in the presence of a drum[20], it would follow that the picture is evidence (however small) of an ancient conscious tradition of music in worship. Identifying the object in question as a drum is admittedly not guarunteed but nonetheless the possibility that it is a drum remains viable. Ultimately, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, this remains an unsubstantiatied, but still possible.

Various organological studies, including Dumbrill's, contain dozens of depictions of musical instruments dated after 500 BC placing them squarely in the Achaemenid (or later) empire. This is encouraging in that these images reinforce the musicality of the society, but it is also striking that they are rarely mentioned in any Zoroastrian scholarly writings, even in works which attempt to provide descriptions of ancient Zoroastrian societies[21]. Although ancient images of musicians do not necessarily point to music in a religious context, there is at least one association between instrumental music and Zoroastrian mythology. According to the myth of Yīma, mankind's first king, "at the onset of a severe winter Ahura Mazda ordered Yīma to bring plants, animals and humans into a shelter. To help him Ahura Mazda gave Yīma two implements: a golden sufrā ('trumpet' see Duchesne-Guillemin, 1979: 540-541) and a gold plated aštrā (whip). The myth implies that the instrument was used to call animals" (Lawergren 2001: 524-25).

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[20] Identifying object in question as a drum is admittedly not guaranteed but nonetheless the possibility that it is a drum remains viable. Therefore, any historical interpretation based on the perception of a drum is not being put forward as a proof, but rather as a possible sign of an ancient musical tradition.

As a rule, discussions of the music of this early period have not found their way into the works of the authors studying the Zoroastrian religion. An immediate and reasonable supposition is that in the absence of any detailed ancient accounts all one can do is note the words which have been translated as recite, sing and chant which ancient sources have used to describe Zoroastrian prayer. However, in comparison to other cultures this absence is conspicuously odd. There is an abundance of information on the music of Mesopotamia, in particular Sumeria and Akkadia, cultures which preceded Zoroastrianism and, which, as the basis of the Babylonian empire[22] were incorporated into the Achaemenian empire, but nothing on Zoroastrianism itself. There are, of course, some accounts of the minstrelsy tradition in the Sasanian period but there is nothing in them that points to corresponding music in a liturgical setting.

In spite of the fact that there is no historical detail indicating what an ancient Zoroastrian priest may have sounded like, all the above mentioned references to singing and hymns as well as the possibility suggested by the image of the drum do have one important underlying value: they all point to the possibility that early Zoroastrians could have had a conscious tradition of music in worship. Indeed, given the importance of music in other ancient religions, it would have been exceptional if they did not. This notion, however, must now be left until the final chapter of this research. The focus of this thesis is not antiquity, but rather the living practice of Zoroastrian prayer performance. The first essential step of delving into the sound of Zoroastrian prayer is to understand the context of the performer, the Zoroastrian priest. This will be the focus of the next four chapters.

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[21] A worthy exception is Les Instruments De Musique Dans L'Art Sassanide by Marcelle Duchesne-Guillemin (1993) which provides a collection of images from plates, seals etc.
[22] Discussed in more detail in chapter 10, page 325.

Chapter 3 The Role Of The Priesthood In The Community

The purpose and status of a priest as perceived by the priesthood and by the community sets the context within which prayers are performed and ultimately shapes that performance. This chapter will outline the Zoroastrian priest's progress towards his contemporary status. It will also situate his function within the community as suggested by the ethos of the religion itself. Finally, it will broach the subject of the impact of these factors upon prayer performance.

First, regarding the job of a priest, the literature of the religion itself does not provide a detailed job description. *Vendidad XIII.45*, alludes to the moderation of priests: "He eats broken food like a priest (a wandering priest); he is grateful like a priest; he is easily satisfied like a priest; he wants only a small piece of bread like a priest; and in these things he is like unto a priest." Also, in *Vendidad XVIII.6*, a priest is encouraged to pursue divine wisdom in order to ease mankind's passage into the holy world: "Him thou shalt call an Athravan (priest), O holy Zarathushtra, who throughout the night sits up and demands of the holy Wisdom, which makes man free from anxiety, with dilated heart, and cheerful at the head of the Cinvat[23] bridge, and which makes him reach that world, that holy world, that excellent world, the world of paradise." (Darmesteter1880: 163)

The above does not paint a very complete picture of a priest or the context within which he functions. In the absence of specifics as detailed by scripture it is nonetheless possible to extract a definition from within the structure of the religion itself. It is, in a sense, definition by elimination. The priest must do what the laity cannot do for themselves. The laity, however, are expected to do a great deal.

[23] Sacred bridge leading to the afterlife (Boyce 1977: 14).

Zoroastrianism is a credal religion with a focus on self-discipline. By praying, an individual fights evil spiritually and reinforces his/her choice to strengthen God's good creation (the world). Also, through individual prayer each Zoroastrian takes responsibility for his/her good or bad thoughts, words and deeds for which they are accountable in the afterlife. Therefore unlike Hinduism, for instance, the entire spiritual experience of prayer is not relegated to the priesthood. All Zoroastrians are expected to recite their own prayers daily (five times[24]) thus bringing them regularly into their own direct spiritual experience of God. This is applicable for prayers at home as well as in Temples. Hinnells observes that in Temples there are no set times for group prayers or worship and that "each person prays to Ahura Mazda alone, just as the religion consistently emphasises individual responsibility (Hinnells 1996: 25)."

In this light it follows naturally that there has never been and currently is no public ritual in the course of which congregational prayers are performed and moral guidance is given in the form of a sermon. Furthermore, unlike Judaism or Christianity, priests are not, according to any scripture, theologically endowed with the moral authority of a shepherd tending to a flock. Consequently the Zoroastrian priest does not, as a rule, provide intercession. Nor is he a moral figurehead dispensing judgement and interpreting God's word and will. "The priest is there not as one who offers sacrifice, but as a man whose life is dedicated to the maintenance of the level of purity necessary for direct contact with the physical presence of the divine" (Hinnells 1996: 25) He is a specialist providing a service in times of need and in times of joy (special blessings, rituals for giving thanks etc). His whole purpose is the proper performance of prayers for those occasions that require rituals and prayer[25] and a level of ritual purity that only a priest through training and initiation can

[24] A practice thought to have been adopted by Moslems.
[25] This consists of all the prayers and rituals outside the daily prayers that each Zoroastrian recites.

achieve. Furthermore there are the priests in Temples (in India and Iran[26]) who tend to the sacred fires of the faith[27] and perform the daily prayers and administrative duties involved therein. These are not generally attended by the laity, although they are permitted to observe, but have a purely spiritual purpose and are intended, as it were, to strengthen the presence of God's spiritual creation within the physical world and thus diminish the power of evil. The performance of all these prayers and rituals is no small matter, and the service provided by priests to their community is considered spiritually invaluable.

Remarkably, in spite of the service they provide, the priesthood is currently a poorly paid class of specialised ritual performers. They still hold a unique position in the community, but now they are at the bottom of its economic structure. Any power, religious or otherwise, that a priest may have today comes from the force of his own personality and/or social connections, but no longer simply from being a priest. This was not always the case. Nor was the activity of a priest always so limited in scope. The priesthood was for a long time a powerful entity endowed with religious authority and secular power.

3.1 The Magi

The ancient Persian word for priest is Magus. The Magi were already, at the time of Zoroaster, an established caste of Median and Persian priests in a polytheistic milieu. "They were the experts on ritual and rites, keepers of the cultural and religious traditions of the Iranian tribes [and] held an exclusive

[26] There are various levels of consecration for the fires in Zoroastrian temples. For the purpose of this study it suffices to note that there are no fully consecrated fires of the highest levels outside Iran and India.

[27] Sacred fires are never extinguished. One of the oldest "The Iranshah" in Udvada is reputed to have been kept continuously burning for over 1000 years (Boyce. 1979: 166, 188).

position in the religious life of a number of Iranian tribes" (Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989: 330)[28].

These rituals and cultic rites included animal sacrifice, mass blood offerings, the use of intoxicating juices (haoma) and the worship of a pantheon of deities. Some scholars[29] believe that upon receiving revelations, Zoroaster, a priest himself, spoke out against the Magi condemning some ritual practices and, in general, their positions of authority. He elevated Ahura Mazda above all other deities in the pantheon and configured a monotheistic religion whose continuance was placed largely in the hands of the laity. However by the time we reach Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanian history we find that priestly function has reverted back to its pre-Zoroastrian form and no longer accords with his vision.

The Achaemenids, Parthians, Arsacids and Sasanians were, under the religious leadership of the Magi, notably polytheistic, although under the Sasanians Zoroastrianism was the state religion. Persepolis fortification documents from 500 B.C. record libations given to priests for the worship of other Iranian deities as well as Ahuramazda. Also throughout both empires, various royal Temples were built for Mithra and Anahita as well as Ahuramazda. It can be argued that the Magi were not responsible for the polytheism of their age but that it was a culturally entrenched factor that Zoroastrianism could not remove (Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989: 328). The evidence certainly suggests a peaceful accommodation with polytheism. However the efforts of proselytising cults such as those of the Goddess Anahita, of the prophet Mani[30] or the

[28] In *The Cultural And Social Institutions of Ancient Iran* Dandamaev and Lukonin provide the most comprehensive and yet pointed summary of the various theories and supporting archaeological data pertaining to the origins of the Zoroastrian priesthood in antiquity. Fully 739 works are cited in this impressive and insightful work.

[29] Dandamaev and Lukonin cite Hertel, Hüsing, König, Lehmann-Haupt and Herzfeld (Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989: 327)

[30] Phrophet of Manicheaism.

religions of Christianity and Judaism, which in Sasanian times were viewed as threats, were met with protest or outright violence[31].

Further in contradiction to Zoroaster's emphasis on the role of the laity, the Magi are, throughout antiquity, recorded as interceding between an individual and God. Herodotus notes that the Magi of Xerxes interpreted the King's dreams, gave him prophecies and accompanied the Persian army on campaigns to pray for victory (Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989: 331). They also continued sacrifices throughout their time in direct contradiction to Zoroaster's objections to the practice of sacrifice which included libations of the intoxicant, haoma juice[32]. Although there is a debate within Zoroastrian research as to the prophet's rejection of the use of haoma, a general drift away from a religion for and by an individual and towards a mediated experience can be perceived, and the interpretation of dreams and use of intoxicants could be construed as means by which the Magi were put in a position to control the religion.

It is also important to note that the Magi's power was secular as well as religious. The publication of the Persepolis tablets in the Elamite language record the Magi as the official priests of the Persian empire (Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989:331). They also outline their important role at the royal court and the riches to which they were entitled. Moving into the Sasanian period *The Letter Of Tansar*[33] (Boyce 1968), a New Persian document (presumably going back to a Middle Persian original dating to approximately the 3rd-4th centuries AD) clearly situates the clergy in the highest echelon of power—that

[31]Mani was put to death, and Zoroastrian priests are recorded as being judges in the trials of Jewish, Christian or Islamic martyrs. (Frye 1983: 314,315) quotes Agathias (II, 26) [primary source], Braun [ch. 1, n.12] 123 [secondary source] and H. Delehaye (1905: 494).

[32] Dandamaev and Lukonin (1989: 335) quote Abaev, Zaehner and Duchesne-Guillemin in noting that Zoroaster objected to the fact that sacrificial meat which had been sprinkled with intoxicating haoma juice was subsequently given to believers to eat.

[33] In her translation of the letter Boyce makes it clear although it has many portions which are now considered dubia because of additions, omissions and exaggerations by various translators over centuries, the central parts can be considered authentic and provide valuable information about the Middle Persian time of Ardasir.

closest to the king[34]. Rashna Writer observes that the very nature of the Sasanian empire was forged through a close link between Church and state and that the *Dinkard*, a 9th century Zoroastrian text "categorically informs us the 'Religion is royalty and royalty is the Religion' (Dinkard, ed. Madan, 47.6)" (Writer 1994: 3). The Dinkard also describes a heavily ritualistic society which necessitated daily interaction between the priesthood and the laity, interaction which further solidified their power base. This is not to suggest that the Magi completely ignored the religion of Zoroaster. There is much evidence regarding their adherence to purity laws and they did worship Ahuramazda above all other deities. They did, however, for the majority of recorded history, usurp that part of the religion which places much of the power of worship onto the laity, and therefore exceeded their core role of performing rituals.

In the 7th century, however, the Sasanian empire and all those who were at its apex fell from power. First the Arab invasion of Iran and persecution of Zoroastrianism saw the whole community shrink and wither. Later it was further weakened and fragmented as many Zoroastrians fled to India (according to tradition, in the early 10th century AD). The priesthood, however, still maintained its hegemony within the community for much of the second millennium. The destruction of Sasanian Kingship perhaps left a void of authority that the priestly class partly filled. The observations of two 17th century English travellers (Lord and Terry) suggest that at least Parsi society in India was still as stratified as society had been had been in late Sasanian times with the priesthood still at the top. Lord and Terry, during separate voyages years apart, noted that Parsis were divided into "three sorts of men...the laymen or 'Behedin', the 'common Churchman', their 'Daroo' or 'Herbood' and the 'Distoore or High Priest'." Terry and Lord also noted that as well as maintaining strict ritual purity and piety, a priest was to "ensure that no marriages were made without his approval". Regarding the High Priest they

[34] More information on the ancient hierarchy of the priesthood is discussed in Chapter 5.

wrote that he "was given the power to tell any man, no matter how great, of his sin, and all had to obey him." (Firby 1988: 102-108)

In spite of their position at the head of the Zoroastrian community, the unravelling of the priesthood's power base was already in motion. The first stage was completed when Persia ceased to be a Zoroastrian empire. The priesthood had married their fortunes to the Kingship of that empire, and as that Kingship fell, so did the source of their secular authority. The second stage lay in the gradual disappearance of cultural knowledge as evidenced by the changing of customs. Over time the customs between Iranis and Parsis began to differ as each group reflected the influences of their respective surrounding cultures. Also, many books of knowledge were not preserved and, perhaps most damaging of all, Zoroastrians largely did not undertake to record and preserve their own history. Boyce notes that detailed historical information for much of the second millennium AD "is a matter of deduction" as "Muslim historians ignore the Zoroastrians, their numbers having been reduced to a point where they no longer had any political or social importance; and their own records are largely blank..." (Boyce1987: 165)

There are some notable exceptions. The work of a 12th century Parsi priest in Sanjan (India), Neryosang Dhaval, was taken up with the translating of Zoroastrian religious texts from Middle Persian to Sanskrit. Another important source of early Parsi history is the 16th century *Qissa-i-Sanjan*, a narrative poem thought to have been assimilated from oral traditions by another Parsi priest, Bahman. However, the few examples that exist really serve to emphasise the paucity of overall record keeping.

Ultimately, with this fragmentation of population and loss of written documents came confusion as to the authenticity of certain practices. There are,

for example, three Zoroastrian calendars currently in use[35]. Also, the issue of conversion revealed differences between Iranian and Indian Zoroastrians. Evidence reveals that the Parsis of the 15th century had come to think of their religion as a hereditary matter whereas when they consulted Iranians on this point they were told "if servant boys and girls have faith in the Good Religion, then it is proper that they should tie the kusti, and when they become instructed, attentive to religion and steadfast, the barashnom[36] should be administered to them" (Dhabar 1932: 276).

A community's knowledge of its own history and customs is fundamental to its sense of identity. For a community such as Zoroastrians who have suffered persecution and exile, a great deal of lost knowledge can be attributed to their enemies who undertook the rewriting of their history. However, each community also assumes a degree of responsibility for preserving its own heritage. It is important, therefore, to understand that after the fall of the empire, a great deal of the priesthood's power came, not simply from hereditary precedent and ritual purity, but also from their knowledge of Zoroastrian lore and history. When, eventually, that knowledge was revealed as defective, their communal supremacy was also breached. If one were to accept that that knowledge is power, and that knowledge is a construct, one could also expect that a loss of knowledge would provoke a new construction process and a commensurate shift of power. This came to the forefront of discussions during the 19th and 20th centuries, when Zoroastrians came into close contact with Western scientific thought and debate.

[35] These are the Shahanshahi, Kadmi and Fasli calendars. Kotwal/Boyd, Boyce, Hinnells and many authors discuss this issue in detail. Kotwal/Boyd 1982 provides a concise summary.

3.2 19th – 20th Century Shifts In Power

The rippling social consequences of globalised Western industrialisation had created newly rich mercantile classes and saw financial power and leadership positions shift onto them and away from the priesthood. This, along with the effects of science based Western education was also responsible for an intellectual departure from automatic adherence to explicit religious authority. In the light of Western thought, Zoroastrian communities (particularly in India) began to question the priesthood's grasp on the religion and its history.

On his trip Yazd, Iran in 1903, the scholar A.V. Williams Jackson noted that "the Acting High Priest and also the more scholarly members of the assembly were unaware that a great part of the Younger Avesta is composed in metre. The idea of verse and verse-structure appeared wholly new to them...In all such matters it is manifest that ages of persecution and of neglect of their sacred lore have not been without a detrimental influence upon their technical knowledge" (Jackson 1906: 365).

The writings of John Wilson, a 19th century Scottish missionary in Bombay deal with his efforts to bring Parsis into the Christian fold. Wilson attacked many Zoroastrian concepts. Priests who were called upon by the community to defend their faith were, however, out of their element and lacked the skills for the task. The missionary had studied translations of the Avesta and the Bundahishn[37], works which at that time were beyond the ken of all the Zoroastrian laity and most of the priesthood, who were versed in rituals and prayers but were not trained to articulate the concepts they contained. Some staunchly adopted an orthodox position claiming the religion was above any attack, while the attempts of others simply revealed their own lack of Zoroastrian scholarship. (Boyce 1987: 197)

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[36] A bathing ritual of purification lasting nine days.
[37] A Middle Persian work on cosmogony.

This led to a demand for educated priests and over the century schools based on Western style academia were founded. Nonetheless any sacrosanct authority the priests might have previously enjoyed had been dealt a fatal blow. Their word would never again go unquestioned. The opening words of J.J. Modi, editor of an Indian publication on Iranian subjects in 1914 reveal the degree to which Zoroastrians felt inclined to question their priests and also the deference paid to Western academics who were now seen as authoritative scholars of the religion.

> A few years, (sic) there was a controversy raging in Bombay, as to whether the Parsee priests of India of about four centuries ago were well-instructed or ignorant in the matter of the knowledge of their sacred scriptures...At the time of that controversy, Mr Muncherjee Pallonji Kutar, B.A. LL.B., of Bombay had addressed letters to some of the European *savants*, asking their views on some of the subjects of the controversy.... (Modi 1914: editor's note)

A final contentious issue that the 19th and 20th century Zoroastrians faced was the overwhelming burden of ritual. After the Arab invasion and diaspora to India the communities still maintained their pre-conquest structures but on a reduced scale. However by the 19th century and its economic expansion, these structures collided with the needs of commerce, which meant, essentially, the need for Zoroastrians to do business with people of other faiths. Of course Zoroastrians had interacted with other communities for centuries following the 6th century Arab conquest of Persia, but the scale of expansion meant contact on an unprecedented level (Boyce 1987: 199). The problem was that if all the purity laws of the Vendidad or other conventions were followed strictly, Zoroastrians would effectively be denied contact with non-Zoroastrians. For minority communities living within larger non-Zoroastrian populations this would have meant permanent and extreme ghettoisation. Decades after the Wilson attacks, a reform movement of Parsis arose and at the core of their beliefs was a tremendous reduction of all rituals and re-prioritisation of the purity laws. Clearly the community did not abandon rituals and purity laws

altogether, but ultimately, the effect of this intellectual shift was probably more responsible for reversing the fortunes of the priesthood than any other factor.

The laity, who had, for the whole of their history, been under the rule of priests, were given the social, intellectual, and financial means to reverse that rule. Their access to Western education gave them a framework by which to question authority. The new wealth from industry gave families the power to build their own personal Temples and this triggered an important shift in the priesthood's economic position. For centuries, possibly reaching back to pre-historic Indo-Iranian times, there existed a tradition of payments to priests in exchange for the performance of rituals. However, given the greater role in people's lives that religion would have played in ancient times (as compared to the last two hundred years) these payments would have effectively been an obligatory stream of revenue from the laity to the priesthood, which could then assume not only spiritual, but also economic and social pre-eminence within the community. This was especially the case in the highly stratified Sasanian empire, where state and church were viewed as inseparable. However, by the time of the industrial revolution in the mid 18th century, the laity came into intellectual independence and assumed control over the temples and purse strings of trustees. The nature of payments to priests ceased to be obligatory and became a form of patronage and, effectively, the laity came to control the fortunes of priests.

As the priesthood lacked any structure for the continuance of its socio-political power such as the Catholic Church, it was unable to prevent it's loss of authority over the laity. Thus denied its former unquestioned position at the head of communities, the priesthood's sphere of influence or even of activity eventually became confined to the technicalities of performing rituals.

In one sense this was a sad reduction of circumstances for a once thriving class of the community. Certainly the numbers of boys willing to enter the

priesthood has declined broadly in proportion with the reduced economic prospects the vocation brings. A further consequence has been that the more academically able students are disinclined to pursue the priesthood. However, in another sense, while the reduction of economic circumstances can never be seen as advantageous to priests, the limiting of the priestly sphere of activity to ritual prayer can be seen as more in keeping with the ethos of the foundations of the religion.

The status of a priest and the perception of his function gives rise to a number of questions regarding prayer performance. Does the community's perception of his role affect the way in which he prays in front of them? What effect does a priest's economic status have upon his prayer performance? Do a priest's work conditions psychologically affect his performance of prayers? Did the lack of record keeping mean that methods of prayer performance were also lost over time?

The next chapters will undertake to explore and address the above questions.

Chapter 4 The Role of The Laity During Public Ritual

Although the focus of this study is the Zoroastrian priest, a brief exposé of the behaviour of the laity during public rituals is also needed. This will serve to shed light on the general atmosphere within which prayers are performed, and its effect on the priest. Public rituals are those for which it is customary for the community or families to gather together for a specific purpose such as feasts of obligation, initiation into the religion, funerals, marriages etc.

It must be remembered that the presence of laity purely as an audience (i.e. not being part of the ceremony such as a bridal couple etc) is not required at any ritual, Inner or Outer. The purpose of Zoroastrian prayer and ritual is to strengthen the presence of God's spiritual creation within the physical world. The following observations must be seen in this context.

Presently there is no body of writing or a particular work devoted to this subject. Beyond passing observations through the ages by scholars who have come in contact with Zoroastrians, there are no detailed historical descriptions of the behaviour of the congregation during ritual ceremonies. For this study, therefore, I have drawn upon my own experiences of the community in North America, England, India, Iran, as well as data from contemporary interviews conducted during the course of research[38].

Put simply, the laity will sit and listen to prayers during public rituals, and in some communities they will rise together at the end of a ceremony to pray an Ashem Vohu and/or a Yatha Ahu Vairyo[39]. Although they pray together, each

[38] The above and following community impressions are taken from conversations with (among many others) Mr H Dhalla, Mr B Antia, Mr R Dalal, Mrs T Gazdar, Ms D Gilder, Mrs A Daryush Nejad, Mr D Salamati, Mr M.R. Darvishi, Mr B Jamshedian, Mr D Salamatipur, Mr F Kateli, Mr S Sharokh all of India, Iran, London and North America. The impressions are also informed by my own experiences.

[39] Yatha Ahu Vairyo is the Ahunawar prayer. "Yatha Ahu Vairyo" is commonly used by Parsis to refer to the prayer itself which is thought to have been composed by Zoroaster, and, along with the Ashem Vohu is one of the first prayers learned by all Zoroastrians. The two short prayers in addition to being

person follows his or her own pitch sequence and tessitura. Also, at the end of private jashans[40] held in people's homes, each person will kneel before the fire urn, place a pinch of sandal wood into the flames and, saying a short prayer, bow their heads to the floor.

The fact that the role of the laity is so easily summed up is possibly responsible for the fact that this topic has not been the subject of much discussion. There is not much to discuss in terms of orchestrated rules or conventions of congregational prayer as, perhaps in Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. Unlike a gathering in a Mosque, an entire roomful of people do not simultaneously prostrate themselves at certain points of a prayer. Nor, unlike Yemenite Judaism is there responsorial chanting between the priest and congregation. Also, unlike Christianity there is no repertory of hymns from which the laity all sing together at specific intervals of a service.

There are exceptions, but all are either marginal or no longer practiced. For instance, one ritual which has fallen by the way side is the Hamâzor, "a particular way in which, at the end of several ceremonies, one person passes his hands into the hands of another person". As it progresses each person wishes righteousness onto the next recipient, from the senior most priest to his junior and so on throughout the audience (Modi 1922: 51). Even as Modi wrote his book in 1922 he commented that the custom was passing out of practice in Mumbai but could be found in rural Gujarat.

There are also other exceptions, mostly found in Iran[41]. One is a gesture I noted in Taft, a village in Yazd (Iran) during the seasonal gahambar[42] prayers in July

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performed on their own are also commonly found at the beginnings and endings of many other larger prayers.

[40] This word has two meanings. The first denotes a holy day where the name of the day coincides with the name of the month. The second as a ceremony of thanksgiving or memorial for an event or person.

[41] In A Persian Stronghold Of Zoroastrianism (1977: 179) Boyce describes a Hiromba ceremony (recitation of the names of the dead) in Sharifabad during her visit 1963-64 in which the congregation exclaim the names of the dead in a responsorial fashion with the priest.

[42] Annual feasts of obligation (Boyce 1979: 33).

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of 1999. I observed that at certain points men who were gathered round the priest would exclaim "Āfarināmé" (translated as 'praise of the name') and hold up the forefingers of their right hands. They would shortly repeat this again and then also hold the middle fingers up forming a backwards "peace" symbol. I was informed that this was a devotional gesture affirming God and the faith of the individual to him. I did not, however, find this to be a widespread custom. The congregations in neighbouring Zainabad and Sharifabad may also follow this practice but I did not see it at any point during their gahambar prayers. It was also found in Tehran decades ago but I did not witness it during my time there[43]. I have never seen or heard of it being done anywhere else in the world. When asked about the origins of this gesture I was informed vaguely that "we've always done this"[44]. Mary Boyce also observed this congregational response during her visit to Sharifabad (neighbouring town to Taft) in 1963-64. The explanation she was given was that "one finger meant 'God is one' and two fingers meant 'He is not two'". Boyce theorised that this was an affirmation of Zoroastrian monotheism which might have developed as a reaction to Moslem polemicists who misinterpreted Zoroastrianism as a religion acknowledging "two gods rather than one beneficent and one malignant power" (Boyce 1977:43).

A final exception was described to me by Mobed Rustam Bhedwar who noted that in his childhood in India, congregations would participate in praying whole passages of long prayers such as Atash Niyayesh and not merely short Ashem Vohus[45].

In comparison with other religions, then, the congregation is essentially passive: its participation in the ritual is limited to watching and listening. This becomes quite significant when considering what it is that they see and hear.

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[43] In an interview Mr Shahrokh Shahrokh, born in Iran, presently in London, informed me that this practice was common in his youth (1920s) in Tehran.
[44] Taken from a conversation with my host in Taft, Daryush Salamati August 1999.
[45] Taken from interviews with Mobed Bhedwar 1998.

The only visual material to contemplate is the officiating priest as he performs the prayer[46] sitting in front of the fire (and its accoutrements). The only aural materials are the sounds of mostly incomprehensible words. Neither the priests nor the laity understand Avestan, and Persians only understand those parts in Pazand. Finally, if two or more priests are performing the prayers and they are not synchronised, which is often the case, the resulting phase-shifting makes the text utterly impenetrable. Mobed Rustam K. Bhedwar (from India currently residing in London) was asked about this during an interview[47].

RM What about when two priests are praying together? What happens to the words and pronunciations?

RKB Yah that's where the problems come in. When there is more than one priest praying it's very difficult to keep together. We should pray together especially the Atash Niyayesh but some priests have got the habit of praying the way they want so afterwards you can't correct them when you've already started. You have to concentrate on your prayers.

Furthermore, this is not a recent phenomenon. Boyce observed in a ritual more than thirty years ago in Sharifabad that "The three priests... did not recite in unison, so that unless one concentrated on one voice it was impossible to follow the words..." (Boyce 1977: 197)

It is natural, given the above, to wonder what exactly is supposed to hold the attention of the laity during a ritual lasting one to two hours (sometimes more)? The only answer arising from interviews is that nothing is really done to engage or affect them. Nonetheless some people attested that simply being present during ceremonial prayers fulfilled a sense of communal duty. This is particularly so when the solemnity of the occasion usually commands unwavering attention. To a lesser degree, navjote and marriage[48] ceremonies are also closely followed. I would venture that this is often because the added

[46] He, or his assistant will periodically tend the fire and perform actions such as the plucking of flower petals, touching a pestle to the fire urn etc.
[47] Interview conducted in English.
[48] Marriage ceremonies usually have various levels of involvement from the two marriage families and groups of friends. These however, differ widely between Iranian and Parsi tradition and often between communities in different towns. They should be seen as more representative of local customs than a universal Zoroastrian tradition.

participation of the individuals concerned brings a dimension of immediate relevance to some members of the audience. I can also attest that there is a tangible sense of gratitude that is expressed by the families to the priests for providing prayers, especially during difficult times of mourning which require priestly services at short notice and some prayers that need to be performed at unusual hours.

Nonetheless, this level of engagement is not the norm. Interviews and my personal observations of public rituals performed over the years in different countries reveal that Zoroastrian congregations are more likely to be largely apathetic, with small pockets of enthusiasts. A typical gathering in a hall can broadly be divided into the following groups. There are a usually few who are keenly focussed on the proceedings. This handful (often comprised of an older generation) will sit up front close to the priest and will attentively follow the prayers. Many will also read from their own prayer books. Then behind them are people who are present out of a sense of duty. They are paying respectful, if not absorbed attention. These people are spread throughout the hall in degrees of diminishing interest until one reaches that constituency which has been forced to come and is frankly bored. They disregard the ceremony entirely and chat about social issues. Sprinkled throughout the gathering are children of varying ages and levels of restlessness. Indeed, a common contemporary sight in many countries is that of children running and playing during the ceremony[49]. This can be either in the hall itself or loudly nearby[50]. Finally, apart from those actually present is a significant contingent which does not come for the ceremony at all but will arrive in time for the banquet dinner that follows. Ultimately the overall impression is that the priest is praying to very few people who are actually listening, as can be heard on Track 1 of the CD, a

[49] Again, this is not the case during funeral rites.

[50] The sight of children playing openly during ceremonies is one that I have witnessed in every country. However it must be noted that this does not sit well with many members of the community. Two gentlemen interviewed, one from Iran and the other from Mumbai, both noted that they had only observed this arising in the last 20-30 years. As a personal observation I can recall that growing up in

recording made at a wedding in Tehran in 1999. The children who can be heard running about and the adults conversing were all seated not far from the wedding couple and priest. Again, it must be emphasised that that Zoroastrian prayer ritual does not require an audience and is there purely to strengthen the presence of God's spiritual creation within the physical world.

Nonetheless, this leaves the audience in a peculiar position, specifically because most Zoroastrians are led to understand from a young age that it is obligatory for them to attend rituals. The probability that children are made to attend public prayers out of a sense of social obligation to the community is never actually discussed. As far as most Zoroastrians are concerned, they are simply supposed to attend public rituals. However, once there, there is nothing for them to do and ultimately, their presence serves no religious purpose. The friction caused by this contradiction very likely plays a part in the overall apathy that many exhibit when hearing prayers and watching ritual.

There is, however, a paradox contained in the audience's disengagement. Their display of apathy could be thought to signify that they have no feelings or ideas about the ceremonies they attend with listless obligation. In fact many people questioned actually have strong feelings about public prayer performance and do have ideas about what they like and dislike. They simply lack any forum for expressing them, as was made apparent during the process of locating and contacting priests. I spoke with a number of people to ask for referrals and I expected that during the course of research I would naturally come into contact with a variety of priests, but I especially asked to be put in touch with those who stood out for their prayer performance. I was often told "well, so and so prays very nicely". When asked to elaborate they would explain that "There is something special about the way he prays. He doesn't just rattle things off" or "He has a singing way of praying". Two points became apparent. First that far

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Canada, my parents would never have tolerated such behaviour from myself or my sister. It is not a universal Zoroastrian trait, but rather changes from family to family.

from being indifferent, many people had preferences for certain kinds of prayer performances. Furthermore, this distinction was based on the musicality of the delivery. One particularly strong statement of appreciation for the musicality of a priest's delivery is found in Kreyenbroek 2001:156. Ms Kursheed Khurody, a musician, spoke of her experiences of listening to rituals as a child. "So gradually that (the chanting) grew on me much as a concerto or a symphony would grow on me, and drove me to want to be able to sing the prayers in the same way".

Among my own interviews it emerged that even priests who had only the slightest degree of pitch variation, ornamentation and emphasis were valued above those who had a rapid monotone delivery. Ultimately tremendous value was attached to even the smallest amounts of expression. The significance is that people may appear to be disengaged at a public ceremony, but their *ennui* is directed at the specific performance itself, not at the idea of the ritual. Their level of engagement is, therefore, entirely dependent on the priest.

Two other audience types are also worthy of note. First, there are those who are genuinely uninterested in prayer performance. Even when pressed they express no opinion other than that they really do not care what they hear as long as it's over quickly. Then there is that segment of the community which is dedicated to all Zoroastrian occasions in a flag-waving manner. They tend to be absolutist in their outlook and express the opinion that whatever way the prayers are performed is the way in which they ought to be performed. Consequently they give all priests blanket approval regardless of their delivery. Some even take offence at the notion that one priest may be appreciated more than another for his manner of praying. When I broached this issue with them it was considered judgmental and it was felt that in some way the questions were criticising the religion as a whole. They were especially offended when asked if they thought it was unusual that Zoroastrianism did not have an obvious tradition of music in worship like many other religions. Some found it intolerable that it could be

suggested that their religion lacked something others had, and I was openly told "Well of course we have a rich tradition of music and prayer!", but they could never then quite tell me where it was.

The main significance of all three above audience types is that so long as they are present and quiet during public ceremony, they mostly appear the same to the priests. This is especially reinforced by the fact that priests are almost always thanked for simply doing the ceremony. They may at most be told "That was very nice." But there is no feedback to indicate that anyone was really listening. Nobody admitted to ever telling a priest that he should pray slower or differently or that they really appreciated a certain passage. In short, nobody revealed that they felt they could influence the style of a priest's performance. Mostly they felt that all they could do for a public ceremony was to show up. This became significant when it was revealed that many priests were indeed affected by what they perceived as the audience's reaction to their prayers.

4.1 Impact Of Audience Upon Performer

The point has already been made that there is not much ritual display to engage the audience, but what effect might a disengaged audience have on a priest's performance? When asked about this, all the priests interviewed said that during their prayers they were more wrapped up in their performances and were not really focussed on the audience. However, as shown below in an interview with Mobed Rustam K. Bhedwar of London, they all also subsequently revealed that they were somewhat aware of a congregation's general apathy or appreciation.

RM When you're praying during a public ceremony what do you focus on?

RKB We just, at least myself I just carry on doing my own prayers.

RM Are you aware of the people listening to you?

RKB I don't sometimes even know who is in the congregation. My mind doesn't go there at all, you know, you just concentrate only on your prayers.

RM Have you ever been given a really good reaction or bad reaction to a prayer ceremony?

RKB Well, the good reactions yes, sometimes when you hear them talking that it was so peaceful, that the whole atmosphere was so nice. That sort of thing you can even hear after death prayers. Then you know that there is a good reaction. But about the bad reaction? Perhaps, when you don't hear anything like that. Or when you feel yourself that you did not pray, you know, with a full heart or with a full faith. Or it didn't come out well. You know it yourself that your prayer didn't go well.

Some priests acknowledged that the audience does have an impact on their performance. Mobed Marazban Firozshah Gonda of Lonavalla (in Gujarat, India) has an exceptionally melodic and expressive, almost florid singing way of praying. His style has come to the notice of his congregation and trustees, and he was brought to my attention because his reputation had spread to Bombay from his small hill-town station. He commented on the mixed reactions he has received.

RM What was the reaction to your praying when you first arrived here?

MFG Bit by bit I became a little known. A jashan here and there and people began to speak. It depends on people how they take it. Some may like it some may not, to be quite honest. Some person will come he will like very much. Another lady or gent will come and will say "What is this? We don't like this. You just pray the ordinary way." Here it's a public place. You have to accept as people want to hear you do it. In fact my trustee announced that "My present Panthaki he doesn't pray he sings." He told this in front of the public. Well my way is my way. I feel that it is acceptable by ninety out of hundred.

My hosts in Iran, the Daryush-Nejad family, reported that Mobed Cyroos in Tehran was able to command high fees for performing ceremonies because he had a reputation for musical performances. Speaking as both audience and performers, both Mobed Andhyarujina in Mumbai and Mobed Nicknām in Tehran, said that they themselves did not like the sound of the prayers that were simply rattled off, and their own, very musical performances reflect this bias. On the whole, however, priests who receive appreciation for the aesthetic quality of their prayers are in the extreme minority.

Ervad Sooroosh in Sharifabad said that he simply began his prayers and, falling into a certain speed, finished them without any consideration for what the audience heard. He also acknowledged that the senior Mobed (Goshtasp Belivani) was well liked for his style of praying. Other priests in India and Iran commented that they "didn't pray well" and so rushed through things because they felt that people just wanted to get to the banquet following the prayers[51]. Mobed Bhedwar also noted the increasing speed of performances over the years.

RM Do you think prayers are being performed faster now than they used to be or slower than they used to be?

RKB It's faster now, but only thing, nowadays we don't have that many priests who can perform properly. It's everything depends on the individual priest really. Whether today or that time it makes no difference. I heard that now some of the priests in Bombay can finish the Geh Sarna (funeral prayer) in 25 minutes while we used to take 45 minutes. Here (in London) we still take about 45 minutes[52]. Because we pray very slowly obviously because we don't have that many (to do). Like they (in Bombay) have to perform sometimes two or three Geh Sarnas per day while we just do sometimes one just once in a while.

Kersey Karanjia, head of the Cama Athornan in Bombay, attested that some priests in his acquaintance were also aware a lack of audience interest and so simply ran through prayers as quickly as possible. He and Ramiyar Karanjia, head of the Madressa, also note that some Bombay priests get through prayers quickly to move from job to job during a busy period. The speed, text length and performance of the prayers is, for them, literally a function of time and economics[53].

In trying to establish cause and effect between performance and reaction it can seem that a monotone priest and an uninterested audience are in a self-perpetuating loop. It is logical to wonder which came first. Some such as Dastur Hormazdiar Mirza (born 1907) maintain that priests have more or less

[51]These men refused to be recorded for this research and asked that their names be withheld.
[52] See bottom page 255.
[53] The effects of economic pressures will be more fully discussed in the next section exploring the structure of the priesthood.

"always prayed the way they do now" because the oral tradition has preserved their practices. This would therefore indicate that if priests are praying as they always have, then it is the audiences who have changed and are no longer attracted to what they experience in public ritual. However, other opinions from men who at the time of this study are in their forties to fifties contradict this conclusion. Mobeds Rohinton Peer, Andhyarujina, Mali and others including Hormazdiar Mirza's son Peshotan insist that their forefathers prayed in a much more musical way than they and their contemporaries do. Even allowing for a South Asian and Near/Middle Eastern tendency to venerate ancestors above all, this line of thought suggests that it is the priests who have changed and that that is why audiences have tuned out.

The most compelling answer to this chicken-or-egg conundrum, is that neither came first. The two phenomena seemed to have developed co-dependently. Older Zoroastrians observe that this "tuning out" during public rituals has increased steadily over the last half century[54]. This is the same period over which the laity has seen its status increase and the priesthood has deteriorated on many levels, including the calibre of its candidates. This suggests, therefore, that there is a parallel causal connection between steadily disengaging audiences, the deterioration of the priesthood, and, lacklustre prayer performance.

The issues raised here all ultimately lead to the question of motivation which is a key point of this study. This research has sought to determine why a Zoroastrian priest prays in one way or another especially given that they do not all pray in the same way. For the scope of this section which has focussed on the congregation, it suffices to note that the reaction of a priest's audience does impact on his motivation. While it does not always provide the sole motivation for that performance, certain cases (Mobed Gonda in Lonavalla or Ervad

[54] From interviews with the late Dastur R Shahzadi in Iran (July 1999) and Dastur K.F. Dastur in India (Feb 2000) Both men were in their nineties at the time of being interviewed.

Sooroosh in Sharifabad) reveal that it can promote or suppress creativity. It follows naturally that a priest who knows that he is largely being ignored or even politely tolerated is not encouraged to deliver an impassioned performance. It also follows that one who knows he is being attentively listened to and appreciated will attempt to engage his listeners even further.

This chapter has also served to reinforce a key feature of sound in Zoroastrian prayer performance which is that it is almost never discussed. It can be compared to a large yet invisible object. It is absent from research[55]. It is not clearly addressed in training. In fact it has been demonstrated throughout that in every aspect of a priest's life the aesthetics of his performance are virtually never examined. It has also revealed the paradox contained in the performer/audience relationship which is that for the most part, the congregation do not think they can or should influence the performance of a priest and give very little feedback and yet most priests are somehow aware of a community's reactions and this informs their delivery.

[55] It is important to mention *A Persian Offering, The Yasna: A Zoroastrian High Liturgy* by Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal and James W. Boyd. This, and other collaborations between Kotwal and Boyd are the only works to even briefly address sound production in Zoroastrian prayer performance and even here the observation is limited to simply noting that "the sound of the words takes precedence over their meaning" (Kotwal, Boyd 1991: 24). No attempt is made to examine Zoroastrian prayer sound as a musical phenomenon.

Chapter 5.The Structure Of The Priesthood

This chapter will situate the contemporary institutional and economic contexts within which Zoroastrian priests operate. The goal will be to address the impact of the structure of the priesthood and of a priest's working life upon his prayer performance. Although much of the information in this chapter relating to the current state of the priesthood was gleaned from personal interviews conducted in the course of research, some of the findings are also reflected in pages 52 and 53 of Philip G. Kreyenbroek's 2001 collaboration with Shehnaz N. Munshi, *Living Zoroastrianism.*

A preliminary issue of Zoroastrian priesthood is eligibility and this depends on gender (the priesthood is exclusively male) and heredity. The community is divided into two sets of families—Behdin, who are laity and may not become priests and Osti, who are priestly. However, not all those who are born into Osti families now take up the profession. Also, consequent to the declining numbers of priests in the 20th century, there have been instances of Behdin boys being initiated into the priesthood. This is, nonetheless, exceptional.

Of those who become priests there are again three broad classifications[56]. Each designates a certain level of training and also can imply a priest's professional standing. In descending order of stature these are:

- Dastur ; High Priest of a Temple
- Mobed
- Ervad

There is one further designation within the priesthood that applies to prayer performance. When a ritual involves multiple priests, one is designated as the lead priest, or Zōt. This man will perform the majority of the text with other

[56] There is a longer list of eight categories of priests in Uzayarin Gāh (a Younger Avesan prayer) but these positions are no longer common today and this list (Appendix B) will further be discussed in the final chapter of this study.

priests joining him in prayer at various points. Also, the other priest(s) may have the responsibility of tending to the sacred fire (making sure it does not go out) while the Zōt concentrates exclusively on the text. Most rituals do not require more than one priest who is able to pray and tend to the fire at the same time, however, for the sake of convenience, and/or as a sign of prestige, many families request that two priests perform rituals for them (weddings, funerals, initiations etc). The Zōt is often the priest with the most experience or seniority. However, where two or more priests of equal experience are present, they simply appoint the Zōt amongst themselves, and often this can rotate from ceremony to ceremony with different priests taking turns. There are no special duties relative to sound production that are assigned to the Zōt.

An Ervad has received training in the outer rituals[57] of the liturgy and has been initiated with a Navar ceremony. A Mobed has been trained in all rituals and has received further initiation in the form of the Maratab ritual. A Dastur is a Mobed who has been made a High Priest and is the head of a particular Temple. This office is either hereditary or is bestowed by the trustees of the Temple. The official duties of a Dastur, in addition to prayer performance, are presently limited to supervising the correct performance of rituals in his community. Some undertake scholarly and community work as well, but this depends on their own initiative.

Professionally an Ervad will perform rituals on a part-time basis while pursuing another full time career. According to Mobed Rustam Shahzadi of Iran, Mobed Ramiyar Karanjia (Head of The Madressa, Bombay), and Mobed Kersey Karanjia (Head of The Cama Athornan, Bombay), the vast majority of Zoroastrian priests are Ervads. A Mobed may or may not pursue the priesthood full time. He may practice part time until retirement from another career and

[57] There are inner and outer rituals which are distinguished by the degree of the ritual purity of the performer and the premises. Inner rituals require the greatest purity from both.

then carry out priestly duties more regularly. To be a Dastur is always a full time occupation.

5.1 Ancient Priestly Hierarchies

It was previously noted that the priesthood no longer has power over the community and here it must be further emphasised that there is also no real chain of command within the priesthood itself. This was not always the case. The mid to late Sasanian priesthood was stratified into a hierarchy with defined responsibilities, both religious and secular. The information regarding the middle Sasanian period comes from the writings of Kirdir, the most influential priest who maintained his post during the passage of seven Sasanian kings, as well as from Al Tabari (839-923 AD), and the Syriac Christian Acts of Martrys. Late Sasanian data is available from *The Sasanian Collection of Laws* as well as seals, bullae and the legends on them (Wieshöfer 1996: 176).

Kirdir's own inscriptions from the late 3rd century AD state that Bahram II "appointed him as 'mobad and dādvar (judge) of the whole empire' and as 'director and authority over the fire of Anahid-Ardakshir and Anahid the lady (in) Stakhr'." Other ranks which are distinguishable are: Herbed, a religious official of low or medium rank with no precise tasks; Mobad, guardian of a less important fire temple; and Mogmard, caretaker of more significant provincial fires. There is also mention from the Syriac Martyrs of "a 'head of the mobads' (*rēs mauḥpātē*) a 'great mobad' (*mauḥpātā rabbā*), mobad of a province, and from Tabari, the *hērbedān hērbēd*, 'supreme priest' (Wieshöfer 1996: 176).

The priesthood was also integral to the administration of the empire in late Sasanian period (6th –7th century). Here we find district, provincial and 'head' positions with responsibilities including being judges (dādvarān) dispensing justice in civil cases; interrogation and conviction of religious prisoners

(Christians); advisors to royalty (a *handarzbed* such as the priest Yazbad according to an inscription from King Shapur); a judge who was the protector of the poor (dryōšān gādaggōv ud dādvar); an *āyēnbed*, whose duties included the financial sphere of looking after gifts from the King and preserving lists of customs and ceremonies as well as the protocol function of supervising ceremonies. Standing above them all at the top of the Zoroastrian hierarchy was the mōbadan mōbad whose office was subordinate only to the King.

The influence of this 'top' priest seems to have been considerable. By his own inscriptions, Kirdir states that "thanks to his efforts under King Bahram II (276-293), Zoroastrianism was promoted in the empire and other religious communities were persecuted" (Wieshöfer 1996: 199). This is notable not only to underline the influence of the priesthood during Sasanian times, but also for the departure it marks from the religious tolerance for which the empire under Achaemenian Kings is still famed.

5.2 Priestly Power In The Present Day

All this stratification and power disappeared following the fall of the last Zoroastrian empire. Today authority is more accorded in the form of respect given to elder priests and to those with a great deal of experience and/or scholarly accomplishment.

This authority/respect is normally limited to technical matters of ritual. Also, as there is no structured hierarchy as in the Catholic Church, matters of religious disagreements cannot be settled with an official binding decree from a single highest office. Very often they are not settled at all and different factions of a dispute are simply left agreeing to disagree. Consequently various groups of Zoroastrians may follow their own will to the extent that their resources allow. This does not involve the sort of historically violent cleavages found between

Catholics and Protestants or Shia and Sunni. It does however cover a variety of issues ranging from the three different holy calendars[58] currently in use, to the fact that some priests will perform interfaith marriage ceremonies and others will not.

What this underscores is that even within the priesthood no individual can decide the fate of a community. He may be, at most, a respected vessel of ritual knowledge. When asked about this Dastur K.F. Dastur, one of the High Priests of the Iranshah Temple in Udvada, commented on his own position vis-à-vis the conservative nature of his community and openly stated "No, I am not that conservative, but I have to live among these people and they are, so what else can I do?"[59]

Consequently a priest may choose to object to a practice or may insist on continuing one that is being abandoned, but he lacks any mechanism through which he can enforce his will. He may also simply be contradicted by another priest and will effectively be powerless to stop him. In 1975 forty Moslems in Iran desired to convert to Zoroastrianism and applied for help to the community in Tehran. They were sent literature but the conversion was not sanctioned by the leaders of the community. Although this took place during the Shah's regime, the risk of backlash from a majority Moslem population was still considerable. Ultimately, one priest stepped forward to instruct them and perform their initiation (Amighi 1990: 230). For the Zoroastrian community in Iran to openly assist in converting Moslems today, would be to risk fatal punishments from the ruling Islamic theocracy. Conversion in North America or anywhere else in the world does not carry such risks. An Anglo-Saxon American, Joseph Peterson, converted to Zoroastrianism in 1983. Although the

[58] In recent centuries Parsis became aware that their religious calendar was 30 days later than that of Iranian Zoroastrians. In the mid 18th century the Parsis then divided into two groups. The "Shehenshahis" stayed with the Indian calendar while the "Kadmis" followed that of the Iranians. In the early 20th century yet anoither calendar was designed in strict alignment with the Gregorian calendar, thus resulting in a third division, the "Faslis" and yet another faction, the "Kadmi Faslis" have appeared recently (Kreyenbroek 2001: 47).

two priests who performed his Navjote received some criticism, the ritual went ahead with no dire repercussions.[60]

Not only can a priest be contradicted, he can also be removed from his position in a Temple. This was made explicit when a prominent member of the Parsi community, J.R.D. Tata, passed away in 1993. J.R.D. was born of mixed parentage. Nonetheless his mother, a non-Zoroastrian, participated in a Zoroastrian wedding to his father, and J.R.D. himself received his navjote. However, when he died, two main priests objected to his receiving funeral prayers. One of them was Dr Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal, and another was Dastur Peshotan Peer. Dastur Peer was, at the time, the Panthaki[61] of the Tata Agiary in Bandra, Bombay. The latter made his objections publicly known in print and as a direct result was dismissed from his post by the trustees who were effectively acting on behalf of the Tata family[62].

Clearly, the power in such instances comes from the community in the form of authority invested in the trustees of a Temple. A strong willed High priest with personal charisma may be able to hold sway over a community but ultimately they can control his livelihood. If he, too, is well connected he may be immune from the trustees. However, this simply serves to underscore the fact that any position he occupies is persuasive not authoritative, and the real power comes from outside the structure of the priesthood.

A priest's authority therefore, largely stems from a negative definition, or, more accurately, definition by elimination. Priests are more aware of what they are not able to do than they are of any enforceable powers. They generally work in an atmosphere of paradox. They are obliged to be largely compliant to the community but are also at liberty to take personal initiatives without

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[59] From an interview March 2000.
[60] From interview with K.E. Mirza May 2000.
[61] The administrative head of a Temple.

enforceable opposition. This paradox is also reflected in the priesthood's role regarding prayer performance. There is no book of rules, but there are broad practices to which many simply conform, or more accurately, that many simply absorb. There are also rare occasions of priests innovating new practices without encountering meaningful opposition. Chapter 7 will explore both, performance features which are unconsciously present in the prayers of many priests, as well as the prayers of a few men who are engaged in active innovation. There is, therefore, no one clear notion of what a priest should sound like and, most significantly, there is no overall guidance on this issue that comes from the structure of the priesthood.

5.3 Economics Of The Priesthood

Apart from grasping the somewhat loose infrastructure of the priesthood, an understanding of the way priests make a living is crucial to fully appreciating the professional context within which Zoroastrian priests operate. A full time Zoroastrian priest, has, as his only income, payment for the performance of prayers.

In India one type of Mobed is often crucial to the livelihood of a Temple and its priests. Termed a Panthaki, he fulfils an administrative position. His responsibilities include negotiating fees for each prayer and ritual performed under the Temple auspices. There are no fixed rates for prayers and they will be adjusted according to the wealth of each family (no family is ever denied prayers because of poverty). He will also expedite the technicalities of each ceremony (scheduling, materials etc). He is the first and key point of contact between the Temple and its community. Although he is a Mobed, he may not always be a practising priest.

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[62] From interviews with Dastur Peshotan Peer's son Mobed Rooyintan Peer, and Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia July 2000.

Not all Temples have Panthakis. Poorer areas have no need of them and so they tend to be found in a handful of locations in wealthy parts of Bombay and other big cities. They are worthy of note in this study because in contrast to most Zoroastrian priests who do not get paid well for their services, Panthakis reap large profits for brokering them. In Bombay there are Panthakis with good sales skills and community relations who are located in affluent areas and are able to demand hefty fees from a rich community[63].

This is, however not the case for most Zoroastrian priests. Certainly any priest in a Temple in a poor area will not receive much money from its community nor is his accommodation likely to be above very basic needs. Ervad Edul Iraji Kanga of Navsari (born 1926) recalled a time in his youth when Mobeds were paid 1 rupee per year. Others interviewed in India remarked that even in big city centres a priest negotiating his own fees will make a living considered at best lower middle class, and in some cases, poor. This is equally true of India and Iran. In 1965 the chief Mobed of Iran, Rustam Shahzadi officially complained that his pay was so low that he had to work full time as a civil servant to make a living. At the time he was not offered an increase (Amighi 1990:237). When I met him in July 1999 he was in his nineties and had long retired. He confirmed that the official payment of priests was still extremely poor. All of the other Mobeds that I interviewed in Iran also supported this view. They all also held full time jobs, including Goshtasp Belivani, the chief Mobed of Sharifabad, one of the oldest centres of Zoroastrianism in the world.

Zoroastrian priests in the West pursue other full time careers and as such their performance of prayers is viewed more as a community service than a part time job. Community services are generally voluntary and so priests in the West are given token financial appreciation, or gifts but nothing more. Nor do they

[63] From interviews with Ramiyar Karanjia and Dorab Mistry (President of Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe) April 2000.

generally ask for more. In fact a common ritual of giving payment to the priest is for them to politely refuse it until it is forced on them. It is sadly ironic that those who perhaps need money for their prayers the least live in the West where the community can afford to pay the most, while the priests in the developing world who need the money the most have the least access to it.

Not only are the rewards meagre in India and Iran but the work conditions are also difficult. Many priests get their money from private rituals which often involve arduous travel and unconventional hours and, as noted by Mobed Rustam K. Bhedwar below, the hours of travel often mean that priests have to finish prayers quickly simply to be able to make it to their next appointment or return home in a timely manner.

RM Why do you think some priests say their prayers so quickly?

RKB In Bombay it is their profession you understand so they sort of do their prayers mechanically without feeling much. But they have to do certain prayers. If there is a lot of work they try to pray fast, try to finish it very quickly, you understand. And so that's the time the priest, they are just consider that as a job. They are tired of doing that job. They are not very happy when they are praying but they have to do compulsory, like the same thing like if you are doing some work you get tired sometimes. You start looking at the clock when it is time to go home. It is that sort of way. You can't blame them really because they have got so much pressure of work.

There also are no such things as medical plans, rate of inflation raises or paid vacations. One effect of this is that a priest really only performs prayers when business presents itself[64]. Most that I encountered were gracious and quite willing to see me but could only do so outside their hours of full time employment. Many were frustrated at the responsibility they were expected to shoulder and the lack of resources provided to them. Mobed Mali in Iran and Mobed Gonda in India both admitted knowing priests who were very demoralised by the low pay and work conditions. They elaborated that when it came to prayers, these people would simply "get the job over and done with as fast as possible". Also, I have personally witnessed many ceremonies in which

[64] With the exception of Temple priests who pray at regular intervals each day.

prayers were delivered with the same uninspired speed of a courier reading a telegram.

The job of a Zoroastrian priest is difficult indeed and the realisation of this is not lost upon students and their families. The decision to become a basic level priest is one motivated by personal and often parental desires. However the decision to become a full time practising priest is usually only taken when no other options are available. Therefore while many families consider it meritorious to have a son who has received priestly training, there is no Zoroastrian community in the world in which the priesthood is seen as a practical full time career pursuit[65].

Most students will end their training upon reaching the basic Ervad level. They will become either part time or non-performing Ervads and it is the minority who go on to become full time priests. It is common knowledge that this minority is composed of those who cannot excel academically or find other gainful employment[66].

Despite the trend of recent history in which the pursuit of a religious career has become financially and professionally unenviable, it is important to note that in the latter half of the 20th century some efforts have been made (at least in India) to subsidise the priesthood and give it more financial stability[67]. Students are also encouraged to pursue academic excellence, making them scholars of the religion and not just men who have memorised a great deal of text and ritual. It may be observed that these are steps that have been taken not simply because some groups felt they were necessary but also because they were possible. Subsidies and educational opportunities are issues that fit into the contemporary framework of any community's group efforts towards self

[65] This is, of course with the exception of the handfull of priests who become Panthakis at wealthy Temples.
[66] From interviews with Dasturs Kotwal, Noshirwan, Dastur and Mobeds Tourel and R. Karanjia (March – May 2000).

preservation. These initiatives may well help to restore a degree of respectability to the priesthood, but the issue of authority is unlikely to be resolved in so straightforward a manner. The better part of two centuries has taken absolute moral authority away from priests and there are no indications that it is the will of the community to restore it to them.

In the final analysis, it can be said that for religious leaders to lose sway over a community can be seen (for any religion) as keeping in step with much of recent history. However, Zoroastrian priests must also contend with a lack of enforceable theological authority. They are forced to work with communal and professional consensus and to evolve or be replaced. Overall this cannot but fail to make priests appear leaderless not only to their communities but also to themselves. Also, their low pay and work conditions can only further demoralise them. Zoroastrian priests face depressing ambiguities and paradoxes especially in Iran and India. Their studies are considered auspicious but their station carries no authority. Their workload is immense but their resources and rewards are meagre. They are expected to uphold a tradition their community desires but does not adequately support.

5.4 Effect Of Economics Upon Performance Practice

Two questions posed earlier are now answerable. It was asked 1) what effect does a priest's economic status have upon his prayer performance? and 2) does a priest's work conditions psychologically affect his performance of prayers?

First, as testimonies verify, in India and Iran priests' low economic status is detrimental to their professional self-esteem and the impact of all this is that most working priests are more concerned with their livelihood than with the sound of their prayers. Second, the rigours of their work conditions also means

[67] Interview Ramiyar Karanjia May 2000.

that they are more focussed on simply getting to and from each ceremony than the niceties of performance. Their prayer performance is therefore affected in that it is never prioritised. Most ceremonies are largely considered successful simply for being completed. Consequently it can be asserted that the working life of a priest does not encourage him to contemplate the aesthetics of his delivery. This can, in a sense, be seen as natural given the priesthood's current state of deterioration. Any institution in decline would normally focus on the basic question of its continuation. Also, the fact that this has been an issue for the better part of the last half century has meant that a longstanding climate has been created in which survival is the dominant agenda and other considerations are not contemplated.

Ultimately it can be concluded that the ambiguity of a priest's institutional structure and the weakness of his economic position leave him unsupported and demoralised, and his work climate pressures him into finishing his job as quickly as possible. Nothing therefore in his working life is conducive to the flowering of aesthetics in performance. It is, therefore, all the more striking that some performance features are present in many priests and that a few are actively attending to an aesthetic dimension and are importing new elements.

Chapter 6 The Training of Priests

Some priests learn their profession in schools and others are taught and initiated privately. Whatever their situation, the majority of those I encountered, even those privately tutored, generally considered the formal process as "more authentic"[68]. Consequently this chapter will focus on institutional training[69].

In India the schools for priests are in Bombay. They are The Madressa in Dadar Parsi Colony and The Cama Athornan[70] in Andheri. In Iran there were no schools purely dedicated to Mobedi studies at the time of my visit, but I later discovered (only after leaving the country) that some priests like Mobed Niknām included some priestly education along with normal studies at the school attached to the Adorian Agiary in Tehran. Some of the other Mobeds in Yazd also mentioned that in their childhood (forty years ago hence before the revolution) there was a nursery school in Yazd (Dinyari school), that for some years had also been including priestly education along with their normal academic curriculum. On the whole, however, I was told that since the revolution all serious Mobedi education is done in private. There are no official training centres outside these countries.

6.1 Time Span

Before beginning any "official" religious training, all Zoroastrian children are taught some basic prayers from a very young age, mostly by their families.

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[68] According to Iranian and Indian priests the schools in India are more rigorous in monitoring and correcting students and place a great deal of emphasis on standardising pronunciation and base these standards on scholarly research.

[69] However, the Mobeds analysed further on in the study include a cross section of backgrounds.

[70] Both these institutions were established in the 20th century.

When the time comes to prepare children for their initiation into the faith which they generally receive by the age of seven, they are often sent to a priest for tutoring. The initiation is in the form of a ceremony called a Navjote[71]. For this ritual, the children are expected to have learned a Zoroastrian's daily prayers as well as the ritual tying of the kusti, a sacred cloth cord worn around the waist. The process of being taught prayers for the Navjote is broadly similar to the way a priestly student learns the entire liturgy—imitation. An adult will (starting with a basic prayer) pronounce each word and phrase and the child will follow mimicking until sentences are assembled. This will be repeated until the prayer, with correct pronunciation, is committed to memory. This is, in a nutshell, also how student priests are taught to memorise and pronounce the entire liturgy.

It is shortly after their Navjote that boys who are to be given a priestly education begin their formal religious training. In addition to normal secular schooling the process of becoming an Ervad (lowest title of priesthood) takes roughly four years and most boys accomplish this by the time they are eleven to thirteen years old. For those wishing to continue, a further five years are required before they become a Mobed. These five years are divided into two further years to receive the Maratab initiation and then two to three years to finish their other secular education and priestly apprenticeship.

6.2 Training Sequence

In schools the first step of priests' training is to learn how to read the script as well as to pronounce the languages of the liturgy—Avestan and Pazand. This is a crucial difference between their formal experience and the way a child or any member of the laity is taught prayers. The laity and children who are not intended for the priesthood do not learn the ancient scripts. Rather they learn to

[71] In Zoroastrianism both boys and girls undergo the navjote ceremony.

pronounce the prayers through reading transliterations and they are given the meanings of the words via translations into an appropriate language (English, Gujarati, Persian etc).

Having learned the scripts of Avestan and Pazand, students are then taken over the years backwards (chronologically) through the liturgy. They start with the later and easier, shorter prayers of the Khordeh Avesta, proceed to the seventy two chapters of the Yasna and finally end with all the chapters of the Visperad. This sequence is configured so that as young boys they memorise short prayers and only begin to address longer prayers and rituals as teenagers.

It is also important to note that during this process the meaning of the text is never addressed except in the broadest terms. Both children learning at home and students in schools will generally understand the purpose of the prayers but will not learn by heart the meaning of each. The reasons for this lie in the fact that the amount of text they memorise is so large that for them also to achieve linguistic fluency in Avestan is perhaps beyond the scope of the training process. Meaning will shortly be discussed in further detail.

In addition to memorising prayers, students are also taught a great deal about Zoroastrian history and the correct technicalities of rituals involving ceremonial tools, foods and flowers. Most importantly, they are given disciplined practice, examinations and apprenticeships in prayer performance.

6.3 Training Method

The focal points of the training method are memorisation and pronunciation. At no point are students ever given specific instruction on the musical aspects of performance. They are only ever taught to preserve accuracy in consonant and vowel articulation with little or no regard to intonation, stress, or phrase

melody. Once students are familiar with pronouncing Avestan and Pazand, the bulk of their time is taken up with memorising prayers. Moreover, advanced students are taught in more or less the same way as beginners. That the same method of tuition was used throughout was confirmed by the Principal of the Dadar Madressa in Bombay, Ervad Ramiyar Pervez Karanjia[72].

RM Let's move on to the teaching methods. Can you describe the teaching methods for me beginning with the beginners right through to the oldest students?

RPK It is the same method. First we ensure that they know the language in which they are reading properly. Initially the Khordeh Avesta prayers are read in Gujarati script. The Yasna prayers and the Vendidad are read in the Avestan script. So first we ensure that they have a command of the script, by command I don't mean command but that he is reading the script, then we go one to the next step of making him read from the Khordeh Avesta words at random or the Yasna words at random to see whether he is able to pick up the structure of the word. Then if he is doing that we make him read stanzas, passages paragraphs and correct it. Teachers have two methods some first say them and ask them to repeat. I prefer the method of first letting them read it and then correcting them so that we know where they are making a mistake. Then they are told to memorise each line then the second line and the third line and the paragraph as a whole and he (the student) goes to his place and memorises the stuff which may take him half and hour. And then he again comes back to the teacher and says that he has learned the lines. Then the teacher takes it up and if he is satisfied he will again give him the next few lines.

RM And this exact same method is applied at all levels? From the beginner to the absolute finish?

RPK Yes. As it keeps on advancing it gets difficult for the boys to remember the previous portion because they are supposed to remember the whole text as such . So in the initial period it is easy for them to learn shorter prayers but when it comes to longer prayers like the Yasna chapters and all where they are supposed to remember all the 20 or 25 stanzas at one go then it becomes difficult for them so we break the chapters up for them. These techniques are different for each student depending on the calibre.

6.4 Setting

The classroom setting for student priests deserves description here particularly because of its impact on sound production.

[72] Interview conducted in English.

In both the Indian schools students are broadly split into beginner, intermediate and advanced levels (The Madressa has two advanced levels). In both schools the beginner and intermediate students of different levels often share different sides of the same classroom. Each class will be naturally engaged in learning different prayers and when they simultaneously practice out loud in full voice, cacophony results. Track 2 is a recording of an actual shared class with the beginner and intermediate students at the Madressa. During the course of this recording, students in both classes are walking one by one up to their respective teachers seated at the heads of each class to have their assignments from the previous day checked. The microphone for this recording was actually only a few feet from a boy being corrected by his teacher. No doubt the teacher and boy who are standing right next to each other can hear well enough to carry out the lesson, but without a visual aid it would be nearly impossible to distinguish the sound of the single boy and teacher from the overwhelming background. The surrounding din is clearly the dominant aural factor in this situation. The setting would simply make features of pitch or melody impossible to impart even if some attempt were being made to do so.

Not all classes are quite so noisy. Track 3 is a recording of a single intermediate class at the Madressa. A student at the head of the class is receiving instruction from the teacher and the rest of the class are practising on their own. Although not nearly as tumultuous as two classes together it is still clear from the sounds of students each praying a few feet apart at their desks, which are themselves right next to the teacher and student up front, that the environment has not been set up to draw focus to the activity of any one voice or the aesthetics of sound in general.

Track 4 is a sample of a class at the Cama Athornan praying Atash Niyayesh together. Although there is no conflicting noise from a second class taking place in the same room, and although the boys are proceeding in relative unison, their voices are really only kept together as they start and stop because they are all reading from the same text. Melodically however, they moving

along unrelated paths. Some voices seem to be following a similar pattern (up and down a minor 2nd), nonetheless for the most part each voice is sounding out by itself and there is no effort from students or teachers to match or cohere the collective pitch material. The same could be said of the advanced class of boys at the Dadar Madressa on Track 5, although it may be observed that they seem to exhibit tonal cohesion at the beginnings and endings of each passage, but tremendous disparity in the middle.

The final example, Track 6, is of two senior boys at the Madressa actually performing a ritual upon a ceremonial mat and using a proper fire in an urn. What is notable here is that in the absence of any conflicting noise and with the ability to only hear each other, there seems to be greater tonal cohesion than in any of the previous group examples. While it cannot be said that the two are performing along identical melodic lines—they are, more than anything else, moving in and out of rhythmic and tonal synchronisation. It is nonetheless observable that at certain points they achieve a distinct degree of tonal similarity.

It must however, be remembered at all times that in each of the above situations the boys are not ever following tonal or musical instructions of any kind.

6.5 Issues Of Training

Some important issues are raised in the consideration of the above learning process. Firstly, it is clear that no conscious attempt is ever made to impart any tonal or rhythmic or expressive elements. Second, as demonstrated above, the setting has not been arranged with the purpose of promoting a student's contemplation of the aesthetics of prayer performance. In fact it could be said

that the setting is one that makes it almost impossible for any kind of voice training.

The third issue is comprehension. Even though the prayers have been translated into modern languages, priests learn the ancient scripts and pronunciations without relating them in any way to their meanings: the languages of the liturgy, Avestan and Pazand are not only sacred but wholly opaque. Neither the priests nor the laity can speak them conversationally and certainly none think in them. As they are recited, the meanings of the prayers do not pass cognitively through the mind. An exception to this is that Persians understand a great deal of those passages in Pazand a form of middle Persian[73]. Nonetheless the study has confirmed that if one were to stop a priest, any priest, in mid-flow and ask for a translation of the last ten words spoken, he would not be able to do it. A handful might be able to translate a few words after a moments reflection, but the vast majority would simply consult a book of translations. None would be able to do it in the way that a bilingual person could convert a sentence from one language into another. This was confirmed during an interview with Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia, the Principal of the Bombay based school for priests, The Dadar Madressa. At one point of the interview Ervad R. Karanjia stated that "Here (Atash Niyayesh) I go more by the meanings generally. The pauses are more by the meanings". I reconfirmed with Ervad Ramiyar that he was clearly stating that if I stopped him at random on any line of the text of a prayer he would be able to translate that line for me easily. However later in the interview it emerged that this was not what he meant to imply.

RM Can you give me an example of how the text might affect you (your performance) in this prayer? Perhaps in one of the main verses?

RPK Now like these are repetitive. "Daityo aesme buyao, daityo baoidhi buyao" (quotes Atash Niyayesh para 2) so I know that every phrase "may'st though be offered wood, may'st though be offered incense" so I know that it is there.

RM Could you please tell me the meaning of that paragraph. Can you actually tell it to me in English translating it?

[73] Although the Parsis of Bombay are of Persian descent, none speak any Persian and are primarily Gujarati speakers.

RPK No. I have to refer to the text.

RM Ok so it doesn't actually pass through your head like language then. For instance you know what it means but if I asked you just now...

RPK The meaning?

RM Yes.

RPK No the meaning I would not be able to tell you so quickly. I go by the text.

RM That's actually what I was getting at. The meaning.

RPK Oh meaning. Not the meaning. I thought you were implying the text.

RM No. The text, the words you've got in your head very well like most Mobeds. But I actually thought that you had said that the meaning passed through your head like language.

RPK No no the meaning is not there. When I recite it I know what it is but you say tell me the whole meaning of the whole this thing then I have to think each Avesta word and then translate it.

RM So you can translate it from one language to another but it doesn't pass through your head like conversation.

RPK No

RM For instance if you were to speak to me in Gujarati, Hindi or English, I could stop you anywhere and you could tell me exactly what you just said.

RPK Yes

RM But not Avestan or Pazand.

RPK No

The relevance of this to the educational process is that students are undertaking the memorisation of words without meaning. Later in life they will pray those words for a congregation and neither they nor their audience will comprehend them as they are being performed. All concerned will be aware of the general application of the ritual (wedding, funeral etc) but none will appreciate any element of the words except the sounds they make. This very absence of comprehension reveals that the primary connective tissue between the performer and his audience, or even between the performer and the material itself is not the meaning of the prayer but the sound. This will be focal to the analysis presented later in the study.

The second issue comprises three points. Memorisation, the reliance on books and the way that it contradicts the notion of the religion being orally preserved. In theory, Zoroastrian priests are supposed to commit a great deal of the liturgy to memory. As students they do learn many prayers by heart. However, as with all pupils, they forget whatever they do not regularly use. Therefore in practice the amount memorised depends on how much each priest performs after initiation. A full time Mobed in a Temple repeating the same prayers for years will retain a great deal more than a regular part-timer who will retain more still than a non-practising Ervad. Furthermore, as Mobed Rustam K. Bhedwar says below, many priests attested that the amount presently committed to memory by student priests is far less than the amount they memorised, which, they claim, is still less than that of their predecessors.

RM Is there a difference between the way you learned and the way students are taught now?

RKB We had to at the that time (1941) undergo quite a lot of training. We had to learn by heart 72 chapters of Yasna 24 chapters of Visperad. We had to learn by heart practically the whole Kordeh Avesta, you know, and that used to take a long time, but now youngsters especially from abroad who goes from America as well as from here, they just, they hardly learn a couple of chapters by heart and that's it.

RM Why did you have to remember the whole Yasna?

RKB Because in the Yasna which takes about two hours (Mobed Bhedwar provides an elaborate explanation of how both hands are occupied during the whole ceremony)

RM What about for a wedding, a navjote, or prayers for the dead...those things. Do you read those?

RKB The book is there. I do it by heart because I learned by heart but there is no harm if any priest wants to read it. Most nowadays read. If you don't practice all the time you must read. There is no harm in this.

Clearly, regardless of the amount memorised, most priests have a book present when praying, even if some rarely consult it. Ultimately no priest is immune from ever referring to a book[74].

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[74] It must be noted that, as Mobed Bhedwar mentions, the Yasna must be memorised because during its course the priest is required to perform certain tasks with his hands and cannot hold a book at the same time. This ritual however, is now rarely performed. Dastur F. M. Kotwal who participated with Professors Willams and Boyd on analysis of the Yasna High Liturgy, commented to me in a 1999 interview that he had not performed the ceremony which is quite lengthy for many years. Mobed Bhedwar noted that in his youth in Navsari there used to be nearly fifteen to twenty Yasna rituals per day whereas now one is perhaps performed every fortnight.

This increasing dependence on books is not a very recent development. One might think that a shift towards reliance on the written word would go back at least to the time when the sacred language had become incomprehensible. There is no clear evidence to provide a date for that occurrence, or for a definitive shift to reliance on writing but a few pieces of evidence provide some important historical markers. Persian is said to have been established as the only recognised "living language" by a royal proclamation dating around 293 AD (Boyce 1987: 116). Also, The Denkard, a ninth century book, records the completion of a written Avesta in the Sasanian period (Bailey 1971; 173). As early as the second century AD Pausanius (*Description of Greece* 5.27.5-6) observed Magi in Lydia performing ritual while reading from a book (Dejong 1997:347). As indicated in interviews, it is now currently generally accepted that the religious texts are purely preserved in modern printed editions. The oral tradition has not, for more than a millennium, been the sole repository of the text of the Zoroastrian liturgy.

It is reasonable, therefore, to query the role of the training process regarding the preservation of performance practices. This leads to the third issue—the production of the sound of the prayers. The question as to why Zoroastrian prayers sound the way they do is central to this study. Thus far the answer has not been evident in either historical or religious texts. There are, however a few lines here and there in the liturgy that broadly address performance issues. The first is directly attributable to the prophet, occurring as it does in the Gathas. Yasna 44.17 written from the perspective of Zoroaster addressing God, contains the line "...how shall I, with your accord, impassion your following, so that my voice might be powerful (enough) to strive for alliance with completeness and immortality..." (Insler 1975: 71). The desire for a powerful voice could be referring to many things, including volume, expressiveness or other performance issues.

A similar sentiment is found in Yasht 10, a Younger Avestan work from the 6th –4th centuries.

> Yasht 10.89
> Whom (=Haoma) Truth-owning Ahura Mazda installed as promptly-sacrificing, loud-chanting priest: as Ahura Mazda's promptly-sacrificing, loud-chanting priest, as the priest of the incremental Immortals, he, the priest, sacrificed (chanting) with loud voice; his voice reached up to the (heavenly) lights, made the round of the earth, pervaded all seven climes. (Gershevitch 1967: 117)

Another reference to volume is found in the 4th – 3rd century B.C. Nērangastān, a treatise on priestly practices related to ritual.

> N. 26
> If one recites the Gathas
> while there is an interfering noise either of water
> or of a stream, or of highwaymen, or of bandits,
> or of lowing livestock.
> he pleases the Ratus[75] when he can hear (himself) with his own ears,
> If he cannot hear (himself) with his own ears, let him reach (the necessary level of sound), if he can reach it.
> But if he cannot reach it,
> The he pleases the Ratus recalling (the Gathas)
> with a medium (loud) voice.
> (Hintze 2002 forthcoming: 141)

The Nērangastān also contains the verb *aiwi-sru* "to listen" which, at first glance appears to be cautioning priests from listening to each other while praying together.

> N. 24
> If they celebrate the Worship
> In verse lines or in stanzas,
> Both of them satisfy the Ratus.
> If they celebrate while listening to one another's words,
> Both of them do not satisfy the Ratus.
>
> And what (is) 'listening to one another's words?' –
> When both pronounce simultaneously

[75] Ratus is an Avestan word of multiple meanings. 1). "The time of" for instance, denoting the five priestly divisions of the twenty-four hour day; 2). The regulation which governs the priestly divisions of time; 3). The person or divinity who regulates these divisions (Hintze 2003 forthcoming: 1 n.1).

> In verse lines and in stanzas
> (and) one listens, but the other one does not,
> that one pleases the Ratus who does not listen.
> (Hintze 2002 forthcoming: 139-140)

This would seem odd from a musical perspective, as it would be a recipe for unintelligibility. Two priests performing together without listening to each other could not but help being out of synch with each other, thus rendering their words incomprehensible. Hintze suggests, however, that a more reasonable interpretation would be that the priests are being discouraged from depending on anyone else in remembering the text during performance, and that each priest is encouraged to pray with great inner concentration and to let the prayers come out from within, free of external influences. It would seem to make more sense to view the passage (N.24) in this light rather than as a literal performance instruction.

Another reference which requires a deeper understanding is found in Yasht 10 which, on a surface reading, seems like a criticism against a certain type of performance, i.e. mumbling.

> Yasht 10.34
> ...so that we, being in good spirit, cheerful, joyful, and optimistic, may overcome all hostilities of evil gods and men, sorcerers and witches, tyrants, hymn-mongers, and mumblers. (Gershevitch 1967: 91)

Gershevitch notes that 'Hymn mongers' refers to a priestly class of hymn-writers who were bent on frustrating Zoroaster's religious reforms. He does not, however, expand on the hymn-writers themselves. 'Mumblers' also addresses a class of priests of whom Zoroaster disapproved. Mumblers is translated from *karapanō* which, in Zoroaster's composition, Yasna 46.11, is used in a derogatory manner. "During their regimes, the Karpans and the Kavis yoked (us) with evil actions in order to destroy the world and mankind." (Insler 1975: 83). However, Hintze argues convincingly that the interpretation of *karpan* as 'mumble' is purely etymological and not precise because the Chwaresmian verb *krb*, as well as the Vedic kṛ̀pate mean 'to whim', 'to

implore'. The term more likely denotes a 'ritualist' than a 'mumbler', and this is supported by the generally held view that Zoroaster was a reformer with a focus on ritual. He opposed certain ritual practices and as such it would follow that he would be criticising 'ritualist' priests (Hintze 1994: 163-164).

Another factor that militates against the liturgy containing a prescription against mumbling is a current and long-standing tradition of praying certain passages in a muted mumbling voice. This is known as praying "in Baj". All that is known is that certain passages in middle Persian are prayed in Baj but never passages in Avestan. This is thought to reflect a degree of respect for the older language. Although this is a tangible performance command, it really amounts, more than anything else, to an instruction to not vocalise loudly. As the origins of this tradition are not known it cannot be fully explored within this study.

As interesting as all the above references are with regards to attitudes towards sound that are contained in the liturgy, they still do not amount to even basic musical performance instructions. Ultimately existing literature cannot reveal what a Zoroastrian priest sounded like one thousand or even a few hundred years ago. There are no writings detailing an ancient method of prayer performance and the techniques it may have involved (if any) such as mnemonic devices, scalar structures or any tonal or rhythmic prescriptions. There is absolutely no codification of the music in the prayers -- no set boundaries of melody, rhythm or any elements of performance. No Tajwīd rules as in the Koran, no notational symbols above the text as in the Torah, no system of pitch relations as in Vedic practice and certainly no Council Of Trent decree as to how a mass may or may not be set to music. There are also no prescriptions against the use of music in worship. There is simply no discussion of the issue anywhere in print. Also, it is not a conscious element of the oral tradition as evidenced by the current training process.

Consonant and vowel articulation are addressed (almost exclusively so) but other parameters such as phrase melody are ignored. Apart from grammatical considerations the process seems to be singularly deaf to the needs of sound. A student is taught amidst a cacophony, performance aesthetics are never addressed and he is never corrected on his pitch sequence or rhythmic and melodic motion. This reveals a startling paradox. Sound is the primary connective element of Zoroastrian prayer, and yet the means of its production is the one thing that is left completely unaddressed when Zoroastrians teach prayer. Sound is the experiential glue bonding the priest to his laity and to the prayer itself and yet there has hitherto been no exploration of the sound's constituent elements or how they are formed and transmitted. As Mobed Rustam K. Bhedwar reveals, this lack of focus on sound production can be found in the training of priests.

RM When you were in school and your teachers corrected your pronunciation and memory, would they also correct the tone of voice that you used? Would they say "No, don't have a high tone there. Have a low tone there." ? Or that your voice should go up here or it should go down there?

RKB No no. I don't think even they were trained that way. The teachers even, they were not trained about the tone of the voice. They won't tell you. They will mainly concentrate on whether you know the prayers by heart. They will concentrate on that.

This gives rise to a final contradiction that is at the nucleus of this research. A priest is never openly taught pitch sequences or melodic motion and yet, as was stated in the Abstract, they are there when he prays. Also as will be stated, certain common features have been found in the performances of priests as far apart as Iran and India throughout the last half century. The next chapter, which presents transcription data, will illuminate these common features.

Chapter 7 Transcription: Methodology and Commentary

The approach to the recordings and their transcriptions had no pre-determined goal other than to create the first analytical archive of Zoroastrian prayer performance and to discover whatever it was that transcriptions of the prayer reveal. There was also, however, a hypothesis that had its origins in my Masters' research.

During my Masters year of study I had conducted a fieldwork assignment with a Parsi priest in London, Mobed Rustam Bhedwar, who made a casual remark that "The Iranian priests sometimes think we sound like the Brahmans and we sometimes think they sound like the Mullahs". I wondered if A) the minority Zoroastrian communities of India and Iran had absorbed the religious sounds of their respective surrounding cultures and B) a comparative study would distil something that was common to Iranian and Indian Mobeds but was still distinct from the surrounding cultures? If so, this aural "distillate" could possibly reveal something useful about the earlier history of Zoroastrian prayer performance.

Ultimately the transcriptions did reveal some crucial performance features that the Iranian and Indian communities had in common, and under analysis the functioning of these features as well as their position relative to the surrounding Indian and Iranian cultures came into focus.

This chapter will focus on the transcriptions of the prayer performances of eighteen priests, nine from Iran and India respectively. The transcriptions are accompanied by audio tracks on the CD.

One of the first steps prior to beginning field recording was to establish selection criteria that would determine which prayers would be performed and which priests would be recorded.

7.1 Selection Of Prayers

There is a huge liturgy from which texts could be chosen, and given the choice each priest could have conceivably chosen a different prayer. However, for the purposes of comparison it was desirable that they should all pray the same texts.

To narrow the choice I sought the advice of Dastur F. M. Kotwal of Bombay, a Zoroastrian scholar and author. Dastur Kotwal initially suggested that I let each priest pray the text he was most comfortable with, but also suggested a short list of sixteen prayers from which a selection could be made. Ultimately a collaborative process with the priests emerged whereby at the beginning of the research they were asked to choose from the selection of prayers and at the end of the research were asked to perform the prayers already chosen by earlier priests. At no point, however, was any priest asked to perform a prayer with which he was uncomfortable, nor was a priest denied the opportunity to perform a prayer of which he was particularly fond. There was an attempt, however, to try and get at least two or more examples of different prayers from each priest so that findings could be verified for consistency.

In the end, two prayers in particular, Yasna 28 and Ātash Niyāyesh, emerged as the prayers most performed, and they provide the bulk of the transcriptions. They are not regarded as more or less important than other prayers but are used in enough contexts to ensure that they are performed often. Their complete texts and translations can be found in the Appendix.

Yasna 28 is one of the Gāthic chapters performed as part of the daily ritual in Temples. It is commonly prayed during the Geh Sarna ritual which is performed after death and is also a part of the Visperad and Videvdad rituals,

both of which are associated with death. The Visperad is also performed at seasonal festivals and especially in the Yasna High Ritual.

The essence of this prayer is a desire, a yearning by Zoroaster to be near Ahura Mazda, to behold him, to offer praises to him and sing litanies to him, and in return he requests knowledge of the religion, help from followers and strength for himself and his followers. The language of the text is older Avesta, and is regarded as originating from the Prophet (c. 1000 – 1,500 BC).

The Atash Niyayesh is from the Khordeh Avesta (Younger Avesta); as such it is not a composition in its own right and may have been put together at a time when original texts in Avestan were no longer composed[76]. It is a prayer for daily use, is recited before the beginning of almost all the outer rituals. It is also recited (in varying repetitions) during the Boi ritual which is the feeding of the fire five times daily in Fire Temples.

The general idea conveyed in the main ten paragraphs of the prayer is for the devotee to show a desire to serve the fire with fuel and incense. Then if the fire is pleased with the offerings, rewards of wealth and progeny are provided. Atash Niyayesh is made up of four different prayers. Two, Yasna 33 and 34 are taken from the Gathas (Ahunavaiti Gatha). A votive portion of it (Kshnooman) is taken from the Sīroze text. The main body of the text, the ten paragraphs are taken from Yasna 62[77]. The language of the text therefore, is a mixture of older Avesta and younger Avestan language (thought to have followed the Prophet by a few centuries) as well as Pazand (Middle Persian from the early centuries AD). Herein lies one of the reasons for choosing these two prayers for the study. It was thought useful to see if any peculiarities of sound could be linked to the different languages involved.

[76] Hintze 2002: ersonal correspondence).

In addition to the above main prayers are two other smaller texts which appear quite regularly, Ashem Vohu and Yatha Ahu Vairyo (Ahunavar prayer). These short Older Avestan texts are often interspersed within the bodies of larger prayers and are also recited on their own. A small number of other prayers also make isolated appearances in transcriptions.

The chapter on Analysis will explore the relationship between the text and sound. It can however, be briefly stated here that there are no real performance connections between the semantics of the texts and the notes on which they are pitched. It only requires, therefore, the broadest understanding of the nature of the prayers as provided above to undertake a study of the transcriptions which are contained in this chapter. For the most part the transcriptions should be approached as purely sound phenomena with textual considerations being put aside for the time being. However, one consideration in choosing the same texts for all priests was to maximise the effect of comparison by allowing listeners to become accustomed to the same words being performed in different ways by each priest.

7.2 Selection Of Priests

The main objectives in selecting priests were to maintain parity between the Iranian and Indian traditions and to have a cross section of age groups. It was also a conscious decision to seek out by word of mouth, those priests who were reputed to pray in ways that people found pleasing.

From the outset a broad distinction was apparent between priests who simply rattled off prayers in a rapid monotone manner and those who invested their performances with some degree of musical expression. There was little to be

[77] Explanations, including the words "sing litanies to him" were provided by Mobed Dr Ramiyar Karanjia, during personal interviews and correspondence Feb 2000.

gained from analysing a monotone performance and so priests who were reputed to pray in this fashion were not sought out. However, some were encountered in the course of the fieldwork and were duly recorded. Finally, over twenty priests were recorded in field trips to India and Iran, and some valuable archival material was also graciously provided by Dr Almut Hintze of SOAS and Dr Lars Hartman, Professor Emeritus at the University of Uppsala, Sweden.

The first phase of field work was carried out in Iran. The decision to start there was somewhat arbitrary and, to a degree, stemmed from the instinct that it was right to begin in the country in which the Zoroastrian religion originated.

I travelled to Iran in the summer of 1999 and while there I was assisted by my Zoroastrian hosts, the Kyas family. I stayed with them in Tehran, and their children, Kamran, Kaivan and Anahita, who were fluent in Persian, English and Darī, a language only spoken by Zoroastrians in Yāzd, were kindly seconded to me for the duration of my research. I was also given crucial help by two noted Persian musicologists and musicians, Hooman Asadi and Mohammed Reza Darvishi.

Through the Kyas family I was taken to a wedding (heard on track 1) and was introduced to two priests in Tehran, Mobed Rostam Shahzadi and Mobed Cyroos. Mobed Cyroos was simply known in Tehran as a priest who prayed "in a singing way" and so was of immediate interest to the study. The Kyas family also knew him personally as he had performed a Navjote ceremony for one of their children. Mobed Shahzadi was, until his recent death, a leader of the Iranian community and had held a leadership position for some years. It was felt that a meeting with him would facilitate meetings with other priests in Iran and this introduces the issue of security and the role it played in the Iranian leg of this research.

Regardless of the official government position on Zoroastrians in Iran, which at best can be described as ambivalent, most Zoroastrians there maintain a delicate balance between being well integrated into the larger society while also being wary of it. However, their situation is full of contradictions and it is not always possible to predict when wariness or integration will prevail. For instance, first impressions in casual conversation may indicate that most Iranian Zoroastrians have an instinctive mistrust of the dominant Islamic/ Governmental institutions and, by extension, of Moslems in general, and yet all Iranian Zoroastrians have close Moslem friends. At one after-wedding party that I attended I assumed from conversations in which I took part and from some I overheard that all the people present were Zoroastrians. It was only later on that I was told that many of the bride and groom's closest friends who had formed part of the wedding party were Moslem. In this social setting Moslem and Zoroastrian were indistinguishable from each other. However, when the Kyas family took me to the Adarian Fire Temple in Tehran I was viewed with suspicion by all until the proper introductions were made. Even then, some attending priests simply refused to take part in any study. Some claimed that they felt their own prayer performances were not of an adequate calibre, but others openly said they had no wish to be part of anything "official" like a study.

Some further contradictions became evident as the study progressed. The Kyas family had well-known contacts in Yazd and were able to provide me with lodging, transportation and a local guide. The names of local priests, however, proved more difficult. The breakthrough here came unexpectedly from a Moslem source. I had been put in touch with musician, musicologist and lecturer Hooman Asadi, who was able to introduce me to Mohammed Reza Darvishi, also a musicologist as well as a composer. Mr Darvishi had, five years previously, become interested in Zoroastrian prayer performance and had made the acquaintance of Mobeds K. Niknām and Mali, both featured in this study. He had travelled to Yazd to meet them and recorded each of them

performing long prayers. After his initial meeting, however, the priests simply became unavailable for any further study. Mr Darvishi played me the recordings he had made and at that time they sounded quite remarkable to me. I had never before heard prayers performed in this way. For me, there was no question that these men were singing. Mr Darvishi kindly put me in touch with Mobed Niknām who was in Tehran and who, after meeting with me and participating in the study, suggested that I meet other priests in Yazd. He arranged for me to meet Mobeds Behruz, Khodabash, Mehraban, and Mali in Yazd itself.

I had also expressed a desire to my hosts to visit Sharifabad and meet with the Mobed there who was the son of Mobed Rostam Belivani, Mary Boyce's host during her visit there in the 1960s. This meeting was ultimately made possible by our local guide Behroz, who mentioned Mobed Shahzadi's meeting with me in Tehran. Other priests were also encountered in the course of research, and a few agreed (without proper introductions) to participate.

In the end, even after completing recordings and interviews, some Mobeds would only answer further questions on the phone while a few were happy to continue to have follow up meetings. A final factor of the Iranian research that must be mentioned was that it took place in the summer of 1999 during some of the worst student riots that were taking place in Tehran as well as other parts of the country. It was often against a backdrop of streets and areas cut off by rioting that some interviews were conducted and although none of the issues underlying the riots were related to Zoroastrianism, the unrest served to reinforce the understanding that the setting in which Persian Zoroastrians lived was still quite volatile. Their wariness was founded on experience.

Ultimately, in Iran, the issue of access to the community's rituals, temples and priests boils down to two essential factors— references and religion. If a person is a stranger and not a Zoroastrian, access would prove very difficult if not

impossible. With the proper introductions it becomes possible to meet with certain people. However it is only with the combination of references and being a Zoroastrian that the greatest access is possible. Even here it is not always guaranteed on the first attempt. Often, appointments were made simply to have the other party not show up. Sometimes it would only be at a second rendezvous that the men would show up, having in some way been convinced of my authenticity. I was told quite clearly that many of the Iranian Mobeds in this study would simply not have agreed to meet with me had I not been Zoroastrian. Furthermore, in both India and Iran non-Zoroastrians simply were not (and are not) permitted inside many Fire Temples.

Having grown up in Canada, I was particularly struck by the wariness and sometimes even secrecy that pervaded these meetings. This is not to suggest that I met people in a cloak and dagger fashion but simply that without certain elements in place, the meetings would never have happened and/or people might not have opened up about the subject. While growing up in Canada it was not unusual to see non-Zoroastrian friends, girl-friends, boy-friends, spouses etc at community functions that also involved prayers. Also, I am familiar with people, including priests, who in Canada and England (and probably also the USA) participate in inter-faith meetings where the rituals of different faiths are performed in front of people of all backgrounds. Before going to Iran I was aware that, given the political situation there, rituals and priests were probably things that were kept away from non-Zoroastrians. The fieldwork not only confirmed this, but also revealed (as analysis later in the thesis will discuss), how this element of isolationism pervades the way in which prayer performance itself is perceived by many Persian and Indian priests (who still live in Iran and India). It is something private, and is kept apart from the social circle of one's everyday life.

The India leg of research took place in the spring of 2000. Although quite a few people spoke English, many were more comfortable speaking Gujarati, and

here my wife Nina and father-in-law Minoo Wadia were able to act as interpreters throughout India.

Introductions also played an important part in meeting priests in India but there was no element of wariness as in Iran. No doubt this reflects the differences in the politics of each country. Nonetheless, being Zoroastrian was again, here, invaluable. For instance, I knew before beginning that I was related to two of the men who appear in this research, Dastur Hormazdiar Mirza, of Udvada and his son Peshotan. It also emerged during an interview that Dastur Hormazdiar was an uncle to one of the teachers at the Cama Athornan, Mobed Shiavax Sidwa, making us distant relations. Also, being Zoroastrian meant that I was able to enter Fire Temples. Some temples like the Iranshah in Udvada had regulations forbidding any kind of recording equipment (audio, video or photographic) inside temple grounds but other locations were more permissive.

At the outset of my research in India I was generously assisted by Mr Baji Antia, a family friend, a trained priest, and also someone who was familiar with many prominent members of the Bombay community. Mr Antia put me in touch with Dastur Kotwal (mentioned earlier) who provided useful liturgical advice, as well as Dr. Homi B. Dhalla, President of the World Zoroastrian Cultural Foundation in Bombay who introduced me to Mobed Gonda of Lonavala. Mobed Gonda had established a reputation as someone who prayed in a singing way and he features prominently in the study.

Dr Almut Hintze, Zartoshty lecturer, was kind enough to loan me archival recordings of Zoroastrian priests in Bombay dating from 1959 (made by Professor Hanns-Peter Schmidt). It turned out that one of the priests in the recording, Mobed Peshotan Peer had a son Royinton, who was still a practising Mobed in Bombay. It was of definite interest to find the son and compare his performances with those of his father to see what similarities or differences might be found. In his turn, Mobed Royinton passed me on to Mobed Kersey

Karanjia, the head of the Cama Athornan school for priests in Andheri Bombay. This allowed for valuable interviews and recordings of students and teachers.

I was also introduced to Mobed Ramiyar Karanjia, the head of the Dadar Madressa school for priests in Bombay, by Mr Dorab Mistry, President of the ZTFE in London. In addition to being recorded and interviewed for the research, Mobed Karanjia, being a doctorate holder and a Zoroastrian scholar, also provided helpful scholastic input. The students and teachers of the Madressa also feature significantly in the study. Other contacts, such as High priests of Udvada and Surat, were also provided by various people as the study gathered momentum. In the end, as with all research, more data was gathered than could fit into the final thesis and in order to maintain a quantitative parity of data between Indians and Iranians, some Indian Mobeds had to be left out.

The final selection of priests and prayers reflects an attempt to provide the listener with a cross section of old and young priests, teachers and students, fathers and sons, High Priests and novices; solo performances as well as pairs and groups of performers and all in a variety of settings. The inclusion of contemporary recordings as well as archival material also allows an examination of performance practices over time.

7.3 Issues Of Recording

With the exception of archival material, all audio recordings of interviews and prayer performances were made by the author using a DAT recorder and single bi-directional microphone. The equipment was specially selected to make sure that the microphone and recorder were suitably responsive but also small and un-intimidating. Early experiments with fieldwork in my Masters degree had

indicated that the more priests felt like they were praying for me and not into a machine, the more relaxed they were.

A standard practice when recording and interviewing Mobeds was to first ask them to perform a series of prayers (to warm up their voices and loosen them up) and then ask for other prayers including the two mentioned earlier, Yasna 28 and Atash Niyayesh. After recording, the priests were asked a series of questions about the process of learning their prayers and then gradually they were brought around to the subject of the sound of their prayers. Priests were asked a variety of questions that tried to illuminate how they perceived the sound of their own prayers and the degree to which they were aware of the sounds of other priests. The data from these interviews will be explored in chapter 8 following the transcriptions.

A final element of the fieldwork that should be noted was the locations of performances and interviews. All priests were asked if they had a preference for where they would like to have their prayer performances recorded. One or two priests felt that there was a difference between the way they prayed at home and the way they prayed during an actual ritual in a Temple or at a public gathering and attempts were made to accommodate them. Most, however, insisted that location and occasion made no difference as long as they were comfortable and could pray with a full voice. As a result, some priests were recorded in their own homes, some in the Fire Temples in which they work and some in community halls. Many of the recordings in Yazd took place in a 600 year old temple. A few recordings feature priests performing actual ceremonies.

7.4 Issues Of Notation

The two basic questions in transcribing these prayers were 1) what exactly to notate and 2) how to notate it?

These are interconnected, and the process of resolving them was somewhat circuitous. In partially answering the first question, the second became clearer, and only after refining the second was the first completely brought into focus.

The first step in choosing what to notate came from the realisation that there were literally tens of hours of prayer performance from which to choose. There was just too much material to present in its entirety, and not simply because of space considerations, but also because it would be impossible to maintain a clarity of focus over that amount of data. Space also mattered as the intention of the study was to analyse a broad selection of priests, and so even a half hour of material from each of twenty priests made this unworkable.

It also became clear from simply listening to the performances without any notation that one was not hearing something that had a distinct beginning, middle and end like a piece of music such as a Renaissance era setting of a Mass or the exposition of a rāg in the North Indian dhrupad tradition. Instead, there was a clear sense that the each priest's performances consisted of variations around some basic core material. There seemed to be patterns and intervals that recurred throughout a performance but not always in any specific order. Therefore after a period of initial listening, the goal in selecting material was refined down to choosing those passages in which the core material was most clearly present and to satisfy the question, was this essentially what was being heard in variation throughout the whole prayer? The passages did not have to be the same for each priest, nor was there any effort to only select similar material from each performer. Rather the intention was to first tease out

from each individual the essence of their sound and then compare material from different men.

It must also be pointed out that as the first transcriptions were done following the trip to Iran and before the trip to India, the very first material available for transcription was mostly Persian with only a very few pieces of archival Indian recordings.

Having selected a few passages, the question of how to notate them had to be tackled. As was made clear in the previous chapters, prayer performance has not been codified by Zoroastrians and therefore there is no Zoroastrian prayer notation as such to consider. The performances presented here, therefore, have been transcribed using the Western system of staff notation with some minor modifications.

The decision to use Western notation was made for several reasons. First, simply listening to the various performances soon made it clear that there were no intricate rhythmic cycles or detailed scalar structures or melodies or any other complex musical matter in operation. Given the absence of special features, relatively simple Western notation seemed best suited to capture the sound phenomena in question.

It also became obvious during interviews that it would be difficult if not impossible to speak of the performers' intentions as none of them claimed or demonstrated any awareness of the specifics of their sound and insisted that "it just came out". The problem with this was that during transcription the microtones were detected but it was impossible to verify if they were accidental or intentional. The desire was to avoid the two main (and somewhat standard) pitfalls of transcription as laid out by Ellingson (1992: 125). The danger on the one hand was to present transcriptions that were clear and comprehensible but that over-simplified the performance and distorted it, and on the other hand

there was the risk of notating with such precision that complexity rendered the notations too dense to understand.

In seeking a compromise between "fluent legibility and objective precision" (Ellingson 1992: 125) it seemed most logical to focus on consistency. This also corresponded with the aim of notating those passages that seemed to manifest the core features of a performance in microcosm. If a priest consistently manifested certain pitch or rhythmic behaviour, the purpose of the notation was to capture this on paper as fluidly and as clearly as possible. In the absence of the priests' own abilities to comment on their performances, there was no attempt made to interpret what the intentions of a performer may have been. Instead, the focus was maintained on what he actually did. However, this was tempered with the understanding that there should be a distinction between notating a change and "rounding off" a slight imperfection. For instance, if a priest clearly hit a particular quarter tone, care was taken to notate it as such. If however, amidst a series of clear tones and semitones, the odd note only sounded slightly off (very slightly, less than ¼ tone) it was rounded off to the closest actual pitch. This is not interpreting the intention of the performer but rather filtering out minor information that obscures the larger picture[78].

7.5 Choices Of Notation

Regarding note values, it was immediately clear that very little if any melisma was in evidence in any of the performances. For the most part, therefore, note values simply reflect a priest's syllabic division of words.

A basic grasp of the differences between long and short vowels and places of stress helped broadly separate the duration of sounds in relation to each other,

and from this emerged the assignment of durational values. In the end the durational values reflect an approximate but close analogue of the rhythms of the text. It must be understood therefore that a 16th note in these transcriptions is close to but not always exactly one half of an 8th note and so on. Nonetheless, in trying to balance fluidity with precision an attempt at some useful detail has been made. Staccato signs on 8th notes are used as they would be normally, to indicate a clipped quality of sound—somewhere between a regular 8th and a 16th note. Ornamentation in the form of grace notes has been notated and where applicable, ties have been used. Beaming represents the close grouping of a string of words or the separation of individual words as demarcated by a strong distinguishing attack at the beginning. The purpose in notating word groups as beamed notes is to present them in the way they are heard, which is as grouped rhythmic events.

It was also decided not to use barlines or time signatures as the prayers did not occur in any musical metre such as triple or duple time. Some prayers are poems and as such follow a poetic metre, but this is not always observed by all priests. Instead, the lines of a prayer tend to flow somewhat freely and are largely demarcated by pauses (wherever they fall) which are indicated by rests. Sometimes these pauses happen when a priest stops to breathe or occur at the ends of sentences. Also as with note values, long pauses tend be notated with a quarter note value and short pauses with an 8th note value etc.

For pitch, as with rhythm, there were no complex systems in operation and the notational goal therefore was to capture the essence of a performance while balancing fluidity and detail. It must again be remembered that the question of intention does not really come into play with Zoroastrian priests but consistency can be perceived. Some priests are consistent, some are not. Some approximate to equal temperament. However, in one or two examples pitches

[78] Overall, microtones do not appear consistently in the performances of all priests. They are only heard once or twice in the prayers of six priests (three from Iran, three from India). In total there are eight

do seem to be consistently neutral and some care has been taken to capture this detail. The symbol 𝄳 indicates that a pitch is flatted by less than a semitone and likewise, the symbol ♯ means that a note is sharped by the same small indeterminate amount. In general, therefore, in these transcriptions pitch representation may not always be exact, but should certainly provide at least a good approximation.

For purposes of comparison all performances were transposed to C below middle C. The original pitches of each performer are indicated separately at the beginning of the first system and thereafter whenever the performer's tonic varies.

Zoroastrian prayer performance most commonly involves one solo priest. Where two or more priests are involved, they give no consideration to pitch relationships and none of note were perceived during research. In fact it is well known that performances of pairs or groups can often result in cacophony if the men are not accustomed to praying together. Those pairs of men who do pray together for long periods of time can achieve great synchronisation, but the voices do not tend to have a structural harmonic relationship. Examples of a group of priests and of two priests praying together can be heard, respectively on tracks 69 and 70.

There is clearly no sense, on either of the above examples, of a voice carrying a cantus firmus accompanied by other voices that follow or mirror it at the 5^{th} or the octave and that perform expansions or ornamentation around it as in some other vocal traditions. Normally where more than one voice is involved priests simply try to start and stop at the same time so that the text is not obscured. As the examples show, they are not always successful. This will be discussed in greater detail later. For now it is important to note that as single voice prayer

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quarter tones in fifty pages of notation.

performance is the norm, the focus of all the transcriptions will be on solo performances.

7.6 Common Performance Features

The early transcriptions revealed a number of elements that were common to all the Iranian priests and also to the archival Indian recordings. However, before listing specific common structural elements, one general but prominent feature seen to be common to different priests should be mentioned first.

The prayers of almost all priests occupy a fairly narrow pitch range (usually a 4^{th}) within which one pitch (the 'tonic') predominates. In fact some priests adhere to the tonic so overwhelmingly that their prayers can sound like a single repeated tone which is simply interrupted by other events. It is these striking "other events" that constitute the performance features.

Initially there seemed to be ten performance features that appeared in various recordings. Over time and after the Indian field work and transcriptions were complete, these were reduced to six.

Once identified, the six features took on a new dimension. It became apparent that they were present in the prayers of diverse priests yet not always in the same way, and also in spite of their presence different priests still did not sound exactly like each other. It became clear therefore that the features were manifested more or less randomly and were underlying structures rather than the main defining aural element. For instance if a priest prayed with a great deal of vibrato or at a tremendous pace, or had a loud declamatory style or was quiet and meditative, it would be these things that would most impact upon the ear. However, transcription might reveal that the lines he was praying with

great vibrato or at great speed were pervaded by structural features that were also common to other priests who on the surface sound completely different.

Another surprising aspect of the common performance features that surfaced as the study progressed was their appearance in the prayers of priests who otherwise prayed in a rapid, monotone, featureless way. Why would a priest who appeared to be doing nothing apart from delivering a flat rapid monotone all of a sudden manifest these six features? Or why in a prayer that consistently manifested five of the features would the sixth feature appear only once or twice? The question that underlies both of these mysteries is: what is revealed by the fact that musical structures are present in the prayer performances of men who do not believe they have ever been taught music?

These questions will be more fully explored in the Analysis chapter. For now it is important to note that the impact of these discoveries upon transcription was to make sure that the notations reflected as accurately as possible, not only the appearance of common features, but also a sense of the relative frequency and strength of the features within the whole performance. This meant that some passages were included which did not contain the performance features. This may at first seem odd, but to have only included those portions with a high percentage of manifested performance features would have given the impression that they were as frequent throughout the prayer as they were in the sample. It has already been stated that the performance features are the prime formative element of the sound of Zoroastrian prayer, but this does not mean that they are always present in every line of the prayer. The truth is that with some priests they are only present in clusters. i.e. a performer may drone at length on the tonic and then all of a sudden break into the performance features and then go back to the drone. An attempt has therefore been made to present a sample of data that is as balanced and as representative of the whole performance as possible, and in some cases this means showing the presence as well as, to a degree, the absence of the performance features.

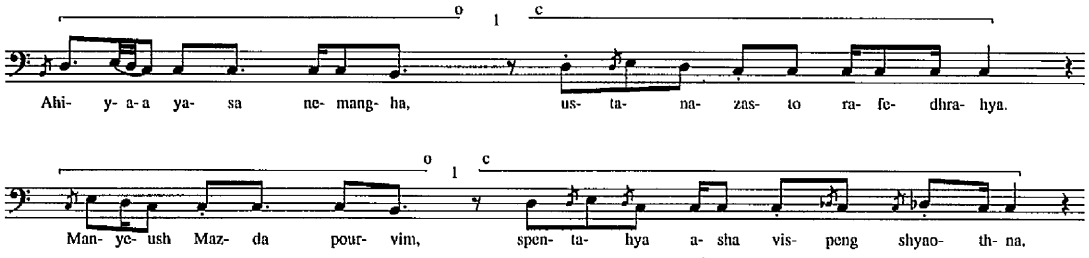
A final decision in the transcription process was (where possible) to standardise the selection of verses from each prayer. In general, verses from the beginning and end were chosen to show that the features occurred throughout the prayer. Also, for the purposes of comparison, this would allow the listener to become accustomed to the same words being rendered individually by different priests. It was not, however always possible to select exactly the same passages for all the priests as priority had to be given to those sections that most amply fulfilled the selection criteria.

The six features are:

1) Alternating Melodic Movement

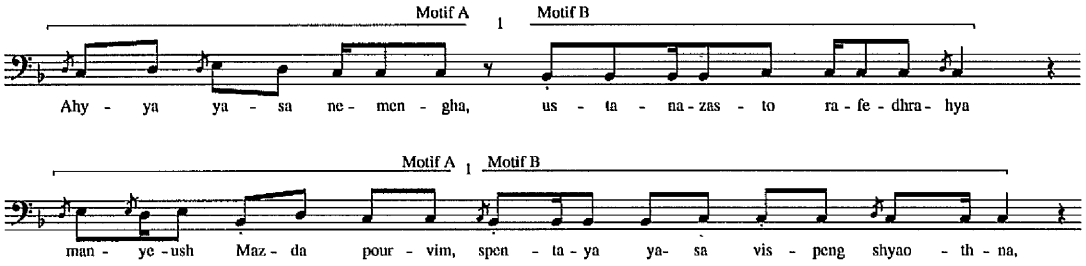
There are two kinds of alternating melodic movement: ouvert—clos motion and balancing motifs.

Ouvert—clos motion occurs between phrases. The first phrase ends on a note other than the tonic (often the subtonic) and the second returns to end on the tonic. This motion need not be continuous though for some priests it is, as in the example immediately below. For others, ouvert—clos motion is more of an immediate return to the tonic after a brief departure.



Balancing motifs tend to involve phrases, or parts of a phrase that alternate between two kinds of melodic movement. Frequently the first motif (motif A) contains movement around the notes above the tonic, often starting higher and then descending to it. The second motif (motif B) predominantly features a

trajectory that rises to the tonic from below. The excerpt below shows (in the first system) balancing motifs occurring between phrases separated by a pause and then in the next system occurring within a phrase. The division between motifs need not, however, be limited to one or two phrases. Either motif may cover any number of phrases, and the two motifs do not have to contain equal numbers of phrases. The 'balancing' lies not in the quantity of notes contained in each motif, but in the alternating melodic movement that is created when these complementary motions follow one another.



2) Interval Of Tri-Semitone[79]

Due to the narrow pitch range of most performances it was sometimes necessary to notate an interval as either an augmented 2nd or a minor 3rd simply to preserve visual clarity i.e. C, D, E♭ is less cluttered than C, D, D♯, and C, D♯, E is clearer than C, E♭, E. However for the purposes of this study it was more useful to have a single classification of the sound those intervals produce. The term tri-semitone makes this possible.

Most melodic motion is stepwise with the occurrence of occasional 3rds and from time to time with some priests, other larger intervals up to leaps of 6ths. Within this context the tri-semitone with its distinctively Middle Eastern (augmented 2nd) flavour stands out sharply. It is all the more remarkable in those performances which do not seem to contain it except for a few strikingly clear examples. The fact that it was found in performances of diverse priests,

[79] Like a tri-tone but consisting of three semi-tones.

some of whom seemed quite musical and others not so much, suggested that its presence was not coincidental but consistent and striking enough to be structural.

3) Melodic Motion Outlining A Trichord

In spite of the habitually narrow pitch range within which most priests pray, infinite number of melodic motions are still possible. It is striking therefore that many priests manifest motion that habitually outlines the trichord from the tonic to the 2nd and 3rd degrees above it. Some trichordal motion outlines other notes such as the subtonic, tonic, and 2nd above.

4) The Subtonic As Leading Tone

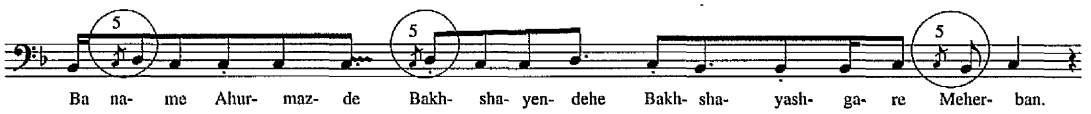
In this feature the subtonic is the penultimate note at the end of a musical line and is given a strong presence at cadential points. In these transcriptions, cadential means any point of pause between phrases.

Given that a priest's melodic motion could resolve in a number of ways, even when limited to four notes (leaping down from a 4th above etc), it was consistently striking that so many phrases ended via the subtonic.[80] This was even more so in those melodic lines where the subtonic really only made an appearance at the end.

[80] Some priests like Mobed Belivani of Sharifabad or Mobed Karanjia of India can end no fewer than 50% and as many as 90% of their phrases via the subtonic. Others such as Mobed Homji of India end between 30-60% of their phrases using the subtonic as leading tone. It is therefore notable that even in

5) Ornamentation

The type or ornamentation found in all prayer performances is a note of extremely short duration which is notated by a grace note.



When heard, this note is literally a flicker of a tone. It is, nonetheless, distinct enough to impact upon the ear and, as with all the other performance features, because it is heard in the prayers of all the priests studied, it can be considered consistent and structural.

6) Articulation Of A Melodic Contour

Among the common characteristics that emerged in transcription was the sense that certain strings of notes seemed to form a particular melodic (and on paper geometric) shape.

There is one basic contour which is found explicitly in many performances and also has two other variations. The two essential components of the contour are its trajectory and range of its oscillations. Its trajectory rises above the tonic then dips below it and rises again before resolving on the tonic itself. Its pitch range or oscillation is wider at its beginning than at its end. The range at the beginning of the contour extends usually from a third or more above the tonic down to the subtonic, while the end of the contour has a more limited ambitus.

In the following diagrams the straight line represents the tonic, and the curved line represents the pitch sequence relative to the tonic. The first contour is the most basic and the others are variations and expansions of it.

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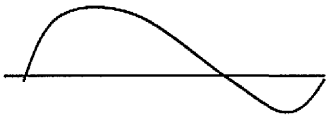
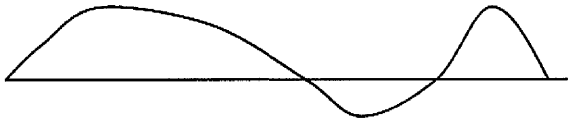
the performances of those priests where it appears the least, this feature occurs in no fewer than 30% of

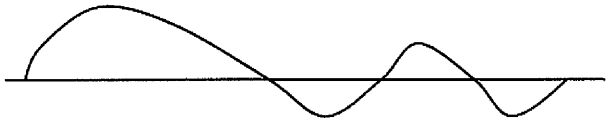
a).



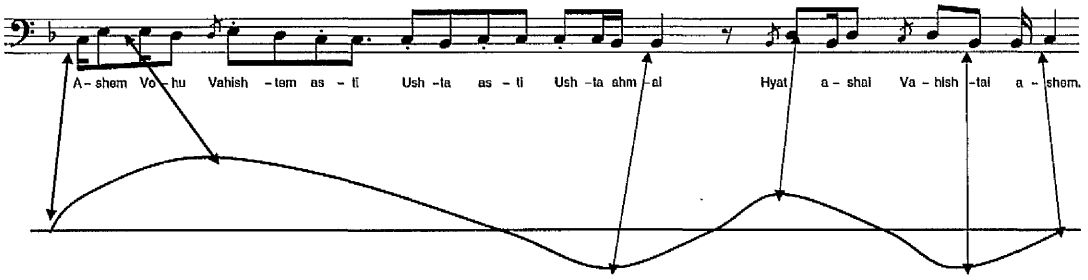
b).



c).



The example below maps out one way in which the curve (ex C) appears in notation (without articulating every detail).



The occurrence of each performance feature will be noted by the number of the feature as presented on the list above. i.e. 2 = Tri-semitone etc. The number will be accompanied by a bracketed line specifying the notes or phrase manifesting the feature. To avoid confusion, feature 6 will be marked with a dotted bracketed line. Feature 1 will appear as a number between two bracketed lines with either, "o" and "c" on either line indicating the ouvert and clos lines of motion, or "A" and "B" indicating sectional musical statements. A thick line separating systems indicates that these passages are not actually performed sequentially but have been edited together for analysis.

A sample notation is provided below.

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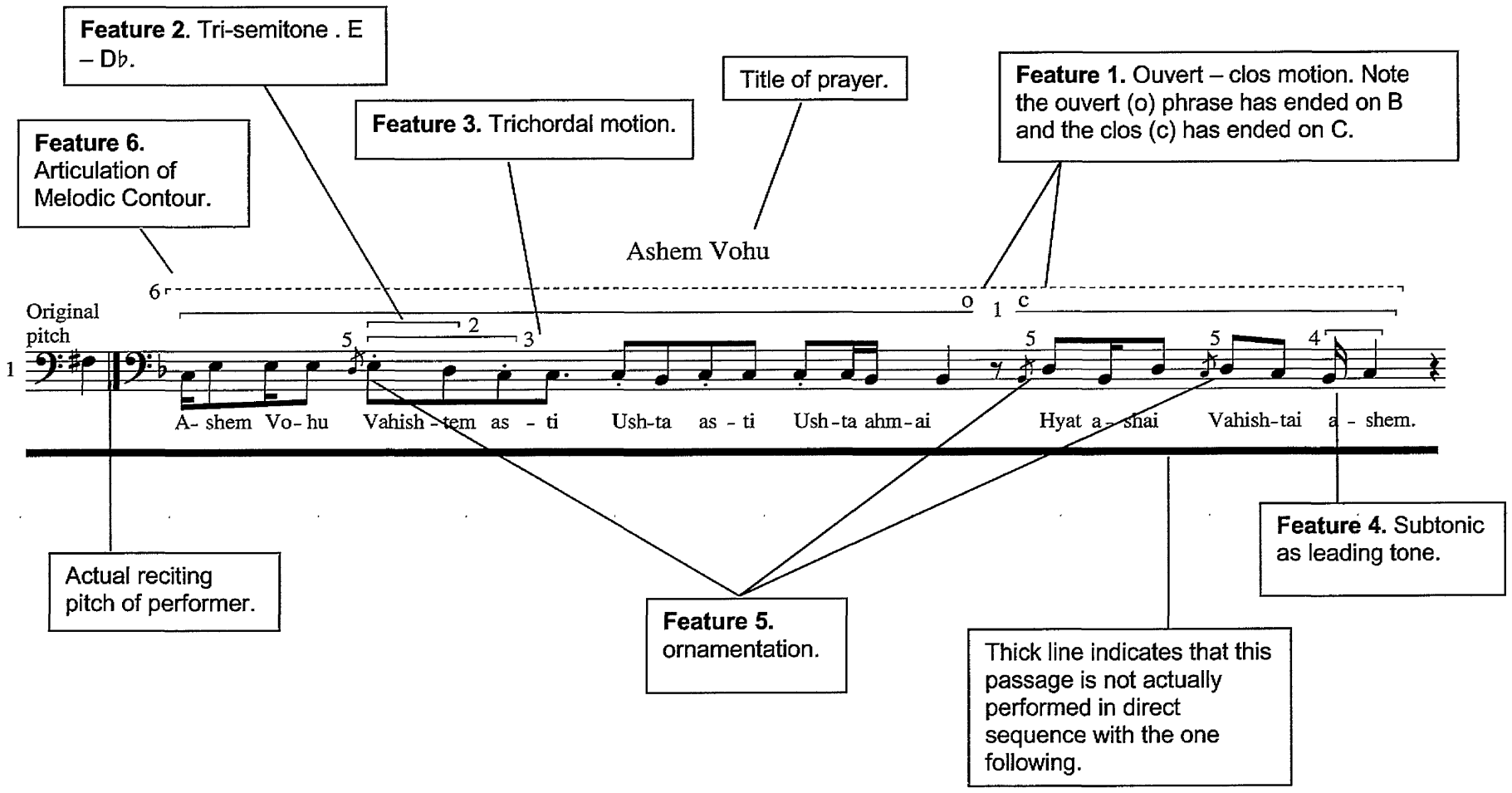
all phrases.

Sample Notation



7.7 Selection Of Passages

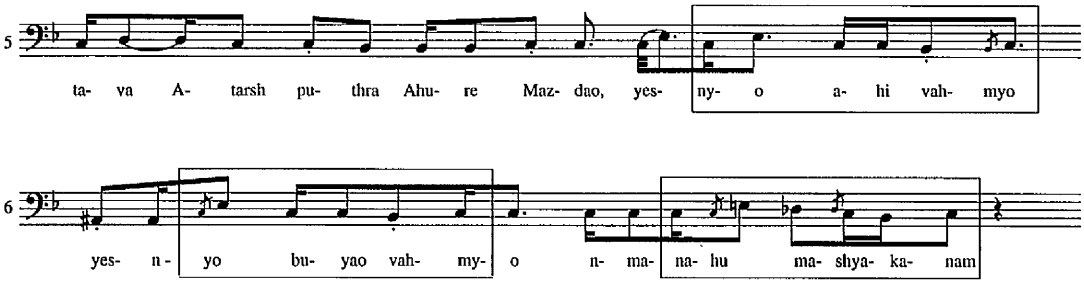
A main goal of selection was to present each priest's rendition of a prayer in microcosm through passages that were representative of the whole performance. This necessitated showing the relative strength and manner in which the performance features manifested as formative elements for each individual. To balance the presence as well as absence of the features the selections do not, therefore, only draw from those passages in which the features are most concentrated, but also attempt to show, in proportion, areas in which they are absent.

Passages were generally taken from close to the beginning, middle and end parts of a prayer to see if and how the performance features did indeed pervade the whole text. It was not practical to simply select the exact same chunks of text from each man because the features manifested at different points for each performer. Ultimately, however, a good number, if not all of the selections do show different priests performing the same verses.

It was also important to show that features could manifest in different ways but still be considered formative to the overall sound. For instance, a feature like the melodic curve (feature 6; as on the sample notation page) will be normally (but not always) be marked out showing the beginning and ending of the curve coinciding perfectly with a musical phrase that is demarcated with rests. This would be considered a "perfect" example because when the melodic curve is succinctly expressed in the short and contained parameters of a single phrase or pair of connected phrases, it is most easily and convincingly perceived. Nonetheless, as shown in the example below (an alternative[81] notation of systems 5 and 6 of Mobed Khodabash's performance of the prayer Atash Niyayesh) the melodic contour (marked in squares) can pervade the musical

[81] The main notation is in the following chapter along with all the other transcriptions.

lines even though it is not matched perfectly with the beginning and end of any one line.



Finally, because these were common texts being performed by individuals it was logical to try and ascertain the manner in which a performance could be said to be common to a group and yet still be the product of an individual. Therefore, an effort was made to include those passages which not only contained the performance features but which also showcased the peculiarities that each man brought to his performance. This last part is the focus of the short commentaries that accompany each transcription.

7.8 Commentary

As a rule there is no great difficulty in distinguishing one priest from another because they all have different voices and no two performances follow exactly the same pitch sequence. The commentary merely highlights and summarises these and other differences in order to bring out a priest's individuality, his "wrapping around the core" as it were. Sometimes the wrapping around the core consists of elaborations such as an ABCBAB sectional pattern as can be found in Mobed Niknām's performance, or it may simply consist of that kind of variation that occurs when a performer strays from a repetitive pattern but then returns to it. This kind of straying can be caused by the variations in the text. i.e. different phrase lengths are prohibitive to the occurrence of too much repetitively symmetrical melody. Therefore while ouvert-clos motion can occur

frequently, it does not, in any Mobed, occur consistently on every single pair of phrases, nor does it always involve the exact same pitch sequences. Tied in to this is also likely the instinctive, extemporised nature of a Mobed's performance. Conforming the text to a particular pattern would require a conscious effort, and this is specifically what Mobeds do not bring to their performances.

The commentary will not, however, be strictly restricted to differences but will also pick out striking similarities that may extend beyond the performance features. Overall, the transcriptions and commentary should deliver a sense of how a common set of musical building blocks brings continuity to a disparate community of individual sounding priests. The comparisons will also, therefore, illuminate the degree to which a performance can be said to be the product of an individual and the degree to which it simply reflects the general characteristics of a tradition. Given the fact that all priests claim to perform instinctively and without an awareness of their sound, "from the heart" as it were, it follows logically that any individual touches as well as the performance features, both manifest in a similarly unintentional manner. Also it must be remembered that Zoroastrian prayer operates within very narrow parameters of pitch, rhythm and elaboration. There is not, therefore, a rich vein of comparatively diverse musical options such as might be found in, for instance, the improvisations of a Qawwali singer. Such a performer is consciously creating sound within the context of participating in a tradition while at the same time establishing an individual identity. Although the first criterion can broadly be applied to Zoroastrian priests, the latter simply cannot and the result is that there is often not a great deal of "individual" material upon which one can comment. This too varies from priest to priest and so not all the Mobeds' performances invite the same degree of analysis.

The commentary will also observe a priest's own consistency between his renditions of the two prayers[82]. This will help assess if the features manifest in the same way when applied to different texts. It can be broadly stated now that in general they do, but any small or distinctive differences will be duly noted.

Lastly, the age of each priest and the date and location of the recording are provided at the beginning of the commentary. The varying ages and locations also give a sense of continuity as they demonstrate the presence of the performance features over time and distance. The commentaries also make note (where possible) of the people who influenced each priest during their training period and other life information that may be relevant. Also, for the most part the commentaries avoid the details of the men's professional lives, because the prayers were largely learned and are performed within the relative seclusion of the community ritual practices, and these experiences are what inform the men's prayer sound most significantly. Whatever their careers outside the priesthood, they all share a common training process and a performance context, and ultimately it is the effect of this training and this performance continuity that is the subject of this transcription and analysis chapter.

[82] See footnote 102 page 221.

7.9 Mobed Behruz – Yazd, Iran (1999)

Yasna 28 and Atash Niyayesh – Tracks 7 & 8

Mobed Behruz was 35 years old at the time of recording. As a boy he completed his Mobedi studies in Yazd Iran under the guidance of teachers at his nursery school, the Dinyari school in Yazd. Also, within the last decade he has been praying with Mobed Parviz Mali (featured later in the study) who has assumed somewhat of a leadership role among the Mobeds of Yazd.

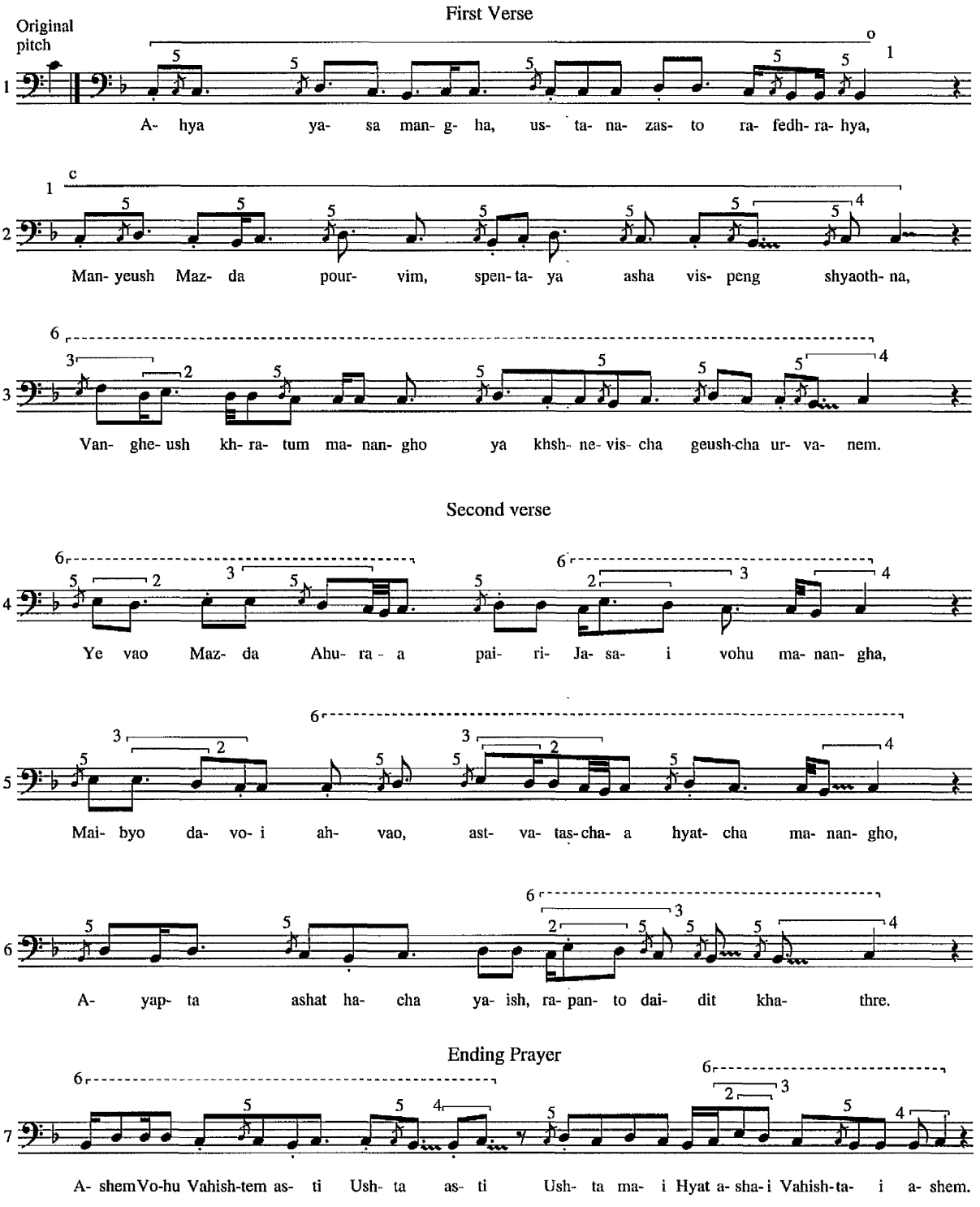
Two characteristic features of Mobed Behruz's performance are a slow pace and vibrato on the subtonic. Of the two prayers transcribed, Yasna 28 is somewhat slower than Atash Niyayesh. When asked about this difference in pace he simply replied that his intention was to be clear and that in this instance[83] there was no particular reason that one was slower than the other. Aside from the pacing, the performance features appear in much the same way in both prayers.

Also distinctive about Mobed Behruz is that unlike most priests, his performances do not contain any line or a pair of lines in which all the performance features succinctly appear. Some lines do manifest five out of six features but never all at once. It is the melodic contour and the creation of alternating melodic movement (features 6 and 1) that never appear in the same line.

Ouvert-clos motion is the feature that appears the least in Mobed Behruz's performances as most of his phrases end on the tonic. Nonetheless when it does manifest it is convincingly present.

[83] As discussed earlier in the chapter on The Structure of The Priesthood, priests often have time deadlines or other practical considerations which affects the pace of their performance. The recordings for this study were made without any deadlines.

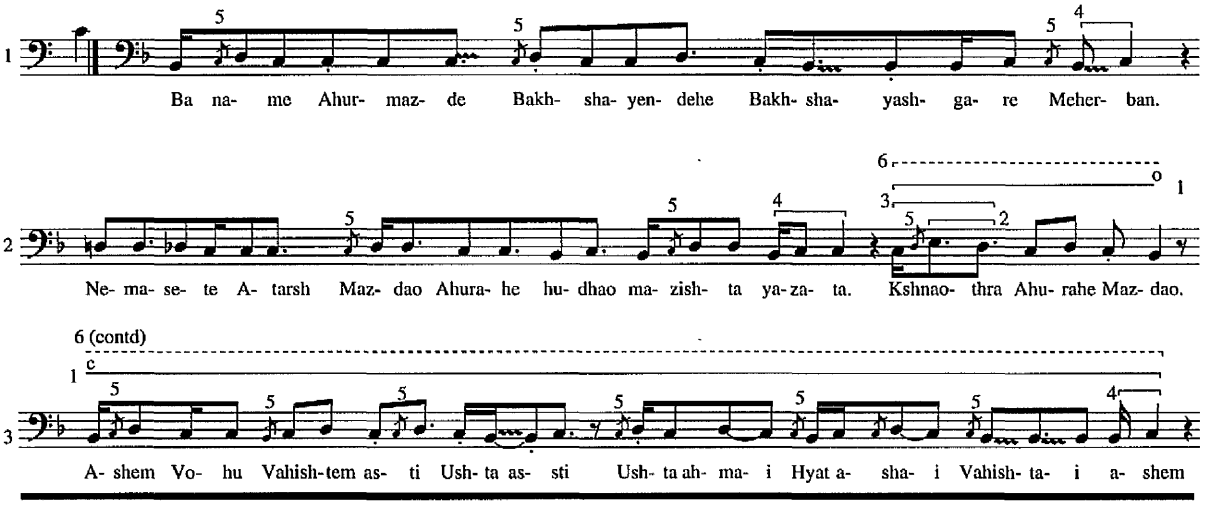
Yasna 28 - Mobed Behruz



Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Behruz

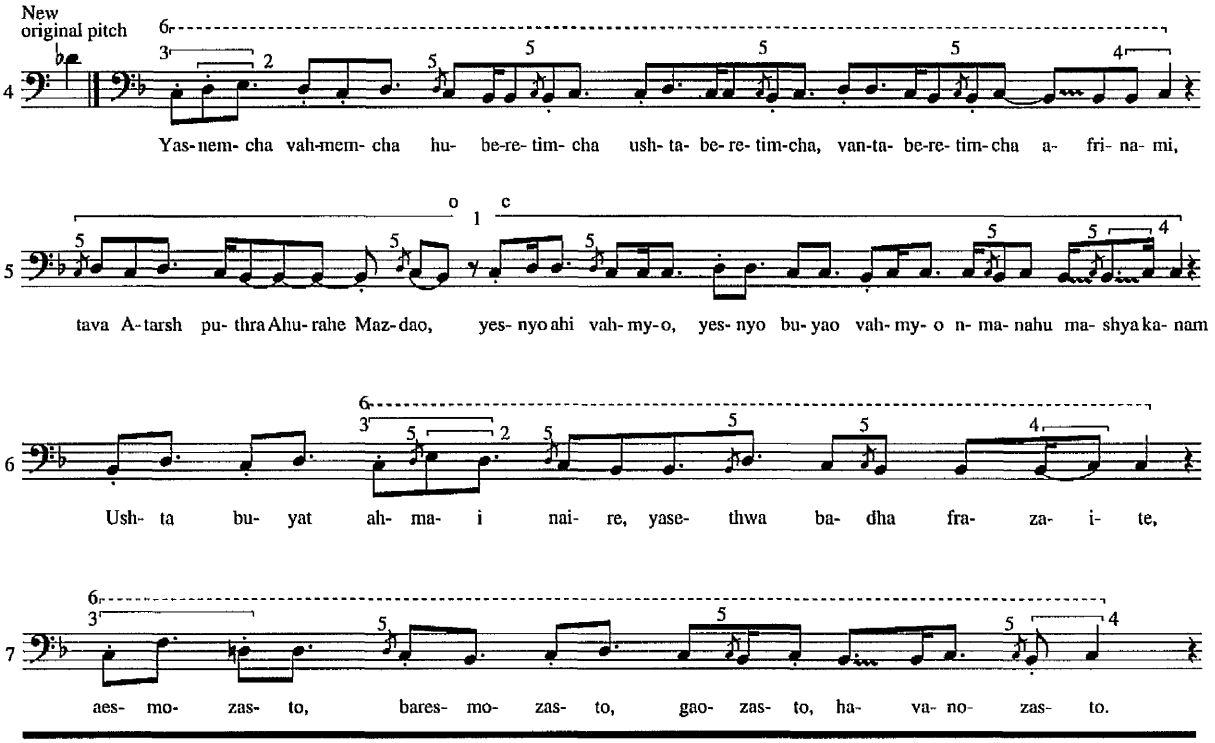
Original pitch

Opening Lines



First Numbered Verse

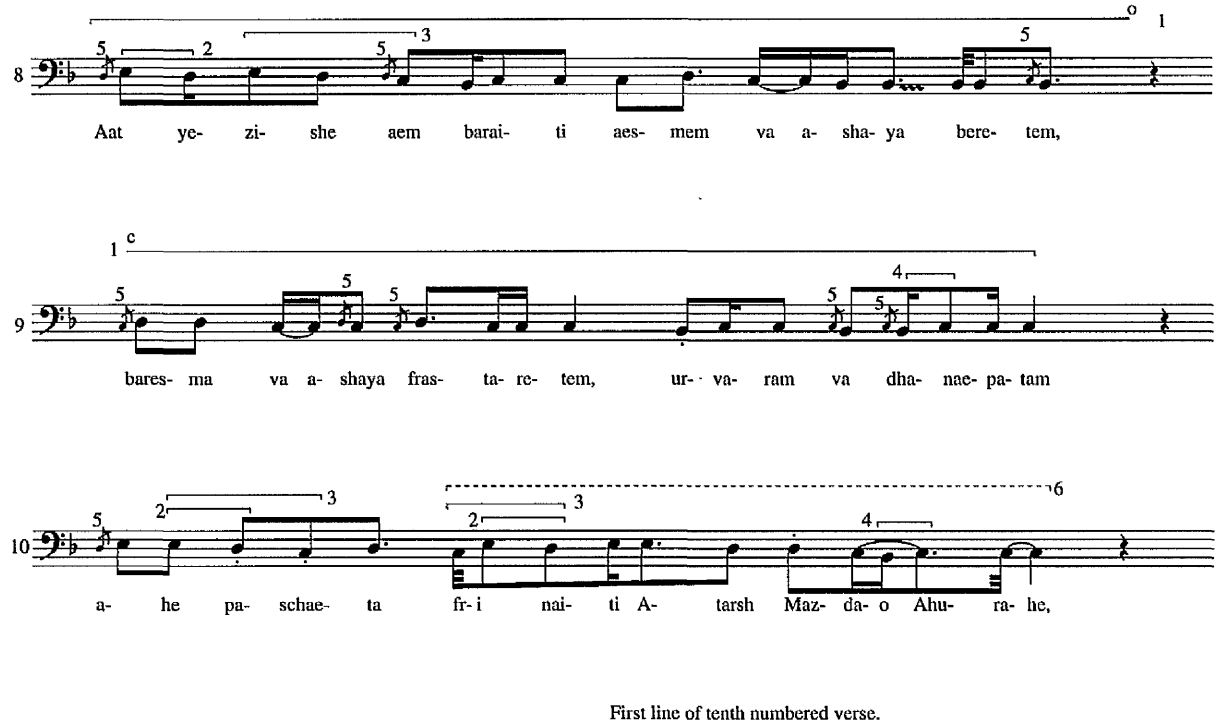
New original pitch



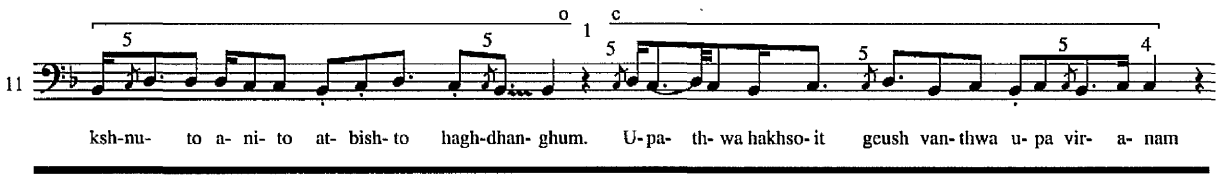
(continued)

Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Behruz (contd)

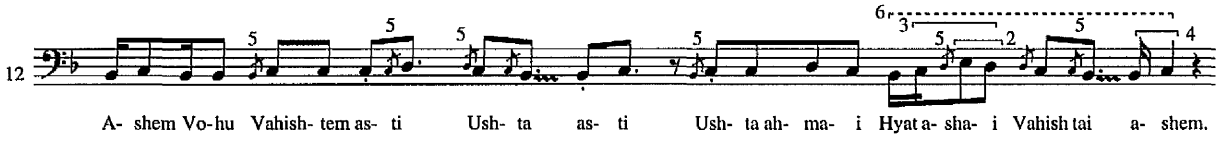
Ninth Numbered Verse



First line of tenth numbered verse.



Last Line Of Prayer



7.10 Mobed Khodabash Yazd, Iran (1999)

Yasna 28 and Atash Niyayesh – Tracks 9 & 10

Mobed Khodabash was 75 years old at the time of recording. As a boy he received priestly training in Yazd from Mobed Firuz Azad Goshasp of Sharifabad. He also received minor further training from Mobed Mali in recent years.

It is notable that due to the relative weakness (due to age) of his voice as compared to some other priests, Mobed Khodabash, by his own admission simply does not have the strength to chant forcefully let alone sing the prayers. Nonetheless, even when performed with a speech-like strength, the prayers still contain all the performance features, which manifest in similar ways in both prayers.

Aside from the strength of his voice, Mobed Khodabash's performances also differ from other priests in the way that some of the performance features are manifested.

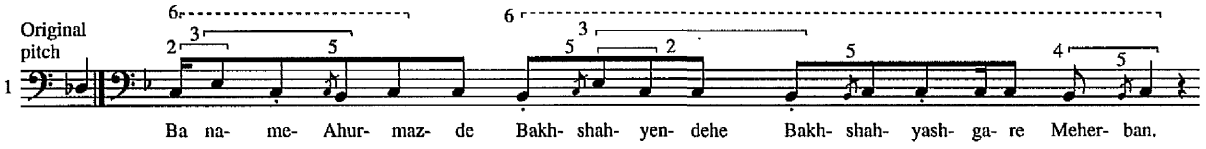
Feature 1, alternating melodic motion is manifested more by balancing motifs rather than by ouvert-clos motion although there are examples of both in Atash Niyayesh. In this prayer motif A is pervaded by a rising motion to the tonic and motif B is signified by the rising tri-semitone between C and E♭. In Yasna 28 the balancing motifs are distinguished by opposing descending/rising beginnings. Motif A begins with a descent from E♭ and motif B is characterised by a rising opening from C to E♭.

The trichord (feature 3) that is outlined most consistently is not C-D♭-E which is more common with most other Mobeds, but rather B-C-E♭. On rare occasions however, both are spelled out within the same phrase (systems 1 & 6

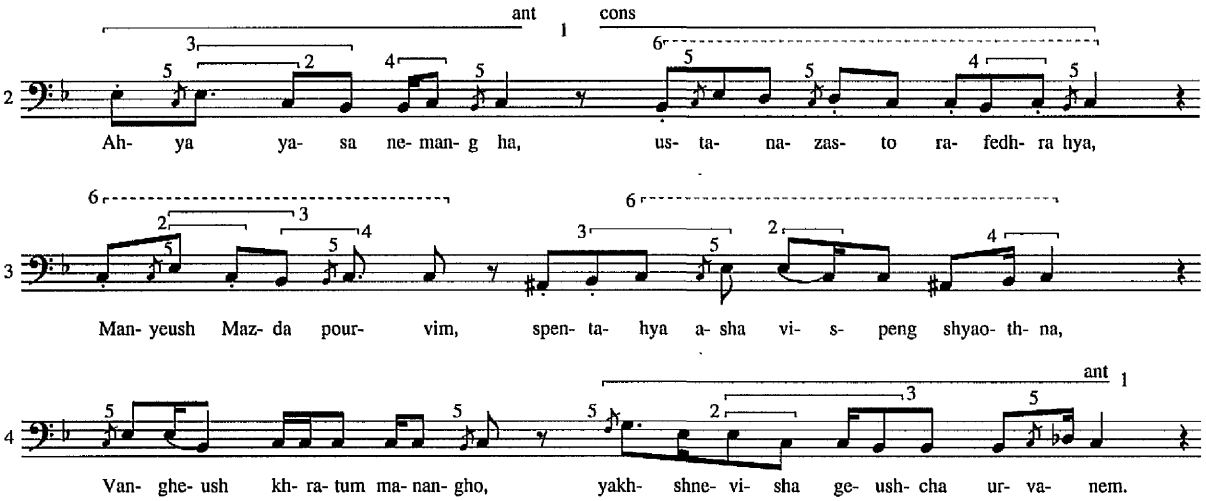
Atash Niyayesh). Also, the tri-semitone between C and E♭ is so consistently present that D is very rarely present. In fact Mobed Khodabash seems to preserve the intervallic relationship of the notes B, C and E♭ even when the trichord is sounded on higher pitches such as C-D♭-F as in system 10 of Atash Niyayesh.

Yasna 28 - Mobed Khodabash

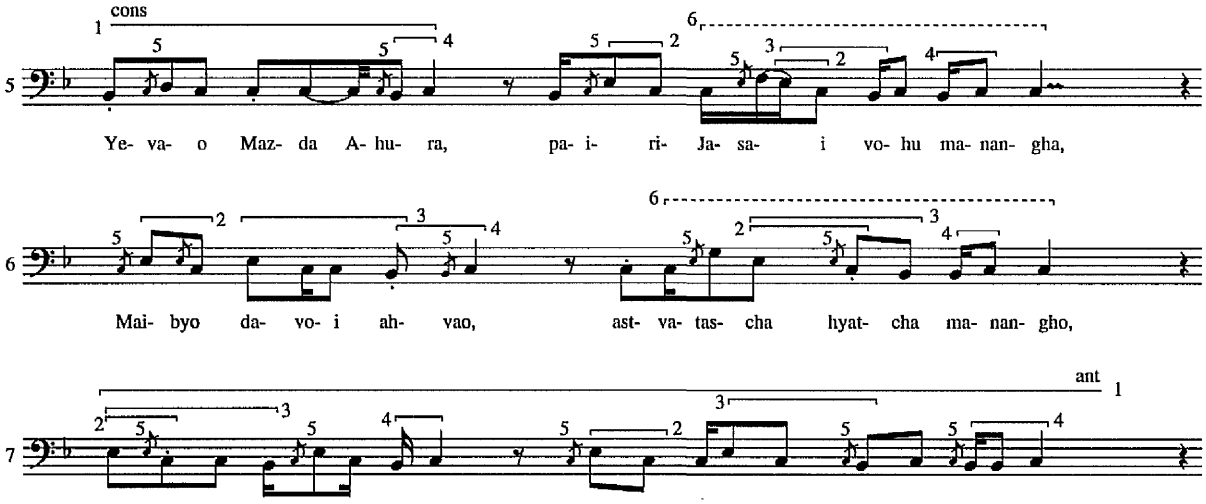
Preliminary Opening Line



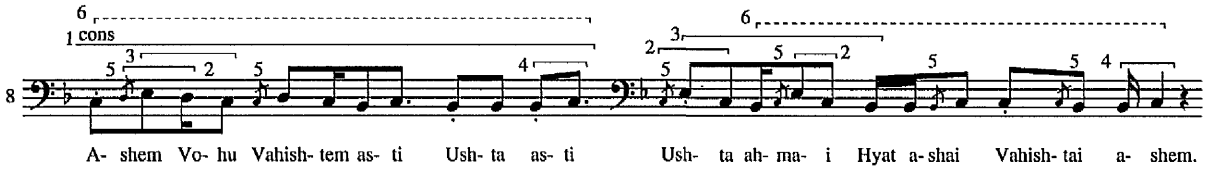
First Verse



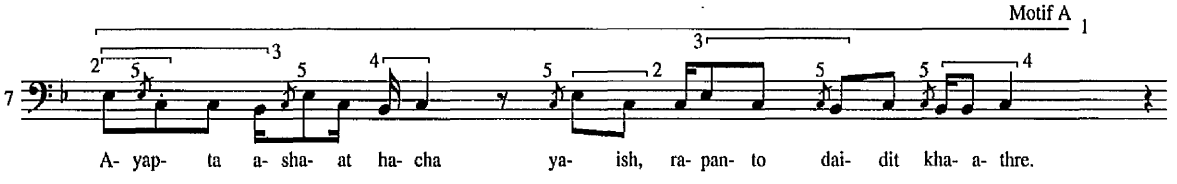
Second Verse



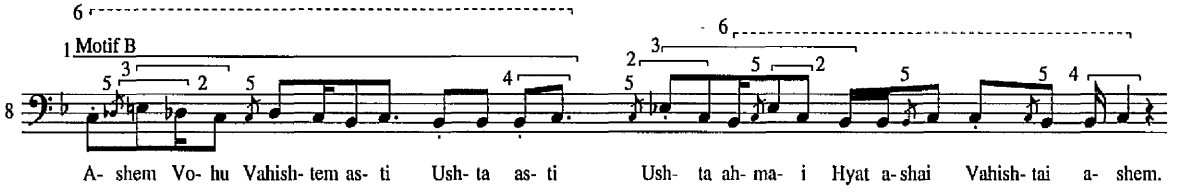
Ending Prayer.



Yasna 28 - Mobed Khodabash (contd)

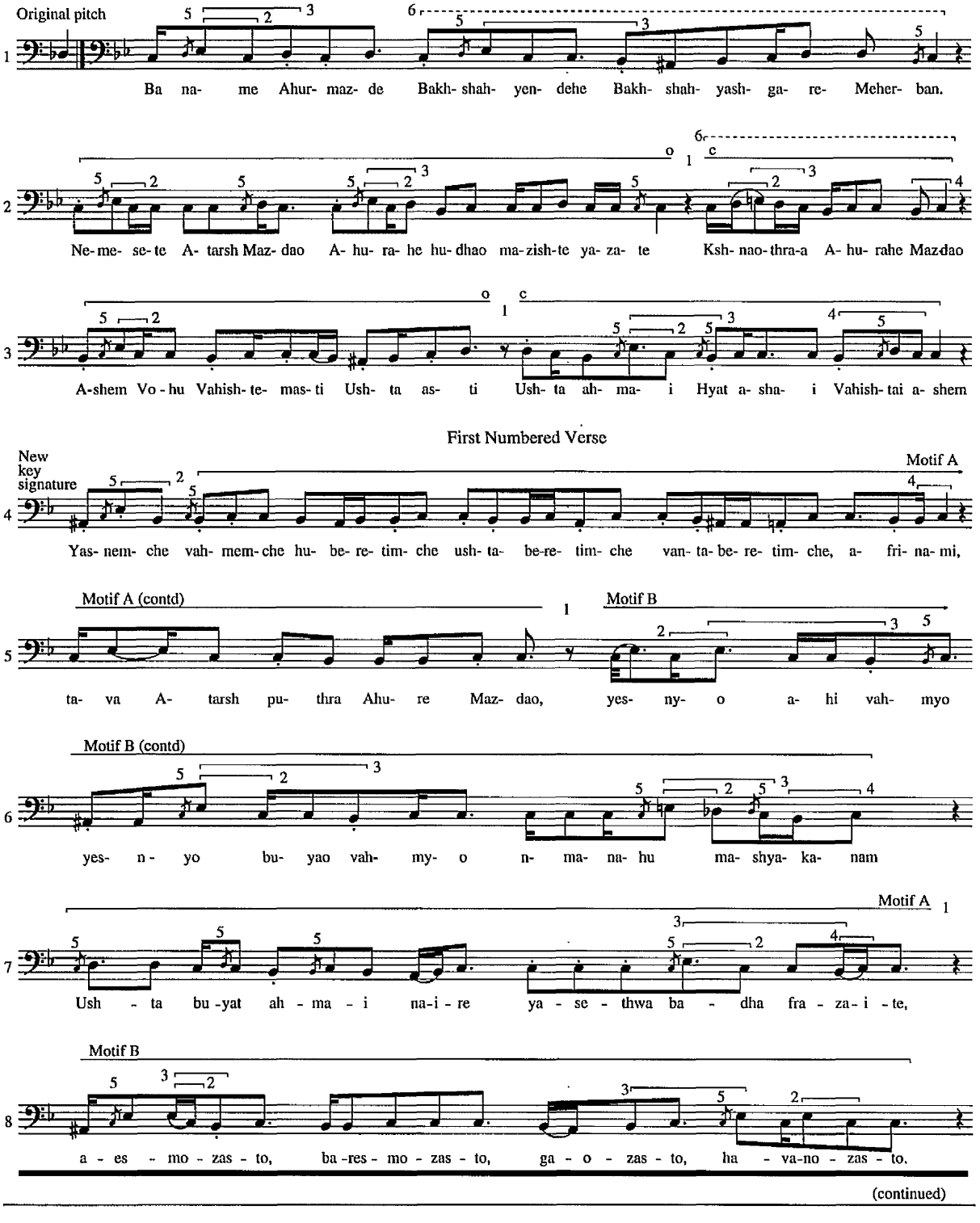


Ending Prayer.



Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Khodabash

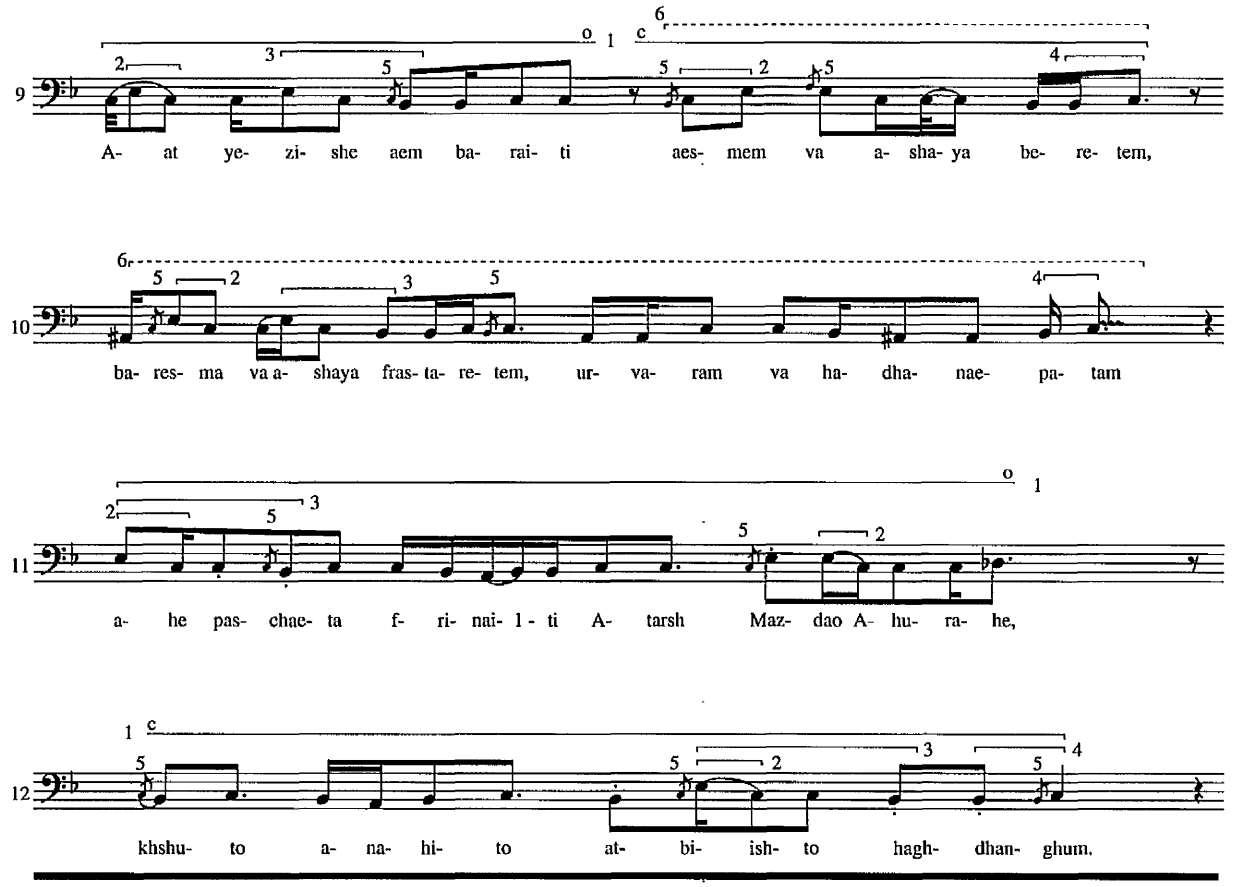
Opening Lines



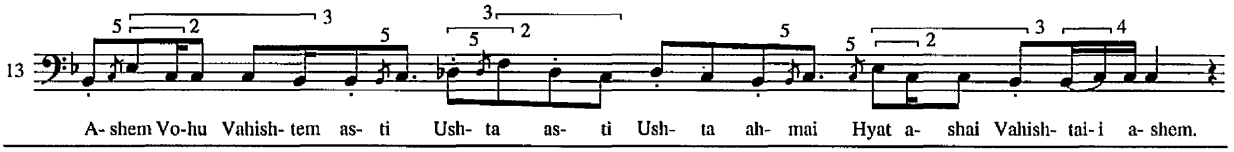
(continued)

Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Khodabash (contd)

Ninth Numbered Verse



Ending Prayer



7.11 Mobed Parviz Mali – Yazd, Iran (1999)

Yasna 28 and Atash Niyayesh– Tracks 11 & 12

Mobed Mali was 46 years old at the time of recording. Like Mobed Behruz, he too received priestly training at his childhood nursery school. Later in life he received further assistance from Mobed Meherabad é Fravaran also of Yazd. As has been noted, in recent years he has played a leadership role in organising and providing additional training and certification for some of the Mobeds of Yazd.

The interval of a tri-semitone (feature 2) has a powerful presence in Mobed Mali's performances. Out of all the performance features it appears with the most consistency. Indeed, for certain passages such as in system 7 of Atash Niyayesh, it occurs so frequently that in order to avoid visual clutter it is only marked at the beginning and then again at the end of the line.

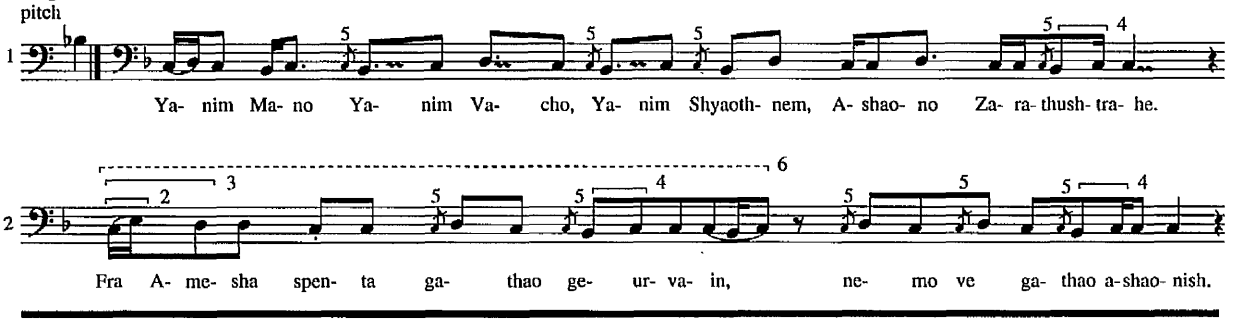
One noticeable difference between the two prayers is that ouvert-clos motion occurs with great regularity in Yasna 28 but is somewhat more random in Atash Niyayesh where it manifests itself without evident predictability. Also, Mobed Mali's Yasna 28 has many phrases that begin with an upward leap of a 4^{th} and this does not appear in Atash Niyayesh. This large upward leap is also found in the performances of Mobeds Khodabash, Mehraban and Niknām of Iran (Mobed Niknām often leaps up a 5^{th}). It is also found in the performances of Mobeds Karanjia, Peshotan Peer and Royinton Peer of India. It is possible that this upward leap is an extension of the upward leap of a 3^{rd} that forms the beginning part of the melodic curve. The basic principle of the curve is that of a series of oscillations that are wider at their start than at their finish and these Mobeds are, on occasion, simply (and without forethought or awareness) widening the beginning.

Although Mobed Mali occupies a leadership role, it is not accurate to say that the Mobeds he has helped reproduce his sound. As has been noted thus far, each puts forward the prayers in his own voice and with his own habits and the underlying structures that connect them are the same that are found in men they have never met and whose lives do not intersect with theirs—Mobeds from India. Therefore it is more accurate to suggest that after training, all these Mobeds do not simply reproduce a Master, but rather are plugged into and participate in a larger Zoroastrian tradition.

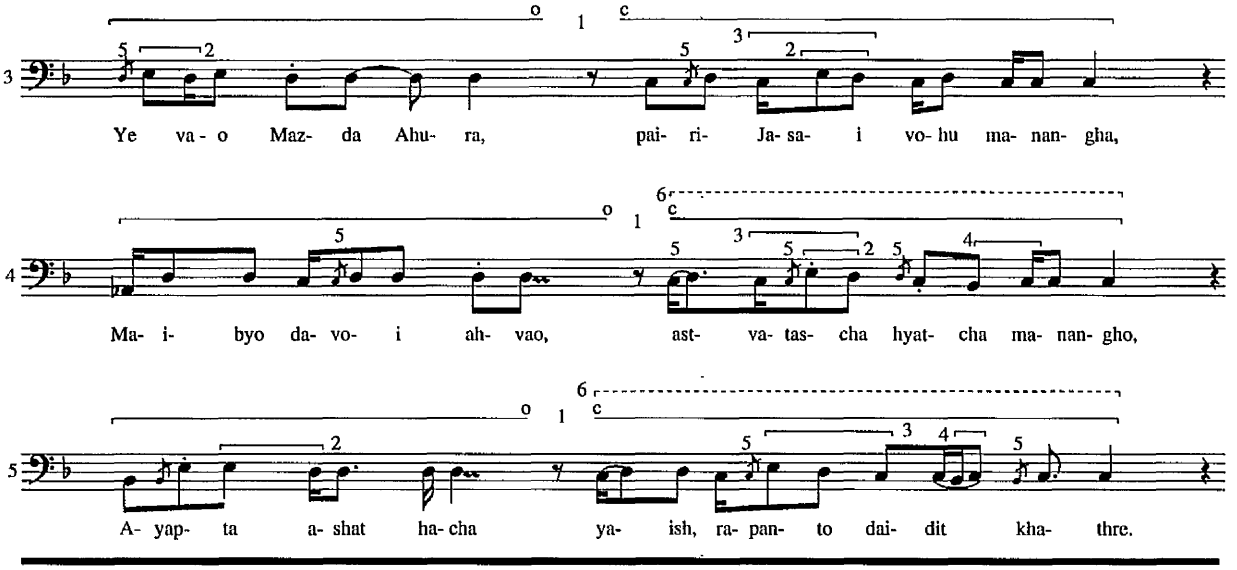
Yasna 28 - Mobed Mali

Original pitch

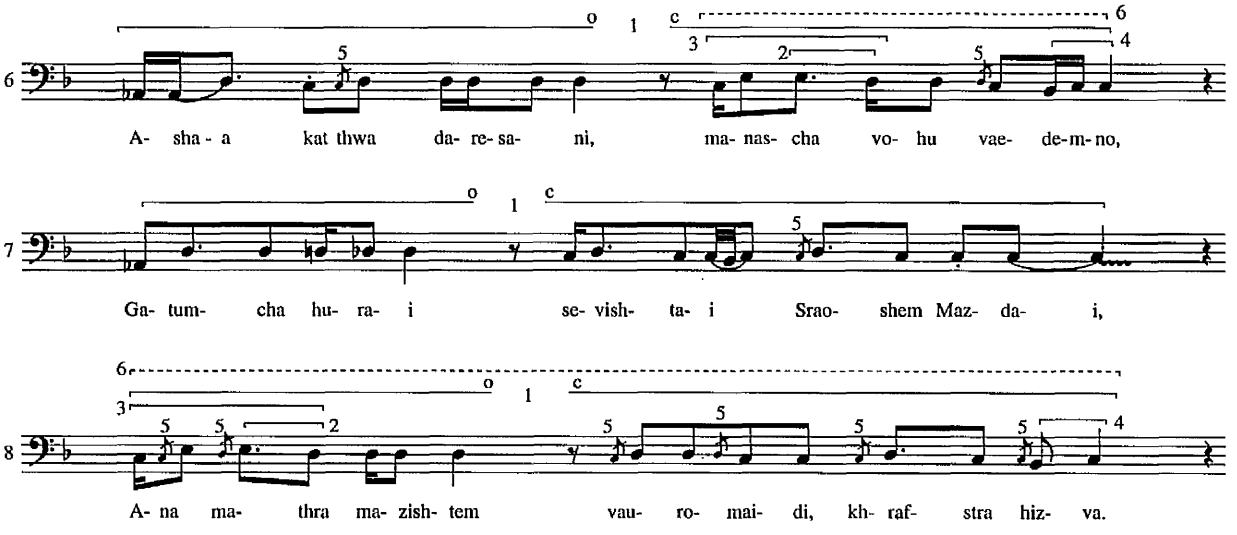
Opening Lines



Second Verse



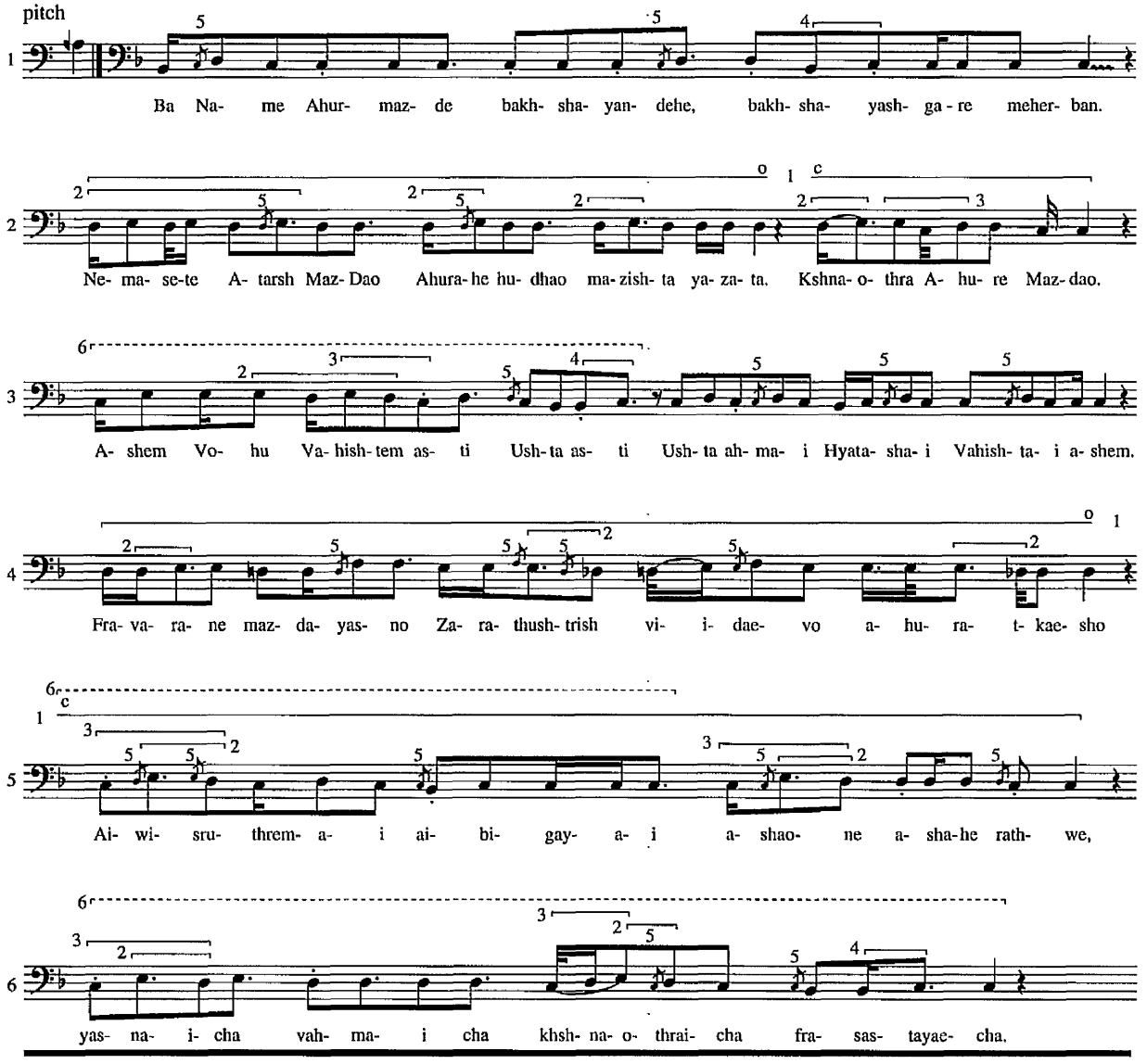
Fifth Verse



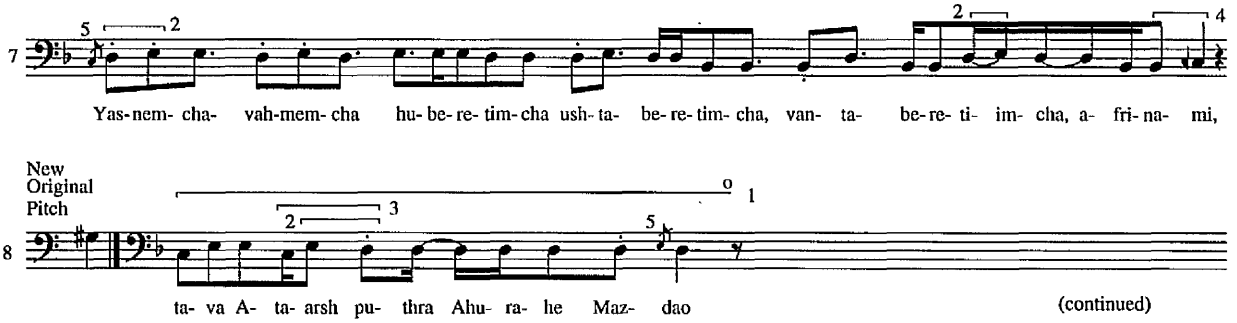
Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Mali

Opening Lines

Original pitch



First Numbered Verse

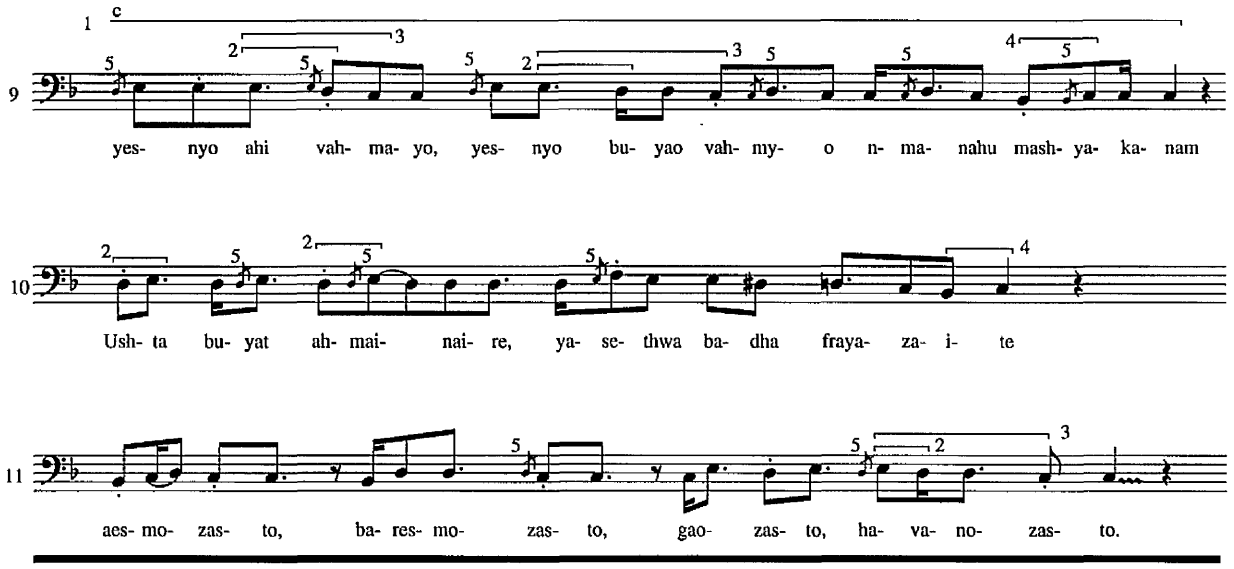


New Original Pitch

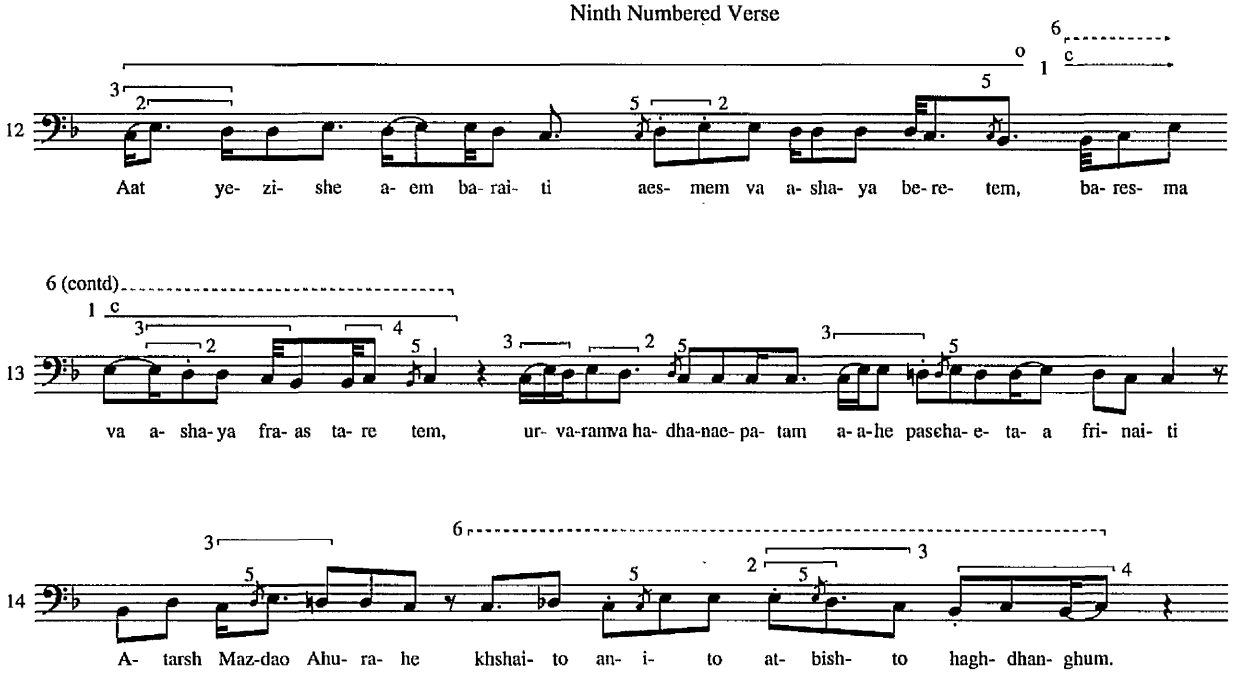
(continued)

Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Mali (continued)

First Numbered Verse (continued)



Ninth Numbered Verse



7.12 Mobed Mehraban – Yazd, Iran (1999)

Yasna 28 and Atash Niyayesh – Tracks 13 & 14

Mobed Mehraban was 43 years old at the time of recording. He completed his Mobedi studies in Yazd between the ages of seven and fourteen and then along with Mobeds Behruz and Khodabash he received a small degree of further training from Mobed Mali.

There are two strong similarities between the performances of Mobed Mehraban and Mobed Mali. First is the extreme regularity of ouvert-clos motion in Yasna 28 and the fact that for both of them this motion is rare in Atash Niyayesh. Second is the already mentioned upward leap of a 4^{th} at the beginnings of some phrases.

However a difference between the two men is that in Mobed Mehraban's Atash Niyayesh, balancing motifs are present whereas they does not appear in any of Mobed Mali's performances. In Mobed Mehraban's performance the beginnings of some phrases strongly feature D (systems 1-4) and others (2^{nd} half of system 6 to system 12) give similar emphasis to E♭. This alternating tonal focus can be viewed as motifs A and B.

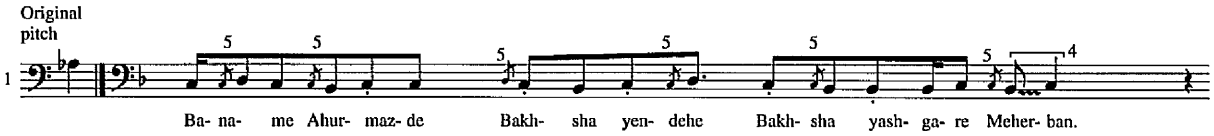
Mobed Mehraban's performance also has two similarities to that of Mobed Khodabash. The first is that both men use balancing motifs (although the motifs are different). Also, regarding feature 3 (spelling out of a trichord) both spell out two different ones within the same performance. In Mobed Mehraban's Atash Niyayesh the trichord being outlined begins as C, D, E♭ (not used by Mobed Khodabash) but soon becomes B, C, E♭, which is also the trichord predominantly spelled out by Mobed Khodabash. Even in system 5 of Mobed Mehraban's Atash Niyayesh where the C, D, E♭ trichord is spelled out

three times it can be seen that for the last two occurrences D is actually a passing note and B, having a greater note value is more forceful upon the ear.

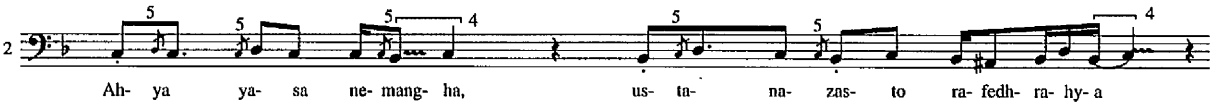
One characteristic that is unique to Mobed Mehraban is the pervasive occurrence of vibrato on the highest note of a trichord which has the effect of creating a three note scale of which the highest often receives special treatment. System four of Yasna 28 and system 5 of Atash Niyayesh are particularly clear examples of this ornamentation. The subtonic also receives vibrato but overall not quite as much as does the highest note.

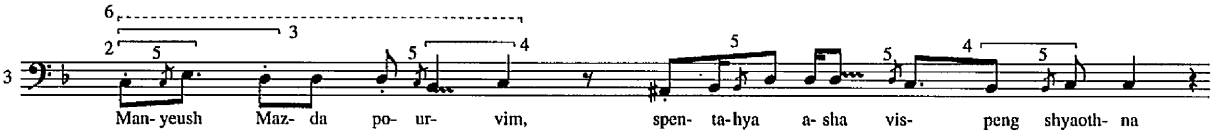
Yasna 28 - Mobed Mehraban

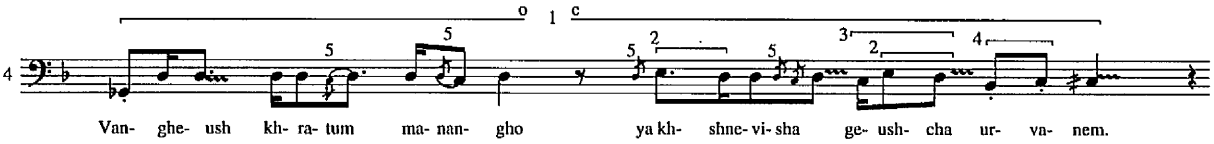
Preliminary Opening Line



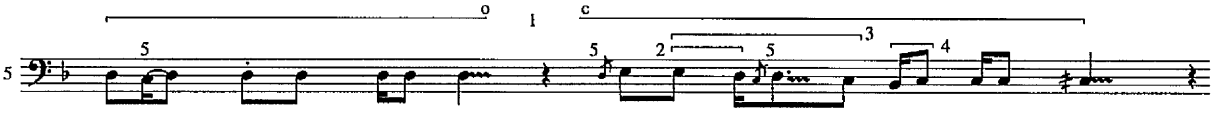
First Verse

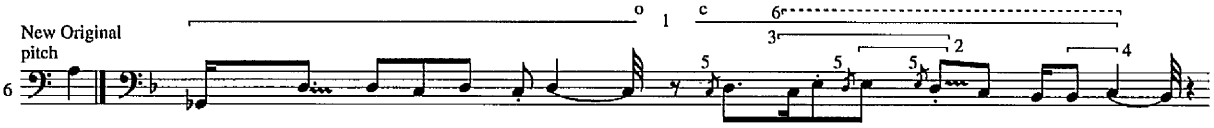


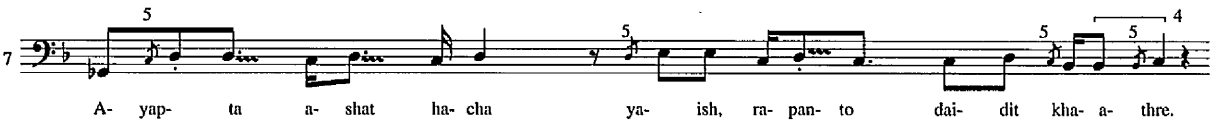




Second Verse



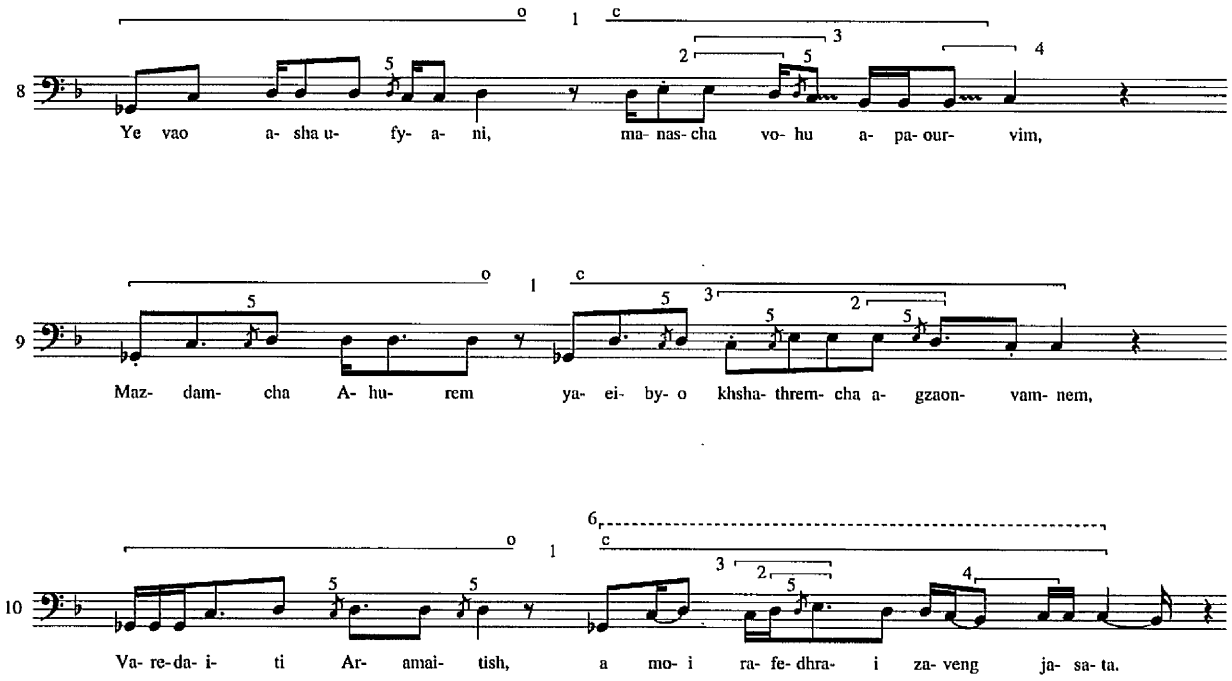




(continued)

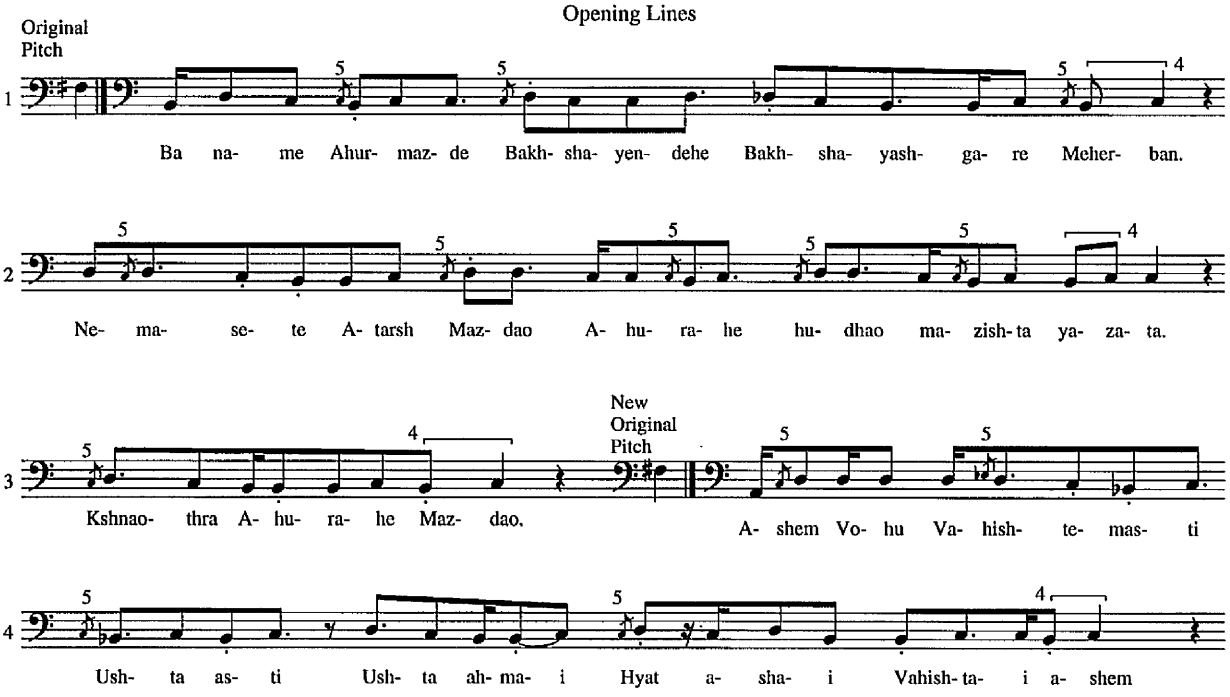
Yasna 28 - Mobed Mehraban (continued)

Third Verse

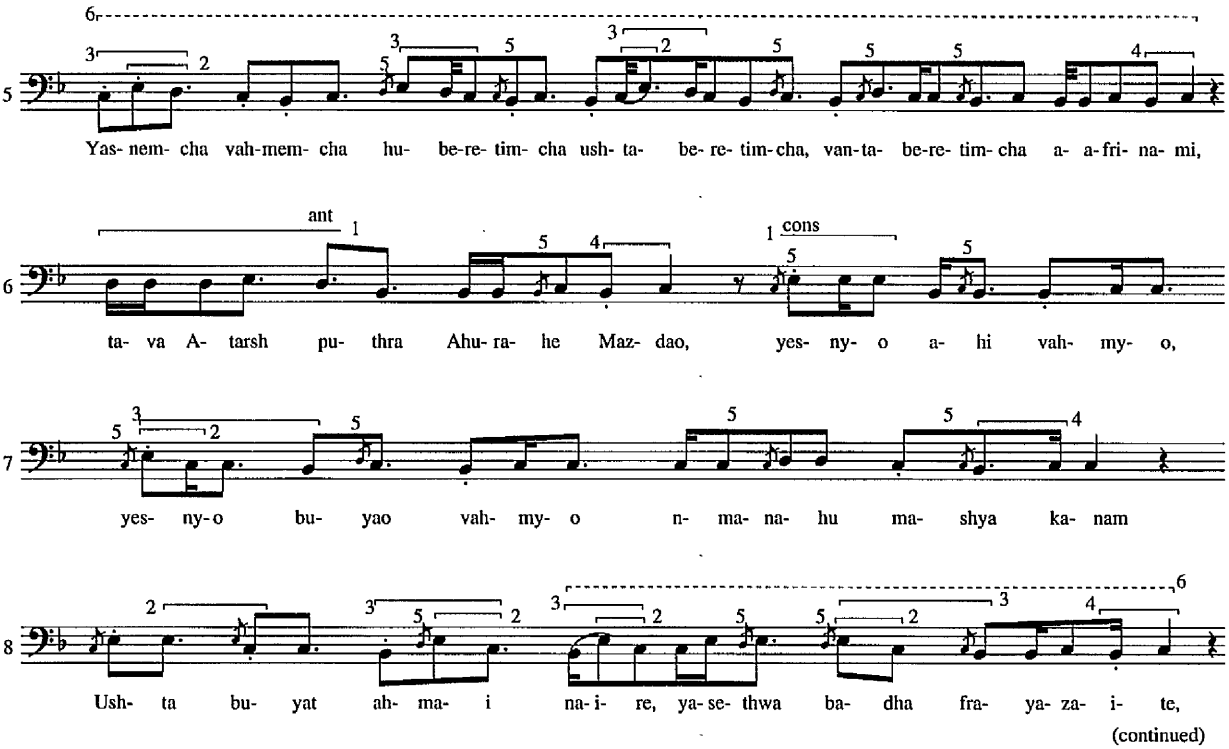


Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Mehraban

Opening Lines



First Numbered Verse



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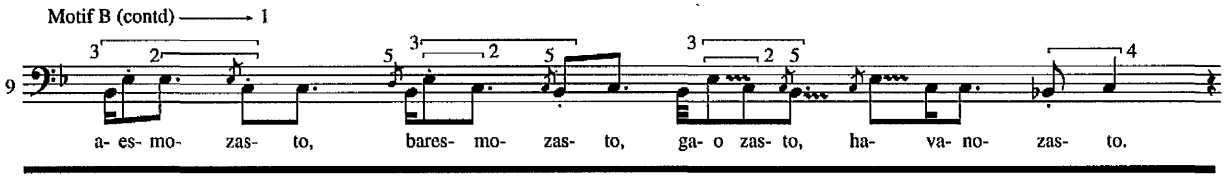
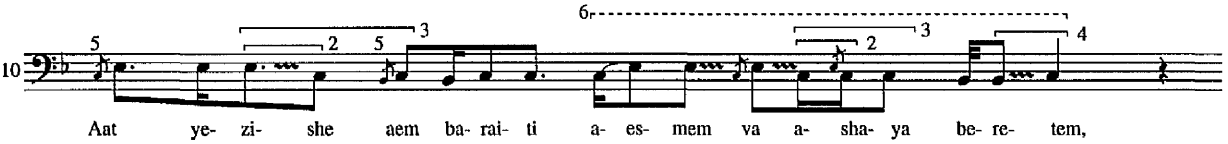
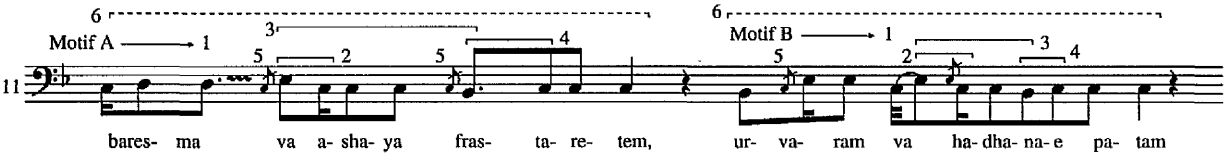
Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Mehraban (continued)

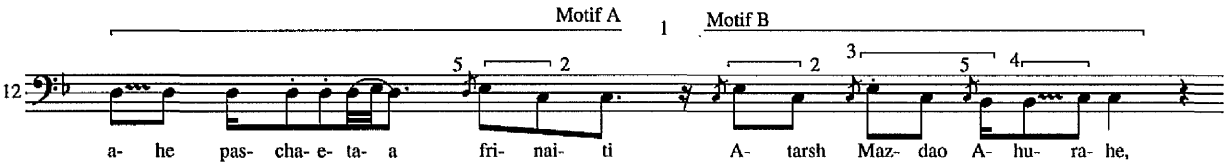
First Numbered Verse (continued)

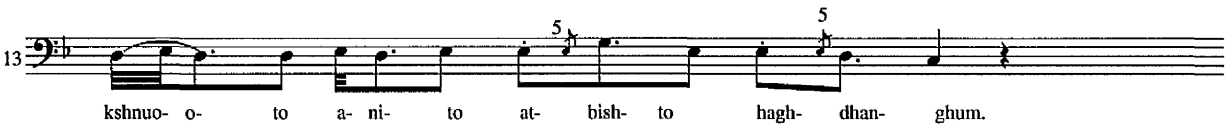


Ninth Numbered Verse

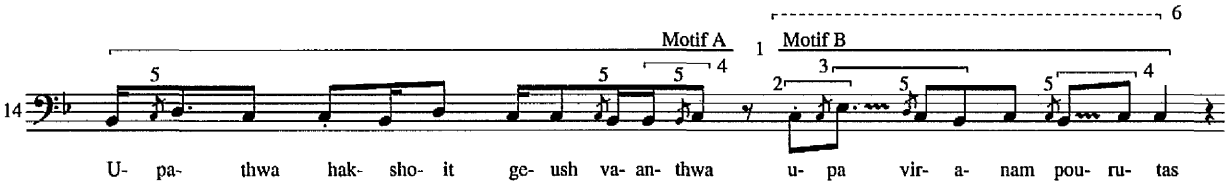








First Line of Tenth Numbered Verse.



7.13 Mobed Niknām – Tehran, Iran (1999)

Yasna 28 and Atash Niyayesh – Track 15 & 16

Mobed Niknām was 45 years old at the time of recording. Although recorded in Tehran, Mobed Niknām is originally from Yazd where as a boy he was trained by Mobeds Bahman é Ahurahi and Mehraban é Fouruhi. More recently he has received further certification instruction from Mobed Firuze Azadi Goshtasp.

It is apparent that Mobed Niknām offers one of the most musically rich performances out of all the Mobeds studied. Not only does he manifest all six performance features with clear transparency (all six are immediately presented in the first two phrases of system 1 of Atash Niyayesh) but his performances are also infused with other elements which suggest that a musically developed sensibility is in operation. For one, his range (a 10^{th}) far exceeds that of other Mobeds. Furthermore, from system 2 onwards of Atash Niyayesh, many phrases begin with an upward leap of a 6^{th} from G below the tonic. This is mirrored by the occasional leap of a 6^{th} to G (or G♯) above the tonic. This bookending of the tonic by upper and lower G provides a certain tonal symmetry. Also in Atash Niyayesh (systems 6 & 7), the key of c minor is strongly suggested with ouvert-clos motion beginning and ending on C and the fact that B, E, and A are all flatted. No other Mobed has manifested such a complete scalar structure.

Ouvert-clos motion seems to be a dominating factor of Mobed Niknām's performances for both prayers. It is also of note that the only other priest with whom the ouvert-clos structure is quite so pervasive is Mobed Karanjia of India. The paths of these two men have never crossed.

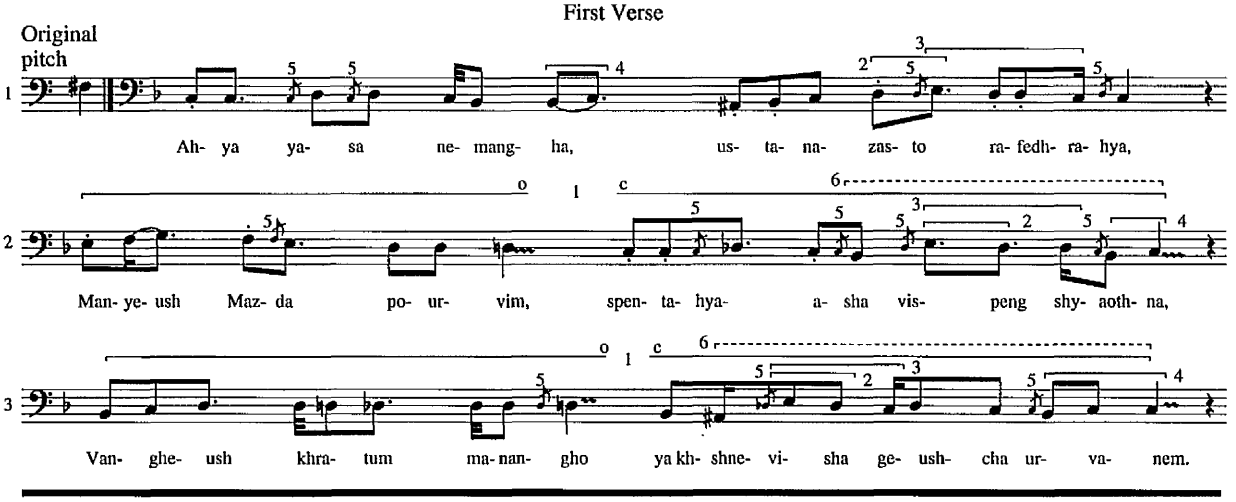
In addition to regular ouvert-clos motion, Mobed Niknām's performance of Atash Niyayesh can also be analysed as containing an ABCBAB pattern

(please see page titled Atash Niyayesh & Yasna 28 - alternate analysis). In this structure A and B are the ouvert and clos phrases and C is a brief modulation of sorts to a 5^{th} or higher above the tonic which is followed by a return to ouvert-clos phrasing. The return is usually immediate or delayed by no more than one intermediate phrase.

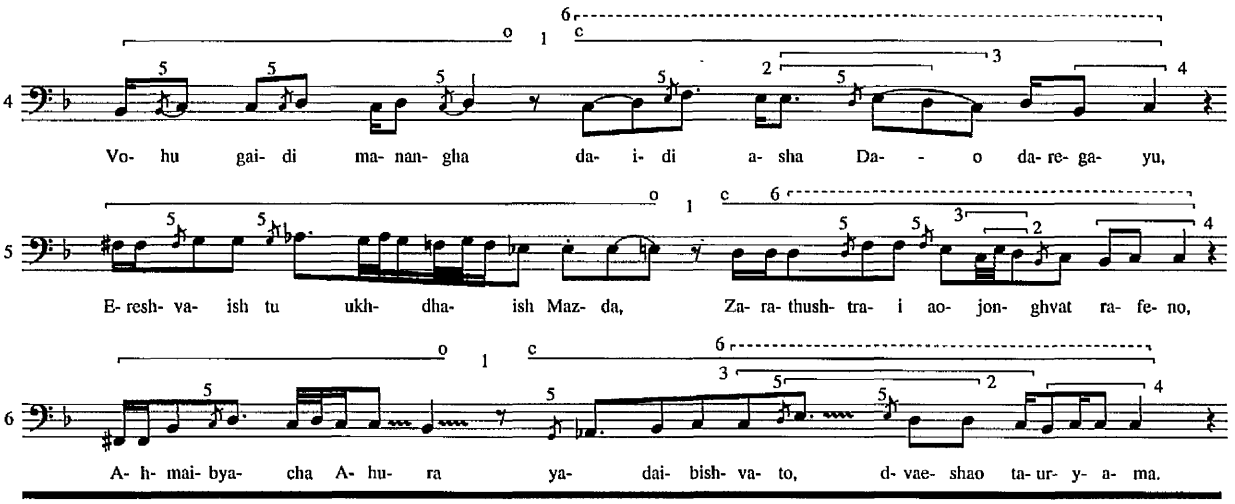
Although Mobed Niknām insisted that he had no musical training and has no musical knowledge whatsoever, all these elements are possibly indicative of a more sophisticated musical ability than is evident in the performances of other Mobeds. Overall the combined features of Mobed Niknām's sound serve to give his prayers a more song-like quality than those of most other priests.

Yasna 28 - Mobed Niknaam

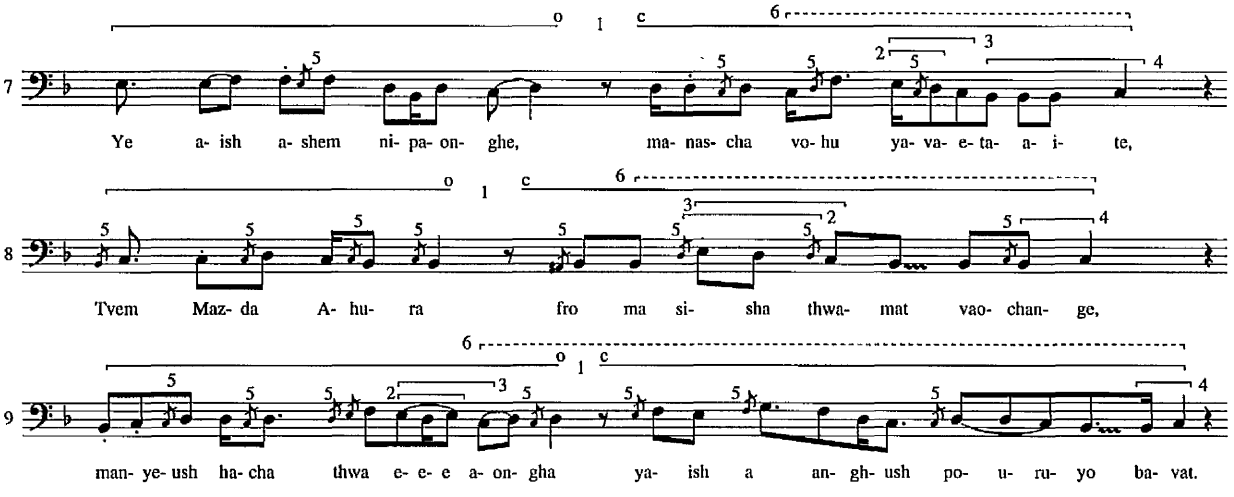
First Verse



Sixth Verse

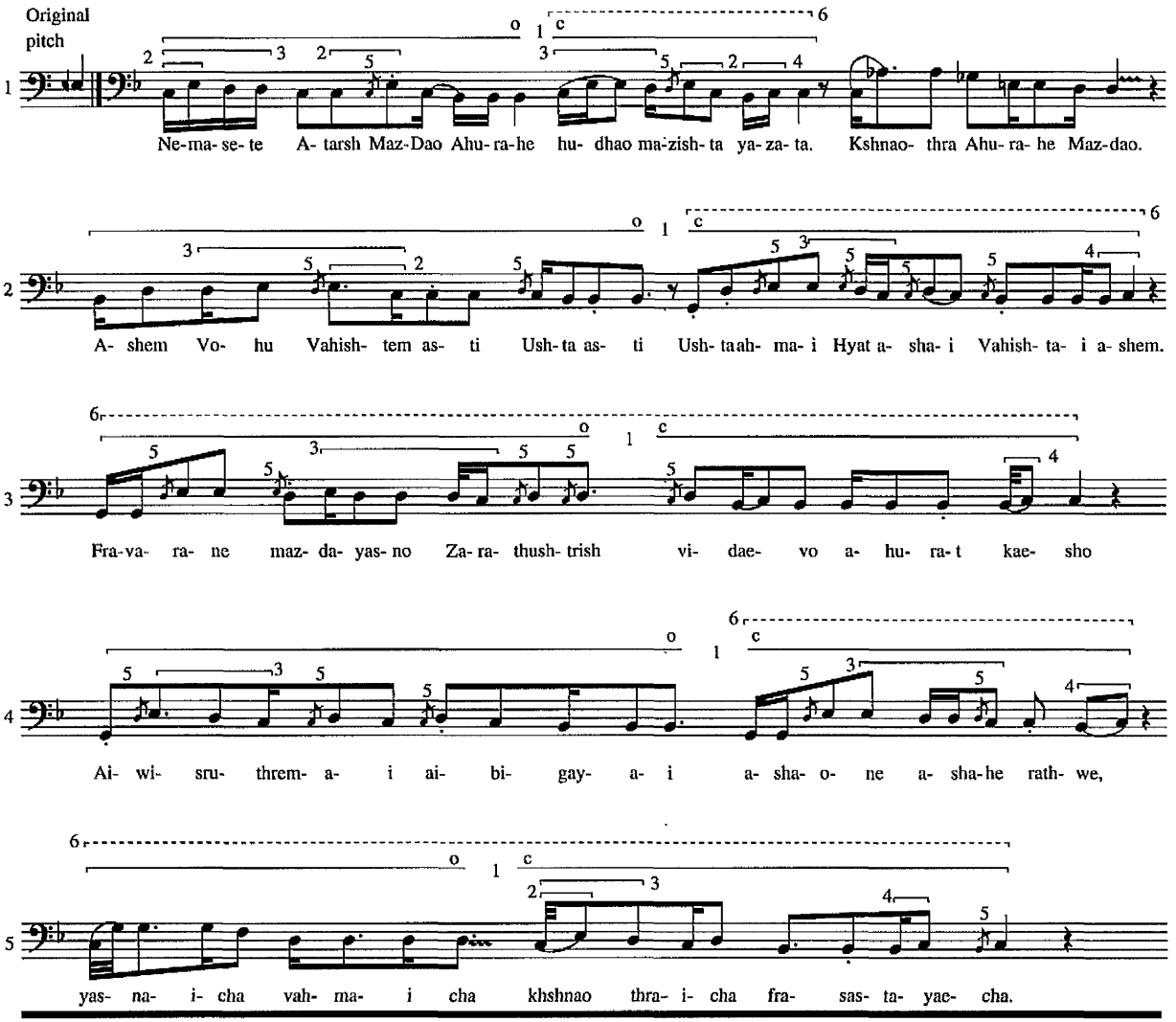


Final Verse

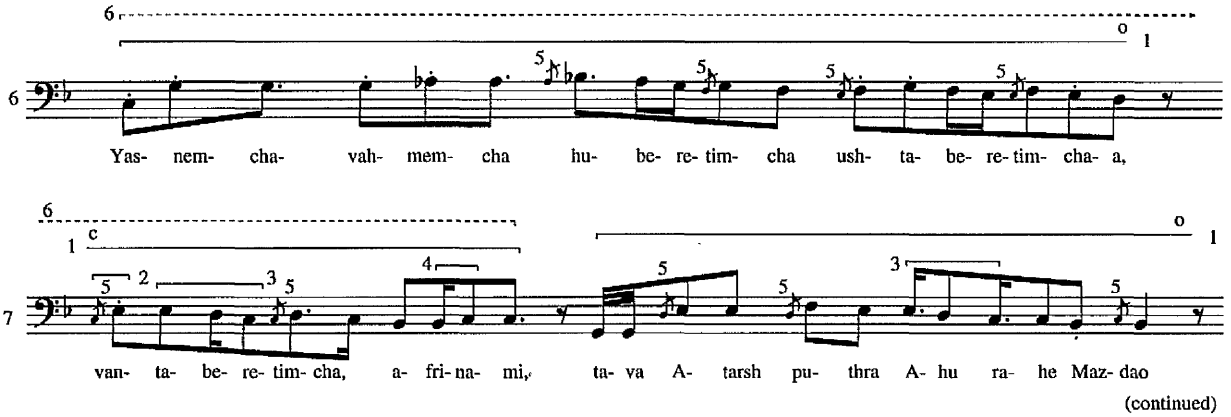


Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Niknaam

Opening Lines



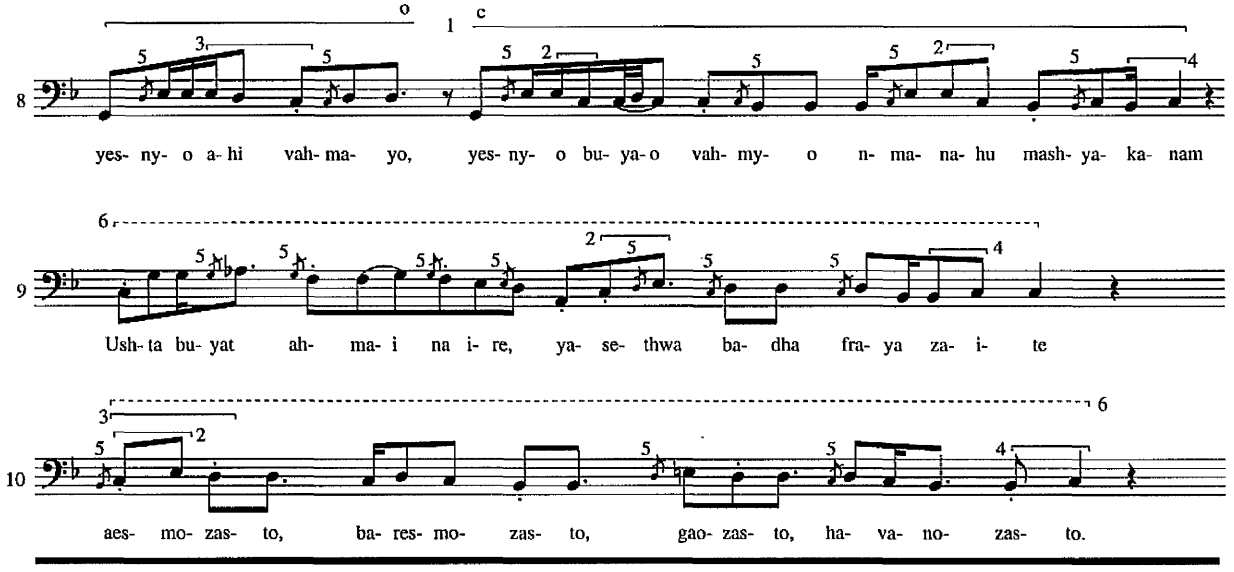
First Numbered Verse



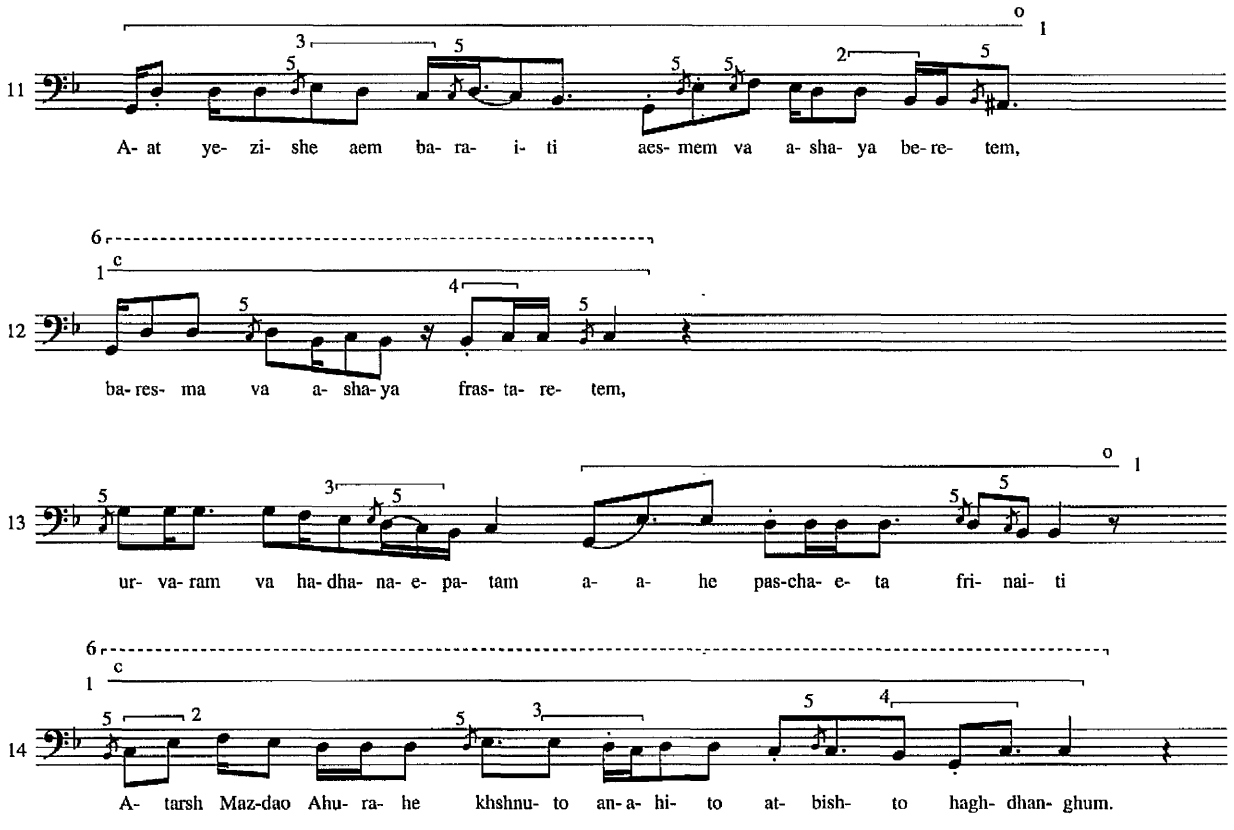
(continued)

Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Niknaam (continued)

First Numbered Verse (continued)

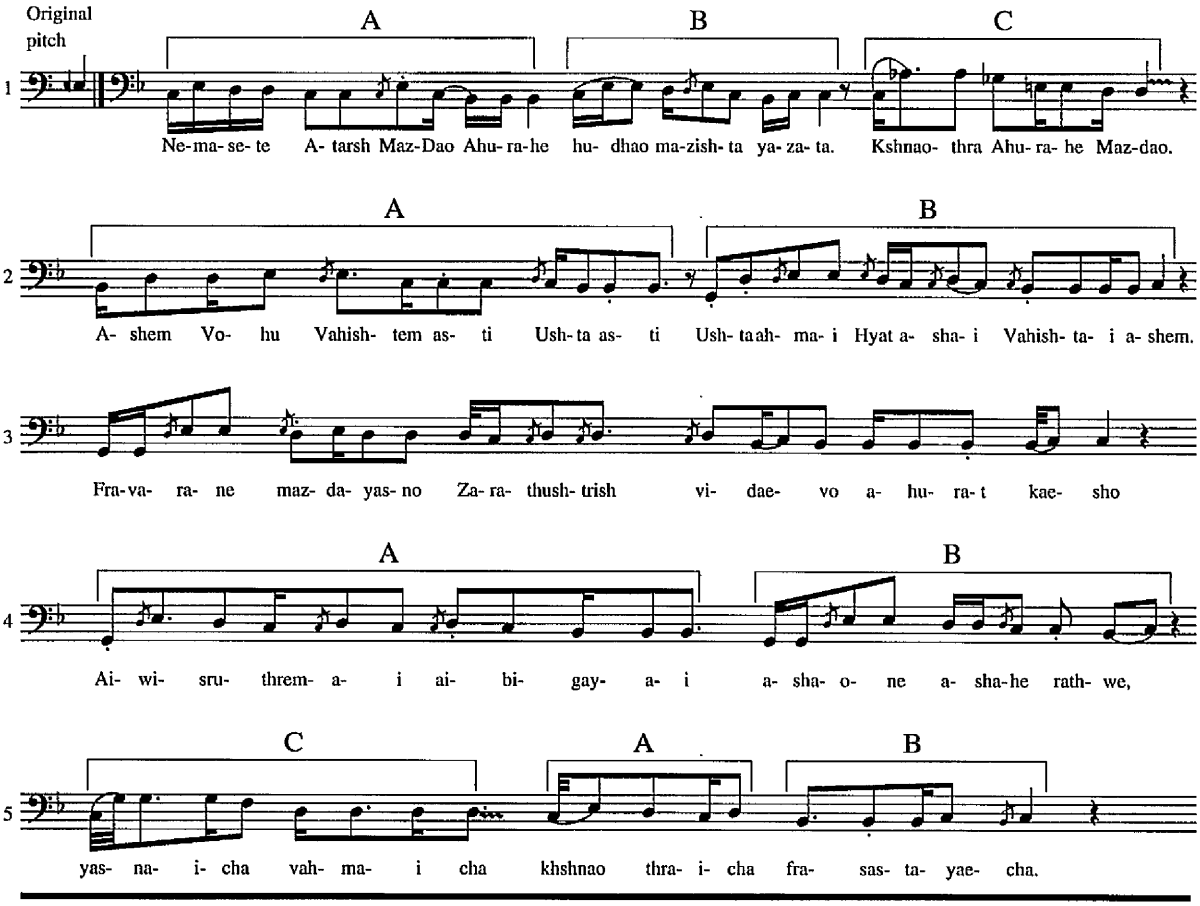


Ninth Numbered Verse



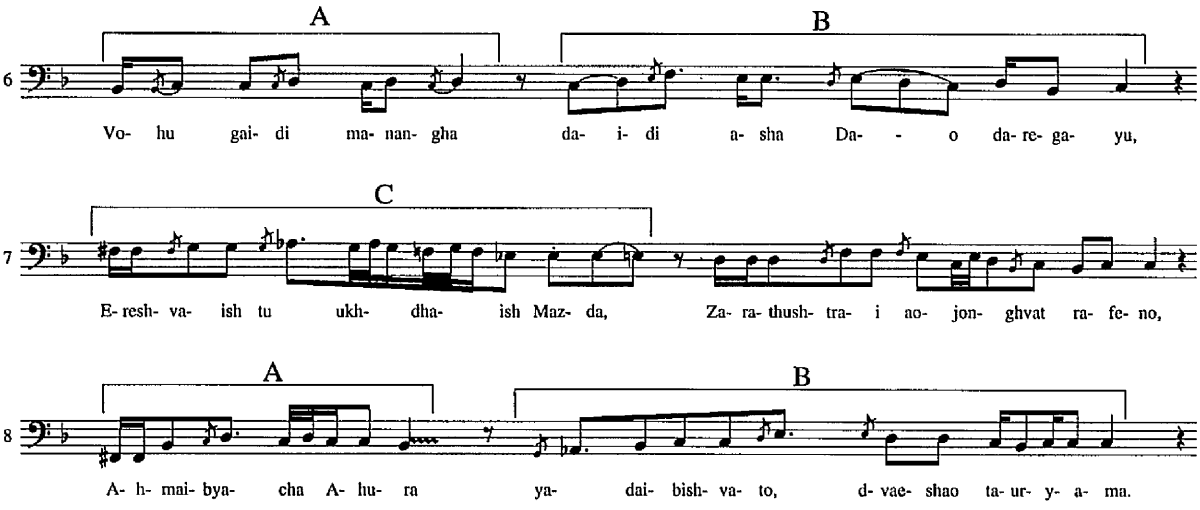
Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Niknaam - Alternate Analysis

Opening Lines



Yasna 28 - Mobed Niknaam - Alternate Analysis

Sixth Verse



7.14 Mobed Ramiyar Karanjia – Bombay, India (2000)

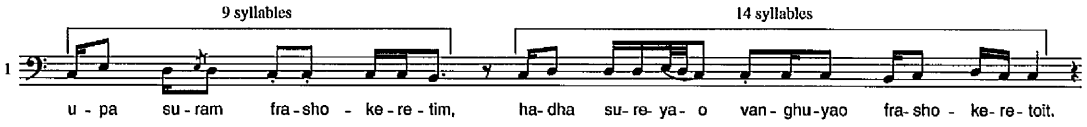
Yasna 28 and Atash Niyayesh – Tracks 17 & 18

Mobed Karanjia was 35 years old at the time of recording. He is presently the head of the Dadar Madressa training school for priests in Bombay. He was also a student of the Madressa and completed his Mobedi studies there.

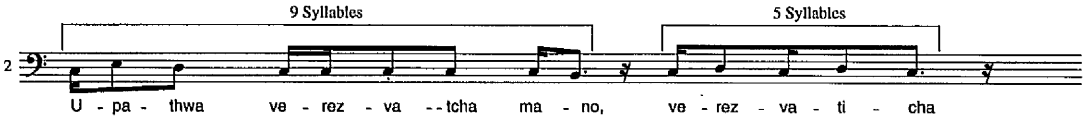
Aside from a slight vibrato that pervades his sound, feature 1, ouvert-clos motion is the single most consistent element in Mobed Karanjia's performance. He seems to be so locked into ouvert-clos motion that it prevails in all prayers regardless of their sentence structure. Yasna 28 is mostly comprised of poetic couplets and it may have been possible to conjecture that lines consistently written in pairs may simply from the point of grammatical rhythm, lend themselves naturally to a departure-and-return motion such as ouvert-clos. However, the numbered verses of Atash Niyayesh are more prose-like and yet both prayers are performed with the swaying alternation of this melodic movement.

Such is the momentum of this motion in Atash Niyayesh that, as demonstrated in the notation below, the text seems literally to be squeezed into it regardless of the differing lengths of phrases. Lines with as few as five or as many as fourteen syllables are both stretched or crammed unevenly into ouvert-clos motion. As a rule however, it must be said that Mobed Karanjia seems to (instinctively) make an attempt to pair up lines of roughly equal lengths as indicated by system 3 below. In this prayer he seems to divide lines into lengths of approximately seven to nine syllables.

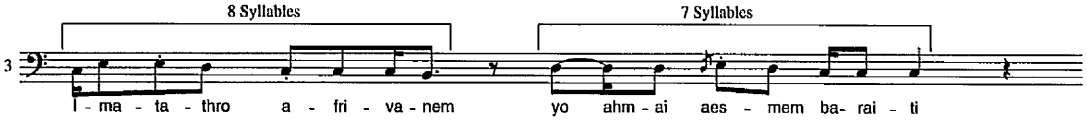
Third Numbered Verse. Last Two Lines



Tenth Numbered Verse, Second Line

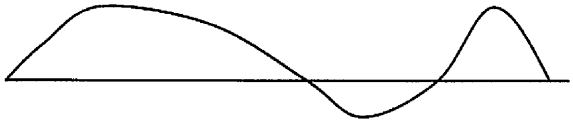


Tenth Numbered Verse, Third & Fourth lines



In comparison to the pervasive feature 1, other features such as the tri-semitone and subtonic as leading tone (features 2 and 4) appear only fleetingly.

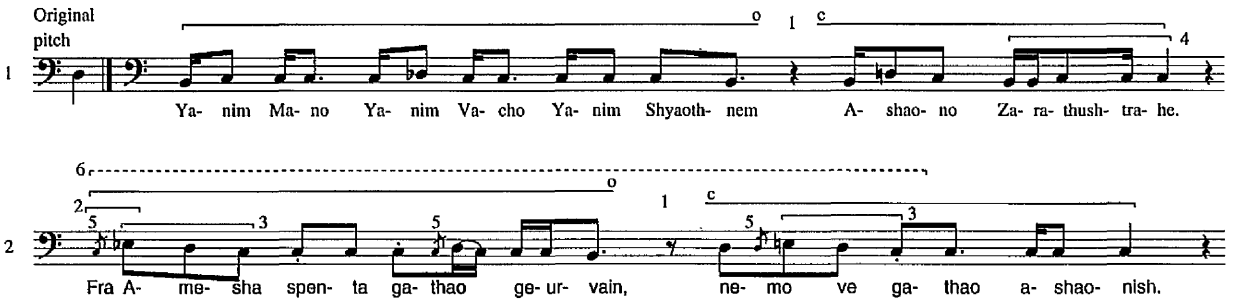
A final distinction of his performance is that the melodic curve he manifests is mostly type B which descends to the tonic at the end.



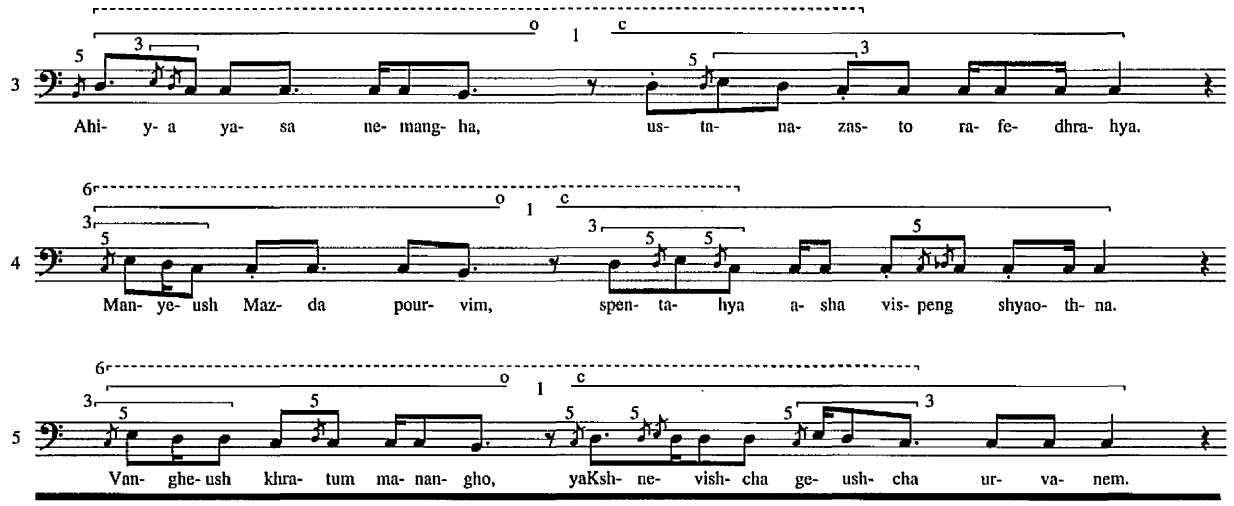
It also notable that type A also appears once in Yasna 28 systems 9 and 10.

Yasna 28 - Mobed Karanjia

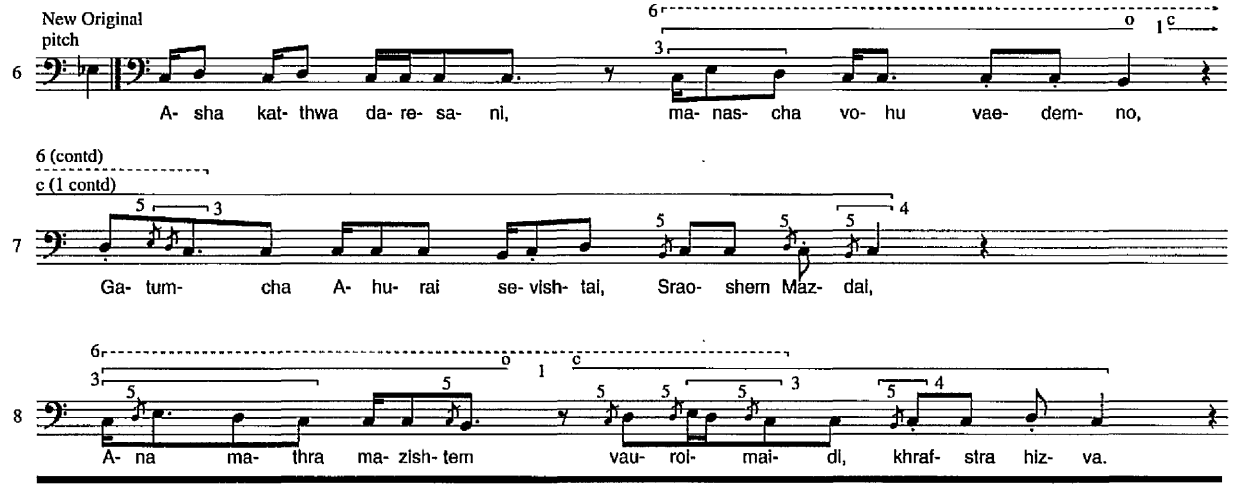
Opening Lines



First Stanza



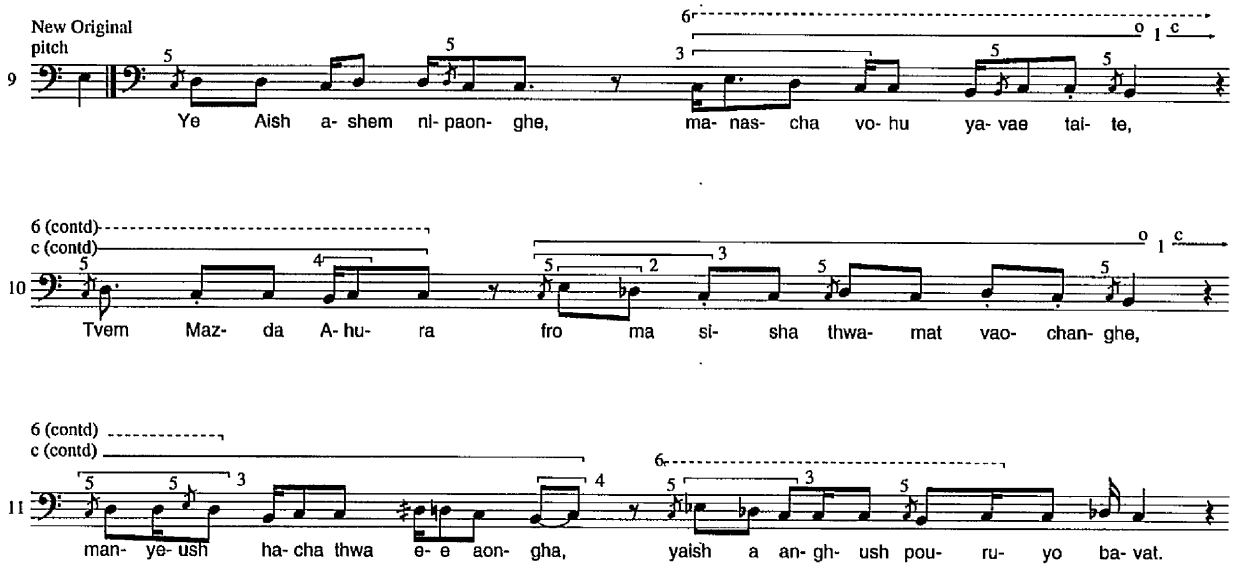
Fifth Stanza



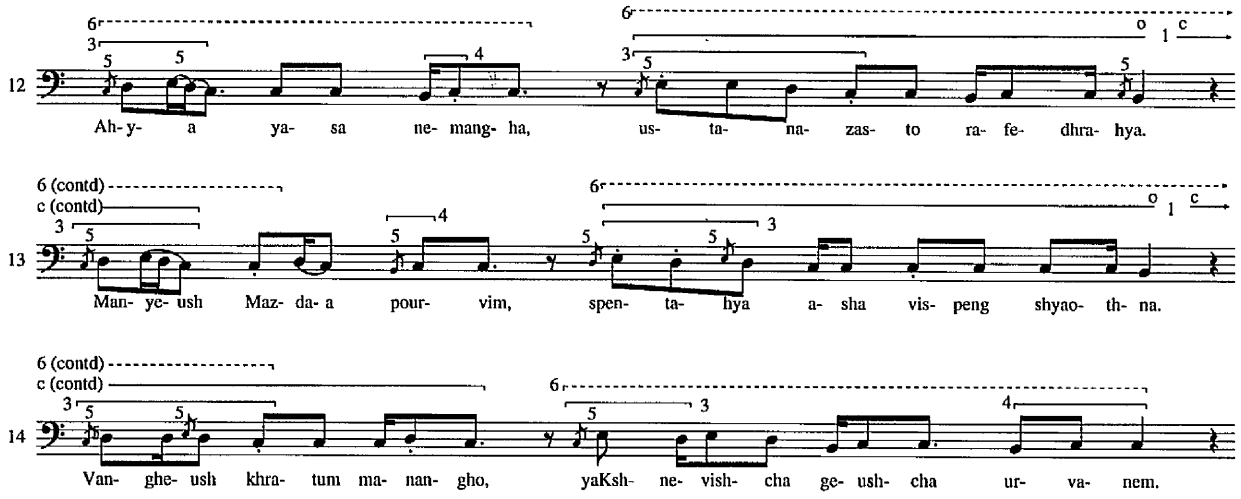
(continued)

Yasna 28 - Mobed Karanjia (continued)

Eleventh Stanza

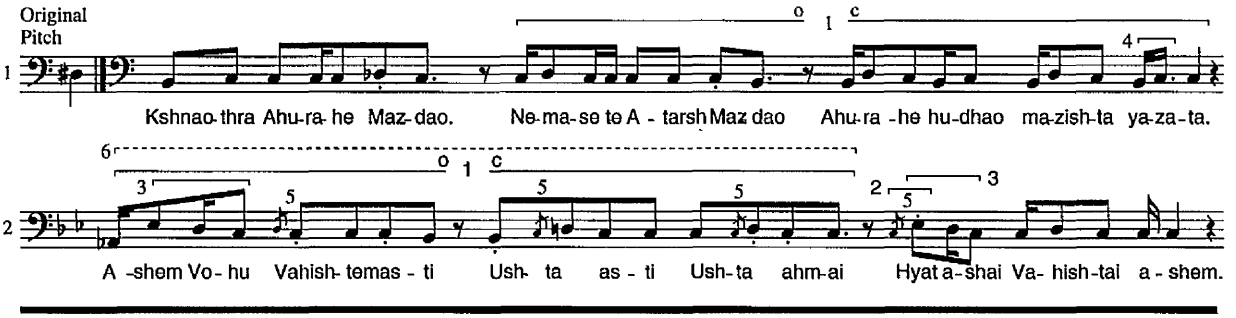


Twelfth Stanza

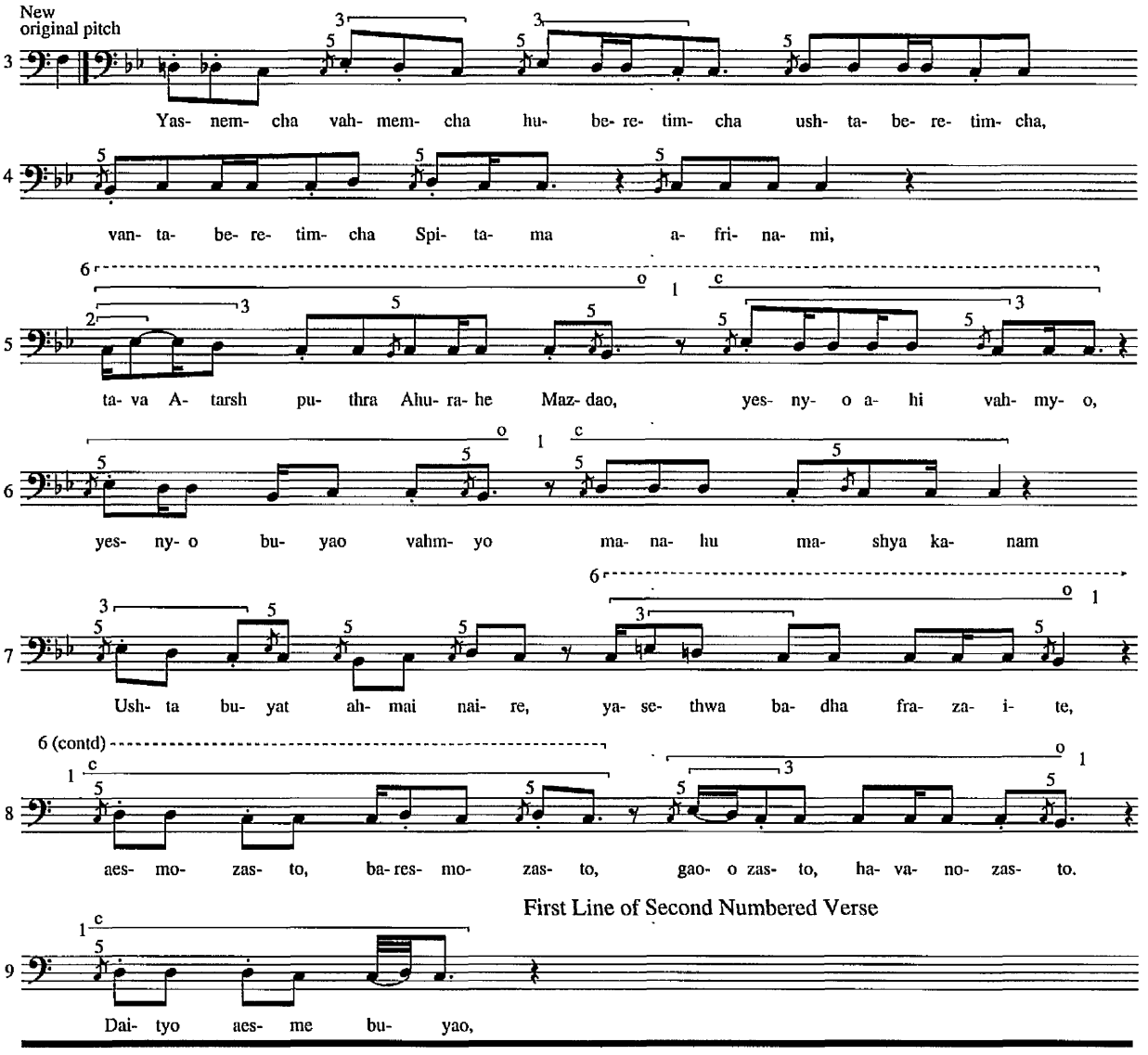


Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Karanjia

Opening Lines



First Numbered Verse

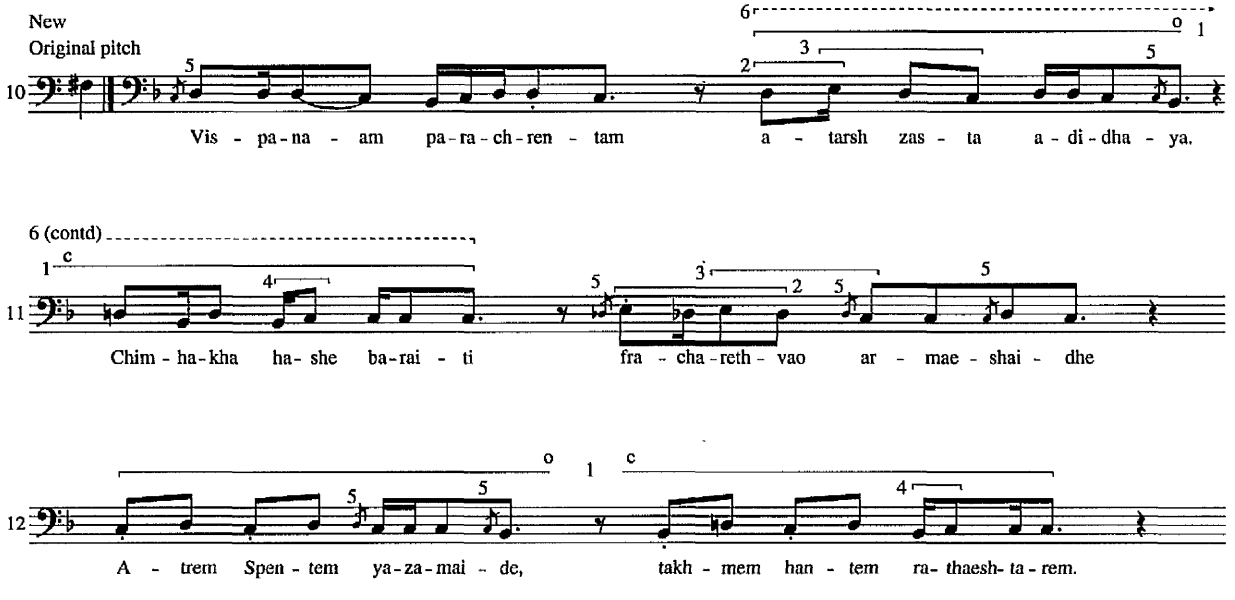


First Line of Second Numbered Verse

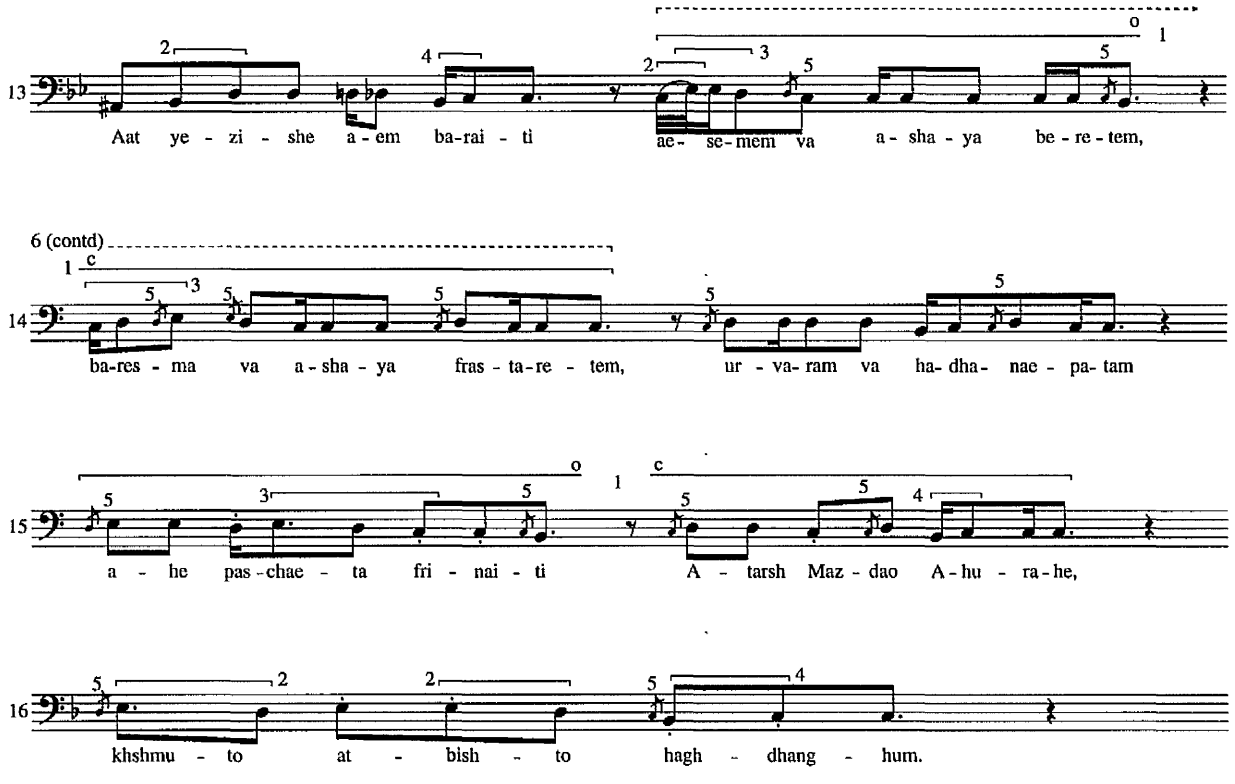
(continued)

Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Karanjia (contd)

Eigth Numbered Verse



Ninth Numbered Verse



7.15 Mobed Aibara - Bombay, India (1959)

Yasna 28 Track 19

Mobed Aibara (1933 – 1989) was 26 years old at the time of recording. This recording[84] along with the others made at this time is particularly significant because it constitutes proof that these performance features have been present in India for at least the past forty years[85]. It is also significant as Mobed Aibara was a teacher of Mobed Royinton who was interviewed and recorded for this study and whose transcriptions will shortly be presented. A comparison of Mobed R Peer's sound with that of Mobed Aibara's as well as that of Mobed Peshotan Peer (Royinton's father) will be crucial in the tracing the transmission of these performance features from one generation to another.

Mobed Aibara prays somewhat rapidly and his sound is very much that of a monotone drone which is periodically punctuated by arcing and dipping melodic curves. The most striking traits of his performance are permeating balancing motifs and the fact that his pauses clearly do not follow the grammar of the text but are there when he stops to take a breath. This last point, like Mobed Karanjia's straining ouvert-clos motion, is another good example of how a priest's musical or performance momentum can take precedence over the grammar of the text. The pauses that are grammatically indicated by the end of one stanza and the beginning of another are for the most part not observed. From the outset Mobed Aibara stops at various points which are not possible to predict. He stops in the middle of stanzas and sometimes in the middle of sentences (stanza 6 line 5). The duration of each section varies and seems to clearly be a function of breath capacity—short breaths result in short sections long breaths in long sections etc.

[84] A number of recordings were made in Bombay 1959 by Professor Hanns-Peter Schmidt and were kindly made available to me by Professor Almut Hintze.

A striking facet of these breath divisions is that a certain amount of musical material is always covered within each section. Notably, the melodic contour, which could be divided between phrases, is always articulated within one breath. No section is complete without at least some performance features and from the sixth stanza onwards all features appear in most sections.

Balancing motifs are perceptible by the second line of the prayer. Motif A begins with, and prominently features, the ornamented rise to the mediant. Motif B maintains a binary motion between the subtonic and tonic. It is not, however until the sixth verse that the Mobed begins to hold to these motifs which then remain consistent to the end. The balancing motifs can be discerned both between and within phrases.

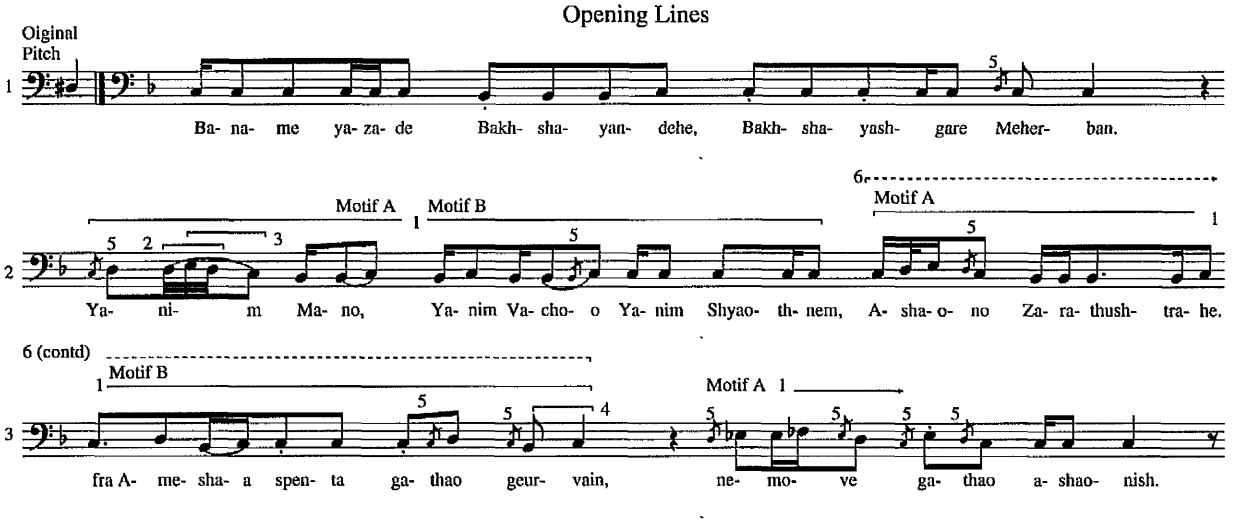
When occurring between phrases the motion is perceived in the way each new phrase is begun. The first transcription provided (systems 1 – 16) follows only the beginnings of each phrase from the sixth verse onwards.

To see how the motion also simultaneously operates within each phrase an alternate transcription accompanied by track 20 is provided (systems 17 – 26). This alternate transcription also shows more clearly, the regular appearance of feature 4 (subtonic as leading tone) than is possible when simply focussing on the beginnings of phrases.

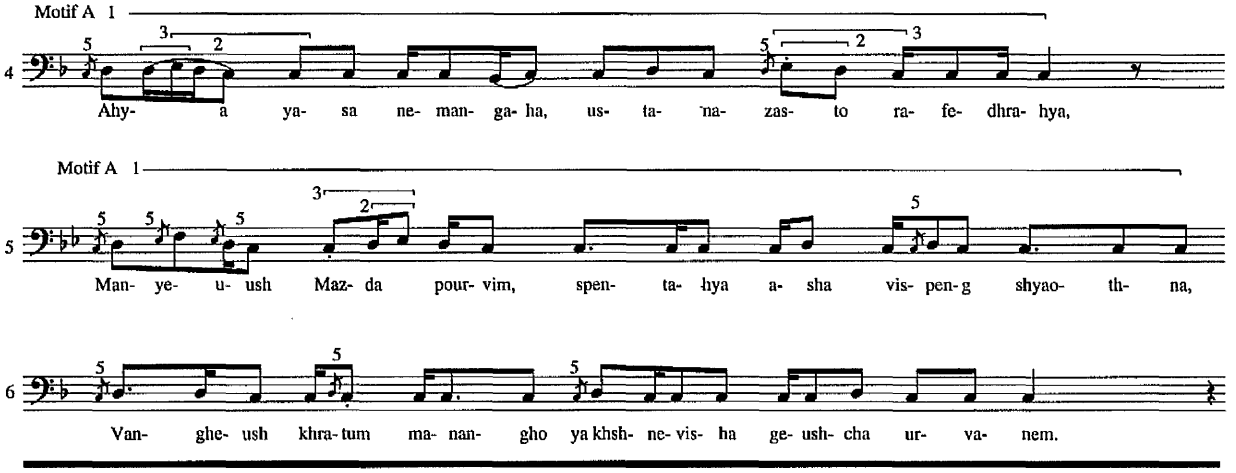
[85] A full discussion of the possible age of the performance features will be undertaken in the analysis chapter.

Yasna 28 - Mobed Aibara

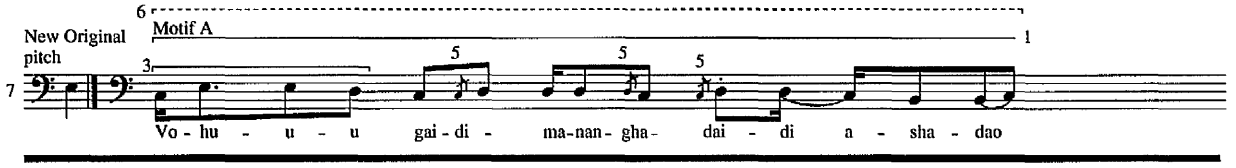
Opening Lines



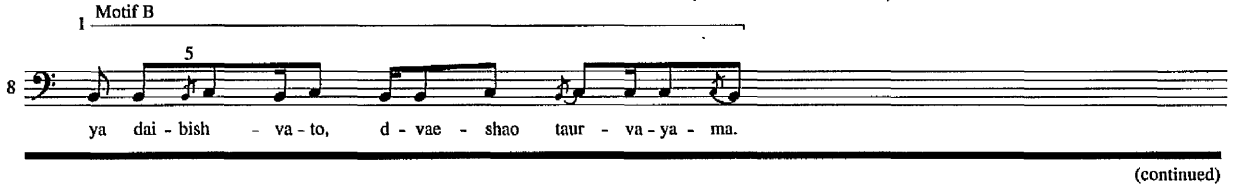
First Verse



Sixth Verse (first line)



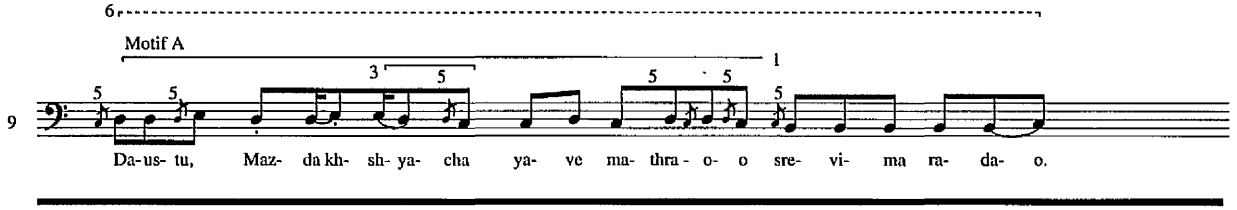
Sixth Verse (middle of fifth line)



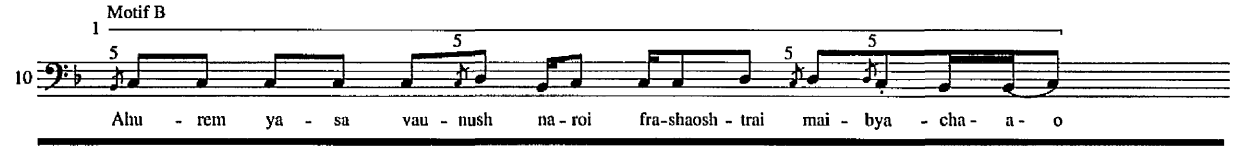
(continued)

Yasna 28 - Mobed Aibara (contd)

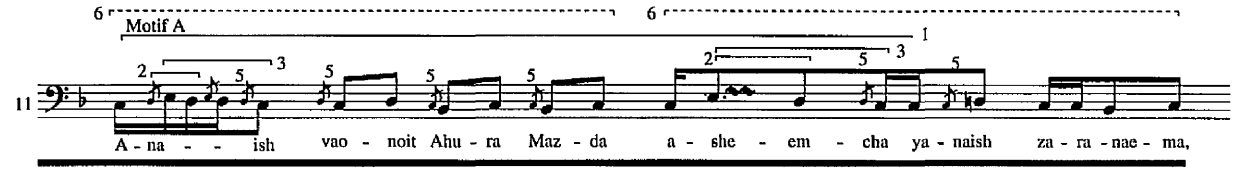
Seventh Verse (fifth line)



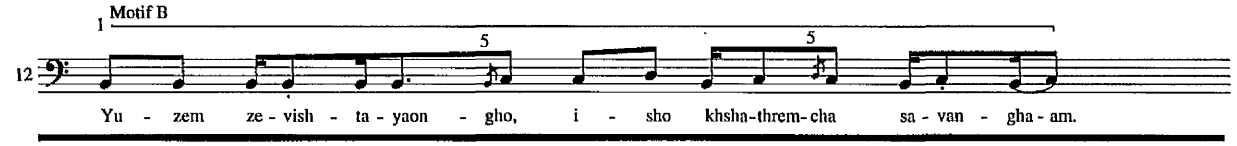
Eighth Verse (3rd & 4th lines)



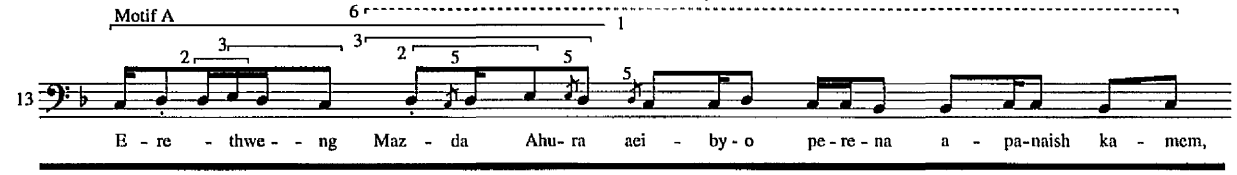
Ninth Verse (1st & 2nd lines)



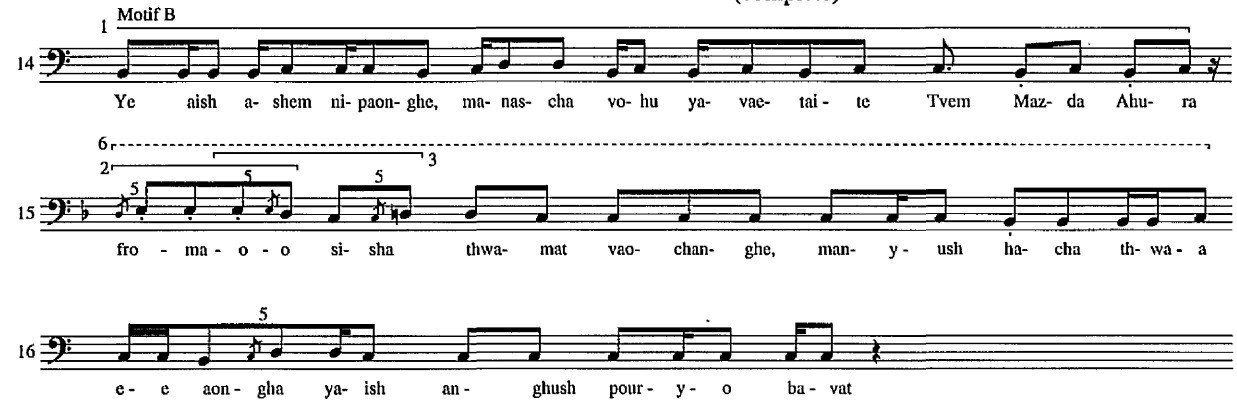
Ninth Verse (last 2 lines)



Tenth Verse (3rd & 4th lines)

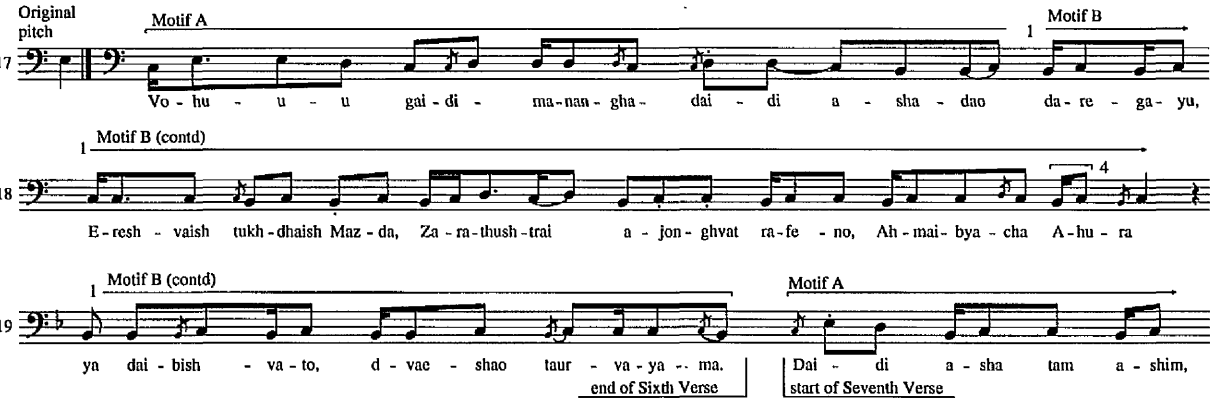


Eleventh Verse (complete)

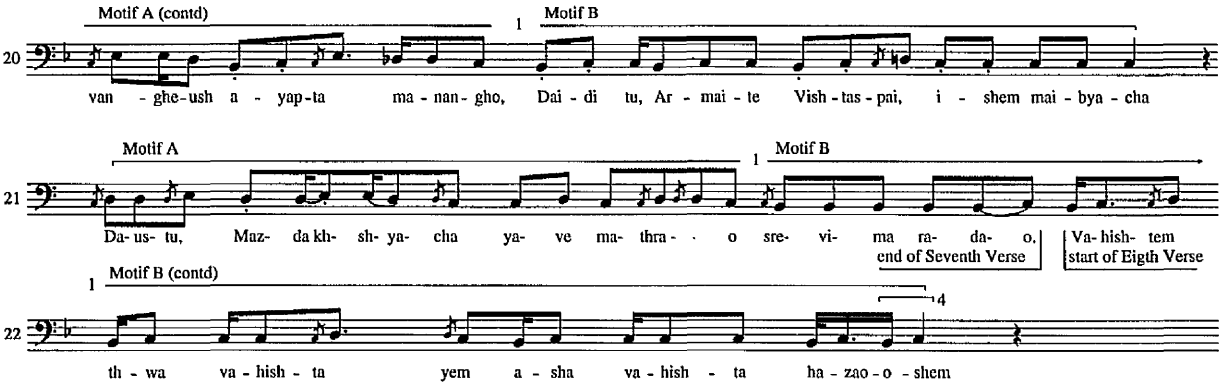


Yasna 28 - Mobed Aibara (alternate analysis)

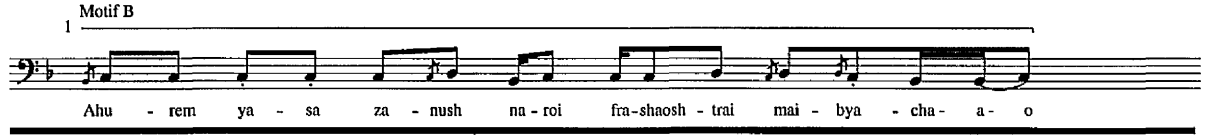
Sixth Verse



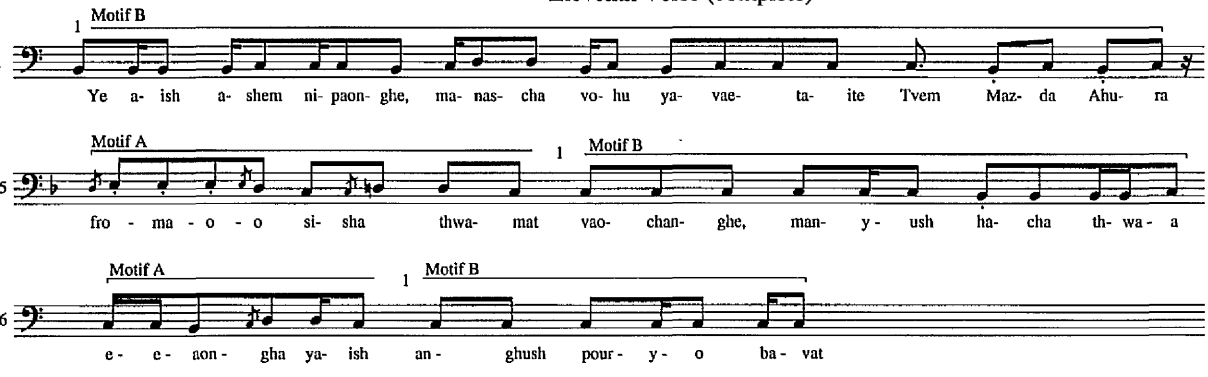
Seventh Verse



Eighth Verse (3rd & 4th lines)



Eleventh Verse (complete)



7.16 Mobed Peshotan Peer – Bombay, India (1987)

Atash Niyayesh – Track 21

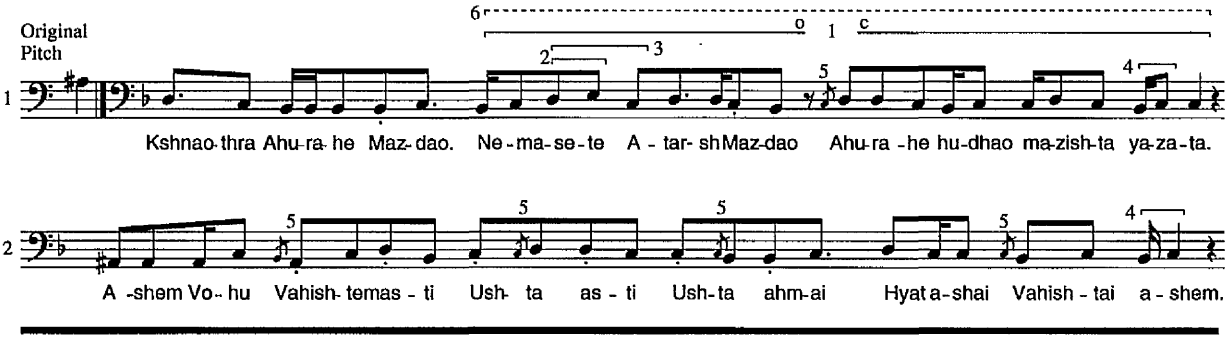
Mobed Peer (1924 - 1997) was 63 years old at the time of this recording. He received his priestly training at the Cama Athornan institute in Andheri Bombay. Mobed Peer is the father of Mobed Royinton Peer whose performance will be analysed next to discern if any similarities exist between father and son.

There is no one feature which dominates Mobed Peer's sound. It is also noticeable that in this performance, features 2 and 6 (tri-semitone & melodic contour) seem to occur the least. It cannot, however, be assumed that they are generally absent from his performances as feature 2 occurred frequently in the analysis of Mobed Peer leading a boy in a navjote ceremony. Another difference between the two performances is that the slight melisma that was present in the navjote ceremony (1^{st} system/4^{th} bar, 3^{rd} system/3^{rd} bar, 5^{th} system/3^{rd} bar etc) is entirely absent in Atash Niyayesh. This inconsistency underlines the fact that in addition to the six main performance features, a priest's repertory may contain a number of other characteristics which do not all manifest themselves in every performance. Nonetheless, all six main performance features do manifest themselves in every performance.

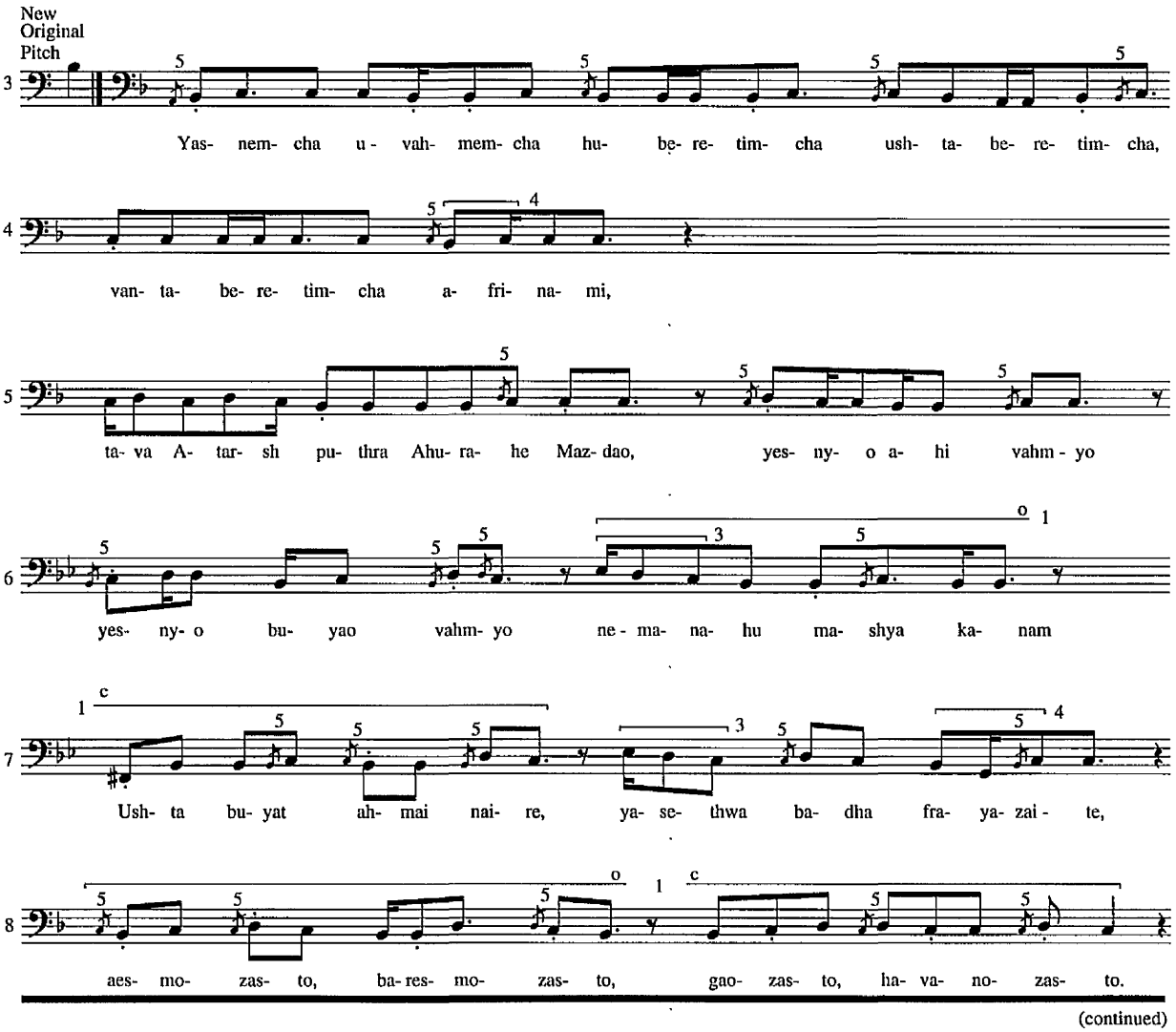
Mobed Peer's rendition is a good example of how the performance features can appear in clusters rather than with consistent continuity. All the features are present in the second phrase of the very first system but then appear only sporadically. Systems 3 –5 are examples of the stretches of passages which lie in between their occurrences and, as notated, these are generally devoid of all except one or two features.

Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Peshotan Peer

Opening Lines



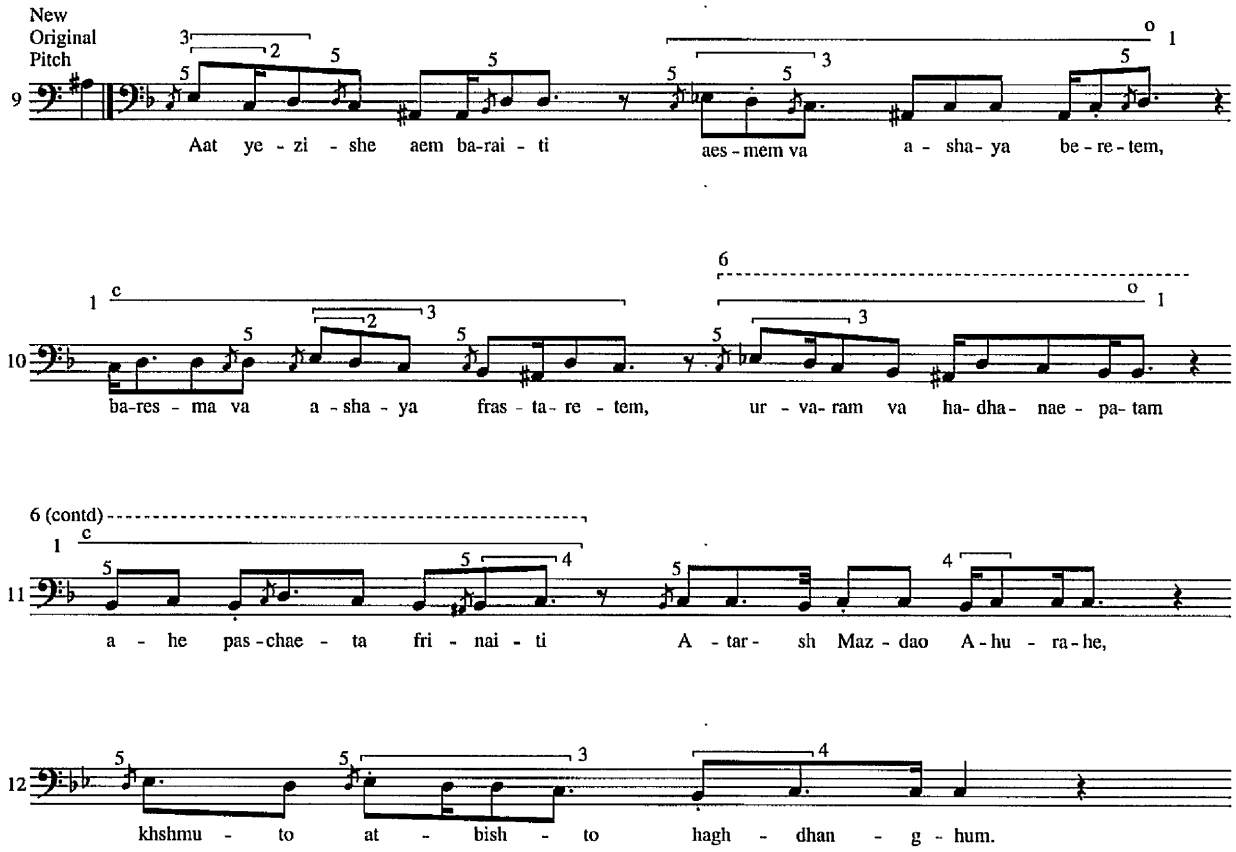
First Numbered Verse



(continued)

Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Peshotan Peer (contd)

Ninth Numbered Verse



7.17 Mobed Royinton Peer – Bombay, India (2000)

Yasna 28 and Atash Niyayesh – Tracks 22 & 23

Mobed Royinton Peer was 47 years old at the time of recording. He prayed alongside his father (Mobed Peshotan Peer) for over thirty years and claimed that this had the greatest formative influence upon his prayer performance.

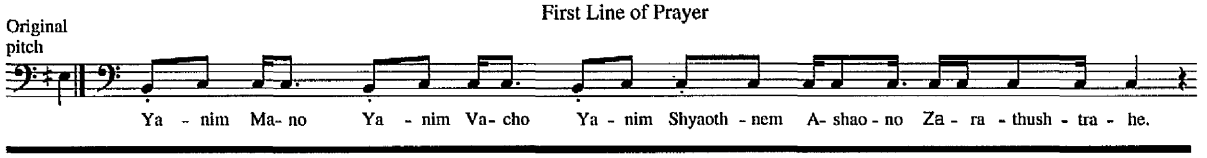
Mobed Royinton's two performances are largely similar but one difference between them is that in Atash Niyayesh some of the cadential points are elided. Where in Yasna 28 he would have taken a breath or inserted a pause, in Atash Niyayesh he prolongs the cadential note but continues with a breath pause. Examples of this are in systems 2, 8 and 10 of Atash Niyayesh. Here one can clearly discern the two phrases of ouvert-clos motion (feature 1) but they are not separated by a pause. The continuation of a phrase past its anticipated melodic end is particularly noticeable between the end of system 10 and the beginning of system 11. It could be that on this occasion Mobed Royinton simply continued until he ran out of breath.

Atash Niyayesh also contains the notable occurrence of the slight melisma on the words "managha feseratum" (system 5). This melisma is notable for two reasons. First it is a feature of Royinton Peer's teacher, Mobed Aibara's performance in Yasna 28 particularly at the beginnings of systems 2, 4, 11 etc. Its presence here in Royinton Peer's performance indicates that it was possibly transferred from teacher to student. Secondly, it almost seems out of place as it does not happen anywhere else in this performance. The significance here is that this melisma was a feature of Mobed Peshotan Peer's navjote ceremony performance (featured later in this chapter) but not of his Atash Niyayesh. Now in the son's prayers many years later, it appears suddenly in one performance (Atash Niyayesh) but not in the other (Yasna 28). This could interpreted as a faded replication of the father's own inconsistency with this gesture. It seems

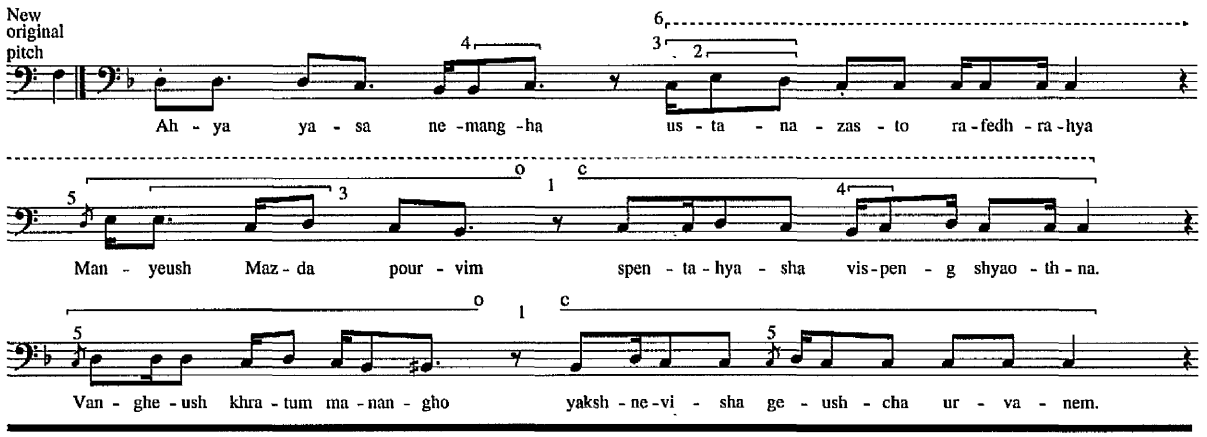
likely therefore that the pupil has absorbed not only a characteristic element from one role model, but also the inconsistency of its manifestation from the other role model.

Yasna 28 - Mobed Royinton Peer

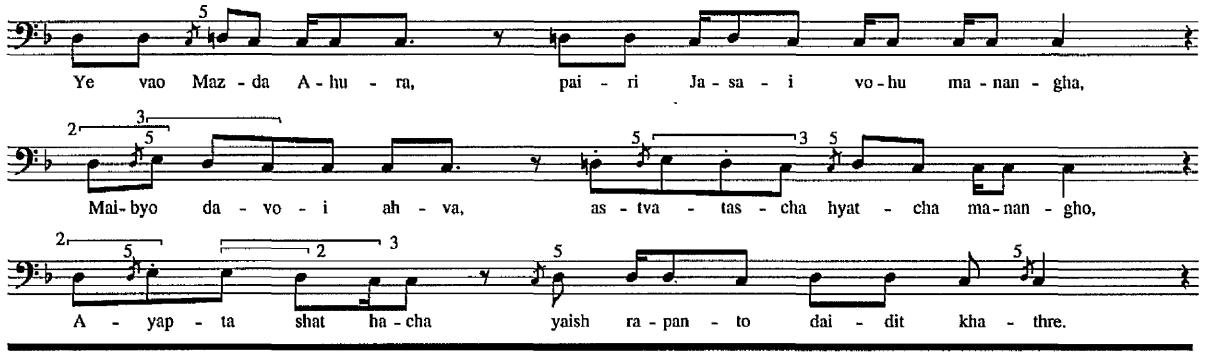
First Line of Prayer



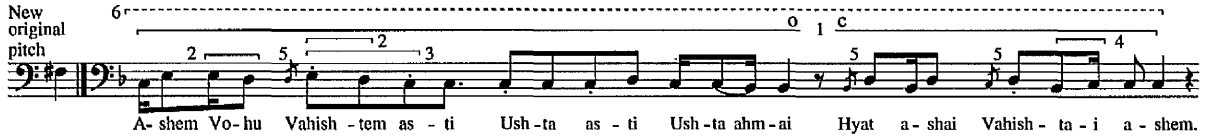
First Stanza



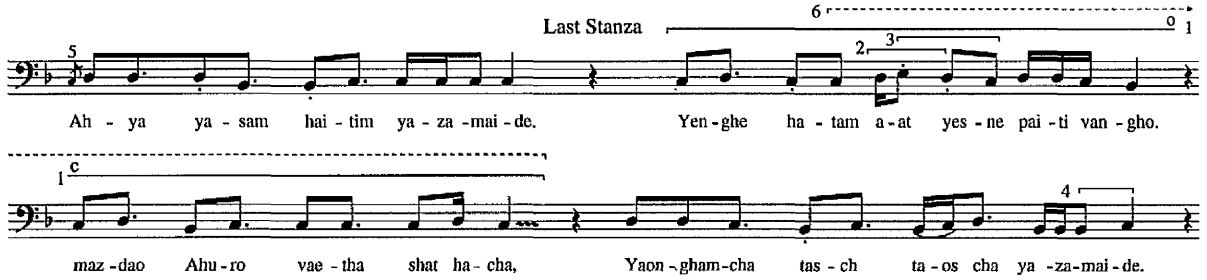
Second Stanza



Bridging Prayer

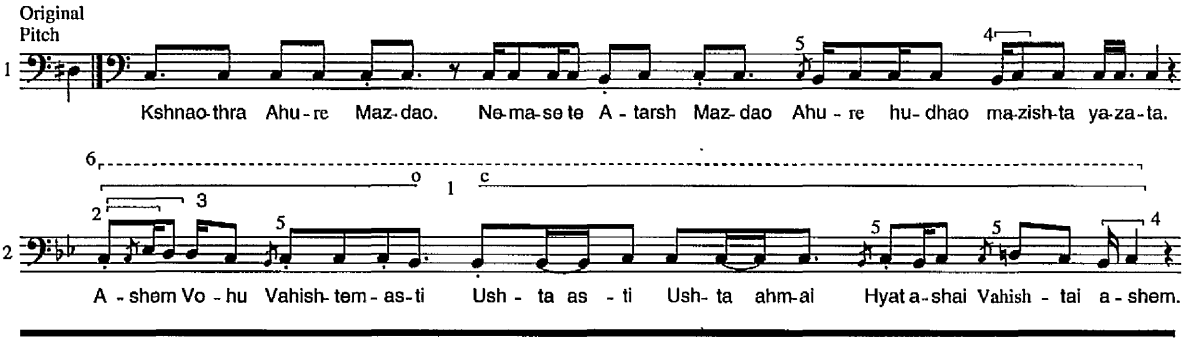


Last Stanza

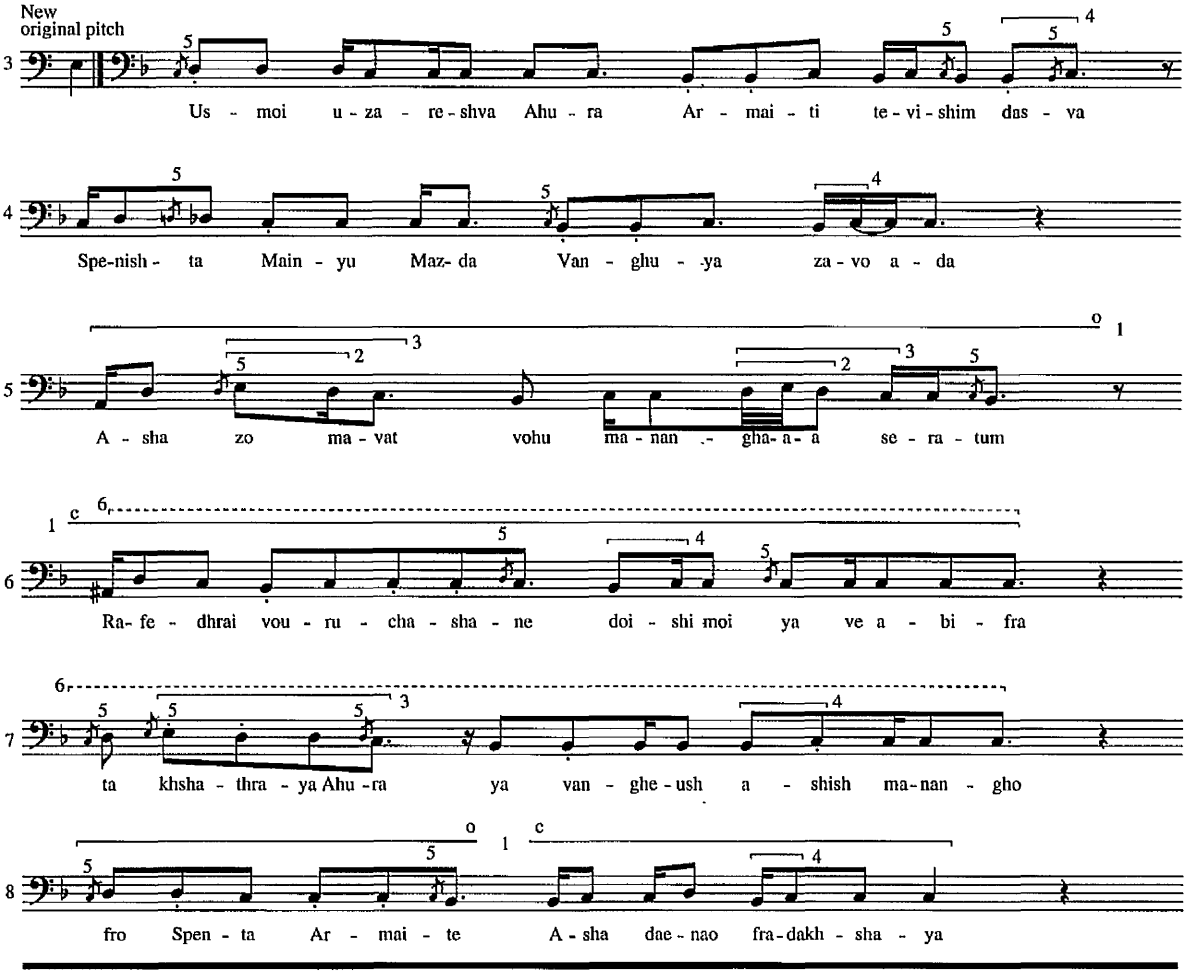


Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Royinton Peer

Opening Lines



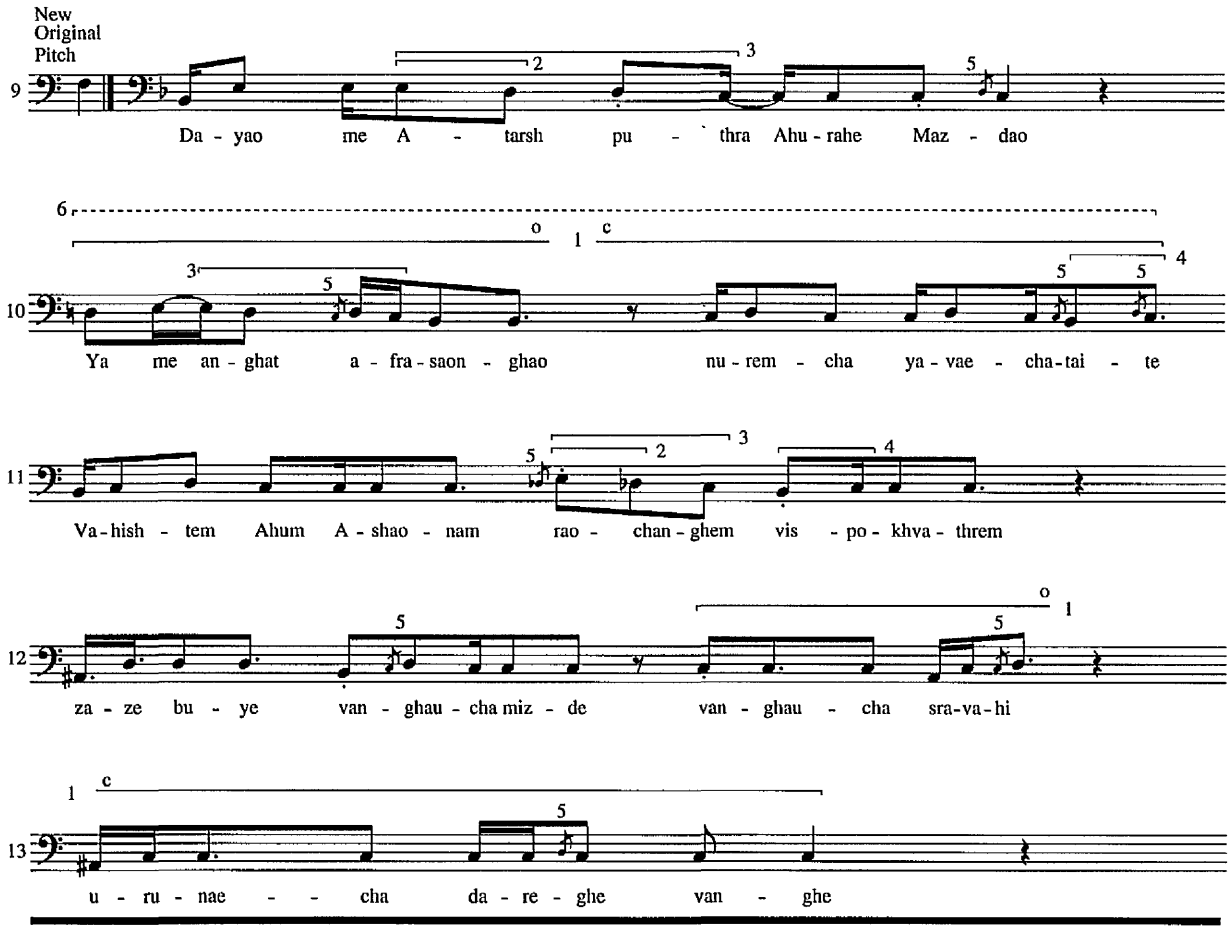
Bridging Prayer (Yasna Ha 33 Excerpt)



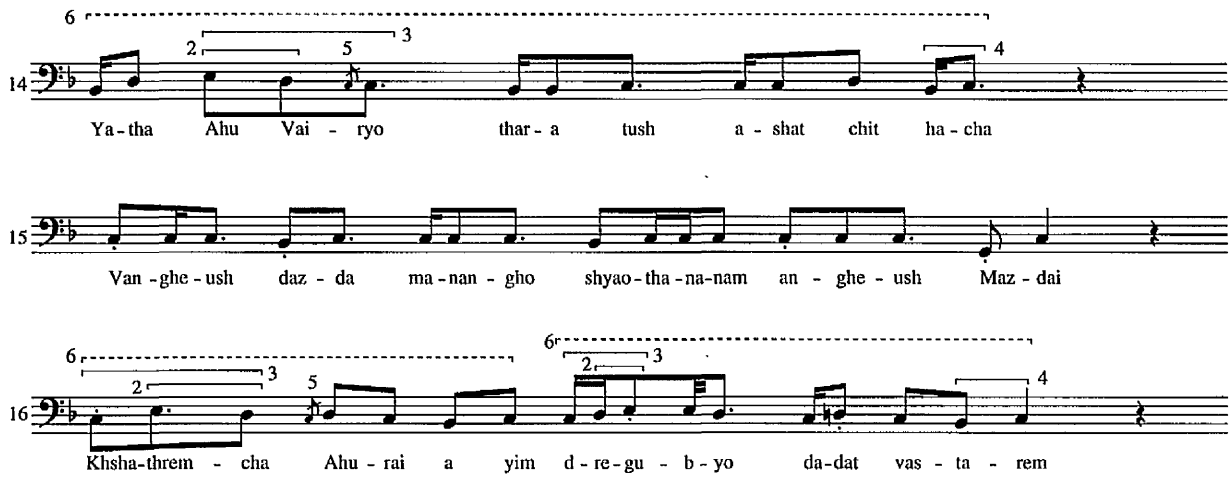
(continued)

Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Royinton Peer (contd)

Sixth Numbered Verse



Bridging Prayer (Ahunavar)



7.18 Mobed Minochehr N.D. Homji – Bombay, India (1979)

Atash Niyayesh – Track 24

Dastur Homji was born in 1912 in Navsari, India and was 67 years old at the time of this recording which has been taken from a HMV LP (EMI LP ECSD 2816). Like the recordings of Mobeds Ibara & P. Peer, this performance also has historical value as it took place in 1979. It stands, therefore as a mid-way point between the fieldwork of 2000 and the archival material of 1959 and this is the main reason for its inclusion in this study.

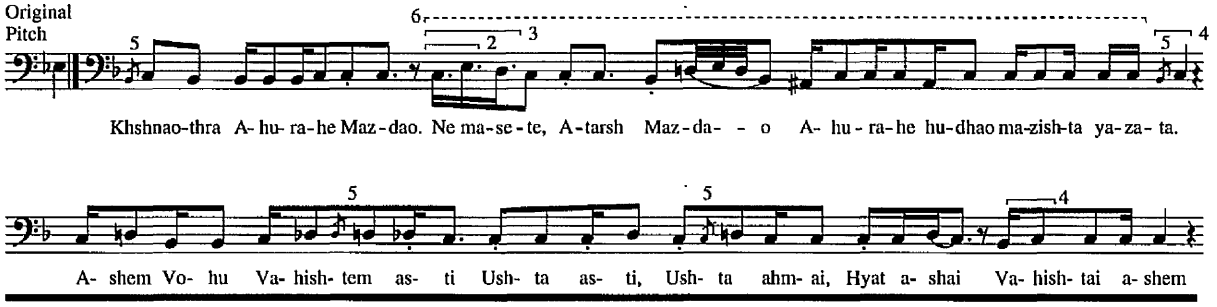
The features that appear the least frequently are the tri-semitone (feature 2) and the subtonic as leading tone (feature 4). After the beginning of the first numbered verse (and the line just preceding it) both these features largely disappear from the prayer. Alternately, ouvert-clos motion (feature 1) and the melodic curve begin to be more regular just as features 2 & 4 drop out and continue to be prominent in the latter half than at the beginning of the prayer.

Mobed Homji also displays brief flashes of the kind of melisma that was noted in Mobeds P. Peer and Aibara (systems 1 & 3).

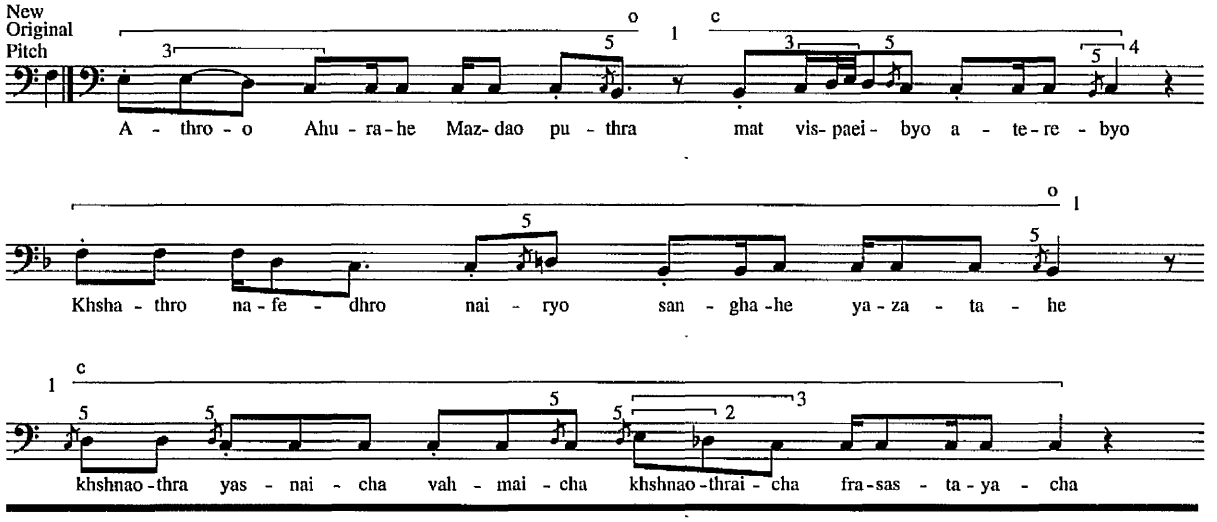
Apart from the individuality of his voice, and the fact that no two priests manifest the exact same pitch sequences, Mobed Homji does not have much to distinguish his performance from that of the other priests. This recording serves, in fact as an example of what may loosely be described as an average Zoroastrian prayer performance containing all six performance features.

Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Homji

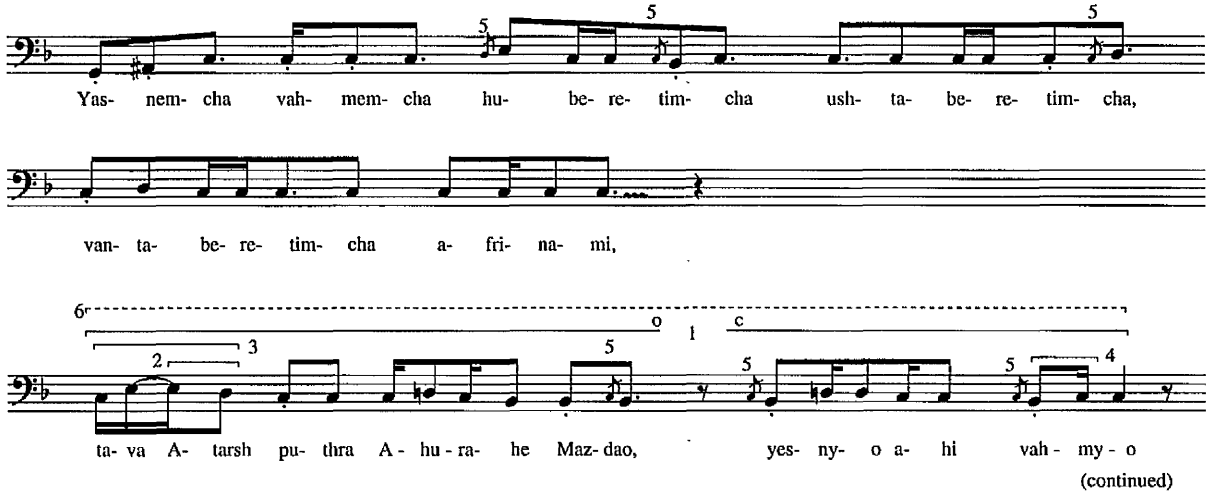
Opening Lines



Excerpt of Bridging Prayer



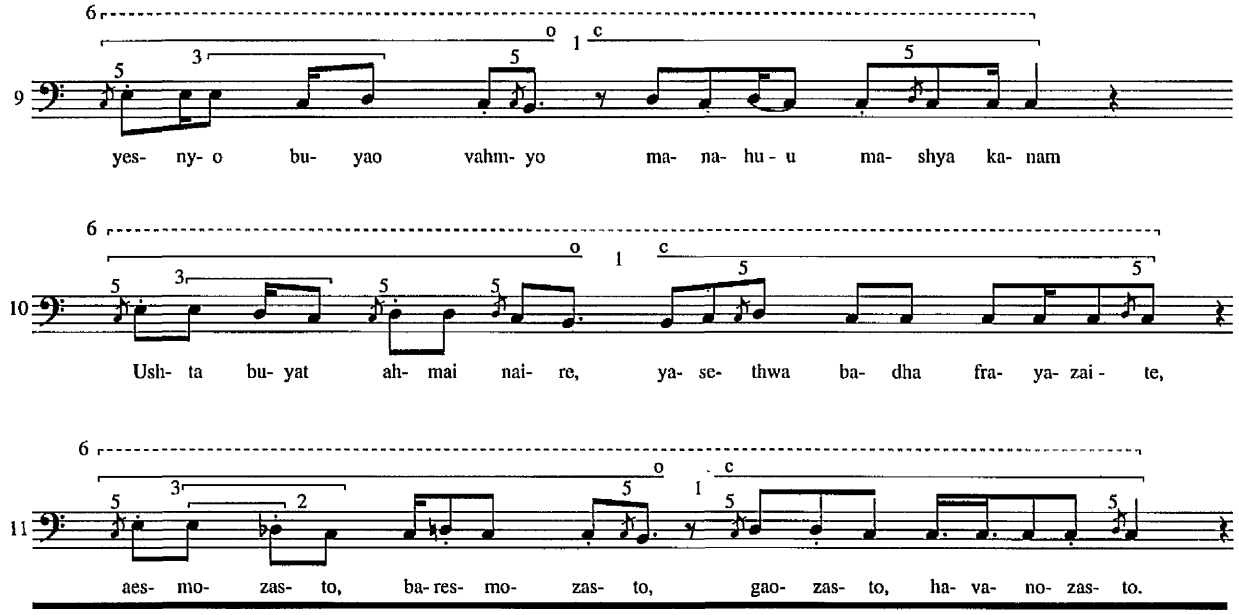
First Numbered Verse



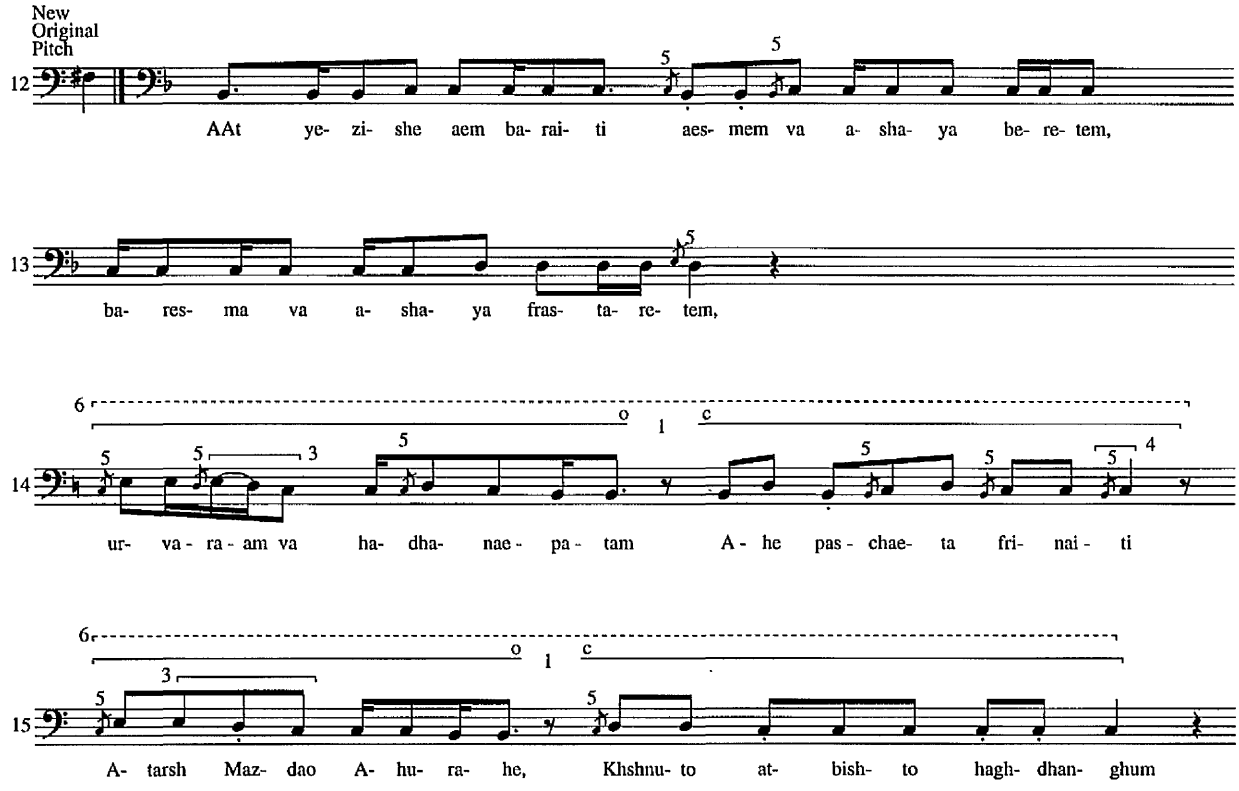
(continued)

Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Homji (continued)

First Numbered Verse (continued)



Ninth Numbered Verse



7.19 Dastur Hormazdiar Mirza – Bombay, India (2000)

Yasna 28 & 51 – Track 25

And

7.19a Mobed Peshotan. H. Mirza – Bombay, India (2000)

Yasna 28 & Atash Niyayesh – Tracks 26 & 27

Dastur Mirza and his son Peshotan were interviewed together and because of certain findings, the commentary will address their performances simultaneously. The recordings should also therefore be heard in succession.

Dastur H. Mirza was 93 years old at the time of recording. His initial priestly education was in Udvada at a native school and he then completed his studies at the Athornan Madressa at Parel which later moved to Dadar in Bombay. Dastur Mirza stated that the person who had the greatest influence on his prayer performance was his teacher at the Madressa from approximately 1917 to 1920, Ervad Barjoji Eruchji Bachan.

Mobed Peshotan Mirza was 56 years old at the time of recording. He too began his studies in Udvada at a native school but by the time of his youth Udvada had established a Madressa of its own (Damanwalla Madressa) and so Peshotan's initial education was moved to the new institution. His final priestly education was, like his father's, in Bombay but not at the Parel (now Dadar) Madressa. Rather, he studied at the M.F. Cama Institute at Andheri. He stated that the sound of his father's voice had exerted the most influence upon his prayer style and that he always had a desire to emulate, in his own words, his father's "lilt". Mobed Peshotan was not able to elaborate further on the meaning of lilt. Ultimately the interview confirmed that like all Zoroastrian priests studied, these two men had a broad awareness of a "sing-song" quality that sometimes came to their voices but were not aware of the specifics of their

own sound production, and could not expand on the subject through words or demonstrations.

Because of Dastur Hormazdiar's age, his stamina for prayer recital was somewhat diminished and so rather than attempt whole prayers, he chose to perform portions of the Gathas as they came to him. These were limited to the first verses of each Gatha and out of a number of renditions, two excerpts in particular were chosen for analysis. Dastur Mobed's stamina is an important consideration because although his voice's capacity was somewhat reduced, almost to a monotone, the performance features still managed to show through with brief but unmistakable clarity. It seems significant therefore that even for a voice that is only haltingly able to voice prayers, the performance features can still appear. In the second phrase of Yasna 28 all the performance features except for feature 1, make a strikingly clear appearance within a few words.

Of the other Gatha excerpts Yasna 51 was chosen for analysis because in it, feature 1 (balancing motifs) is clearly manifested (system 5). Later it emerged that almost identical balancing motifs appear in the performance of the son, Peshotan Mirza, particularly in his Atash Niyayesh. The basis of motif A is that it tends to rise above C and generally occupies the notes C and above. Motif B is the more specific of the two and moves between A (below C) and C. In particular this motion between A and C is virtually identical in both men.

Also strikingly similar is the pitch sequence A, D, C which appears in both of Dastur Hormazdiar's Gatha examples (beginning of systems 3, 4 & 5) and Mobed Peshotan's Atash Niyayesh(beginning of systems 3 & 10 and end of system 12).

Another distinguishing fact for both the men is that the subtonic functioned as leading tone only briefly and then the leading tone function fell to A. Mobed Peshotan also used B♭ for most of Yasna 28. It still seems legitimate to assign

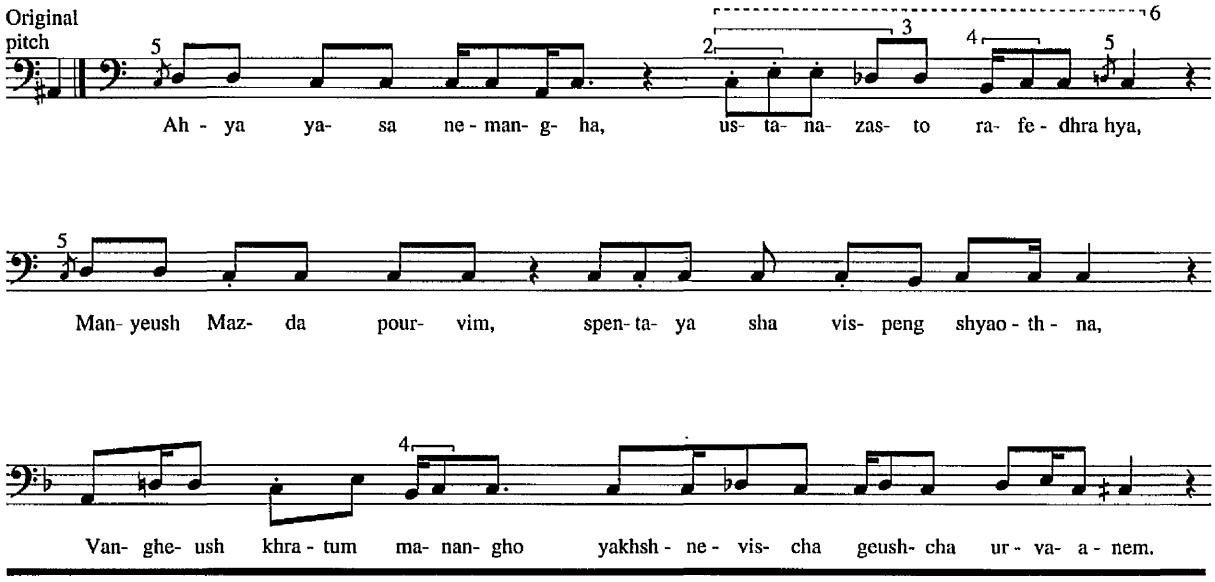
leading tone status to these other pitches as within the context of each performance, they each in turn effectively served as the pitch that was one step (if not one tone or semitone) below the tonic.

For both men the tri-semitone appears with the least frequency and strength and for Mobed Peshotan feature 1 was most predominant. Dastur Hormazdiar's material was not of a sufficient quantity and length of individual prayers to assess anything further than the presence of the performance features and the other facts mentioned above.

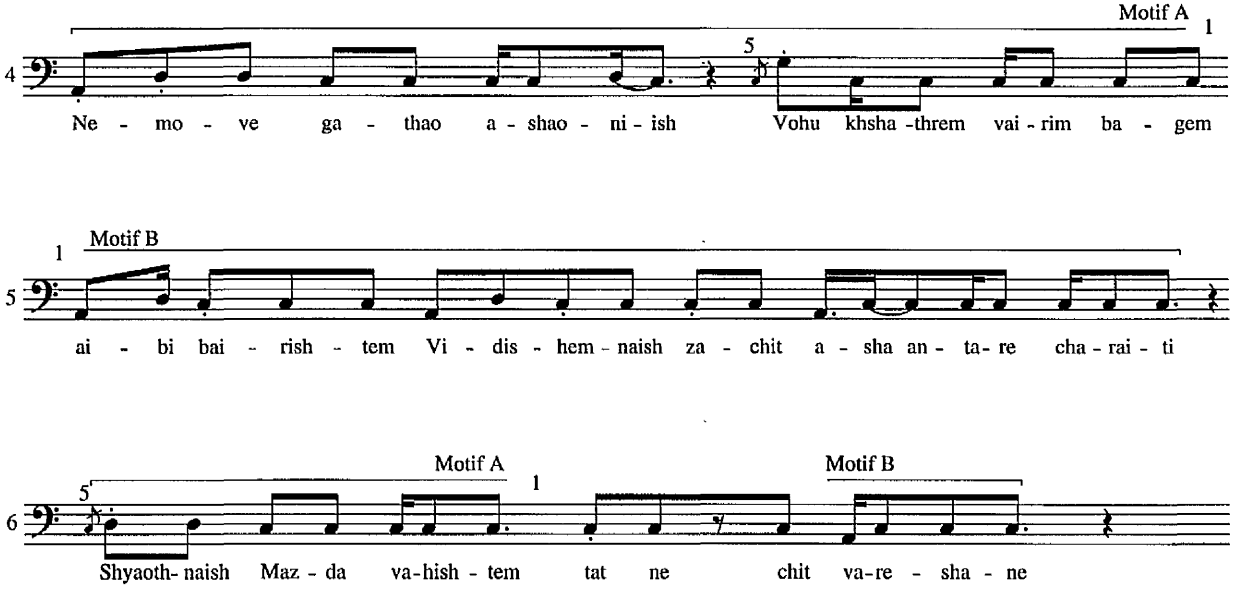
Although Mobed Peshotan does not replicate his father's voice exactly, the similarity of their balancing motifs (feature 1) and the occurrence of the A, D, C pitch sequence indicates at least some degree of direct transference from the father to the son.

Yasna 28 & 51 - Dastur H. Mirza

Yasna 28 First Stanza

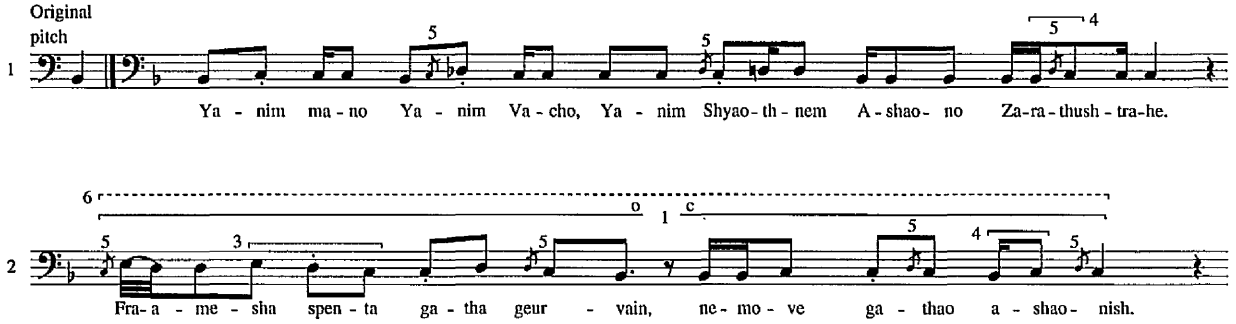


Yasna 51 (Vohu Khshatra Gatha) First Verse

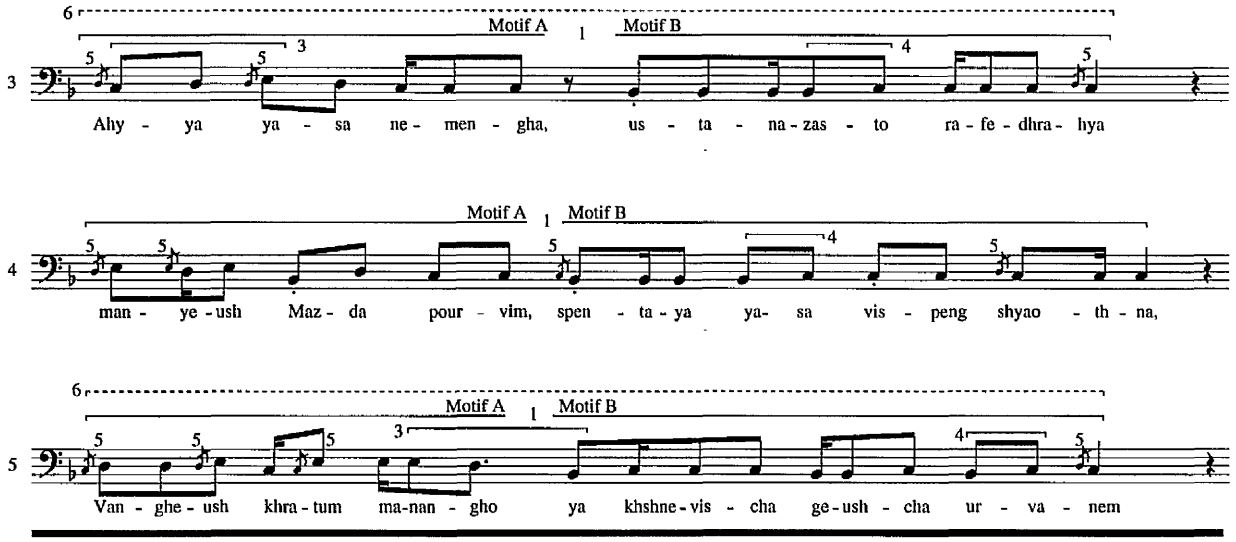


Yasna 28 Mobed - Peshotan Mirza

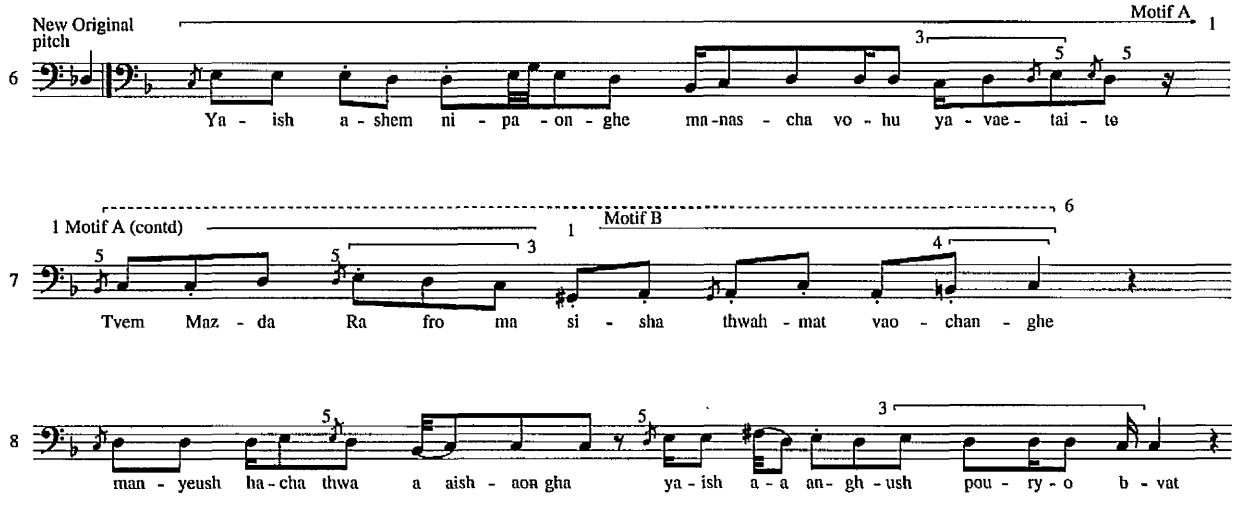
Opening Lines



First Stanza

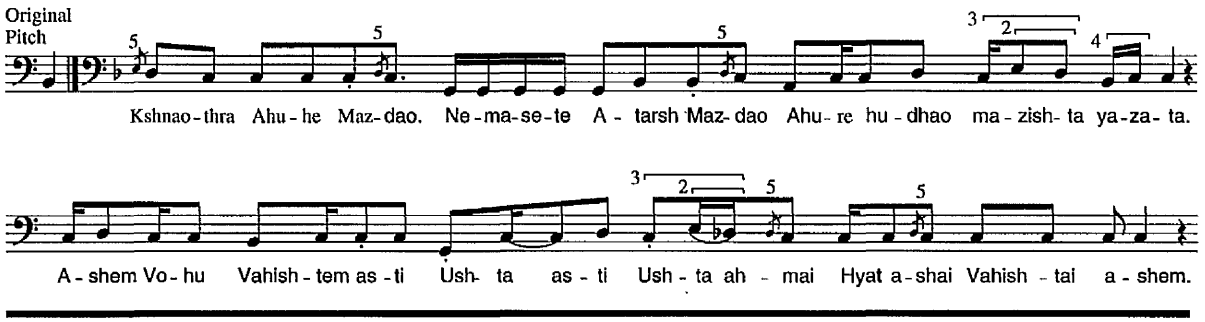


Last Numbered Stanza

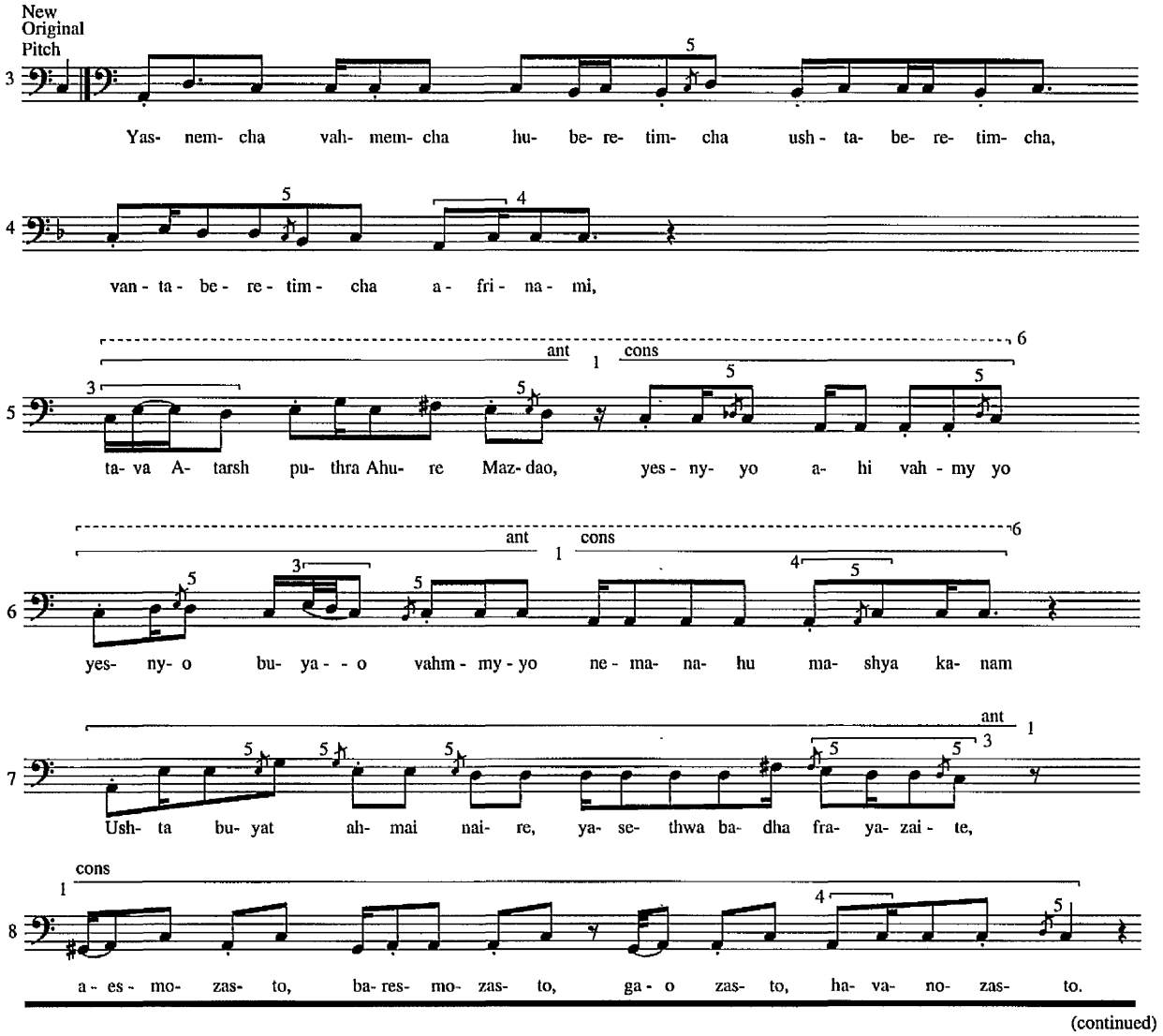


Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Peshotan Mirza

Opening Lines



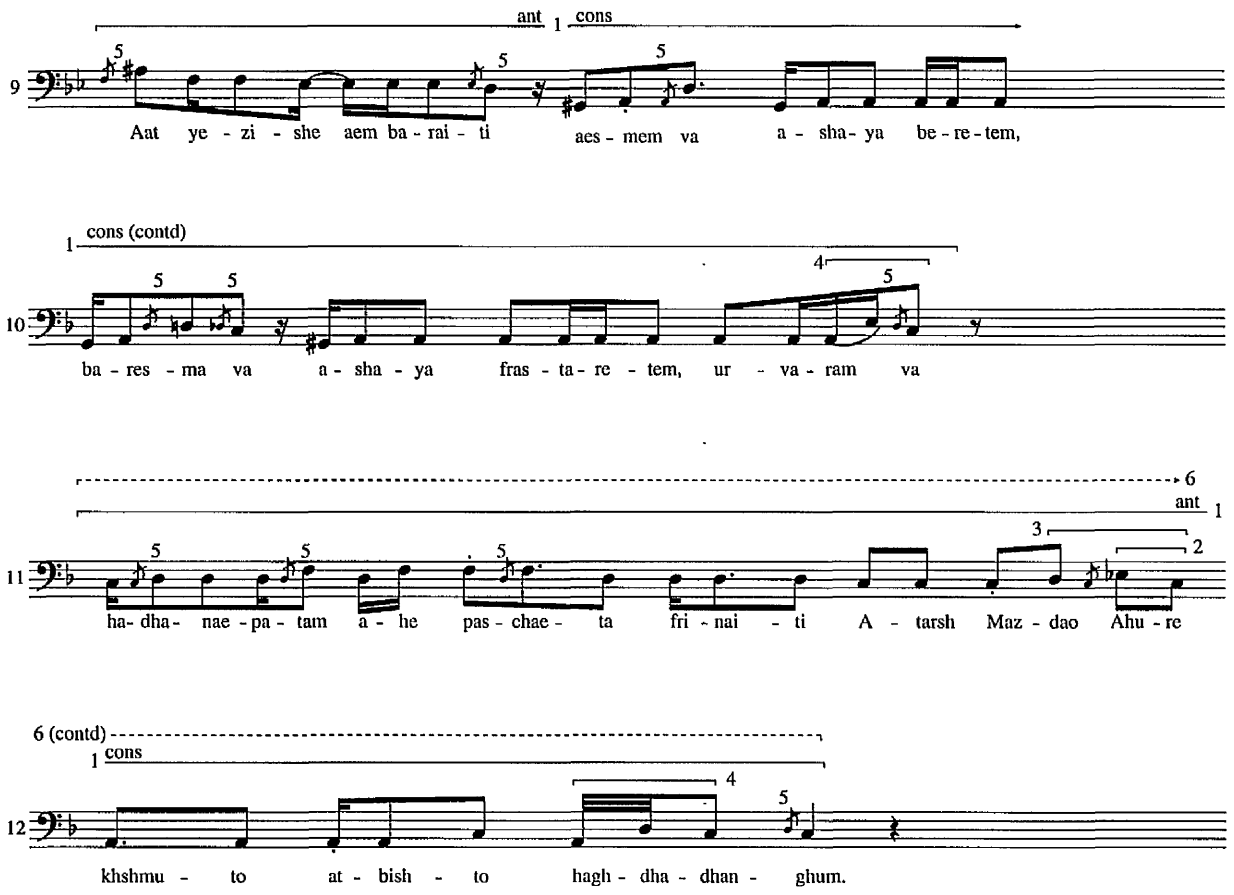
First Numbered Verse



(continued)

Atash Niyayesh - Mobed Peshotan Mirza (contd)

Ninth Numbered Verse



7.20 Unknown Mobed – Sharifabad, Iran (1963/64)

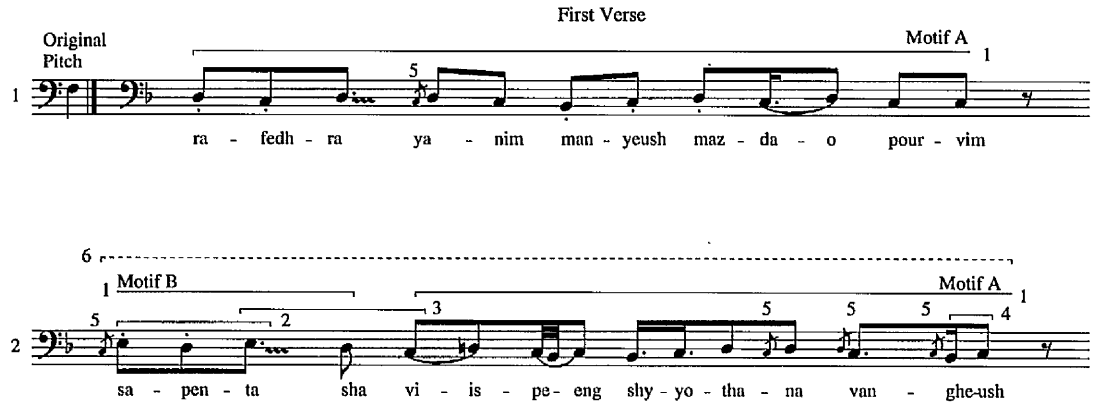
Yasna 28 - Track 28

7.20 a Mobed Goshtasp Belivani – Sharifabad, Iran (1999)

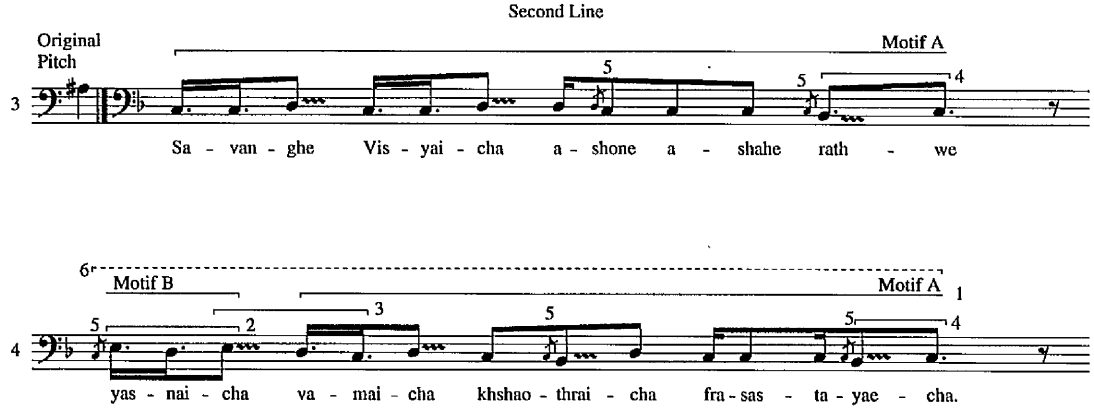
Ardibesht Yasht – Track 29

The identity of the voice on track 30 has not as yet been confirmed. The recording was made by Dr Mary Boyce during her visit to Sharifabad, Yazd, Iran in 1963/64 and unfortunately she omitted to mark the names of the priests on any of her tapes. Also, at the time of writing she did not feel she had the capacity to identify the voice from memory. There are, however, some compelling reasons to compare this with the voice of Mobed Ghoshtasp, whom I recorded almost four decades later in 1999. The similarity between the voices is so strong that Mobed Goshtasp was asked to verify if this could have been the voice of his own father, Mobed Rustam. However, Mobed Goshtasp confirmed that this was not the case. Still, analysis reveals that these two voices separated by forty years form an aural continuity that is apparent under analysis. The tri-semitone (feature 2) has a strong presence throughout both performances as does vibrato. For the unknown priest vibrato occurs frequently on D and E while for Mobed Goshtasp it occurs on all notes but most regularly appears on the subtonic as leading tone at the ends of phrases. Both men also exhibit similar alternating melodic movement (feature 1). The brief excerpts transcribed below (tracks 30 and 31) show that in Motif A both men oscillate between D♭ and C and that Motif B mirrors this alternation but using E and D♭ which creates a prominent tri-semitone (feature 2).

Yasna 28 - Unknown Mobed



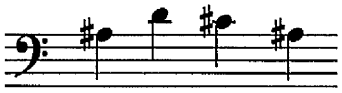
Havan Gah - Mobed Goshtasp Belivani



The quick return from Motif B to Motif A via a stepwise descent to C from E also results in a matching outlining of a tri-chord (feature 3) for both men. Indeed the first six notes of each man's second phrase (systems 2 & 4) are almost identical in pitch and rhythm as is the second phrase's melodic contour (feature 6).

A final similarity that can also be suggested is that both men's voices have a similarly gravely timbre.

One significant difference is that the unknown priest's (actual) tonic tends not to wander at all whereas that of Mobed Goshtasp forms the following discernible arc from the beginning to the end of the prayer[86]:



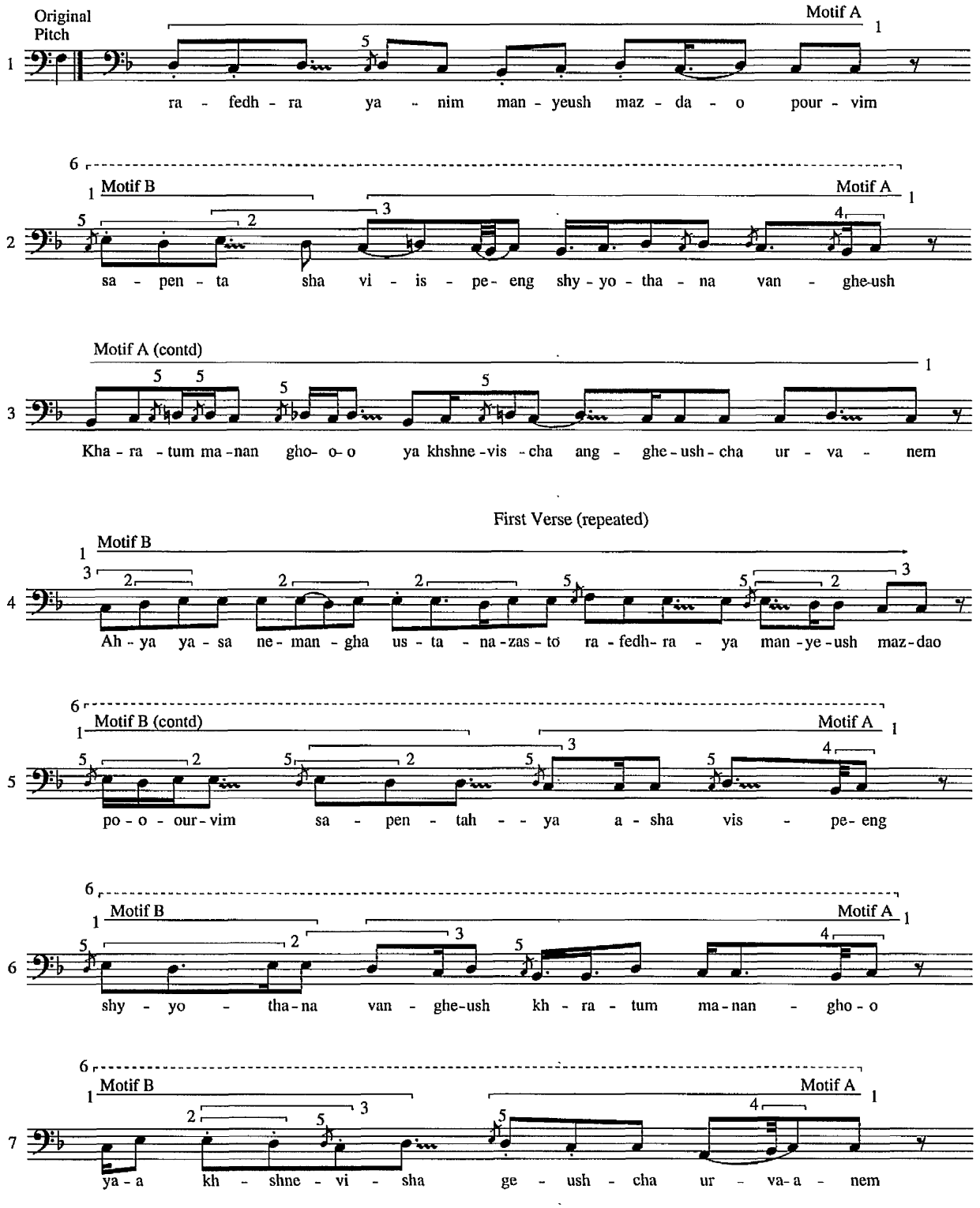
At the time of my visit to Sharifabad Dr Boyce's recordings were unavailable to me[87] and I was unable to ask Mobed Goshtasp to identify or comment on the recordings from the sixties or to perform some of the same prayers as the unknown priest. Mobed Goshtasp chose on his own to perform the prayer Ardibesht Yasht.

[86] The very end of the prayer which returns to A♯ was not notated in the larger transcription presented below but is seen in the above excerpt (Havan Gah) which was extracted from close to the end of the whole prayer.

[87] Dr Boyce's 1963-64 recordings were only available to me in 2001, after my 1999 field trip. It took time to go through all the recordings and it was not until 2002 that the particular extract of a Mobed who sounds remarkably like Mobed Belivani was discovered and then sent back to Mobed Belivani for verification.

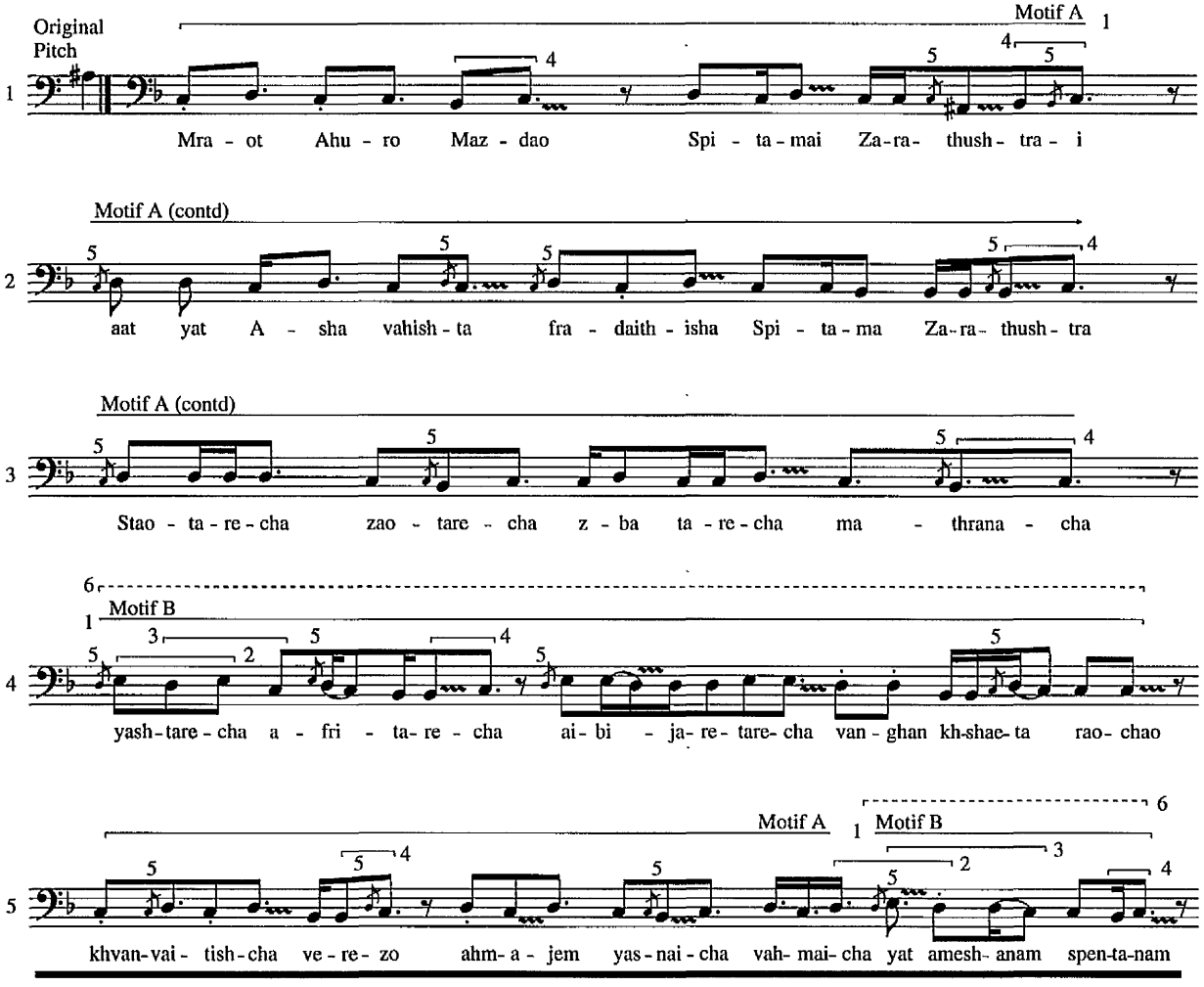
Yasna 28 - Unknown Mobed, possibly Rustam Belivani

First Verse (starting from middle of first line)

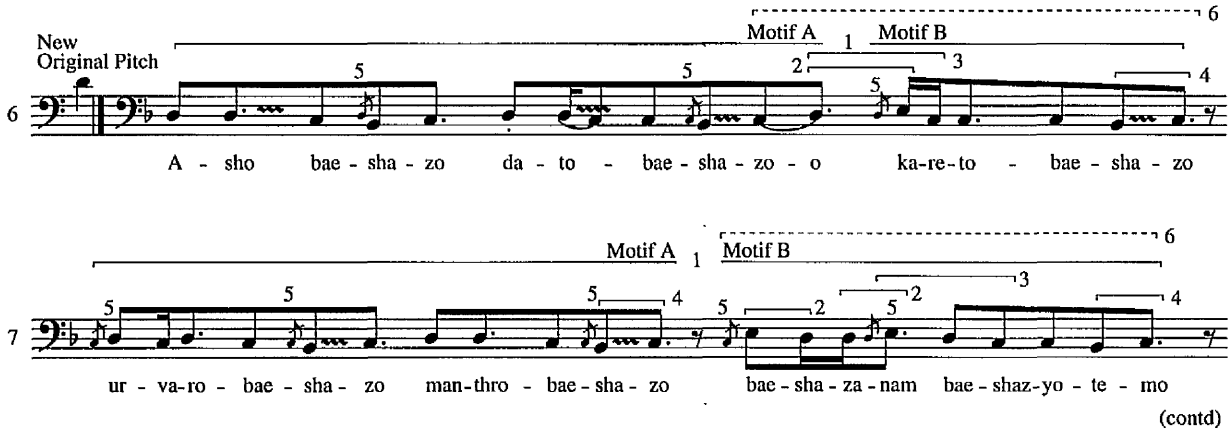


Ardibesht Yasht - Mobed Goshtasp Belivani

First Verse



Sixth Verse



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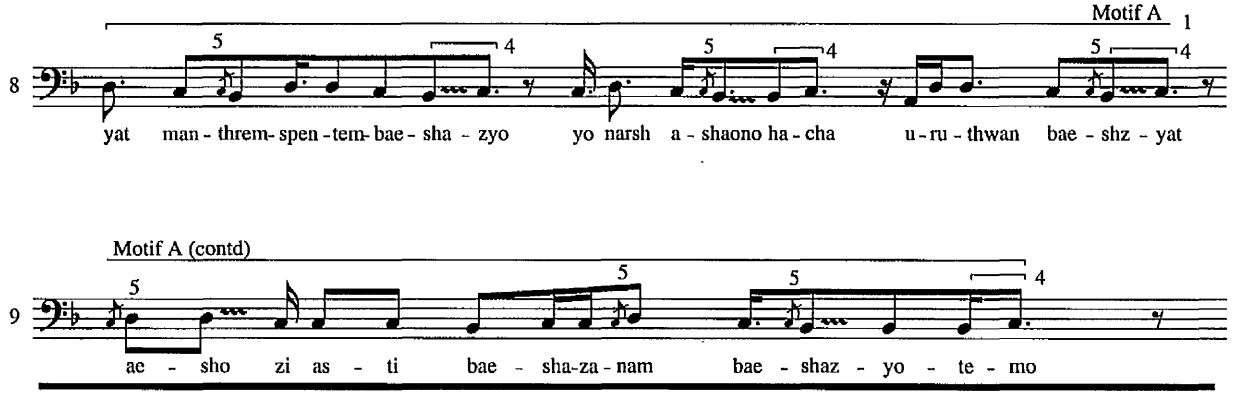
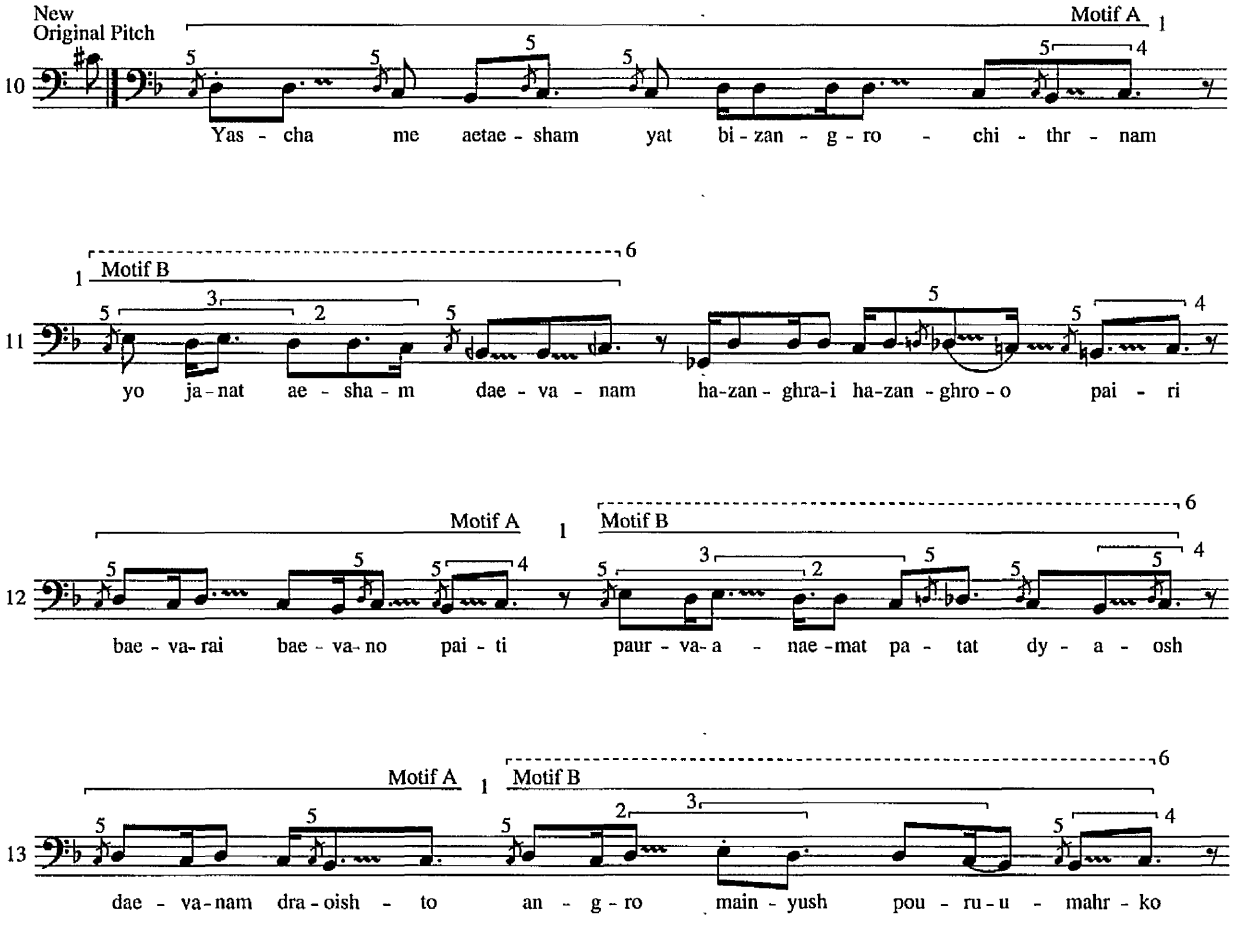
Ardibesht Yasht - Mobed Goshtasp Belivani

(Sixth Verse contd)



Thirteenth Verse



7.21 Mobed Shahzadi – Tehran, Iran

Yatha Ahu Vairyo, Ashem Vohu & Kem-na-Mazda (1999) - Track 32

Yasna 29, Dron Ceremony and Yasna 47, Tehran, Iran (1958) – no audio

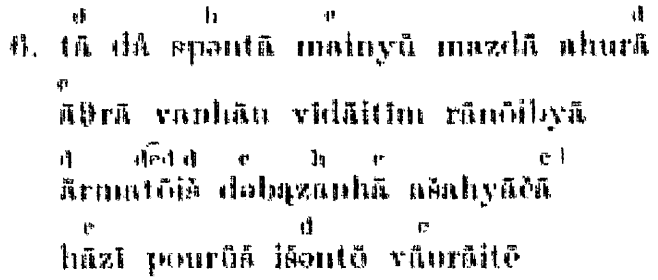
The 1999 recordings were made by myself in Tehran as part of an interview. Unfortunately at the time that I recorded Mobed Shahzadi I was unaware of the existence of the earlier recordings or I could have asked him to perform the same prayers for comparison. In any case, Mobed Shahzadi did not have time to perform long prayers but during the course of the interview performed the above and one other set of short prayers (not included here).

The 1958 recordings were made by Professor Sven Hartman who was at that time an assistant professor in History of Religion at the Faculty of Theology at Uppsala University, Sweden. A transcription of sorts was made by his nephew, Professor Lars Hartman who is currently Professor Emeritus of New Testament exegesis at the University of Uppsala. Unfortunately the tapes passed out of Professor S. Hartman's hands and they have since gone missing and are assumed lost somewhere in the library of the University of Lund, Sweden. It is from the transcriptions made by Professor Lars Hartman in 1958/59 that the analysis of the 1958 performances has been made.

Mobed Shahzadi, who passed away in 2000, was born in Yazd, Tehran in 1912. He was initially taught his prayers by his father, also a Mobed and attended the Dinyari school in Yazd (possibly the same school as Mobed Behruz who was there many years later). He was also sent to India for higher education by the Yazd Council of Mobeds, and attended the M.F. Cama Athornan in Andheri, Bombay. By the 1960's he was generally considered to play a leadership role in the Iranian Zoroastrian community and still retained this position at the time of this interview. It must be noted however that whatever contact he may have had with the other Iranian Mobeds in this study, he never taught prayers to any of

them or their teachers. Also when asked about his time in India, Mobed Shahzadi claimed that the bulk of his priestly education had already taken place in Iran and that the experience in India was more scholarly than liturgical. It can be inferred therefore, that although he may have absorbed some aural qualities from his surroundings in India, he, like the other Iranian Mobeds gained the bulk of his formative training experiences in Iran.

Mobed Shahzadi was in his late eighties at the time of the 1999 recording and like some of the other older priests of this study his voice was diminished in strength and tone. Nonetheless, the analysis of the 1999 prayer examples show all six performance features clearly and without ambiguity. Of the two recordings of Mobed Shahzadi the 1958 performance is actually of greater interest to the study, serving as it does as a historical anchor, but without the audio, the analysis is limited to the simple identification of the performance features. When included as part of an article in Orientalia Suecana (Hartman 1960: 92-112), Professor L. Hartman's notation was not, for the most part, presented on a traditional western five line staff but rather as letters over the text of the prayers. (see example below Yasna 47 6th numbered verse). Following the German system Professor L. Hartman uses "h" to indicate B.



Some staff notation was provided but was not accompanied by the text. Furthermore as shown above Professor Hartman did not ascribe a note to every syllable, nor did he indicate any rhythmical values, but simply marked the pitch changes roughly at the point that they occurred above a word or letter. While

this provides an adequate overview (which was its intention) it does not allow us to delve into the details of sound such as grace notes.

Overall, therefore, between Mobed Shahzadi's frail voice during the 1999 recordings and the lack of actual sound for the 1958 recordings, it is impossible to speak of any general trends or greatly distinguishing features. Nonetheless, one feature that is clearly unique to the 1999 recordings is the octave drop at the end of prayers in systems 3, 6 & 8 (Mobed Shahzadi various). The lower note however, has been distinguished with an "x" for a noteheadbracketed to indicate that it is not so much a tone as simply a vocalised, almost speech-like sound of approximate but indeterminate pitch. It seems as if Mobed Shahzadi ends some prayers with an exclamation that reverts his sound from a sort of chanting to speech. The Ashem Vohu example ends with an exclamation but not the octave drop and so it seems unlikely that this should be construed as a consistent musical habit, although it could have been a performance one that he formed in later years.

Apart from the above some broad comparisons between the recordings made forty years apart are possible. Most importantly, four of the six performance features that are in the 1999 transcriptions also appear solidly within Professor L. Hartman's notation. The two features which are not quite so verifiable are features 2 and 5, the tri-semitone and ornamentation. Nonetheless, in system 7 (Dron Ceremony excerpt following Yasna 29) two examples are marked out of a possible emerging tri-semitone between C and an E which is not quite fully flatted. In his article Professor Hartman notes certain pitches that "do not conform to the western scale" and assigns them + or – symbols to indicate sharps and flats of a value less than a semitone. It can be argued therefore that given the solid presence of C and E♭ in the 1999 notations (Yatha Ahu Vairyo & Ashem Vohu) the C and E that recurs in system 7 of the 1958 recordings could be indicators of a slightly muted tri-semitone.

The case for the presence of ornamentation in the 1958 recordings unfortunately remains hypothetical. In Yasna 47 three examples of notes that are clustered around a single syllable (systems 9, 10, 11, 13) could very well have been somewhat more pronounced ornamentation. As with the tri-semitone, Mobed Shahzadi's 1999 recordings show that feature 5, ornamentation, is clearly manifested in his sound. However, these note clusters in the 1958 prayers could as easily be melisma as ornamentation and verification is no longer completely possible. Nonetheless, in correspondence Professor L. Hartman did confirm that those notes which he notated in brackets and as occurring very close to another note were not very clearly heard and could very well have functioned like ornamentation[88].

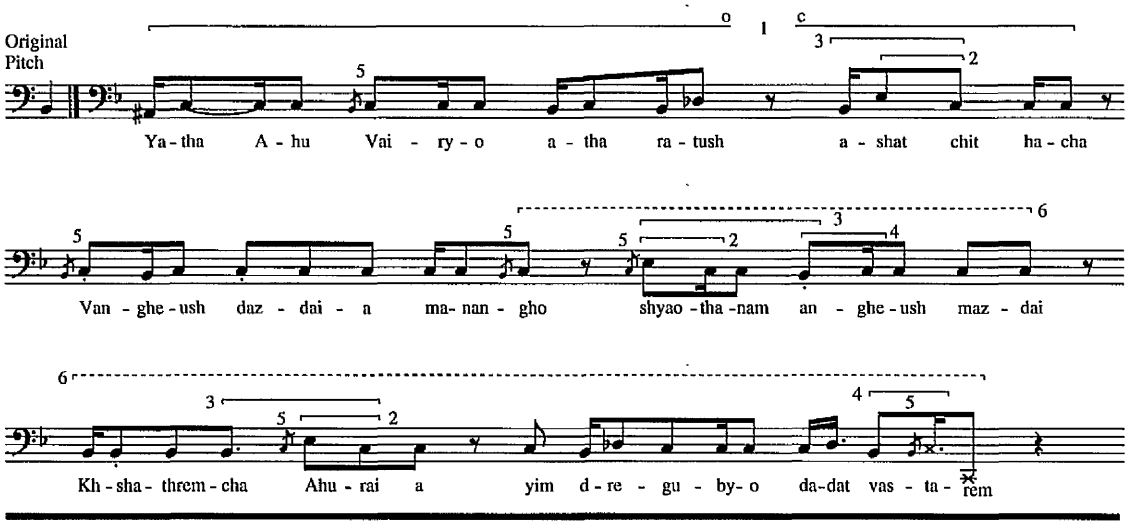
In spite of this it still remains unquestionable that the majority of the performance features are perceptible in the older recordings. It can be asserted that the other two features were equally likely to have been present in those prayer performances, but simply may not have been captured by the notation which had a more generalised approach.

Although his notation may have been generalised, Professor Hartman's analysis was quite acute and has stood the test of time. His observations of Mobed Shahzadi confirm many of the characteristics noted in this study about Zoroastrian priests in general. He noted the narrow pitch range and the strong adherence to the tonic. He observed repeated trichordal motion and diatonic motion between any notes from B to E, especially C, D, E. He remarked that the adherence to the tonic was the strongest element of recitation and any departure from it provided a brief variation before returning to the tonic itself. This is, in effect, a description of sorts of the ouvert – clos motion that is present in the prayers of Mobed Shahzadi (and other priests in general). (Hartman 1958: 92 – 99)

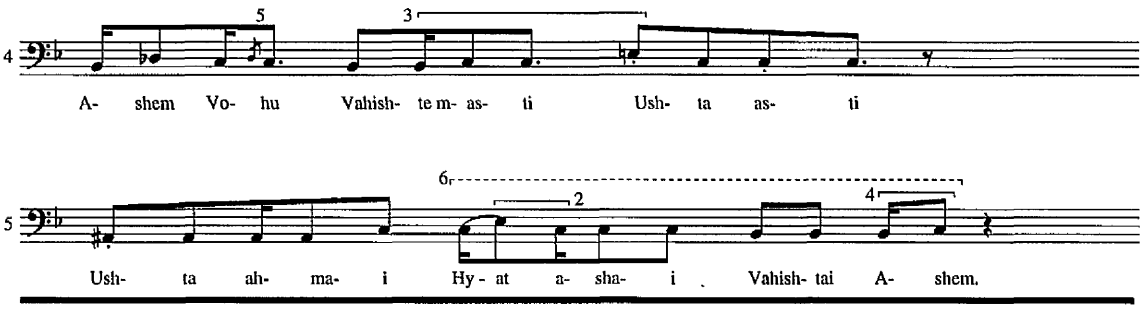
[88] Email confirmation by Professor Hartman Nov 20, 2001.

Mobed Shahzadi - Various, 1999

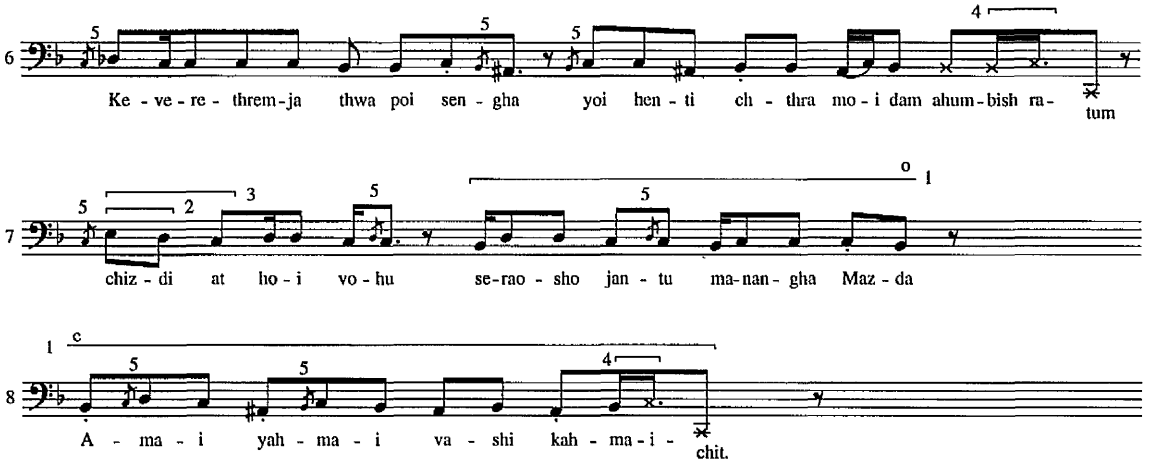
Ahunavar (Yatha Ahu Vairyo)



Ashem Vohu

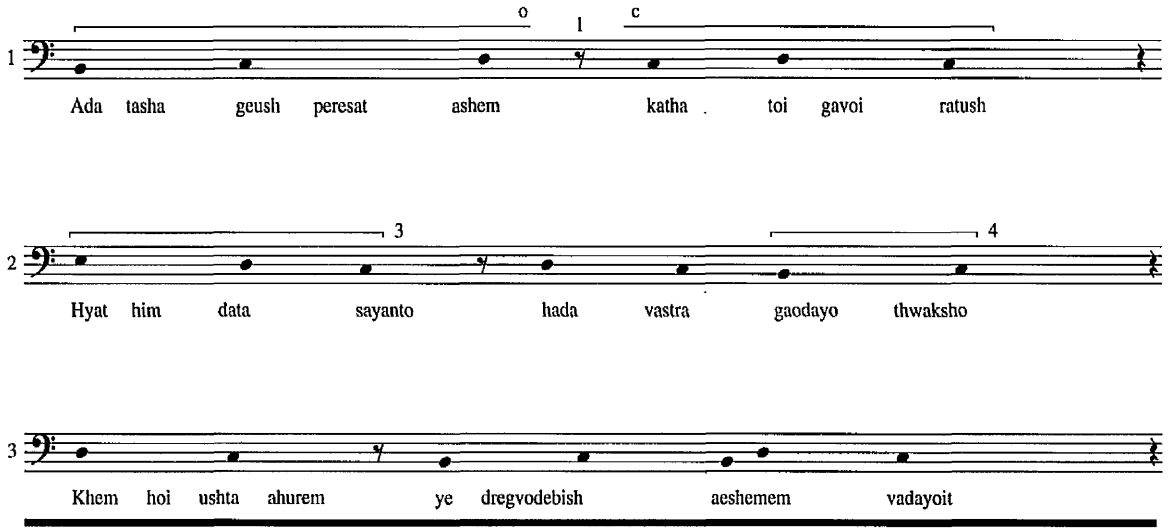


Kem - na - Mazda (2nd verse)

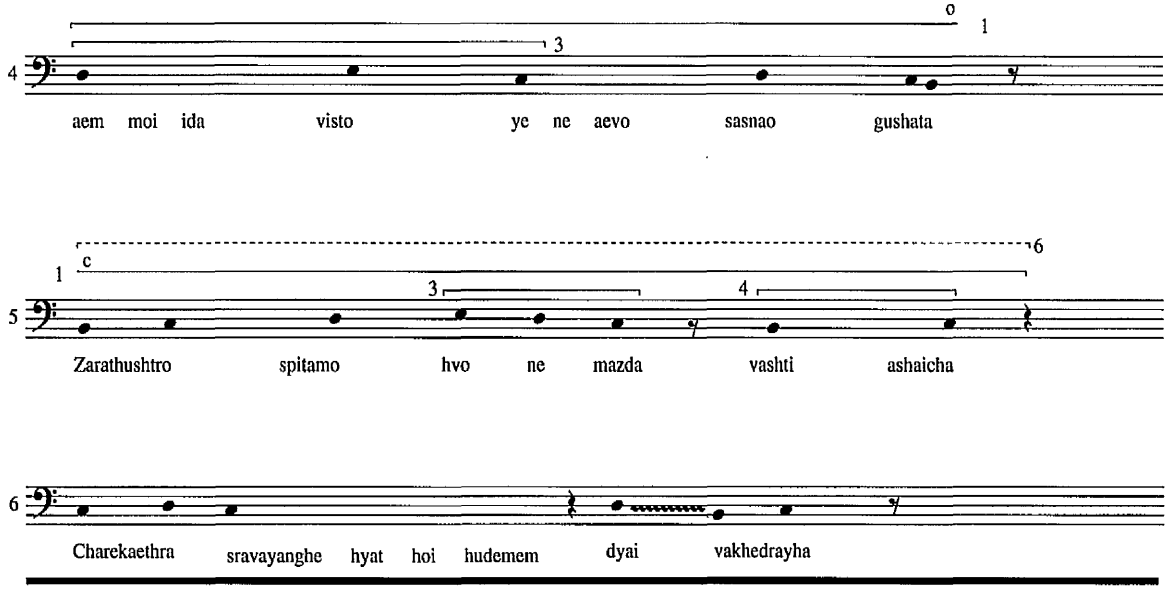


Yasna 29 - Mobed Shahzadi

Second Numbered Verse

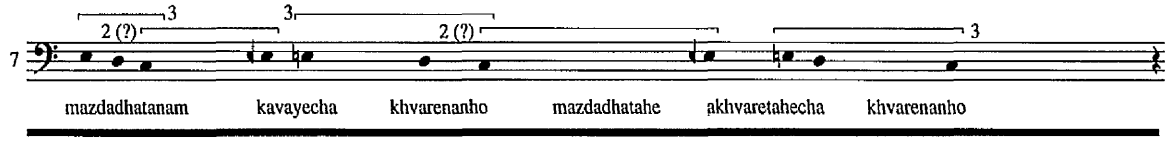


Eigth Numbered Verse



Dron Ceremony

(excerpt verse IV, 19)



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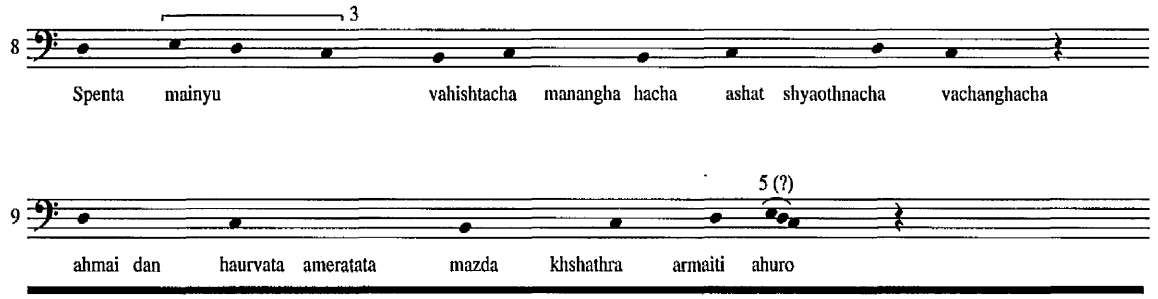
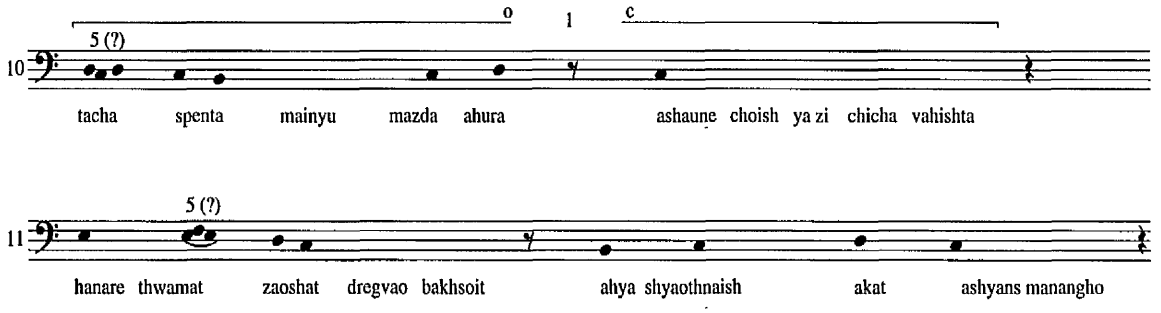
Yasna 47 - Mobed Shahzadi
(contd)

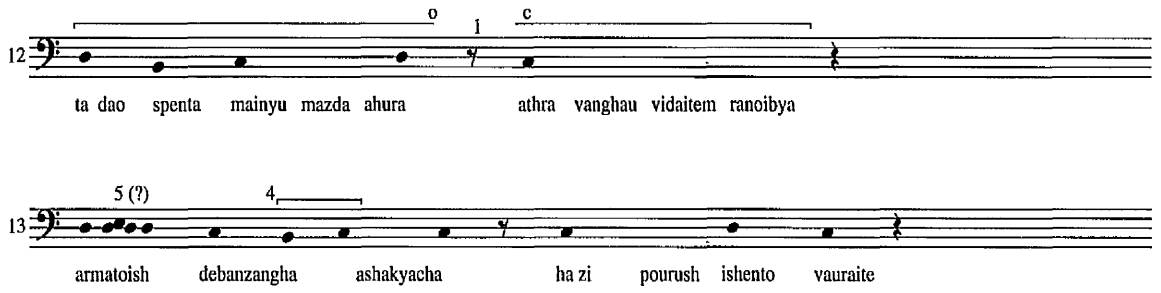
First Numbered Verse



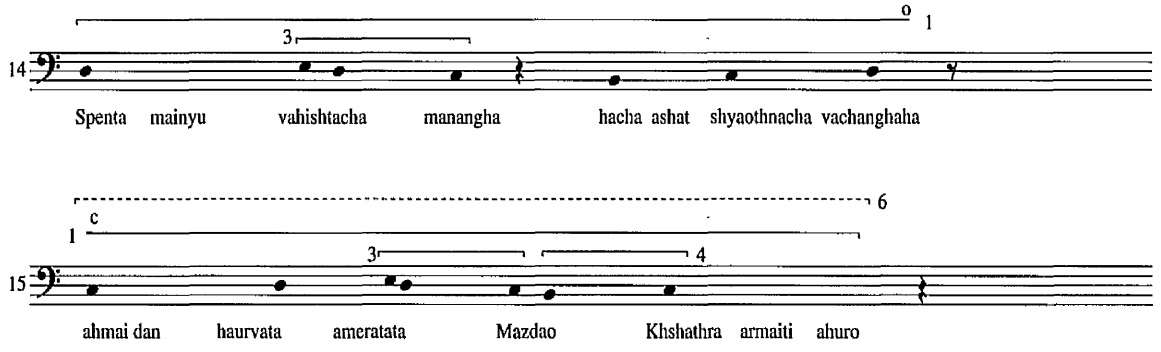
Fifth Numbered Verse



Sixth Numbered Verse



Seventh Numbered Verse



7.22 Training

The previous data has focussed on detecting the presence of common performance features in the prayers of various priests in Iran and India. The next few examples will focus on the training process in an attempt to understand how those performance features are present. To a degree the following transcriptions and recordings capture "in flight" as it were, the actual transmission of those performance features.

Unfortunately it was not possible to obtain data of this sort from Iran and so all the following examples are from India[89]. This imbalance can be to a degree offset by the fact that the training processes as described by priests in both countries were identical. The biggest difference in priestly education between the Indian and Iranian communities seems to be a commonly held perception that there are more opportunities and resources for scholarly studies in India. However, vis-à-vis the fundamental training process in which prayers are memorised and traditions are passed down through generations, the data below can, by priests' own admissions during interviews, be considered to be largely applicable to both countries.

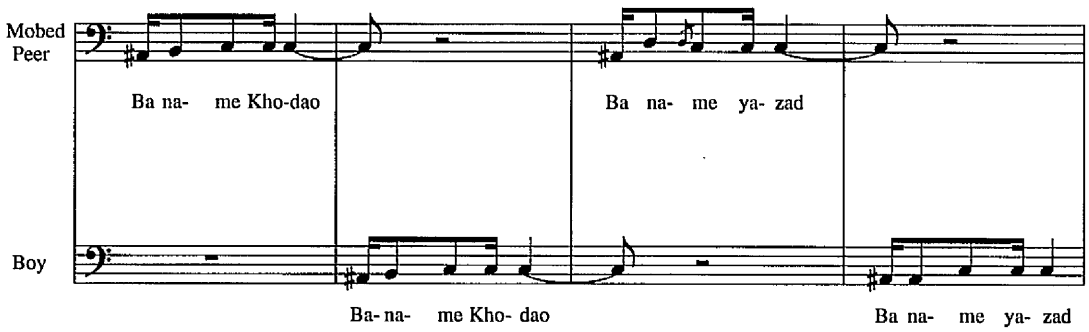
7.23 Mobed Peshotan Peer and unknown boy – Bombay, India (1959)

Din - no- Kalamo from Navjote ceremony – Track 33

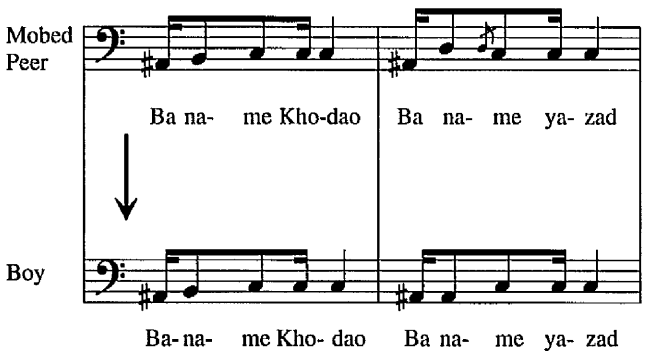
This first example has historic value as it is from 1959 and when linked up to the later current examples shows that what happened forty years ago with teachers and students, still happens now.

[89] There was no school for the training of priests in -*Iran at the time of research.

In this excerpt a priest leads a boy in a Navjote[90] ceremony. In the audio recording accompanying this transcription it is clear that the boy is following the man. However for the purposes of visual clarity and space, the boy's performance has been placed on the stave directly below the priest's. The two performers are therefore not, as notated, performing simultaneously, but rather, as heard, are alternating. Therefore what would normally in a descriptive performance score look like:



has for the purposes of comparison been altered to:



The only exception to this is system 9 at the very end where the two do actually pray together.

The downwards arrow is used to mark those places where the boy has copied the priest exactly or almost exactly.

[90] The Navjote ceremony is the ceremony by which children of approximately seven years of age are formally initiated into the religion.

Mobed P. Peer (1924-1997) was 35 years old at the time of the recording. The identity and age of the boy is unknown but it must be observed that (at a guess) he sounds roughly pubescent/post pubescent and so would be much older than seven which is the normal age of a child to have the navjote performed. It is possible therefore that this is not an actual navjote ceremony but a performance of it that was done specially for Professor Hanns-Peter Schmidt's recordings.

Nonetheless, whether this is an actual ceremony or not is relatively unimportant. The true value of this recording is that it captures almost perfectly the transference of the performance features from one generation to another.

Normally in the Navjote ceremony, the child and priest pray certain passages together, some are prayed by the priest alone, and the section chosen here is particularly useful as it requires the boy to follow the priest. On the audio recording[91] one can hear the priest instruct the boy in Gujarati "Now I will pray (and you must) pray like I do."

On the whole the boy does not copy the priest exactly but does broadly shadow him. The most consistent similarity between the two is in the note values which are almost always identical. This suggests that the most conscious care seems to be given to pronunciation and syllable length (which guides note values) and not pitch or ornamentation. It is pointedly significant that the boy's pitches are mostly different from the man's and yet the boy's performance is still considered proper. He is never corrected and in fact it is reasonable to assume that he was probably chosen for this recording because he was considered an exemplary (or at least competent) student. It is equally meaningful that in spite of not being corrected and possibly not being conscious of his pitching the boy still imitates the priest exactly on a number of occasions, and in one instance manifests all the performance features independently.

[91] The very beginning of the prayer where the priest announces the prayer in English has been edited together with the middle section where the alternating performance actually takes place.

In this transcription a cross-section of different parts of their performance has been edited together to demonstrate the above points. Therefore it shows how for the most part the boy does not copy the priest's pitches and ornaments but also that within this performance he does copy him enough to manifest all the performance features clearly.

The transcription also reveals that at the beginning of this section of the prayer (systems 1-3) the boy does not really copy the priest much but as the prayer is repeated he begins to copy the man with regular frequency. However even here it is notable that greatest incidence of imitation occurs in the middle of this section (systems 4-6) and not at the end. It could be argued that if the boy were consciously copying the adult it is more likely that the imitation would become more precise with greater practice and so would be more frequent at the end than the parts preceding it. The fact that the imitation happens with more regularity in the middle of the performance is somewhat odd, and as an inconsistency it suggests that the boy is imitating the priest on a subconscious level—by instinct and reflex and not by intention.

The passages selected for transcription show that when imitation does take place it is by and large exact. As a rule the boy is able to imitate simpler sequences that do not contain melisma. Nonetheless as the prayer goes on he achieves one or two convincing reproductions of the priest's quick turns between D♭ and E (system 4 bar 4, system 5 bar3). Also notable is the fact that the boy even instantly follows the adult's wandering tonic (systems 4 & 8).

Overall, the features that the boy manifests most often are ornamentation (feature 5), trichordal motion (feature 3) and the tri-semitone (feature 2). The greatest significance in both performances however are in those bars that both performers manifest all performance features within the smallest of textual parameters. This is another demonstration of the fact that the performance features can operate on micro as well as macro levels. Mobed P. Peer manifests

all the features in the last two bars of system 1 and the first bar of system 2. The boy shows a degree of fledgling independence in the last bar of system 5 and the first bar of system 6 where without following the adult he delivers a near perfect two-bar miniature of a complete performance containing all the features. In some ways it is these bars that most convincingly show that the features have taken hold in the boy's repertory and that they can manifest themselves independently of the adult.

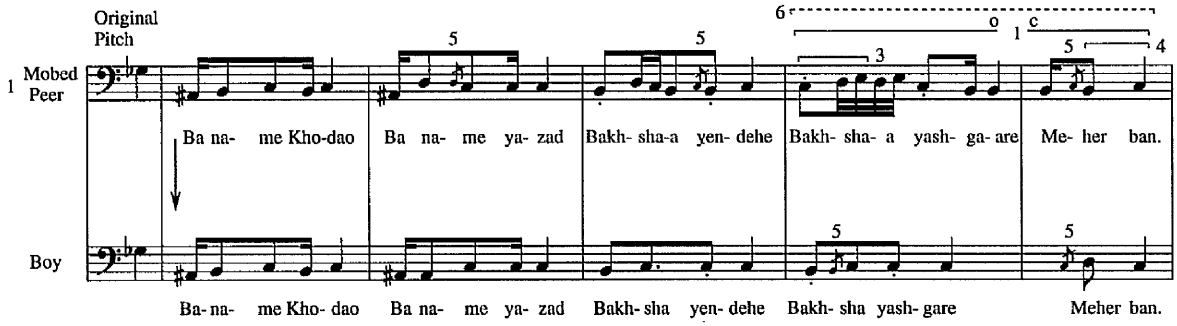
Mobed Peshotan Peer Leading a Boy In Navjote ceremony

Din-No Kalamo (Pazand)

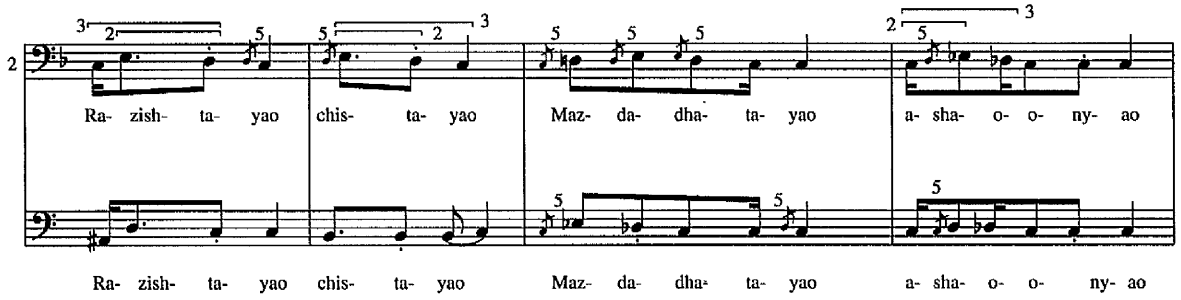
Opening Preliminary Line

The sign ↓ marks those places where the boy has copied the priest exactly or almost exactly.

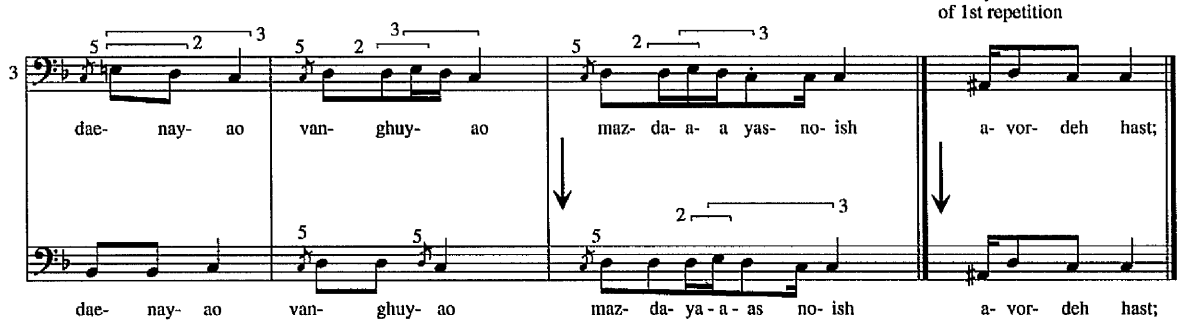
Double bar lines indicate an edit. The two bars separated by the lines have been put together from different parts of the prayer and are not actually performed sequentially.



First Verse, 1st Repetition



Excerpt from middle of 1st repetition



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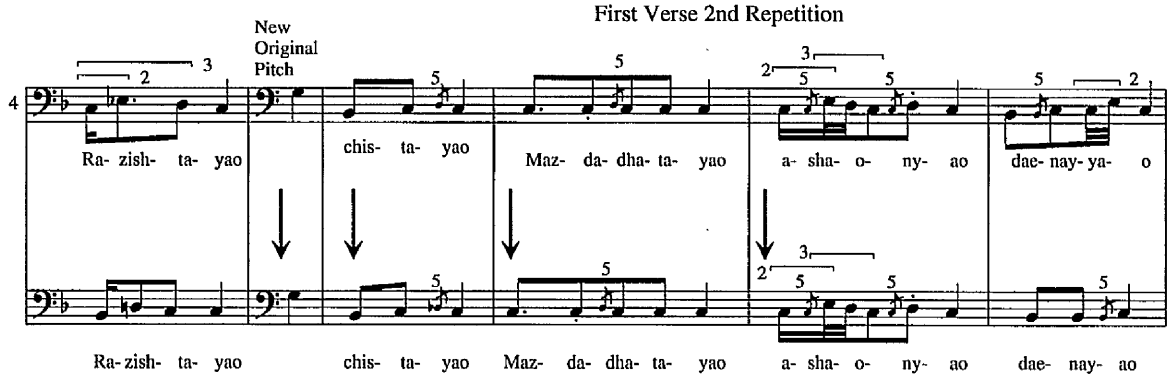
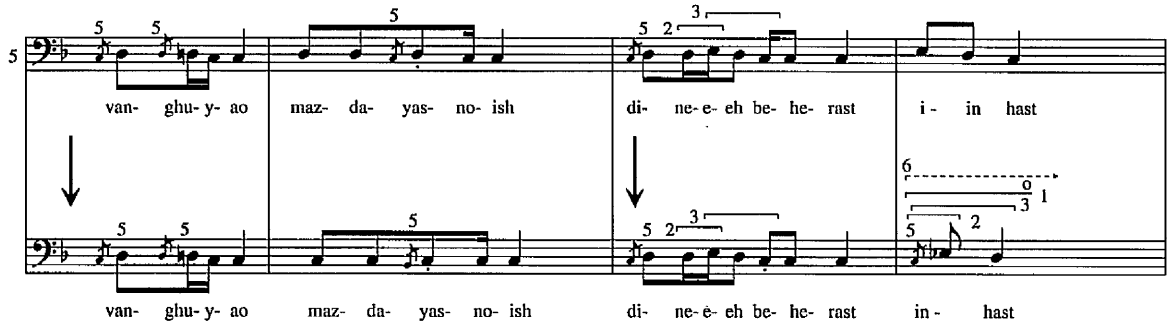
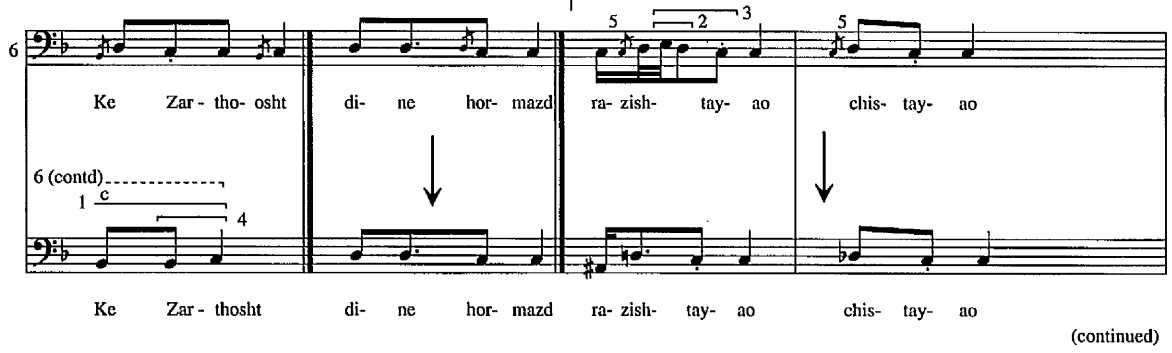
Mobed Peshotan Peer Leading a Boy In Navjote Ceremony
(continued)

First Verse 2nd Repetition





First Verse 3rd Repetition



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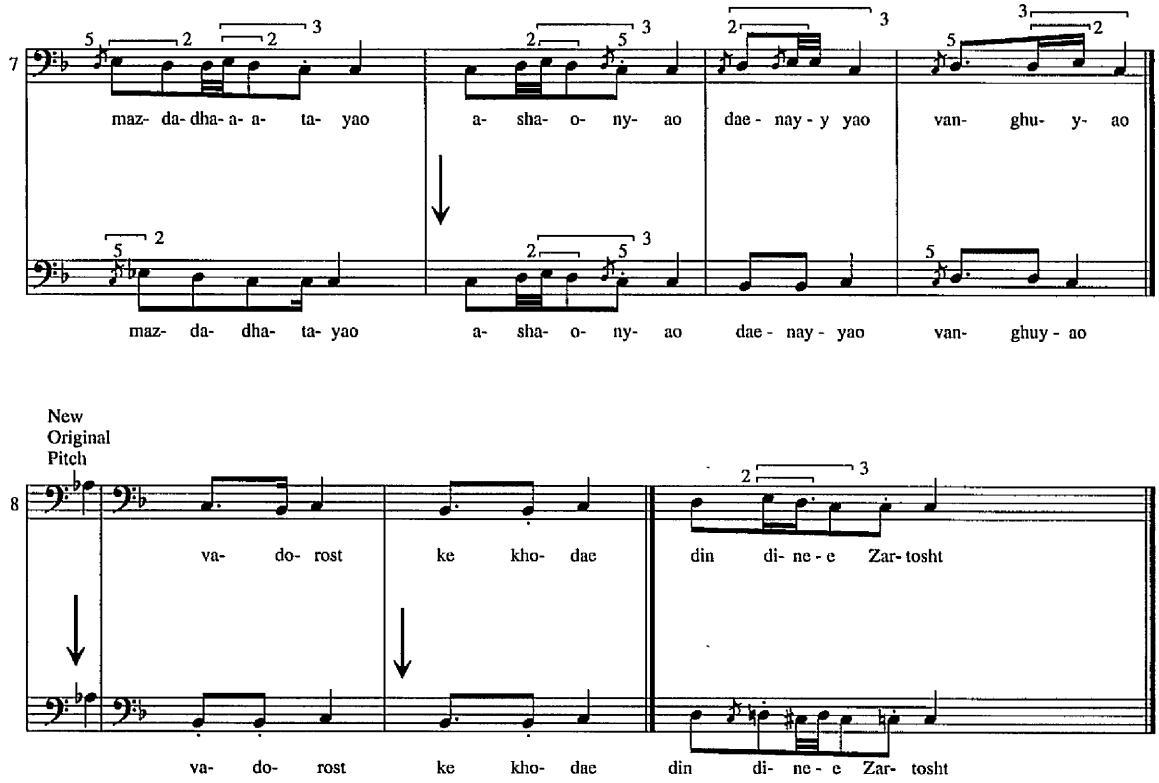
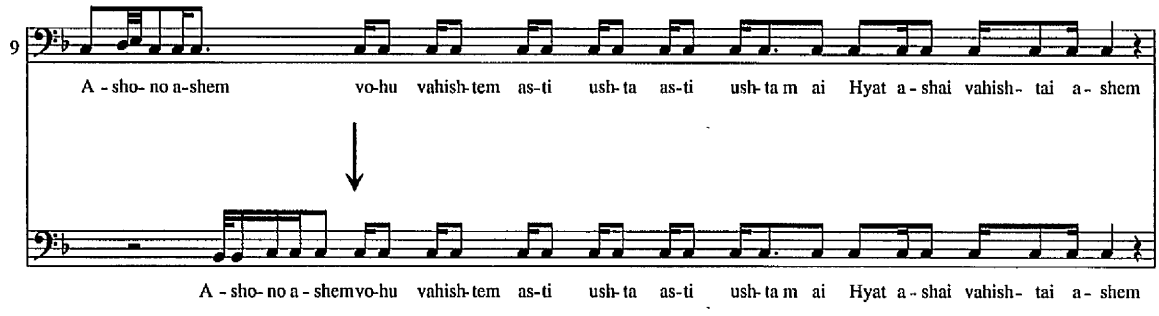
Mobed Peshotan Peer Leading a Boy in Navjote Ceremony
(continued)

First Verse 3rd Repetition (contd)



Ending Prayer



7.24 Mobed Shiavax B. Sidwa & Nikshad R. Fatakia – Bombay, India (2000)

Sarosh Yasht Vadi, Excerpt Karda VII -Track 34

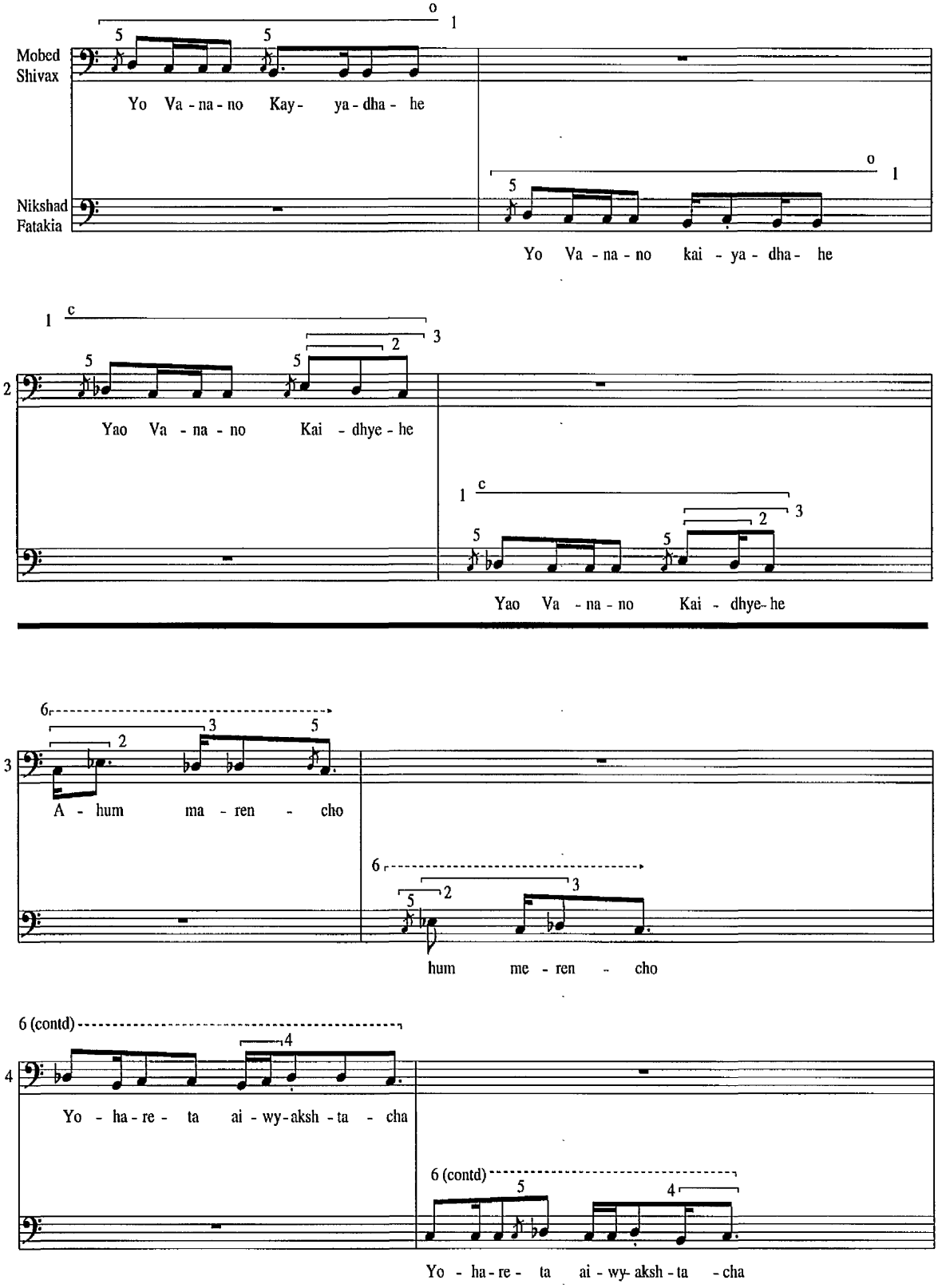
The recording took place at the Cama Athornan School in Andheri Bombay where Mobed Shiavax has been a teacher for thirty years and Nikshad is a student. At the time of recording Mobed Shiavax who completed his studies in Udvada was approximately 60 years old and Nikshad, originally from Surat was 10 years old.

The excerpt chosen for analysis is a contemporary equal to the 1959 recording of Mobed Peshotan Peer leading a boy in the Navjote ceremony in that it too captures, in motion, the transference of the performance features from teacher to student. The boy does not always mirror the teacher completely but within the young boy's rushed repetition of the line his teacher has just said, a very close, if nascent, analogue of the elder's performance features can be seen emerging. The most salient parts of the lesson have been extracted for transcription but it can be stated that on the whole, the close imitation shown here occurred perhaps less than half the time. As with Peshotan Peer leading the boy in a navjote ceremony, there was no particular pattern to the points at which Nikshad imitated his teacher. This demonstrates that although transference is captured as it occurred, it occurred in patches and spurts and not as a continuing unbroken progression.

Please note that the first words heard which are rushed and introductory have not been notated.

Mobed Shiavax & Nikshad Fatakia

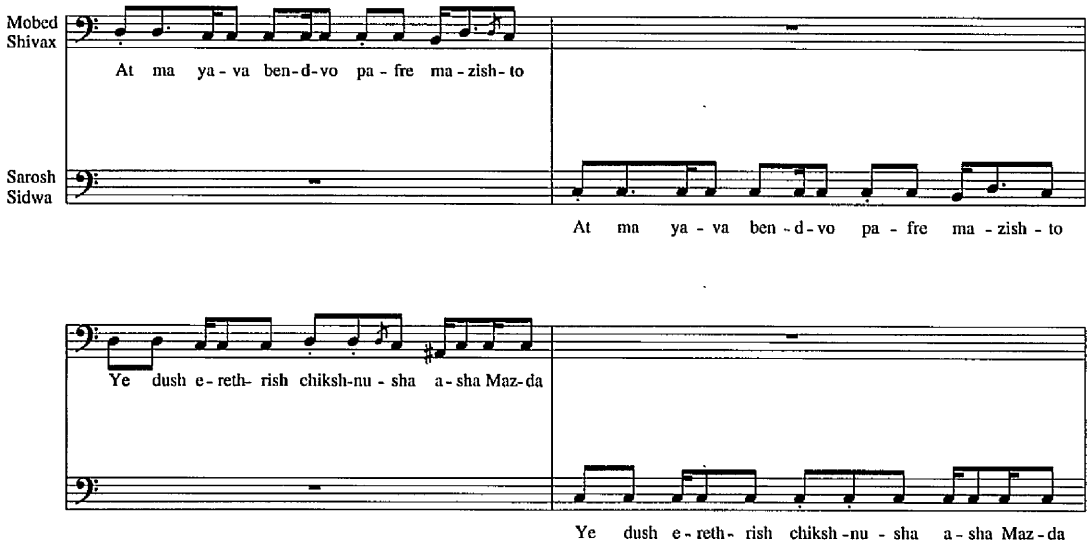
Sarosh Yasht Vadi (excerpt Karda VII)



7.25 Mobed Shiavax B. Sidwa & Sarosh Dara Sidwa – Bombay, India (2000)

At the time of recording Sarosh Sidwa was a 12 year old student at the Cama Athornan school for priests in Andheri Bombay.

The previous two examples serve to capture a moment of transmission. This example proves that the performance features can still be shown to have passed from teacher to student even when it can appear from one recording that a student is simply not copying the teacher, or even that the teacher is not manifesting the performance features all the time. Track 35 (notation below) is a recording of an actual instruction with his teacher, Mobed Shiavax (they have an uncle in common), who was teaching him Yasna 49 for the first time. This excerpt does not reveal transference and it requires very little transcription to capture its essence. The priest's original pitch was D below middle C and the boy was very close to Middle C itself.

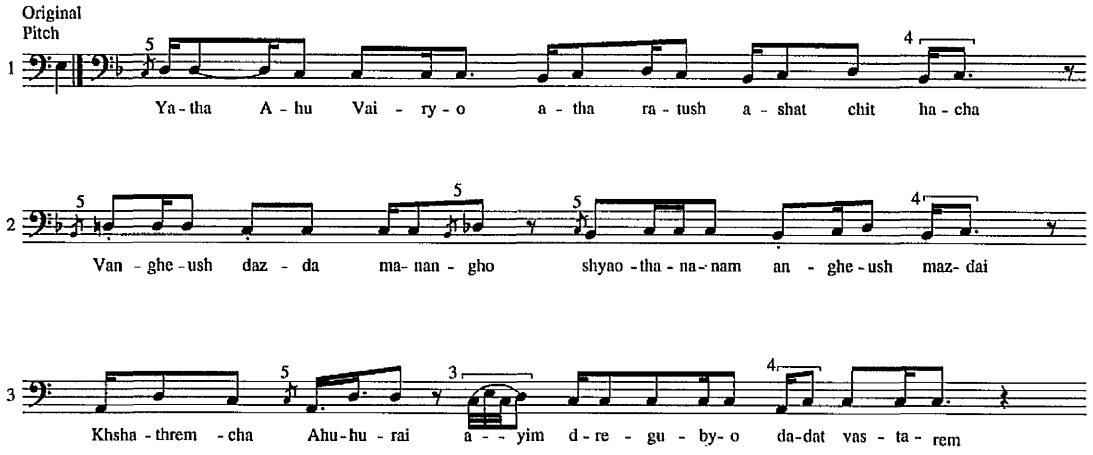


As shown above the priest has certain things that he does consistently for each new line. He always begins on D, descends to C and ends with a leap up from either B or A♯. Yet in spite of the priest's pitch variation which occurs all the way through the lesson, the boy only ever repeats the words on one single note.

With the exception of the last three notes of the first line he almost never diverts from this monotone.

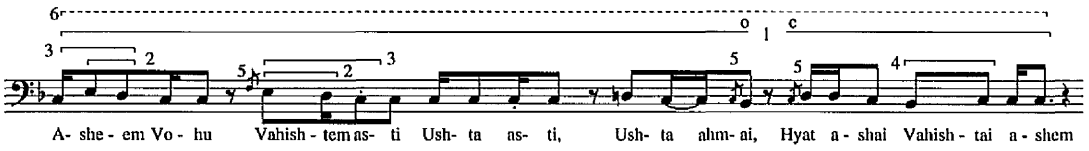
It is also notable that like Peshotan Peer in the 1959 example, Mobed Shiavax never corrects the boy's pitch. For the corrections that can be heard he only ever adjusts Sarosh's pronunciation.

It must also be observed that Mobed Shiavax does not himself manifest the performance features in every realisation of a prayer. During the interview he demonstrated what he felt was the praying with a full and musical voice and performed the short prayer Yatha Ahu Vairyo (Track 36, transcribed below).



It can be seen from the above transcription that although the prayer is rendered with expression, most of the features are not present, and obviously Mobed Shiavax manifests the features often enough for the students to absorb them. In order to see if the boys could pray with the performance features they were asked to "pray like their teacher". As the study went on this became a useful tool in evoking in the boys the subject of the prayers performed in a musical manner and not in a rapid monotone. The Ashem Vohu performed below by Sarosh later in the interview (track 37) contains all the features quite strongly.

Sarosh Sidwa - Ashem Vohu



It also interesting to note that the actual timbre of the boy's voice seems to change. In the earlier example when praying with his teacher Sarosh's voice was maintained close to his speaking voice. For the Ashem Vohu however, he seems to have assumed a higher pitched and, for lack of a better term, a more Zoroastrian-priestly kind of voice. It is different from both his conversational and his normal singing voice (see track 51 for a sample of Sarosh singing a Gujarati devotional song). One has the impression that the boy is able somehow to access a package of inflections and musical material without being able to give it a name or being aware of specifically what he is manifesting. He simply feels that when he prays like this he sounds like his teacher. Sarosh's particular example will be further examined in the next chapter on The Awareness of Aesthetics.

In spite of Sarosh's demonstration that he has absorbed the features, it still follows naturally that if the features are not forcefully present in a teacher as they are not in Mobed Shiavax, the students stand less of a chance of absorbing them. Even in the best of circumstances it may be possible that not all of the students would absorb them. This proves to be the case at the Cama as exemplified by an older student, Kubcher. He did not manifest any of the features.

Track 38 is a version of Ashem Vohu and track 39 is a performance of Yasna 28 performed in the presence of his teacher Mobed Shiavax. Both are representative of the way Kubcher normally prays. Again it is notable that in the performance of Yasna 28 Mobed Shiavax only helps the boy out when he forgets a word here and there, but never even begins to address his sound. At the time of recording Kubcher was almost at the end of his training and track

40, another excerpt from Yasna 28 represents his best attempt at "sounding like his teacher". It seems that he is straining to sound even slightly musical but at best he is locked into a repetitive diatonic groove between C and D. Indeed, the material here is so simply described that it does not require transcription. It is also possible to detect that after a few lines the boy's basic instinct to simply revert back to a rattling speedy monotone keeps reasserting itself.

7.26 Non - Standard Priests

Up to this point all the examples of Mobeds, teachers and students have served to outline the commonality that binds the prayer performances of diverse priests. The next two men however, were chosen because they represent a special minority. In fact they are the only two examples of their particular distinction that were discovered during the course of this study. Simply put, they do not even remotely sound like any of the other priests analysed thus far. The reason for this lies in the fact that both men had a desire to perform the prayers in (what they considered to be) as musical a manner as possible. Their approaches to this goal differed but their resulting sounds, although different from each other, share a important common point—they reflect the broader musical environment of the respective Iranian and Indian cultures within which Zoroastrians live as minority communities.

The impact of the connections Zoroastrians have with their surrounding environments will be discussed in greater detail in the analysis chapter of this study. For now, the following transcriptions will provide additional and interesting layers and differences from the body of evidence provided thus far.

7.27 Mobed Marazban Gonda – Bombay, India (2000)

Yasna 28 – Track 41

Mobed Gonda was 51 years old at the time of recording. He completed his Mobedi studies in Bombay under the private tutelage of his maternal uncles (Nuriman Panthaki and his late uncle, Minocher Beysania) and was also influenced by his paternal great-grandfather Adilji Firozshah Gonda.

His position is unique within this study as he is the only priest who at present works fulltime within an Agiary. He is the priest of the temple in Lonavala, India where this recording was made. A further important point of distinction is that, as mentioned above, he openly expressed a wish to perform the prayers in a musical and singing manner.

The location of this recording as well as Mobed Gonda's openly stated musical desires may have influenced these performances in that, being alone in a temple certainly gave (and gives) him the chance to pray full-voiced at higher volumes than perhaps those recordings made in people's homes. However, it must be noted that all priests studied insisted that the prayers they recorded with me were performed with the same authenticity and energy as any performance regardless of the location or occasion. Nonetheless, it can be observed that Mobed Gonda's sound does have a certain full-throated quality to it.

Of the six performance features it is the balancing motifs (feature 1) that most shape his performance. There are very few lines that do not fall into this motion.

Motif A phrases tend to reach and stay among E, F, G—namely the higher reaches of his range. Motif B often begins B, C, D and emphasises the notes below E. Furthermore, Mobed Gonda has a tendency to prolong the resolution

of the balancing motifs by arriving at the final tonic after three or four phrases, instead of two as would normally feature in ouvert-clos motion. Even other Mobeds whose prayers involve balancing motifs (Khodabash, Aibara) usually work with pairs of phrases. i.e. one phrase (or section) of motif A is followed immediately by motif B. Mobed Gonda seems to prolong the arrival of motif B by usually preceding motif B with at least two phrases of motif A. The alternate analysis provided highlights this tendency and also shows that as he goes further into the prayer, the prolongation itself gets longer. He begins with two phrases[92] of motif A, expands to three and finishes with four. The only other Mobed who manifested an equally complex melodic sectioning was Mobed Niknām whose prayers often followed an ABCBAB pattern. A crucial difference between Mobeds Niknām and Gonda, however, is that many of Mobed Niknām's phrases did not fall into this pattern whereas almost all Mobed Gonda's phrases do follow his balancing motifs.

The feature that appears the most rarely in Mobed Gonda's performance is the melodic contour (feature 6). It often seems implied but does not usually complete its arc. The tri-semitone, trichordal motion and subtonic as leading tone (features 2, 3, 4) are also somewhat rare.

Overall, the abiding impression that one is left with from Mobed Gonda's prayers is that they have stronger and somehow more florid melodic lines than do the prayers of most other Mobeds. This could stem from a number of elements. First, his sound is infused with a pervading vibrato. Second, many of his phrases are enriched with melisma near their beginnings and endings (e.g. system 7) which gives them greater tonal variety. Finally, his pacing is varied. He begins a phrase slowly, speeds up for its middle and then pauses, somewhat dramatically at its conclusion.

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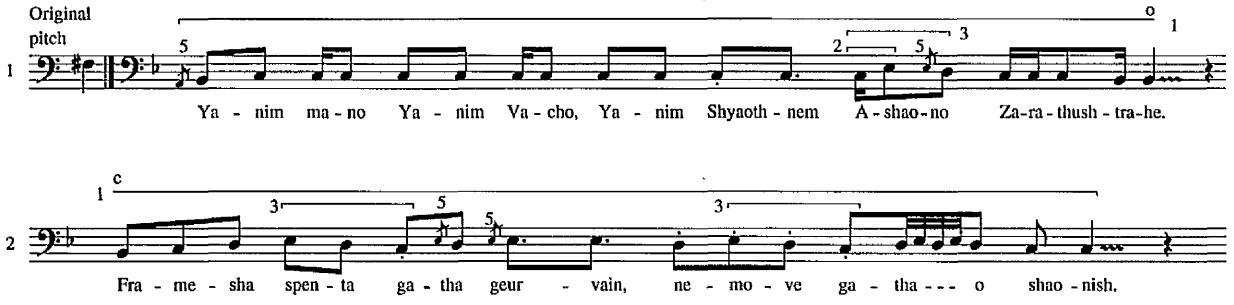
[92] Although the first two systems are marked as having three phrase endings (ABC) the absence of a rest at point B gives it the effect of an elided cadence and suggests that this section can be interpreted as having either two or three phrases. It would seem that it contains a degree of uncertainty which is resolved by the three clear pauses in between phrases further on in the prayer.

The above strong sense of musicality and the comparative rarity of most of the performance features illuminates the interesting conceptual position that Mobed Gonda occupies vis-à-vis general performance practice. It has been established that most priests pray completely by instinct and habit. Even a priest as musical as Mobed Niknām insisted that he was not at all aware of shaping his performance and that he simply prayed as had his teachers before him. However Mobed Gonda openly stated his desire to pray in a musical manner and so one has a sense that on balance, his sound is shaped more by intention than by habit. His expressive melisma, vibrato, pacing and the prolonged arrival at the final tonic of his three-phrase ABC sections give his sound a considered and seemingly crafted symmetry.

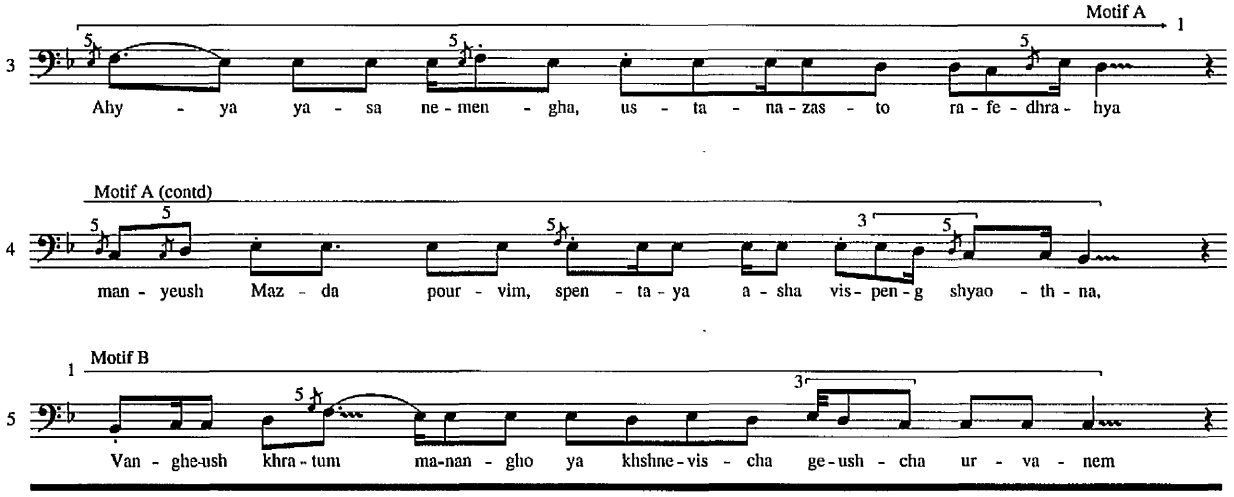
With other Mobeds the six features are considered to be the pervading structural elements of a priest's performance. However, with Mobed Gonda, with the exception of feature 1, their appearances are rare but striking, almost as if some inner instinct is randomly penetrating in small flashes through a veil of intentioned performance. This will be further explored in the analysis chapter.

Yasna 28 Mobed Marazban Gonda

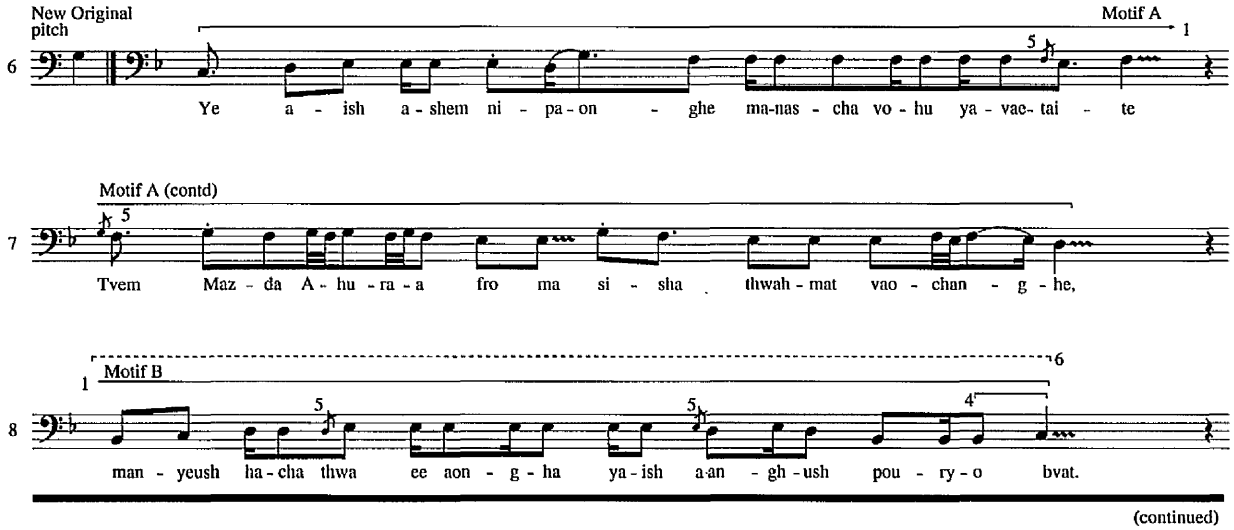
Opening Lines



First Stanza



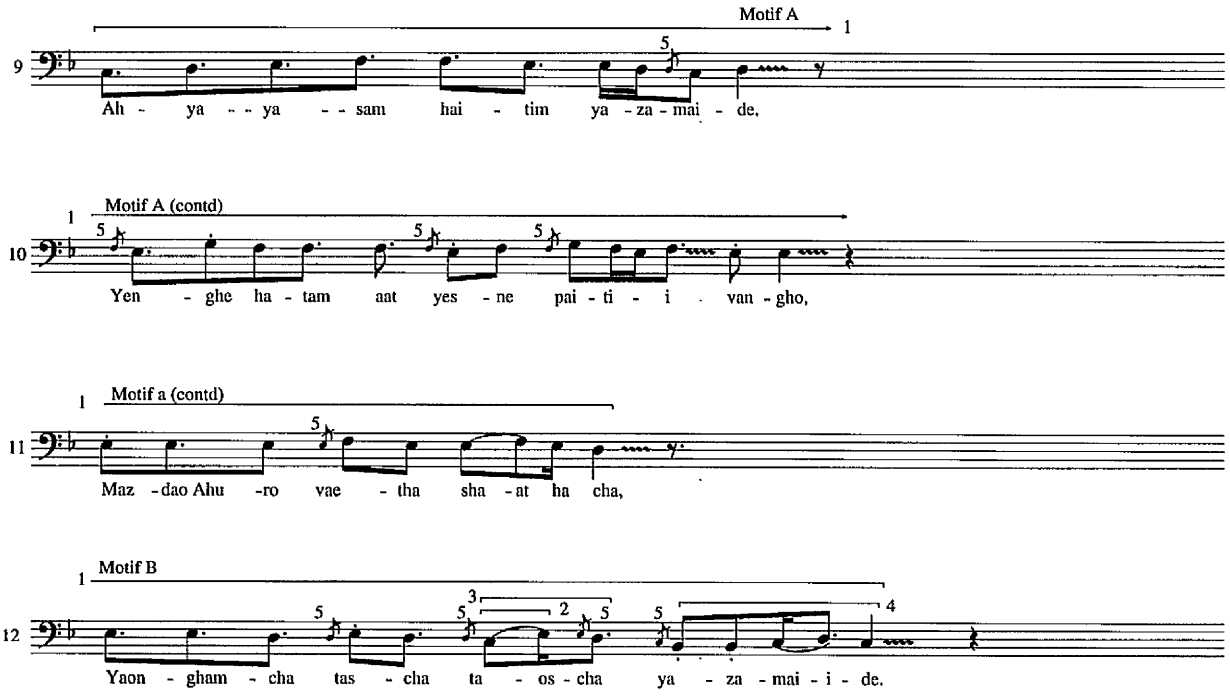
Last Numbered Stanza



(continued)

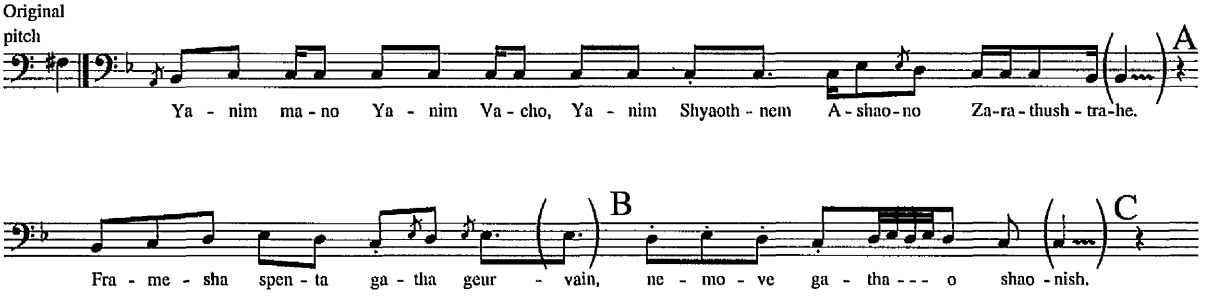
Yasna 28 Mobed Marazban Gonda (contd)

Closing Lines

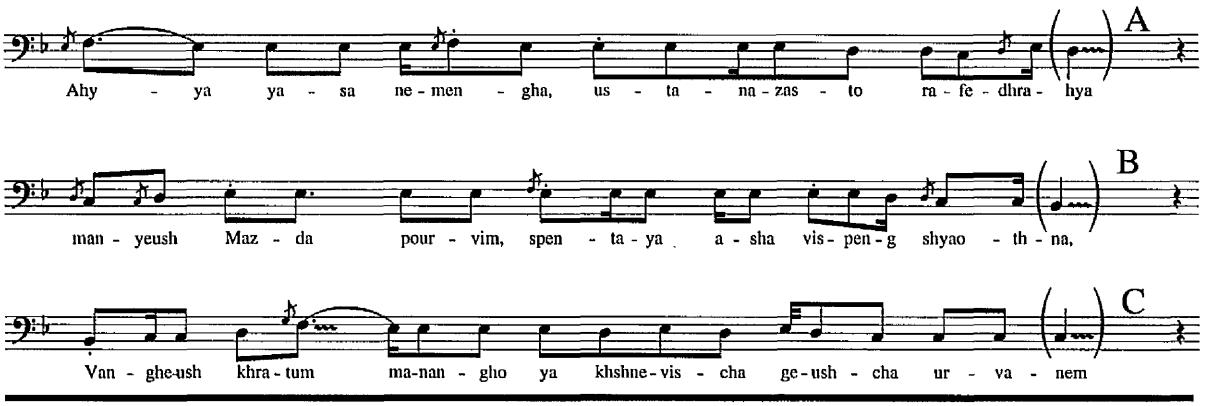


Yasna 28 Mobed Marazban Gonda - Alternate Analysis

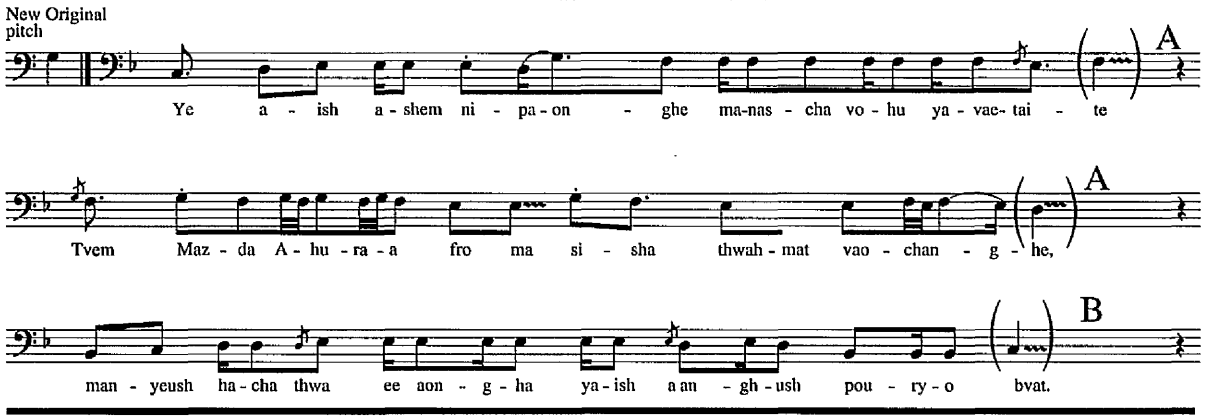
Opening Lines



First Stanza



Last Numbered Stanza



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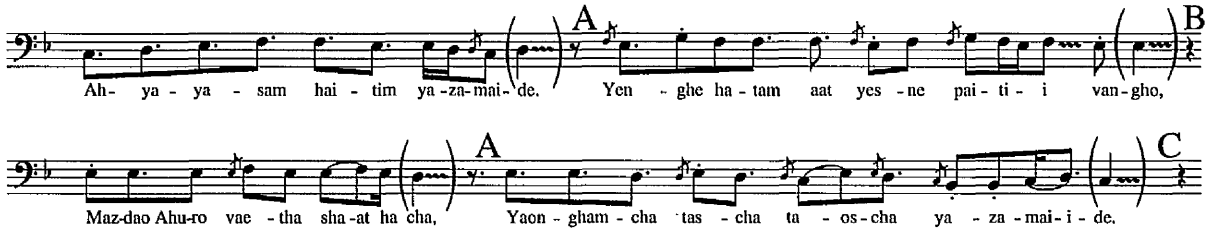


7.28 Mobed Cyroos – Tehran, Iran (1999)

Yasna 28 – Track 42

Mobed Cyroos was 56 years old at the time of recording. He was born in Kerman, Yazd and completed his childhood Mobedi studies with his father. Like Mobed Gonda, Mobed Cyroos has been included in this study because some years ago he too acted upon a desire to sing the prayers in a musical way. However, Mobed Cyroos is unique in that fifteen years ago he actually sought musical instruction for his prayer performance. He consulted three Moslem classical Persian musicians in Tehran, Mr Sorab é Hedoyati, Mr Akbar, and Mr Khoseimi, and took lessons with them twice a week for five years. The musicians knew nothing of the Zoroastrian religion but were interested in it and so exchanged musical lessons for readings of the prayers. Mobed Cyroos would read some prayers out to them and they would play back a musical line on either the tar, setar[93] or violin. Although no notes were ever written down for him, Mobed Cyroos copied the instruments as much as possible and over a period of five years absorbed some of what was shown to him.

A full discussion of these lessons and the effect they had on Mobed Cyroos will be undertaken in the Analysis chapter which also addresses the impact surrounding cultures have had on the prayers. This section will therefore concern itself more specifically with the manifestation of the performance features in Mobed Cyroos' prayer.

Only three of the six performance features (2, 3, and 5) manifest in any of Mobed Cyroos' performance and although they are present they are not a constructive or organisational element. Put another way, the three performance features that are present throughout the prayer—the tri-semitone, trichordal motion and ornamentation, are not the elements that impact most significantly upon the ear, nor, under analysis, do they appear to be structural. The lack of

alternating melodic motion (feature 1) and the absence of the melodic contour (feature 6) help to make Mobed Cyroos sound unlike any other Mobed studied (or encountered).

His prime organisational feature is his rhythm and the breaking up of text into small segments. He progresses from small divisions of two words per segment at the beginning of a section and then rushes through three or more words at its end.

In some respects, it is the constant lurching motion that results from breaking his phrases up into unusually small segments that distinguishes him most from other Mobeds. It also parses the prayers into such small segments that it almost becomes hard to follow the text, especially if one has become accustomed to the more flowing delivery of most other priests.

From a structural point of view the divisions do not seem to occur either grammatically or due to breathing capacity. They do, however, broadly correspond to a loose rhythmic grouping that seems to repeat throughout the prayer which is that each new passage is begun with a small number of words or syllables grouped together and is finished with a larger collection of syllables/note values. Systems 1-3 comprise a section as do systems 4 –5 and in both sections the grouping of syllables at the beginning is much smaller than at the end. The fact that this does not occur for the shorter poems in systems 7 – 9 shows that this pattern is not completely consistent, but it is the only pattern that is observable in Mobed Cyroos' performances.

With regards to melody, there seems to be some general consistency to his pitch patterns but his melodic lines sound like they are crammed into the above described syllable groupings. When compared to the flowing and instinctive

[93] Broadly speaking the tar is a four stringed lute and the setar is the smaller ancestor to the Indian Sitar.

delivery of other priests, this has the effect of making his prayers sound awkward, stumbling and somewhat fabricated. One almost has the impression that Mobed Cyroos is less performing by instinct and is more aping a musical style. This would seem reasonable given his involvement with music teachers. It could very well be that he is attempting to reproduce the instrumental lines of his Moslem classical Persian music teachers.

Another point of comparative ambiguity is the issue of Mobed Cyroos' tonic. While it does not seem to be reinforced with uniform emphasis throughout the prayer, it also, and somewhat paradoxically does not seem to wander or move. In the larger sections (systems 1-3 and 4-6) he does end the final phrase on C but this is not the case for the smaller sections of systems 7-8. Also, within the larger sections the lines in between the first and last sections have no consistent finalis. In systems 4-5 all of the nine phrases end on C but in systems 1-3 five out of the seven phrases do not. In the smaller prayers throughout systems 7 and 8, B is as prominent as C and only in system 9 does Mobed Cyroos assert the home position of C as the tonic. This tonal ambiguity is also a point of difference between Mobed Cyroos and other Zoroastrian priests.

A final issue which also needs to be addressed here is the degree of textual irregularity that seems to pervade his performance. Mobed Cyroos has many irregularities in the text of his prayers. Even in the performance of the excerpt of Yasna 28 he mispronounces words (leaving out sizeable portions), and performs the prayer incomplete leaving out many stanzas. In another recording of an actual wedding ceremony that he performed in Tehran, it emerged that he had left out whole sections of Hormozd Yasht which to the Iranian Zoroastrian tradition is a prayer of central importance.

Even though priests can differ to sometimes noticeable if not large degrees in the text of a prayer, Mobed Cyroos seems to step across a line that seriously breaches the propriety of the texts. Also, some comments he made call into

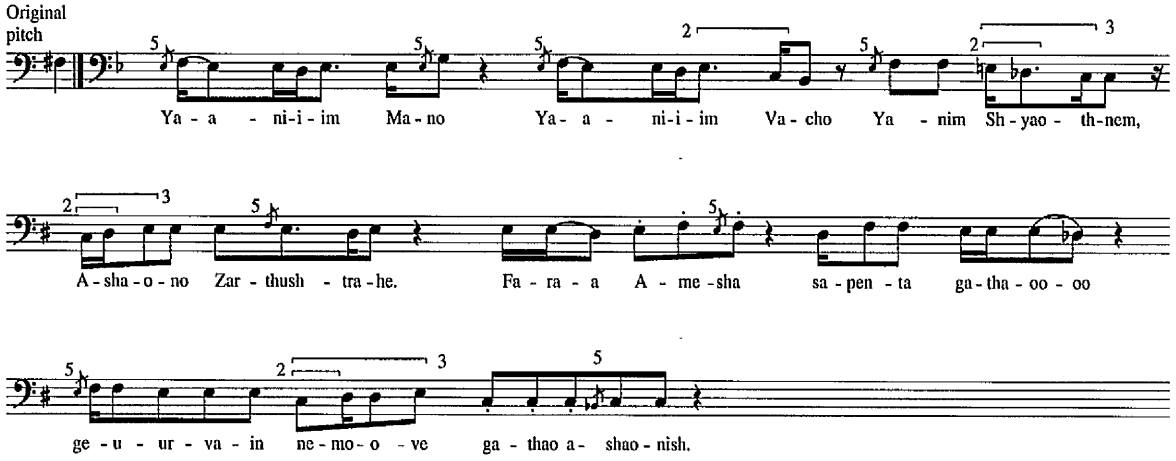
question the integrity of his training and knowledge. When during interviews he was asked to pray passages from the Gathas he insisted, somewhat incredibly, that no priest in Iran would be able to do so. This is comparable to saying that a Christian priest would have no knowledge of The Gospels. He went on to perform a lengthy prayer and insisted that it would meet all my requirements. It did contain the segment of Yasna 28 that has been presented for analysis, but the large prayer from which it was extracted simply does not exist either as an entity unto itself, or as collective parts of a ritual. When his recording was analysed by Mobeds Niknām of Tehran and Bhedwar of London it was ascertained that Mobed Cyroos had, in effect, simply pasted together snatches of different prayers and given them the title of a prayer that doesn't exist—Buzorgan Yasht. There is no such prayer. There is a Buzorgan Afrin, but he did not recite its text.

The abiding impressions of Mobed Cyroos are, therefore, that he is highly irregular vis-à-vis text and regarding music, that his experiences with his music teachers and not the performance features common to other priests are what shape the sound of his prayers. This effectively renders him outside the collective experience of the Zoroastrian priesthood's performance habits.

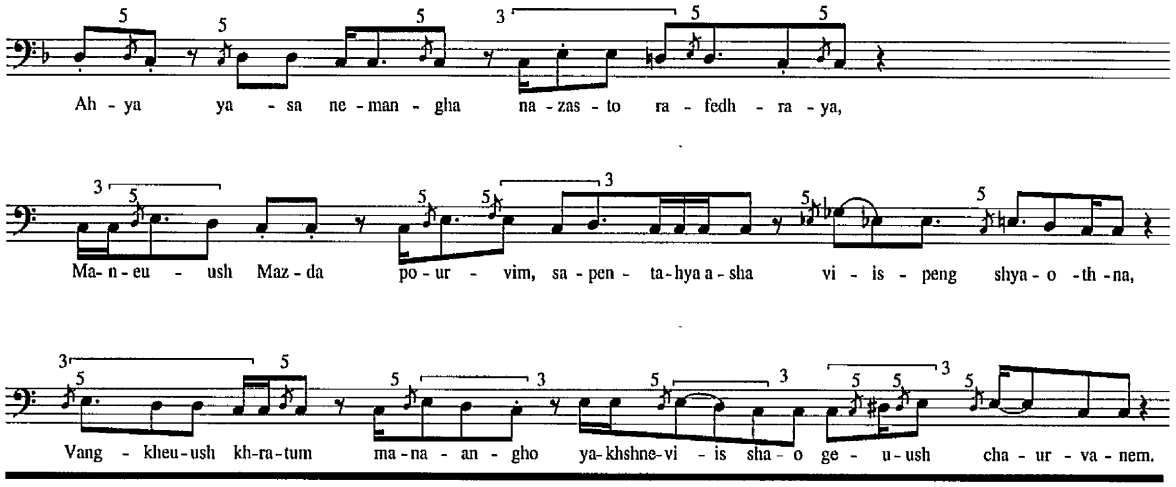
As noted earlier, the prayers of Mobeds Cyroos and Gonda will both be further analysed relative to their surrounding cultures in the Analysis chapter.

Yasna 28 - Mobed Cyroos

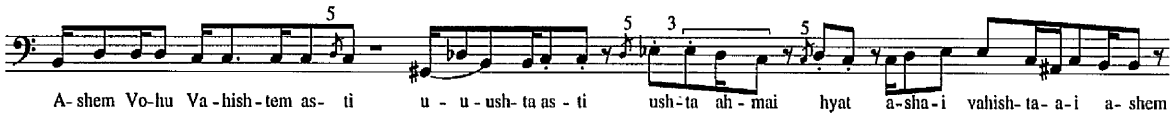
Opening Lines



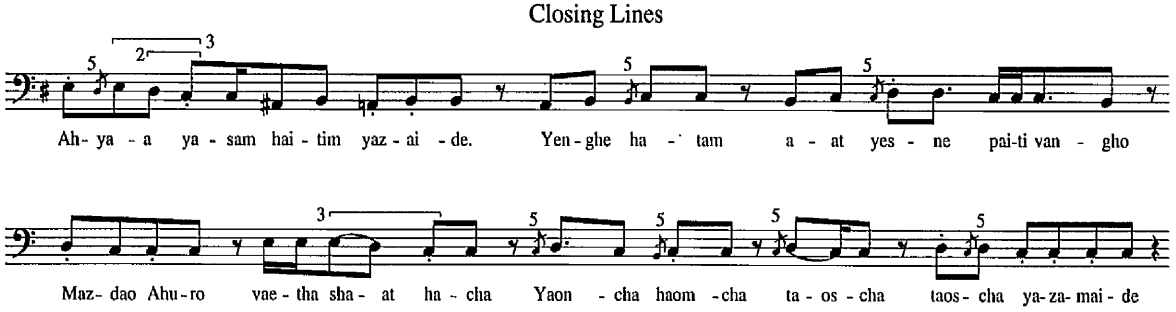
First Stanza



Bridging Prayer



Closing Lines



Chapter 8 The Awareness Of Aesthetics in Prayer Performance

In the previous chapter, recordings from throughout the latter half of the 20th century were transcribed and several features were found to be common in the prayer performances of all the Zoroastrian priests studied who do not simply pray in a rapid monotone. The recordings were forty years apart and the priests were of varying ages and from diverse locations all of which suggests that the findings are applicable across time and the geographic span of the Zoroastrian community. Also, the transcriptions captured the transference of those features during the training process. There is, no doubt, some meaning in these findings, but before embarking on the final analysis it is important to address the fundamental paradox that was first mentioned in the chapter on training, which was that in his whole life a priest is never taught a pitch sequence or a melodic curve and yet analysis shows that these, and other specific aural commonalties are there in his prayers. How did they get there? To what degree do priests know about them and how are they passed on?

To get to the heart of this paradox, priests were asked about their own sound as well as the sound of their teachers or fathers or whoever influenced them most during training. The resulting responses serve as a verbal parallel to the transcriptions of the previous chapter. Those notations were records of performances and these interviews are records of what the performers think and know about performance. The data presented here were obtained at roughly the same time as the recordings of prayers that were used in the transcription chapter.

It should also be mentioned that an attempt has been made to include interview material here in what may almost be considered to be a video or radio documentary format as applied to paper. It is hoped that presenting the responses largely "as they were said" will not only allow the voices of the priests to be "heard" in their own words within this study, but that this may also

bring the reader closer to the experience of seeing these men deal with territory that proved to be internal and intimate, but ultimately hidden to themselves.

8.1 The degree to which priests are aware of their own sound

Zoroastrian priests demonstrated that their awareness of their own sound can be summed up thus: they "know not". Some are aware that they "know not", i.e. they have a vague inkling that they are doing something tuneful when they pray but they do not know what it is. However most priests simply have none but the broadest awareness of anything to do with their sound production. This curiously blinkered cognisance can be expanded a little further.

1). All priests[94] are aware that one can pray in either a flat, rapid, undifferentiated monotone, or in some other way that is more tuneful and expressive.

2). All priests insist that this more tuneful and expressive way simply comes "from the heart" without consideration. Points 1 & 2 represent an on/off cleavage which serves to illuminate the extent of control they have over their sound—either flat monotone or tuneful and expressive.

3). No priest is aware of the specifics of his sound[95]. Some have never once given their sound any thought. The term 'specifics' includes any habits of pitch sequence or embellishment or any of the six performance features noted thus far. Lack of awareness is shown by the fact that when asked about sound in various direct and indirect ways, no priest was able to use words or to demonstrate any specific feature of his sound.

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[94] "All priests" refers to all priests who were interviewed.

[95] Mobeds Gonda and Cyroos are exceptions in that they had considered the nature of their sound production but as was already made clear, their cases are somewhat unique and will be more fully

It must be clarified that although priests may "know not", these performance features are obviously contained within them and exist as a body of knowledge. The precise nature of this knowledge is better dealt with in the Analysis chapter. For now, the purpose is to illuminate what priests expressed when they were asked to contemplate the aesthetic qualities of their sound.

The biggest challenge arose from the fact that this was a subject they had never broached on their own. It was like asking a man to look at the back of his own head. The following interview data helps illuminate the hazy area that sound production occupies within a priest's self-concept. Also, in the same way that the transcription examples of students and their teachers captured "in flight" the manifestation and transmission of performance features, the interviews with students presented later on capture the voicing of a particular awareness or, in a sense, the lack of it, and the passing of this from one generation to the next.

As stated above, for most priests the subject of what their voices were actually doing when they prayed seemed so foreign to them that at times their answers appeared to be addressing questions other than the ones asked. The issue had to be corralled before a clear answer was obtained. Sometimes, as shown in the following exchange with Dastur Hormazdiar K. Mirza[96], it was never obtained.

RM When you pray, are you aware of what your voice does to the extent that you can tell somebody "I go up here and I go down in pitch there. And I use this melody or that melody."? Are you able to talk about the sound of your prayers in that way?

HKM Yes.

RM Can you explain to me please, what are some of the melodies that you might use?

HKM Instead of melody I would say accents. (demonstrates Yatha Ahu Vairyo with accents)

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discussed in the analysis chapter. It can be stated however, that even they had no idea of the actual specifics of their sound.

[96] Interview conducted in English.

Dastur Mirza thought I was referring to accents or grammatical stresses and not pitch. In a similar conversation, Mobed Keki Panthaki, teacher at the Dadar Madressa in Bombay thought I was referring to volume. In Iran, Mobed Goshtasp Belivani of Sharifabad assumed I was asking about pronunciation. It became clear that with very few exceptions, the men interviewed had certain initial assumptions about the kinds of topics that related to prayer performance and these were mostly centred around pronunciation. Issues of pitch and melodic movement and other musical considerations lay well outside their normal conversational and conceptual boundaries. The exceptions to this were, of course Mobeds Gonda and Cyroos who, given their exceptional situations, are not really relevant to a discussion of priests in general. The two will be discussed separately in the Analysis chapter.

However elusive the concept initially seemed to most priests, some kind of understanding was ultimately reached, and when they grasped that they were being asked about the sound of their prayers, a uniformly simple and consistent response from most was that, although they didn't know how any particular sound was made, they felt that whatever their voices were doing came "from the heart". In the words of Dastur Kaikobad of Udvada, "Here you see prayers, nobody shows you anything. Nobody teaches you the voice, the pitch, the low and all that but when you pray with the heart it comes automatically". This attitude is also found in his son Mobed Khushroo who pointed to his heart and said "It just comes. You feel like you are going going going". Mobed Behruz of Yazd also put his hand over his heart and simply said over and over "I don't know. It just happens". The most explicit statement that a priest could not consciously be aware of his sound and that it just came from the heart was supplied by Mobed Cyrus Panthaky of Navsari. When asked about his awareness of his sound, he responded with surprise "I'm thinking how to create my own voice? (shaking head) Not like that. No no, it's coming by heart". This was reiterated many times in the interview but most clearly when he said "This voice is not coming by your throat, it's coming by your heart".

An immediate impression of the above responses is the striking uniformity of the words and the notion "from the heart" coming from disparate people. Men who had never met each other in different countries all either used remarkably similar phrases or otherwise conveyed same the idea. This suggests that some common experience has imparted a common mindset. It would seem logical that the one experience they all have in common regardless of their country of origin is the training process. The previous transcription chapter seemed to capture aural snap-shots of children copying the behaviour of adults. It follows that in addition to absorbing sounds from their teacher a child could also absorb a mindset. This will be more fully examined at the end of this chapter. First, we will establish, as much as possible, the make up and boundaries of this mindset.

It appears from the interviews that priests accept that the sound that comes out of their mouths when they pray is the natural sound of praying, almost as if it happens involuntarily and is outside of their control. When asked if he had ever thought about his own sound in terms of music or melodies or tunes, Mobed Peshotan Mirza reiterated "I never realised it and was never able to analyse also. It just comes. Yes it comes in a natural way. You cannot describe it". In Iran Mobed Khodabash said "I only learned to read Avesta. The voice and other things I don't know". These initial and highly instinctive responses frequently made them appear unquestioning to the point of obliviousness.

In addition to establishing that they had never of their own accord contemplated the sound of their prayers I was curious to see how priests would react when presented with a musical analysis of their prayer performance. The following interview excerpt with Mobed Ramiyar P. Karanjia, the Principal of the Dadar Madressa in Bombay begins immediately after he had performed Yasna 28 for recording[97].

RM Now I observe something right away about the way that you pray. You have used what in Western music would be called an ouvert-clos motion. Which is an open and

[97] Interview conducted in English.

closed motion. You have a particular tone that you recited on and you returned to it at the end of many lines and you frequently began from it as well. It was the central note, the tonic as it were. But you had a particular way of going away from it and of returning to it (I demonstrate). You can see the role of the tonic here. The way a beginning line ends just one note below it the way the returning line ends upon it.

RPK Yes.

RM Are you aware when you are praying that you are doing that?

RPK Not at all.

RM So you had no idea at all?

RPK Not at all.

RM Is this the first time that somebody upon listening to you pray has described something like a melodic structure in what you do?

RPK Yes.

It is apparent that Mobed Karanjia was not particularly affected one way or the other by my observations. This reaction underlines a particularly important attitude of priests vis-à-vis analysis of their prayers. This attitude can be characterised more than anything else as politely neutral. The men were not threatened by the analysis nor did they seem to view it as beneficial or exciting. In fact it was often at this point of an interview that the conversation reached a bit of a lull and one had the distinct impression that the priests were bemused by the subject matter. It seemed perhaps that because this was not something they ever discussed, they found themselves with nothing to say when questions were put to them. By and large they seemed to lack any conceptual foothold or point of entry into the conversation and sometimes conveyed the impression that they were surprised that this discussion held any value for research at all. At one point it almost seemed as if perhaps this study was venturing into sensitive territory and that maybe priests did not wish to divulge certain information.

Of course when these points were put to them candidly they were extremely gracious and courteous and made it clear that they appreciated the interest in their work. It was simply that the focus of that interest seemed to them quite elusive. When asked directly, or when led in steps to the subject, they readily

volunteered whatever information was within their grasp, but inevitably they were unable to provide any specific details. Mobed Shahzadi of Iran actually said "...neither Indian know how to recite nor those living in America or England. None of us have come to know how to recite Gathas. Now if in future they would invent the way to recite exactly that then he will be the teacher for us all. But you see, ask those who are well versed in music to make it some notes exactly as Gathas was recited in ancient times. That is the work of a musician". This quite open-minded response shows that when a priest warmed to the subject he was interested in the benefits of research. Clearly, however, the subject had to be brought to them, they did not approach it of themselves.

It ultimately emerges, therefore, that priests were not guarding the details but, incredibly, just didn't know them. The details, it emerged, were hidden from those closest to them. It can be surmised therefore that regarding the substance that constitutes their sound, the condition of priests is that they "know not".

The fact that priests "know not" is one important boundary marker in the conceptual mapping of their understanding of their sound. The degree to which they may be aware of this condition is another. Also, although they may have been unable to describe their sound, most priests, like Mobed Rustam K. Bhedwar below, instinctively revealed that they did distinguish between a desirable way and a less meritorious if not improper way of delivery[98].

RM When you're saying prayers are you aware of what your voice is doing? That your voice might go up here and down there and that your voice changes as you pray?

RKB Yah, you know you're doing it absolutely correctly, and sometimes you know, the voice doesn't come out that well. You feel it. You feel it that way. You understand. Sometimes maybe, you're not well, you know, and somehow your voice won't come out well at all.

RM When your voice comes out well, how do you know?

RKB You know that you are praying absolutely alright. You feel it that way. You feel it in yourself.

[98] Interview conducted in English.

RM Can you be specific? Are there particular things that you listen for and you know that you are correct when you hear them?

RKB I don't know. You just feel it.

As Mobed Panthaki, a teacher at the Dadar Madressa, reveals below, the distinction between desirable and undesirable deliveries lay in a singing manner of praying as opposed to simple speech-like recitation. I had just asked Mobed Keki about any instruction he might give the boys regarding the sound of their voices. It is important to note that when asked how he taught the boys he only mentioned memorisation and pronunciation. Even after second questioning he simply again emphasised pronunciation. The following response therefore was only obtained after I and not the Mobed introduced the subject of sound into the discussion.

KP Then I will take them tune. Just in good tune they are reciting that is much better. So for that also I will give to them practising. And another only how they have to recite, this I have to take care about.

RM How they recite?

KP In good tune. We are calling that *luddan*. In Gujarati we are calling that *luddan*.

RM What does that mean?

KP Means tune. I will give it to you (demonstrates prayer performance with melody) otherwise they are reciting like (demonstrates monotone fast delivery) like prose. This I don't like. They have to recite it Avesta and also appreciate to others.

The above demonstration of "reciting with *luddan*" provided by Mobed Keki Panthaki is on Track 43 which shows that Mobed Keki is therefore able to give the broadest demonstration of what he means by praying with tune. However as mentioned earlier, priests are unable to fill in the details of "praying with tune". Shortly after the above demonstration I again confirmed the Mobed's meaning and he was only able to demonstrate in the broadest sense that he didn't want students to recite in rapid monotone (track 44)[99].

[99] The fact that Mobed Keki made a distinction between praying with tune for poetry and without for monotone may indicate that he believed they should be performed in different ways but the evidence thus far shows that in practice priests do not make this distinction. All priests, Mobed Keki included,

The same lack of detail regarding praying "with tune" was also demonstrated by Dastur Kaikobad of Udvada. As an exercise I asked him to teach me the proper way of praying a short prayer. I wished to see if perhaps in demonstration he may have been able to manifest some part by part detail of what he considered to be proper prayer sound. After Dastur Kaikobad taught me a short prayer I repeated it for him using different pitch sequence to the one he had used. Then through repeated demonstration and further questioning I asked if it was acceptable for me to pray with tones that were different tones from his. He responded "Oh it's alright if you say it any way. You see the ideal voice should be there. And when you pray your feelings your heart your mind should be there with your prayer. Then you can pray very nicely, melodiously."

A similar exercise was conducted in an entirely separate interview with Mobed Shiavax B. Sidwa, teacher at the Cama Athornan in Andheri, Bombay. His responses were identical to Dastur Kaikobad's and he went on to confirm that there were "no rules" to govern how "the voice went up and down in tune".

In both exercises it required repeated demonstrations to clarify that the subject at hand was tone/pitch. The men would initially simply address pronunciation or points of pause. Also, both men made it independently clear that even when presented with an opportunity to correct the details of sound production, they did not, in fact they could not do so. They also made it clear that there does not seem to exist a body of rules governing sound production. At least not one of which they are aware. It should be mentioned that such exercises were attempted with the Persian priests involved in the study but they all, without exception, simply corrected my pronunciation, not my sound. When asked if they could show me how to pray with their sound they said that any sound was acceptable but to pray like them I would have to study with them for years. When asked if that meant that after years of study I would sound like them, I

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will either pray "with tune" if that is their inclination, or not, if it isn't, regardless of the material being performed.

was told that they had no idea how I would sound but if I prayed with a good heart, "it just comes out".

Although the above demonstrates priests' inability to fill in details, in other interviews some sounded as if were they were saying that there were rules of sound production and that they knew what these were. It was only revealed upon further questioning that even those who appeared to have answers could neither demonstrate nor articulate anything more than any of the priests who easily admitted they knew nothing. As Mobed Keki Panthaki points out below, this hints at another nuance to the mindset of some priests, which is that some are unaware that they "know not".

RM This tune. Does it have any rules?

KP Especially Afringan. Jashan ceremony. They have to recite in the tunes. It's much better that first Pazand Nirang then Pazand Afrin.

RM Right. But the rules for the tune, what are they?

Long pause in which I ask my wife to interpret[100] to make sure the question is understood. She verifies that it is and I repeat the question.

KP Only actually...it's ahh...how you recite Avesta, that's the thing. How you recite Avesta and in what the way you recite.

RM You said that one of the important things to teach was the tune so that they don't just recite flat. (I demonstrate monotone delivery) You don't want them to do that.

KP No it's (demonstrates prayer with melody).

RM How do you teach them that?

KP Sometimes it's create some problem sometimes. They didn't actually know how to recite. Then I will teach them. Actually it's depend on the situation also. Just like in Afringan kriya we have to recite first names and all these things so that others are also know what they are reciting and how they are reciting.

(I ask my wife to put the question to KP in Gujarati. Specifically to ask how the melody is imparted)

NW What details are entailed in teaching the children how to sing the prayers? As in go up at this point and then come down at this point.

KP First they must study the whole prayer by heart and then when they can recite it quickly orally then they have to perform it to us. It's not necessary for all of them to perform it exactly the same but the way in which they can perform it. Like with the

[100] As mentioned at the outset, my wife, Nina Wadia, frequently provided translation during interviews.

Geh sarna, they do recite it differently anyway. (He briefly explained the Geh Sarna ceremony)

NW So it's pronunciation, recitation and then...

KP Yes. Give to them tune[101].

RM How do you give them that tune.

KP Hmm there's the main thing actually. According to situation I have to give to them tune. Geh Sarna is another tune.

NW Understood but, how do you teach them specifically?

KP I can only teach them in the same way that I pray. Because I know, I have heard it all this ceremonies so I can teach them.

As before, Mobed Panthaki is clearly unable to offer anything more in the way of details. He seemed to indicate at the beginning of the above excerpt that he was giving specific instructions or demonstrating particular tunes to his students. However, in the end he was merely expressing the same general idea found in all priests which is that when they pray (not in rapid monotone) the sound he considers as "correct" or desirable, simply emerges "in toto". This last idea is also important to remember as it shows a conceptual parallel to the data in the transcription chapter. As was demonstrated in the notation, the priests do not manifest any performance feature in exactly the same way each time a prayer is performed. They do not, for instance, always repeat the same pitch sequences in the same places. The small prayer Ashem Vohu is often incorporated into the body of larger prayers and can therefore be performed at different times [102]within a single ritual or even a single prayer. Within the selections notated in this study Mobeds Behruz and Khodabash perform it four times each. Mobed Karanjia performs it three times, and Mobeds Royinton Peer and Homji perform it twice each. No two performances for any of the priests are identical. The features, therefore, appear to manifest themselves without discernible patterns or "intention" on the part of the performer, in

[101] Mobed Panthaki actually used the English word "tune".

[102] See Mobed Behruz's Ashem Vohu prayer – pages 114, 115, 116, 251. See Mobed Khodabash's - pages 120, 121, 122, 251. Mobed Karanjia – pages 144, 251, 276. Mobed Royinton Peer - - pages 156, 157. Mobed Homji –pages 160, 251.

which case then it would be consistent that whatever thought processes the performer may have on his sound would also be largely unvolitional.

The interviews indeed show a similar absence of awareness, and that priests do not contemplate their sound as they are making it. It follows, then, that they could not be consciously producing particular aural material at will. By the end of a prayer the features simply have all appeared in their entirety. In much the same way, therefore, when a priest tries to talk about or demonstrate anything to do with the sound of the prayers, he can only either "let the sound come out" in its entirety or supply nothing at all. He cannot point to a particular facet and simply manifest it in isolation.

A final conclusion to be extracted from the above demonstrations is that if a priest cannot manifest any one point of tonal or otherwise musical material, he cannot teach it to students point by point. He can simply produce the whole entity in whatever variation and there is an expectation that somehow the student may copy him even though the priest cannot specify what it is the student would be copying.

In contrast to the above Mobed Karanjia, head of the Dadar Madressa openly stated that "even our students over here, there is no way that they are taught to pray which pitch or word exactly goes high and which comes low". He went on to note that it was possible that during instruction a student probably began to copy his teacher but also stated that this was speculation on his part and only something that occurred to him during the course of our conversation. It could merely have been that during interviews Mobed Keki had not wanted to appear ignorant of some part of his teaching and that Mobed Karanjia was more comfortably unreserved, and wasn't threatened by sharing the fact that on this subject "he knew that he knew not".

Another interesting angle into the priests' perspective on their own sound was to examine how they felt about their prayer sound relative to their understanding of singing. This was useful in two ways. First it addressed the fundamental issue of what is was that the priests thought they were actually doing when they performed prayers. Were they singing? Were they chanting? Were they orating with emphatic declamation? The quick answer is, none of the above. When they prayed priests simply thought they were praying. For them this was a category of activity all on its own and other things such as singing were not the same thing. However this was not a conclusion that was arrived at easily. For the majority of priests a discussion of prayers and singing proved to be a grey area.

With all priests it was important to first of all establish what they felt was singing. With both Iranians and Indians it emerged that their concept of singing was largely analogous to what might be found in mainstream Western lay conceptions. Broadly speaking, whatever was heard in films, on the radio, at festivals, folk songs etc, these were considered as singing.

The following excerpt was with both father and son, Dastur Hormazdiar K. and Mobed Peshotan H. Mirza[103].

RM Hormazdiar uncle do you think that when you pray that you sing? That you are singing?

HKM It depends. At times we realise that it is like in a sing song[104] way.

RM Peshotan?

HKM I think it comes in a natural way because from childhood we are taught in that manner. We are unconscious at that time that we are actually singing.

RM So to your mind, you are actually singing?

HKM Yes.

RM Are there any reasons that you would say I should not sing here (this part of a prayer) and I should sing here or do you feel that you can sing everything?

[103] Interview conducted in English.
[104] Note that as this interview was conducted in English, Mobed P. Mirza actually used the English words "sing song".

PHM No I would like to make it more melodious that's all.

RM Now about the way that you sing…

PHM I didn't say sing actually but pray with a lilt.

RM When I asked you before if you felt you were singing you said yes.

PHM Yes

RM Is that not really accurate?

PHM There is no hard and fast rule that it has to be sung in a particular way. It depends on the individual how they make it.

RM Right but what I wanted to re-affirm was that for you, you are singing (when you pray)?

PHM I would like to keep the prayers or say the prayers as melodious as possible.

RM Is there something about the word singing that you feel is problematic?

PHM Singing you've got to be taught. We are not taught. It is like a, to sing like a song.

RM So if I were to once again ask you, do you feel you are singing?

PHM (laughs) I don't know the difference because I've always been praying and I've never sung a song. Except in bathroom perhaps.

RM (laughing) So you don't actually feel you are singing your prayers when you compare it to what you think is singing a song?

PHM No. Like whatever singing notes you have and all, no. Not that way.

It should be noted here that both father and son as well as any other priest interviewed also made clear that there were no proscriptions against singing the prayers. That, however, was an issue of perhaps propriety or permissibility whereas the difficulty of our discussion as seen above, lay in pin-pointing what exactly they felt they were doing.

Although the above interview may seem unusually circuitous, it was not a unique experience. A discussion with Mobed Royinton Peer also proved equally slippery. He added that he felt that the Gathas were "songs in a sense" and that others (laity) might perceive what priests were doing to be singing but as far as he was concerned there was a clear difference between singing and what he and other priests do in prayer performance.

An example that proved useful with many priests was to ask them to imagine a love song or devotional song (in any style – pop, folk etc) and then simply substitute the words with Zoroastrian prayer text. The question was would they then consider that what remained was still a song? Was the performer simply by virtue of what he was doing with his voice still singing? All the answers were affirmative, yes this was still singing. However when the example was reversed this was not the case. All men interviewed felt that if someone performing Zoroastrian prayer replaced the text with the words of a pop song, the performer simply by virtue of his voice would not be singing.

All the above Mobeds had an idea of what singing is and even though at times they indicated that their prayer voices have a song-like quality, they would not say that they are singing. Mobed Kaikobad of Udvada openly did say that priests were singing but further questioning drew out the qualification that like most other priests, when he said singing he meant in a sing-song way. He did not mean singing as might be heard in other religions or films or songs of any kind. When asked if he simply meant that Zoroastrian prayer singing was different in style from other singing he specified that what others did was singing, whereas Zoroastrian priests did something else. They prayed. This is similar to the opinion of Peshotan Mirza and many other priests. Singing was something that happened in the culture around them. Not in Zoroastrian prayer. It is curious to note that Dastur Kaikobad's son Khushroo did not feel he was singing so much as that he simply got caught up in the performance.

It might seem that Zoroastrian priests were evincing an attitude of censure or disapproval towards song in prayer but this is not at all the case. For one, as was noted at the very beginning of the whole study, the Gathas which are the compositions of the prophet following divine revelation, are by definition, songs. The closest English word to gatha is hymn. All priests are aware of this and are at ease with it. Furthermore, there was no objection from any priest, to singing the prayers. Most simply did not classify what they did as such. Some

exceptions are of course Mobeds Gonda and Cyroos who were already covered in the Transcription chapter and will be further analysed in the next Analysis chapter. Another exception is Mobed Andhyarujina of Bombay who was also interviewed and recorded for this study[105]. However even he, while he felt strongly that what he was doing was like singing, often stopped short of specifying exactly what it was.

In Iran this subject was equally difficult to resolve and contained similar ambiguities and paradoxes. Mobed Niknām felt he was singing "in a way" (Mobed Niknām's words) when he prayed but at the same time he could not reconcile his activity with what he knew to be singing in the world around him. He was, in fact, interested in experimenting with the song styles of Iran and wanted to see if they could be incorporated into the prayers. In fact an abiding memory of his apartment in Tehran was that it was filled with Iranian string and percussion musical instruments. I was later told that they were for his children who took lessons. Nonetheless one was left with an overall impression that Mobed Niknām was, himself, a very musical person. This also reinforces the highly musical impression one gets of his prayer performance that was already mentioned in the transcriptions chapter. Ultimately, however, Mobed Niknām said that he had not as yet ever incorporated what he considered to be "music" into the prayers and was unlikely to do so as, like all other priests, he simply prayed and a sound came "from the heart". Nonetheless, the fact that he viewed the importing of song into the prayers as a completely novel innovation reveals that he did not think that song was already present in his prayer performance. Again, it must be remembered that he felt he was, at best, "singing in a way". This is a startling idea considering how very musical his prayers are and underlines the notion stated earlier that for Zoroastrian priests, the prayers seem to occupy their own conceptual space which does not really

[105] Considerations of space and the need to maintain a parity of representation between Iranians and Indians are the reasons that Mobed Andhyarujina as well as Mobed Khushroo Dastur (both from India) were not transcribed although their performances and stories are equally fascinating.

intersect with other aural phenomena such as music, or what they consider to be music.

Ultimately the issue of singing seemed to lie very close to what it was precisely the priests may have been doing when praying, and for them specifying that particular activity proved very difficult, if not impossible. They behaved as if they had been asked to execute a conceptual contortion, to look at a place they could not naturally see, and none were actually capable of doing this.

8.2 The degree to which priests are aware of the sounds of other priests

Yet another probe into this subject was to ask priests, not about their own sounds, but about the sounds of others. I wanted to ascertain if they could somehow pinpoint in others the things they could not specify in themselves. Again, the short answer is that they could not. The priests appear not only to be conceptually and aurally "blinkered", as it were, about their own voices, but also about the sounds of other priests. Put another way, it seems that the detailed knowledge of sound is itself the thing to which they are blinkered, whether it comes from themselves or others.

Most priests claimed to remember the voices of their teachers but one or two such as Mobeds Sam Sidwa and Kersey Karanjia could not. There were also some men who had said that in their youth they had wished to sound like their fathers or a particular teacher. However, like many aspects of this study, this line of questioning unveiled a paradox. Even Mobed Kersey Karanjia commented that he had wished to sound like his father and believed that he did sound like his father but could not demonstrate or elaborate exactly what sounding like his father entailed. While it would be fair to say that as he lacked musical training (in either Western or Indian music) there was no expectation

that Mobed K. Karanjia would provide any sort of description using musical terminology. However, there wasn't even an attempt at a lay description of sounds or tendencies such as shaking one's voice or for instance "my father went up here and down there". There was only the generalised notion that when Mobed Kersey prayed, he somehow sounded like his father. This was uniform in the testimonies of all men who wished to sound like their fathers.

One such person was Mobed Royinton Peer who, as noted previously, is the son of Mobed Peshotan Peer. The performances of both men were presented in transcription, and analysis revealed that beyond both men manifesting all six performance features, as well as one or two minor and irregular occurrences of melisma, there was nothing that connected Mobed Royinton to his father beyond the fact that both men were connected by the six performance features to the community of Zoroastrian priests in general. In his interview however, Mobed Royinton insists he does try as much as possible to sound like his father[106].

RPP I had the fortune of working with my father. He was one of the best persons for how to recite the prayers. How the prayers ought to be recited. I worked with him for nearly 35 years. From 1965 to his death in 1997.

RM The sound of your father's praying must be really quite fresh in your memory.

RPP Yes.

RM Do you think that you pray like him?

RPP I always feel that I will never be able to attain his level of praying. But obviously what I am praying I have tried to imitate him to a certain extent because his praying was absolutely natural and that natural praying I would not be able to attain.

RM Could you imitate for the sound of your father's praying?

RPP What I prayed for you just now I tried as much as possible to imitate him. (Mobed Peer had just finished performing Atash Niyayesh and Yasna chapter 28 for recording)

RM What do you think are the differences between you and your father in the sound?

RPP I would say he had a very high intonation and he could sustain that high intonation for a long period of time.

[106] Interview conducted in English.

RM Can you tell me what that means?

(Long silence)

RM Are you able to describe it using any words you like or can you demonstrate it for me.

RPP As I said...what I prayed for you just now.

RM You said that you heard your fathers praying for many years—35 years.

RPP Heard means in the sense actually imbibed

RM To what degree do you think your voice reflects his voice?

RPP See particularly I would not be able to myself understand it. Unless and until we hear it back properly. I would say about his style of praying I have developed a little bit. But as I say his natural voice, that natural intonation that was with him, it's something unique it was.

In another case, Mobed Goshtasp Belivani of Sharifabad insisted that he sounded rather like Mobed R. Shahzadi of Tehran who helped him greatly in his studies. This is most curious in view of the fact that (as can be heard on tracks 29, 31 and 32) Mobeds Goshtasp and Mobed Shahzadi sound quite different from each other. As the analysis revealed, Mobed Goshtasp's voice and performance is far closer to the unknown priest (tracks 28 & 31).

It is striking that both younger Mobeds feel that they sound or have tried to sound like the role models and yet the surface qualities of the voices (timbres, placements of emphasis, degrees of vibrato etc) serve to make them sound different from, not similar to their mentors. In Mobed Goshtasp's case he sounds most similar to a person who actually spent the least time with him. Most striking of all is the fact that the body of performance features which comprises the only real connective tissue between the older and younger priests is the very similarity to which they cannot point.

In addition to the by-now repeatedly proven inability to specify details, both Mobed Royinton's and Mobed Goshtasp's testimonies also reveal a high degree of respect, even veneration for the prayers of the father/teacher. This is accompanied by the affirmation that their own prayers will never be quite as good. This attitude is common in many South Asian and Middle Eastern

settings, including that of a musical guru-student relationship. The student always insists on the superiority of the ancestors. In the following interview with Dastur H. Mirza and his son Peshotan, we have the rare opportunity to hear the teacher comment on the fully grown up pupil[107].

RM Peshotan, who the person that most influenced the way that you prayed?

PHM For my Avesta recitation studies I've gone through many priests who taught. However in the lilt, the way of praying, I always liked my father praying.

RM The way that your daddy prays?

PHM The way my daddy prays. Even the Muktad for all ten days he used to pray early in morning. 1:00 am to 4:00 am when everyone is asleep. Even I have to sleep but if I am awake I listened to his prayers. The way he prayed, it was great. I always wanted to copy the lilt he had.

RM And so have you consciously tried to pray like your daddy? In the same tone?

PHM That he has to say. I've done my best.

RM Uncle (addressing Dastur Hormazdiar) does Peshotan sound like you used to sound some years back?

HKM Yes.

RM A lot?

(He nods)

RM Can you tell me, in what way does he sound like you?

HKM He has his own voice.

RM Yes but how does he sound like you?

HKM He has the same sound.

Beyond saying "the same sound" neither the father nor son could tell or show me what it meant for one to sound like the other. It is also notable, however, that in transcription, this particular father and son pair were found to share a specific pitch sequence as well as strikingly similar balancing motifs. This demonstrates that although these two priests (and possibly Zoroastrian priests in general) may not be able to describe what it is that they are doing in sound, there is some basis for their claims that they know similarity when they hear it.

[107] Interview conducted in English.

This issue of sons wishing to copy fathers is made all the more interesting by that fact that in all such cases a son states that he wished to sound like the father but cannot then explain how he went about attempting this. It would seem logical that somebody wishing to copy another person's voice would start thinking consciously in terms of what it is the voice is doing and then later in life would be able to demonstrate or articulate what it was they had tried to copy—things such as melodies or pitch habits of any kind. One would assume that after years of trying to copy someone's voice the student should be able in conversation to show at least some degree of consciousness, or offer certain observations about the behaviour of voices. Incredibly, this does not seem to have happened with any Zoroastrian priest. So how did the sons set about copying the fathers?

The answer seems to lie in the fact that both sons said that all they could do was to pray alongside their fathers for many years. They could not specify or demonstrate anything more than this. This shows in a nutshell, the boundaries of these priests' self awareness. They know that something exists in the father's voice and they wish to emulate it. They cannot describe the entity (nor even conceive of it as "an entity") and yet they have a belief (that they themselves cannot verify by detail) that praying alongside the father for long enough will result in this "something" being passed down to them.

The transcription chapter reveals that the entity in question is arguably the collection of common performance features which serve to shape the sound of the prayers. This chapter has thus far shown that in addition to the performance features, both teachers and students seem to possess a common mindset which is that the features have not even taken shape for these men as elements that can be expressed as words or by specific demonstration, and yet, because they can be manifested "in toto" the men do have the broadest, vaguest and yet somehow an accurate enough intuition that lets them know when the features

are present or absent. Once again stated simply, they know when it's there or not, but they don't quite know what it is.

It has already been established that one of the reasons priests "know not" is that they simply never seem to question or contemplate the mechanics of sound at any point. It can be surmised that as noted in the previous chapters on training and the structure of the priesthood, priests are shaped and grow up in a priestly culture that does not question. Interviews with students and teachers which comprise the last part of this chapter show the existence and perhaps inculcation of this unquestioning mentality in students at all stages of the education process itself. The interviews also show that from a very young age, boys already start becoming people who "know not" and start dividing into those who are aware of this, and those who are not.

8.3 Transmission and the awareness of transmission[108]

When interviewed years after leaving school on how they were trained, all priests spoke as if the only two things they had learned were memorisation and pronunciation. They did not seem aware that they had been taught anything else, much less musical performance practices. Nonetheless some musical information was clearly imparted to them.

The interviews presented below demonstrate that musical practices pass from teacher to student via an osmotic process. As already stated, this process is never discussed but both teachers and students seem, on some vague level, to be aware of it. Also, although it may not be discussed in detail it did emerge that occasionally older students are encouraged to pray "in a singing voice". According to Mobed Shiavax of the Cama Athornan, younger students (under twelve) are thought to be too preoccupied with memorisation and learning new

[108] As in the transcription chapter there was no interview data with Iranian boys in a school system and so unfortunately the following excerpts are all from India. Nonetheless, as was noted before, the Iranian

languages but older students can be nudged towards more expression in delivery. Mobed Sam Sidwa, teacher at the Dadar Madressa also confirmed this view.

An example of this encouragement was witnessed during one particular interview at the Dadar Madressa. As a set part of all interviews, teachers were asked to perform a one-to-one lesson (as they normally would) with a student, in front of us. The student would therefore be taught something in our presence that he had never before learned. During one of these lessons, teacher Mobed Keki Panthaki, said to the boy, Jehan Charna, "You're reading it. Why don't you say what you know by heart. Then it will seem decent." As they finish praying Mobed Keki told Jehan "Stop. Rest again, then start. Pray with tune." These comments could have been instructions that the teacher normally gave to the boy but to a degree they seemed as if they were made for the benefit of the interview. This could have been possible especially as Jehan was not the first child interviewed and by the time it came around to his turn, Mobed Keki had himself been interviewed and had a good idea of our area of interest. Nonetheless, it is equally possible that the comments could have been routine.

When we spoke to Mobed Keki about his teaching methods and specifically about qualities of sound, he revealed that he had a desire for the boys to pray "in the tunes". However, as was revealed earlier, praying "in the tunes" had no specific meaning (see pages 213-214).

An almost identical testimony was received from another teacher at the Madressa, Mobed Sam Sidwa who, instead of saying "in the tunes" spoke of reciting "with a sweet voice". Mobed Shiavax Sidwa, a teacher from the Cama Athornan, also voiced similar sentiments. The information thus far suggests that although students receive some general encouragement to pray "in a sweet

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priests insisted that the training experiences were similar in both countries with the exception of grammatical knowledge being more scholastically grounded in India.

voice" they are never taught anything specific and so should not, in theory, be able to articulate anything specific about what they have absorbed. This was confirmed when the student Jehan revealed that he had an awareness of some "tuneful" material being passed on (but not of its details) and also knew that this was happening through an osmotic process[109].

NW Can you copy the way your teacher Keki uncle prays?

JC No

NW What is the difference between the way that you pray and the way that Keki uncle prays?

JC The difference is in rāgs. He prays with rāg.

NW Rāg meaning?

JC With tune[110].

NW Tune.

JC For us (implying students) the tune doesn't yet come so much. As we become bigger it will come automatically.

NW How do you know this is happening? How did you have this realisation? How did you come to know that the tune will come when you're older?

JC Other people from the Madresa. My daddy was also in the Madresa. Him also, his master taught him and he too (his father) the tune came naturally to his mouth.

NW Do you feel when your dad or Keki uncle prays that they are singing.

JC No. But I know how to do both things. Praying straight and praying with a tune.

RM Can you teach me your dad's or Keki uncle's tune?

JC I don't know it.

RM Try.

JC I have hear it but I don't, I can't.

NW Do all you boys sound different? Do you all have different tunes?

JC Sometimes different. Mostly the same.

RM How do you know it's different?

JC Because when we all pray together sometimes they get lost.

RM Can you show me?

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[109] Interview conducted in Gujarati with the occasional English words.
[110] Jehan actually used the English word "tune".

JC Sometimes we pray "Ashem vohu..." (demonstrates two manners of performance, one with pitch sequence and emphasis and the second with monotone rapid delivery)

RM And this second one is wrong?

JC Yes

RM And show me again the proper way

JC With Rāg "Ashem vohu..." (Again demonstrates with pitch sequence and expression).

Jehan's demonstration of right and wrong can be heard on track 45 .

Jehan's use of the word rāg was investigated. It emerged that this was not a reference to classical Indian music structures, but merely a Gujarati word for tune.

The above again reinforces the notion that although a musical term is applied to the sound of the prayers, it is done in such a loose way that the separation between the prayers and music as discussed earlier in this chapter still remains.

I conducted with Jehan the exercise I had performed with priests in which they taught me prayers and were then asked to comment on variations with which I presented them. His results were identical to theirs. Any variation was acceptable. Any time a detail or a substitution of a detail such as a pitch sequence or melodic line was offered the answer was invariably that the changes were all fine but the changes were never addressed specifically by either priests or students. A blanket "that's ok" was all that was ever said. The only "performance instruction" that was offered was a broad statement that the voice should be louder at the start of a prayer than at the end to let the listener know when a prayer has begun and ended. A subsequent interview with Mobed Keki Panthaki, confirmed that this somewhat generic idea is occasionally imparted to students.

In summarising the interview results it appears that all the points found in the mindset of many adults are also present in this boy.

- He is aware of a particular sound produced by his teacher and believes that because he prays with his teacher this sound will increasingly over time, come from himself.
- He can only manifest the sound "in toto".
- He simply knows when it is present or not.
- He cannot produce it upon demand or premeditate it.
- He feels it just comes automatically.
- He does not think of it as singing.
- He is unable to point to any details of this sound.

At twelve years of age Jehan presents in microcosm an almost complete profile of a grown priest's awareness. He is emerging as a priest whose prayers will contain all the performance features and as to these details he seems aware that he "knows not".

Another interview with a different student yielded somewhat different results. Nine-year-old Eric Dastur was also a student at the Madressa but there were considerable differences between the two boys. For one, Eric almost only ever prayed in rapid monotone and therefore did not manifest any performance features. A priest without performance features is thus seen in the making at a young age.

Track 46 contains Eric praying Yasna 28 after being asked to pray as he normally would. Track 47 is the Ashem Vohu he was asked to pray to try and sound like his teacher.

Eric's example exemplifies the influence of an individual's natural inclination upon prayer performance. Eric showed no propensity for performing the prayers in any way except a rapid monotone. He probably knows what singing is but, as can be heard, makes no attempt to import a singing aesthetic to his prayer performance. When asked about his teacher he did not distinguish that Mobed Sidwa prayed "with tune" or with a "sweet voice" or any kind musical

material. He simply thought the older man prayed slower; indeed, as heard on track 47 when he tried to imitate his teacher he did not really change his pitch behaviour but simply slowed down. Ultimately, the only driving force behind the boy's prayer performance was to get his prayers over with as quickly as possible.

Other boys in similar circumstances (such as Jehan) are not only able to distinguish that the teacher has "a sound" but have an opinion on whether or not they like it. Another student across town at the Cama Athornan, Sarosh D. Sidwa, had a clear opinion on sound. Sarosh's case is interesting in that he has studied at both the Madressa and the Cama. He can, therefore at the time of this interview be said to be a product of both schools. When asked to imitate his teacher he was able to respond to the request[111]

RM Can you imitate Sidwaji's voice for me when he sings.

SDS Means I have to take out his voice?

RM Yes.

SDS By what?

NW Any prayer you like. Let's say you do an Ashem Vohu like him.

(SDS performs prayer with common performance features – outlines trichord and also noticeably lowers the pitch of his voice almost as if to sound more adult-like.)

NW Very good.

RM Why was that like Sidwaji?

SDS I tried.

RM When I say his voice I don't mean deep, I mean his melody, his tune, his way of singing.

SDS Right.

(SDS Performs Ashem Vohu with clear pitch sequence, emphasis and ornamentation. Again outlines trichord but also increases range to notes B – E.)

RM That's very good indeed! How did you learn that?

SDS Because I hear that now with some... Whenever he's saying that by prayers he also repeated just now by that.

[111] Interview conducted in English.

RM Copying him?

SDS Yes.

The above demonstration can be heard on track 48.

It almost seems in rendering the prayer in this way that Sarosh's attitude towards performance changes to one that is more musical. The example is therefore equally useful in illuminating not only a transference of musical material but also of a mindset—the condition of being aware of something without being able to gaze upon it directly. In his conception Sarosh is able to sound like his teacher but is unable (either with words or by demonstration) to say exactly what exactly that means. Another similarity between him and his teacher is only being able to manifest the performance features if he renders a prayer without really thinking.

As noted in the transcription chapter, Mobed Shiavax's performance of Yatha Ahu Vairyo (track 36) was also devoid of performance features. It seems that when called upon to make a conscious attempt to perform something normally done without thinking, the features did not appear. The sound came from his head and not, as it were, from his heart. Similarly, the previous example of Sarosh shows a similar phenomenon taking root in the boy. He required extra prompting to fully understand what it was that he was being asked to do and it took the five attempts to accomplish it (track 48 simply contains the last two). It seemed somehow in the final effort he simply blurted something instinctive and at that point the features manifested strongly.

It is also notable that at the beginning of the interview he was asked if he thought his teacher sang when he prayed and his answer was "Yah...not that much...not by way of prayer", and yet when I asked him to bring out his teacher's tune, his *way of singing* he manifested virtually all performance features in one short prayer. The connection between music and prayer is there but seems inconsistent. At times a correlation is made immediately and at

others not so clearly. It seemed that his most honest reactions came instinctively. He can, it seems, if he relaxes or when something clicks and comes instinctively, deliver a whole package regardless of being unable to break down the contents inside. He seemed to be able to perform with a fairly natural ear for sound and so the musicality of his performance was a factor of his natural and unpremeditated abilities. In this respect he is not alone among students. The importance of a child's natural inclination regardless even of an attitude he might project was also made apparent during interviews with another student at the Cama, Nikshad Fatakia.

Nikshad (ten years old) seemed a bit uncomfortable without the presence of his teacher and without him only ever performed prayers in a flat rapid monotone. He also openly claimed to us that he did this because he got bored (it is possibly a humorously universal trait that most young children get bored with studies). Furthermore, questioning indicated that he was entirely unaware of (or simply highly unresponsive to) issues of sound production. It may be concluded, based on this surface evidence, that perhaps Nikshad was another child in whom the performance features would not manifest. However in the transcription chapter (track 34) his example provides a perfect snapshot of the transference of performance features during his lesson. Here it is shown that regardless of attitude, transference and manifestation of the features are still possible if the performers perform instinctively in a comfortable setting.

It is possible that with encouragement over the years Eric may change and will adopt Jehan's or Sarosh's attitude or may demonstrate Nikshad's instinctive abilities and possibly will start manifesting some performance features. Instructors at both schools did make a point of saying that up to about twelve years of age students are too young to take aesthetic considerations of the voice on board. However, it must be remembered that Mobedi studies generally begin at seven years of age and Eric was almost ten. A significant change could

occur at twelve, but the example of an older student at the Cama, Kubcher Dadajan, is proof that the change may never occur.

Kubcher was 18 years old at the time of interviews and, as was demonstrated in the Transcription chapter, his prayers do not contain the performance features. Furthermore he revealed in interviews that he was aware that there was a musical way of rendering the prayers but insisted repeatedly that he had never been taught how to do this. As a statement this is quite a revelation as none of the other boys (e.g. Sarosh in the same school or Jehan at the Madressa) had also ever been "taught" the performance features and yet they are present in their voices[112].

NW The way Sidwaji prays, can you imitate him?

KD Yes.

NW (Can you do) Any prayer that you like for us?

KD Sarosh Baj?

NW Sure

(Starts to perform prayer and completes one Ashem Vohu monotone and rapidly)

NW But can you do it the way he does it?

KD This is his sound.

NW This is his sound?

KD We pray the same but his sound will be different.

NW When Sidwaji prays does he sing?

KD Yes. He takes the rāg (tune) out nicely.

NW Can you copy that?

(Shakes his head)

NW No? Just now you prayed Yasna hā 28, is that the only way you can pray it or can you sing it as well?

KD No I can also sing it but we learned it fast.

NW What we mean is that we'd like to hear you sing it.

[112] Interview conducted in Gujarati with occasional English words.

KD But they haven't taught us.

NW They haven't taught you yet?

KD They haven't taught us to sing. They've only taught us to say them quickly.

NW So when do they teach you to sing?

KD They don't teach you to sing here. They just say to pray slow. They used to teach how to sing and pray in tune but they don't any more. They just teach to pray fast to learn it all fast.

RM When did they used to teach how to sing and pray?

KD When Sidwaji was a student here.

RM Did Sidwaji tell you this?

KD Yes. He's been here for a very long time.

RM Would you like to sing?

KD Yes but nobody is taught to sing over here

NW Only you don't know how to sing? Or is nobody taught at this school?

KD No, nobody is taught but I like to try.

Kubcher's above Ashem Vohu is on track 49.

Some of Kubcher's responses contradict each other. He starts by saying that he can imitate his teacher's sound but then insists that he cannot. Nonetheless, one can still surmise that overall he believed that no singing instruction had been given relative to praying. He acknowledged that his teacher prayed "with tune" but it was also striking that when asked to imitate his teacher he simply rattled off a rapid monotone delivery, and then insisted that this is what his teacher sounded like. He only affirmed that there was a difference between he way he and his teacher sounded when cross questioned. At this point he may simply have wanted to avoid appearing uninformed about our subject. His first and instinctive reaction may be the more honest response.

The important point is, that having the same teacher (Mobed Sidwa), Kubcher had gone through the exact same learning process as Sarosh and yet the younger boy manifested the performance features whereas the older boy didn't. Why? The only difference between the two that may account for this is their individual abilities and tendencies for handling musical material. It could be

that a person's musical aptitude operates as a facilitator or a block towards absorbing the performance features during training. Therefore the more musical an individual, the greater the acquisition of performance features.

Sarosh may simply be more musically inclined than Kubcher. Even if Kubcher has some minor musical abilities they may be too weak for the boy to unthinkingly absorb the performance features into his prayers. Sarosh's musical abilities may be more innate and developed to a greater calibre which could allow the performance features to more easily take root. This comparison also serves to bring to light the fact that the school and the general formative setting for Mobeds does not itself impart any skills or training to assist a priest towards a musical prayer performance. In the final analysis, the process is completely osmotic and to large degree left to chance. Much depends on the receiver as well as the transmitter. Some students will simply as Jehan Charna did, "get it". However the examples of Eric at the Madressa and Kubcher at the Cama illustrate how two students can go through the same process side by side with others without any guarantee that they will absorb musical material.

It is important here to make an important diversion and mention an interesting fact. At the Cama Athornan the boys are given music lessons every week and the purpose of these lessons is to help "bring out their voices" when they pray. Notably, however, no correlation between the music lessons and the prayers is ever made to the boys. In his final statement on the subject Mobed Sidwa confirmed that the music lessons were not applied in any but the broadest of senses to the students' education on performance practices. The interview with Cama Athornan Principal Kersey Karanjia also revealed that in his conception the purpose of the music lessons was actually to serve learning better pronunciation. This musical encouragement is effectively nothing more than a vague academic gesture towards the merit of praying in a singing type way. Students are told to pray in a singing way but they are never shown how.

The following two examples also suggest that the lessons do not necessarily have the desired impact upon students. Track 50 is Sarosh singing a monajat, a devotional song composed for them by their Hindu music teacher and learned at these lessons. Track 51 is the older student Kubcher doing the same. The boys perform the song similarly enough to prove that they have learned and are manifesting the same aural material. This indicates that with specific instruction Kubcher is just about able to carry a tune but his prayer performances show that his abilities do not extend to applying this to performing prayers. The prayers of these two boys are aurally different and only have the text and pronunciation in common. The musical material is present in Sarosh but not Kubcher. In a sense this also confirms the idea that priests are not taught to think of the prayers as music, even when music is taught alongside the prayers. The prayers, it seems, occupy a different space in their conception.

The students mentioned thus far, Eric, Jehan, Kubcher and Sarosh, demonstrate that much depends on an individual's innate musicality.

It is also important to project forward this thought to the time when boys like these four may themselves grow up to be teachers. Perhaps as a student, Mobed Shiavax was closer to Kubcher than to Sarosh. As was noted in the transcription, the performance features do not have a particularly strong presence in Mobed Shiavax. His responses, after he became familiar with our subject, indicate that he has an awareness of the musical potential of prayer performance and that he encourages musicality in the boys. However when plainly asked how the boys were taught prayer he made no mention of sound. Consequently, the combination of a teacher like Mobed Keki and a student like Kubcher who perhaps does not possess an innate facility for absorbing and replicating musical material means that the boy will simply not absorb them. By contrast, a student like Sarosh who may be more musically inclined will

absorb and internalise whatever is there to be had, however faint it may be, even at its source—his teacher.

The final material presented below are the responses of the principal of the Cama Athornan Mobed Kersey Karanjia. He was in close contact with a student body of only twelve boys and yet was unaware of the difference between Kubcher's abilities in prayer performance and those of other boys[113].

RM Kubcher insisted that he had never been taught to sing, and to sing the prayers and out of all the boys he had the hardest time imitating the prayers of his teacher. How does this happen where a younger boy like Sarosh is able to "bring out" his teacher's voice but the older one isn't?

KK Means that he cannot say anything this Kubcher?

RM No no he prayed very well indeed. His pronunciation is good and his memory is large.

KK No no, means he is not bringing out anything from inside?

RM It was very difficult and in the end it never really happened.

KK Yes. This is something wrong.

RM Can you help me with this? How has this happened? This boy has been here for eight years now and yet...

KK He has not got these things.

RM Yes

KK Might be taught like this way but we are teaching them slowly slowly. Pronunciations should be correct. But how he has done that also I don't understand. Because Ervad Sidwa is teaching them and he is the one that has got nice voice.

NW What makes a nice voice?

KK Pronunciations should be correct. That's the main thing. Slowly slowly also. Not too fast.

NW He did all of that but unlike Sarosh for example there wasn't a lilt or a sense of melody.

KK I have no idea.

It is clear to see from this extract that when the issue was first put to him Mobed Kersey did not quite see what it was. His responses indicate that

[113] Interview conducted in English.

although he sensed we were talking about sound, he could only refer to pronunciation.

Even when the issue was put as candidly as possible to Mobed Karanjia it only served highlight a basic paradox of priestly training and to plant a firm boundary marker at the outer limits of his, and in general, the entire priesthood's understanding of sound production.

RM Can I ask you, everybody has told me "Yes we sing these songs" but in the schools when I ask "Do you teach them how to sing the prayers they say no." Why do you think that is? If we insist on singing the songs why don't we teach them how to sing?

KK I think so bhantar (way of praying) will not be there. Prose is there. Poetry is there. Some parts are prose and some parts are poetry. Accordingly these are the students. We teach them accordingly. From the first only we teach them how to pray. That's all.

RM So from seven to twelve they are taught to pray and to memorise. And Sidwaji said that from twelve onwards they are taught to bring the voice out. Now you want them to sing. And you use the word sing. If were to ask you "Can you sing me a song" you would sing something and it would be unquestionable in both our minds that you were singing something.

KK Yes

RM But at school we don't teach them how to sing the prayers.

KK No. bhantar (way of praying) is bhantar only. One thing only we are teaching them accordingly how we pray that's all.

RM Why if we want them to sing the Gathas don't we teach them how to sing?

KK It's like a singing only. It's supposed to be prayer.

RM Why is it "like singing"? Why is it not barabar (proper) singing? Singing itself. Why do you think?

KK (Laughs) That I don't know.

Mobed Kersey's somewhat tautological use of the Gujarati term *bhantar*, 'way of praying', reveals in a single word the meaning that prayer performance has in his conception. To him, it is what it is and he never questions it. This stands out in sharp contrast to the systematic and rigorous care devoted to the preservation of pronunciation and memorisation which are corrected and verified in training. There is, however, no particular care taken to ensure the transference of specific aural performance features from teacher to student. In

the natural course of performing their own prayers, teachers continually manifest certain aesthetic features, but their transference to a student is dependent on the natural musical aptitudes of both parties involved and the system has no built in safeguards against failure. If there is musical material to be had from a teacher and if a student has the inborn skills to absorb them, he will carry them forward. If not, another priest will grow up to pray with a monotone, rapid delivery, devoid of music.

Ultimately, with this educational process a cycle of unquestioning unawareness about sound is begun that is passed down through generations. This is imparting without correcting, which grows into possessing without understanding, which in turn is passed on by imparting without correcting etc. In the end, when it comes to the sound of their prayers, Zoroastrian priests are unquestioning vessels who have never examined their own contents, and thus are unable to describe them.

The study thus far has put some names and shapes to these contents and has collectively described them as the common performance features. However, the next chapter will strive to go beyond blindly accepting Zoroastrian prayer sound as something that simply "is". All things come from somewhere, are shaped by forces, and when viewed on their own terms, have meaning. The following analysis will place the sound of Zoroastrian prayer within contexts of manifestation, transmission, history, and will broach the possibilities of its origin.

Chapter 9 Analysis

This analysis will address the fundamental question of how the performance features operate. The approach will be to establish the relationship between the features, the text, the overall sound of the prayers and finally, the connections between all these elements and the sociological context within which the priesthood operates.

The first line of inquiry was to ask the performers themselves. However, as has been demonstrated in the interviews, priests do not contemplate the sound of their prayers, much less the technicalities of its production. These are things that have remained largely in their subconscious. When asked, some reveal that they are aware of the presence of a sound, but none have consciously come to grips with it. They have never seen its shape, have never defined its structure, and so were ultimately unable to either explain or demonstrate how its elements work within their performances. The analysis will therefore draw on data revealed in the recordings and the notations. If Zoroastrian priests were able to provide active and musically informed feedback, the information would have been valuable. Nonetheless, the lack of it will not prove insurmountable. As Brinner writes "For the most part, the conventions of performing practice are unwritten and, in some cases, unarticulated, but they are nonetheless observable in performance." (Brinner 2001: 384). This is applicable to the priesthood. What was not articulated by individuals in interviews can nonetheless be gleaned from the collective contributions of the many priests who participated in this research. Also, the recordings and transcriptions can be compared to existing musical data which will help to define the aural shape and parameters of Zoroastrian prayer performance.

These next two sections will explore the various ways in which Zoroastrian prayer text shapes prayer sound and vice versa. The first will illustrate whether

or not the origins of some performance features lie in the text. The second deals with the fundamental impact of the performance features upon the text.

9.1 Impact of Text on Rhythm

A primary consideration in attempting to understand the relationship between the sound and the text of prayers is the balancing of pitch and rhythm against meaning. The weight of the balance will reveal which element is prioritised when rendering text into sound, or more precisely into pitch and rhythm—the clarity of pronunciation or the aesthetic quality of sound.

An obvious indicator of this is the degree to which the words are left intact or to which they are altered via ornamentation or rhythmic subdivision or other devices. In the case of the South Asian vocal style of khayal the text will have some devotional value, but is ultimately more of a platform for virtuoso vocal techniques. It could also be said of the Franco-Flemish liturgical music of the Renaissance, that the techniques of pervading imitation and florid ornamentation between layers of voices served to obscure the text and focussed the ear on shifting harmonies and melodic lines. By contrast, the more the words are left intact, the more emphasis is put on their meaning, as in Ṛgvedic recitation or the South Slavic epic tradition. With regards to the latter Albert Lord notes that "since narrative poetry tells a story...the spoken language cannot be distorted beyond recognition or the whole performance misses its goal"(Lord 1993: 17).

Between these poles is a middle area filled with text that at times is rendered with straightforward clarity and at others is highly altered, all within the same performance. This area is also filled with inconsistencies between theory and practice. For example the orthodox view of Koranic recitation maintains that the text must never be obscured and yet in the practices of various cultures the

text can be ornamented to an extreme degree. The 1985 JVC recording of Turkish Koranic cantillation by Ibrahim Canakkaleli and others contains many clear examples of this. Some words are treated to melisma lasting ten to twenty seconds and sometimes longer.

On this point it can be observed that on the whole, in Zoroastrian practice, the clarity of the words is greatly (but not exclusively) preserved. This has a twofold effect on the sound. First, the rhythms of a performance frequently appear to follow the syllable structures of the text, whether the text is prose or poetry[114]. It is therefore possible that the divisions of the ouvert-clos motion of performance feature 1 are in some way an extension of the couplets into which the verses of the older prayers are sometimes subdivided. The to-and-fro swaying of ouvert-clos motion is almost an aural mirror of the departure and return of each pair of couplets. The recordings of many of the Mobeds transcribed for this research support this, particularly the performances (tracks 17 and 11) of Yasna 28 by Mobeds R. Karanjia and Mali[115].

The text is also seen to have an impact on rhythm where rhyming repetitions occur. These are usually underscored in sound by clear pronunciation and pauses that separate them. These strings of words with the same endings sometimes tend to stand out from other words in a phrase by receiving slightly more stress and emphasis. Track 52 and 53 contain excerpts of Atash Niyayesh by Dastur Noshirwan Manchersa Dastur, High Priest of Surat and Mobed Pervez Jamshedji Turell also of Surat. As both priests perform the first numbered verse of this prayer, the words highlighted in the text below are clearly emphasised over the others. This is especially striking in Mobed Turell's performance. His delivery is extremely nasal and the words he consolidates are virtually stitched together in one seamless continuum. Any words therefore that are not part of that continuum stand out noticeably.

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[114] Broadly speaking, the older liturgy is poetry and the younger is prose.
[115] The text and transcriptions can be found in the Transcription section.

Yasnemcha vahmemcha huberetīmcha
Ushta-beretīmcha, vanta-beretīmcha, āfrīnāmi, tava
Ātarsh puthra Ahurahe Mazdāo, yesnyō ahi vahmyō,
yesnyō buhyāo vahmyō nmānāhu mashyākanām
Ushta buyāt ahmāi naire, yase-thwā bādha
frāzazāite, **aesmō-zastō, baresmō-zastō, gao-zastō, hāvanō-zastō.**[116]

However, while the seeming cause and effect relationship between text and rhythm can be found in the prayers of many Mobeds, it is not true of all. In his performance of the obligatory seasonal prayers for the souls of the departed (Muktad), Mobed Jamshed of Iran begins by broadly corresponding his pauses to the divisions of the text but as the prayer goes on his pauses drift apart from the grammar of the wording. They assimilate the end of a prayer with the beginning of another. They sometimes fall in the middle of a sentence. On track 54 one can hear the Ashem Vohu prayer first done close to the start of the ceremony. This first Ashem Vohu comes almost attached to the preceding declamation Khshnaothra Ahurahe Mazdao[117]. Nonetheless, given that Mobed Jamshed's rapid musical pace is fairly constant throughout his performance and that he tends somewhat to join words together anyway, it is still clearly separated from the verses that follow. However, some fifteen minutes later (track 55) in the middle of the priest's performance, one hears another Ashem Vohu but this time it is split in such a way that its first half becomes the end of another short prayer, Hazanghrem, and its second half becomes the beginning of yet a different prayer, Jasa Mé Avanghe Mazda. Overall his pauses seem to fall either when he runs out of breath, or along some other principle, possibly musical momentum.

[116] Text taken from (Kanga 1995: 78).
[117] Meaning "To the Glory of Ahura Mazda" (Sethna 1975: 10) or "May there be the propitiation or pleasure of Ahura Mazda" (Kanga 1995: 73) this declamation precedes many prayers.

Even some of those priests who begin their performances with a close correspondence between textual and musical divisions may drift into divisions simply based on breath or musical momentum. This can also occur where the text is of irregular lengths and does not present an obvious rhythm. When discussing a prayer with which he was extremely familiar (Atash Niyayesh) Mobed Ramiyar Karanjia, Head of the Dadar Madresa school for priests, related that he broke up the text in places where repetition was present. He also said that his pauses followed the meanings in the prayer, i.e. the end of a phrase and the meaning of that phrase was underlined by a pause. For instance the 10th numbered paragraph of Atash Niyayesh is as follows:

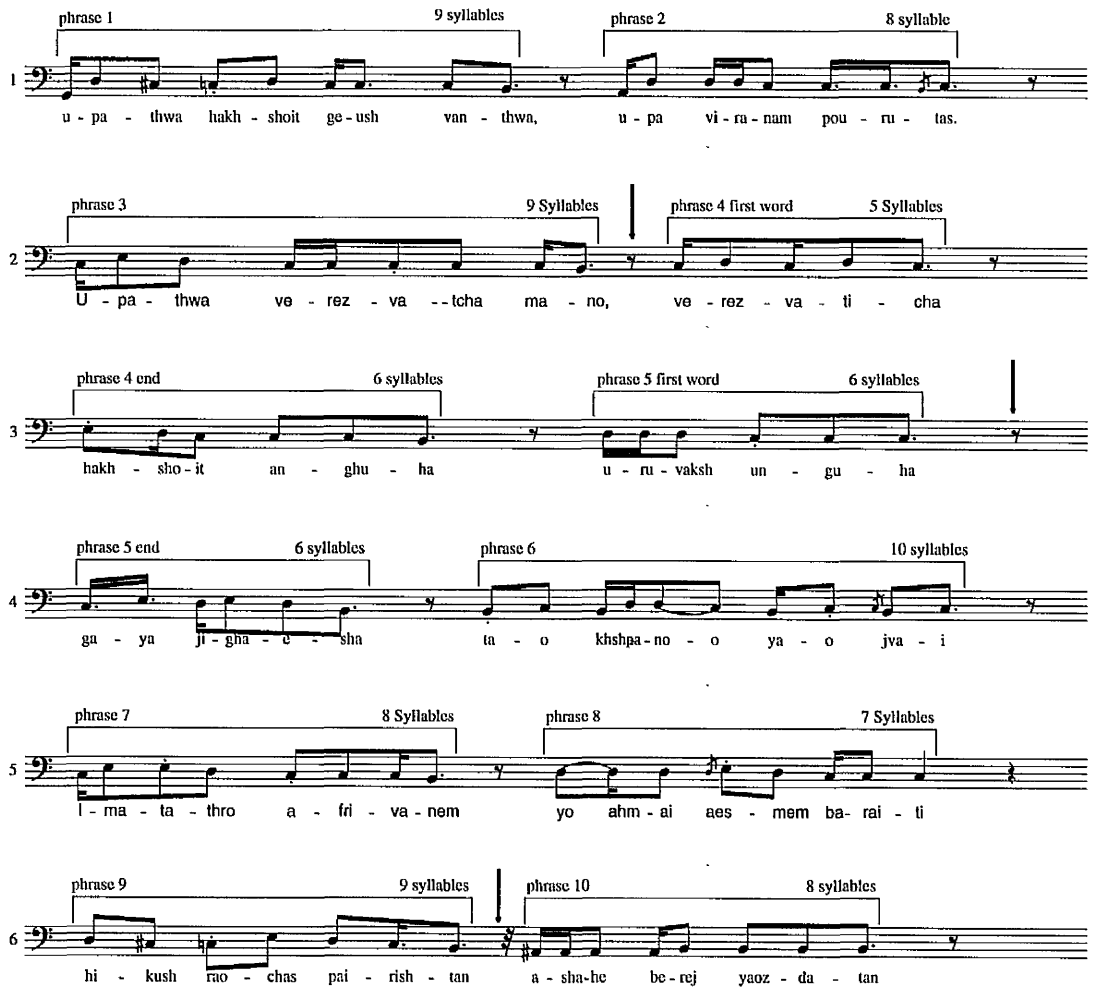
1. upa thwa hakhshoit geush vanthwa	A herd of cattle may accompany you
2. upa viranam poururas	a multitude of heroes may accompany you
3. upa thwa verezvatcha mano	an energetic mind may accompany you
4. verezvaticha hakhsoit anguha	an energetic life may accompany you.
5. urvakhsh anguha gaya jighaesha	May you live a joyful life
6. tao khsapano yao jvahi	all the nights that you shall live!
7. imat athro afrivanem	This is the blessing of the Fire (for the one)
8. yo ahmai aesmem baraiti	who brings him fuel
9. hikush raochas parishtan	(which is) dry, selected for a bright (flame)
10. ashahe bereja yaozdata[118]	purified because of respect for truth.

A pause should naturally occur at the end of each phrase as written above if the priest was following the grammar of the text precisely. The above verse is notated below and it can be seen that Mobed Karanjia has a high degree of congruence between the ends of phrases and his pauses. Therefore there appears to a prima facie case to be made for Mobed Karanjia's claim to be following the meaning of the text. The implication of his statement which seems to be supported here is that the pauses in his delivery are guided by the logic of a grammatical sentence. The suggestion is that he pauses in prayer as one would pause between different phrases when conversing. However, the notation also shows that Mobed Karanjia inserts two pauses in phrases 4 and 5 which are not indicated by the grammar and he also virtually elides through the

[118] Avestan taken from Geldner 1986, translation Almut Hintze 2002.

pause between phrases 9 and 10. These have been indicated with arrows in the notation.

Tenth Numbered Verse



The grammar and meaning of the text are not, here, completely underscored by his pauses. The fact that a good number of the phrases contain roughly eight syllables each suggests that Mobed Karanjia is taking syllabalization into consideration during his performance. However the larger excerpt of the prayer (track 18) which includes the whole of this verse and the transcription provided in the Transcription chapter (systems 7 – 11) both reveal that by this point in the prayer the momentum of Mobed Karanjia's consistent ouvert-clos motion is so overwhelming that he is instinctively straining to cram disparate lengths of text into that motion. As can be seen in the above transcription, a phrase of 9 syllables is paired with one that contains only five.

This last point is useful in highlighting the role that melody or, melodic movement could play in bringing coherence to the sound of the text. It can be suggested that pairing lines of unequal syllabic length as Mobed Karanjia is doing would sound quite disjointed were it not for the regularity of the alternating melodic motion which provides aurally graspable points of departure and arrival. Overall therefore, the divisions at this point in the prayer are falling more according to his musical momentum than to syllabic structure or the grammar and meaning of the text.

It also seems improbable that meaning operates as a guiding principle for Mobed Karanjia during prayer performance because as has been emphasised many times thus far, the language of the majority of the liturgy, Avestan, is a dead language and priests are unable to translate it in their heads. Overall, interviews established that during a performance priests are oblivious to any but the most general meanings of the text. This highlights one of the great paradoxes of Zoroastrian prayer performance; the clarity of the words is largely preserved in delivery and yet nobody understands their meaning during a performance.

The shift from grammar-based pauses to music-and-breath-based ones is not a failing of any kind on the part of Mobed Karanjia or of any other Mobed. It simply reveals a naturally occurring phenomenon in the priests' vocal performance, i.e. that over time, breath and musical momentum will take precedence over other factors like textual syntax, especially if the performance is extemporised and the meaning of the words is not active in the performer's consciousness. A somewhat similar phenomenon is noted by David Coplan in his study of the song and praise poetry of Lesotho migrants. He observes that "the major unit of vocalisation is the 'breath group', which is intended to coincide with a meaning unit of poetic phrasing of one line or more." However he goes on to point out that "the structural force of the breath group will

sometimes overrun a semantic unit, so that the first word or so of a line may be intoned at the end of a downdrift. The performer then takes a breath and begins in the middle of the line with the rising attack." In the case of the migrant singers this asymmetry is soon corrected so that "intonational pattern, breath group and semantic unit are matched."(Coplan 1993: 193) Mobeds, however, make no such correction because unlike the praise poetry, meaning is not the paramount consideration in performance. Mobed Aibara's drone-like performance (see transcription chapter 7, sect 7.15) is also a good example of a Zoroastrian priest vocalising "breath groups" without regard for the lexical divisions that are resulting from those groups.

Apart from meaning and grammar another area in which it may be possible for the text to shape sound is the influence of vowel length on note duration. As William Bright writes:

> The expectation that co-relations can be found between linguistic and musical patterns is partially confirmed by the occurrence of a type of South Indian song called a swarajati, in which the relative duration of the musical notes corresponds closely to the difference between short and long syllables in the words....In the musical notation, short and long vowel symbols indicate notes with single and double duration respectively so that dā is twice as long as da. (Bright 1963:p28)

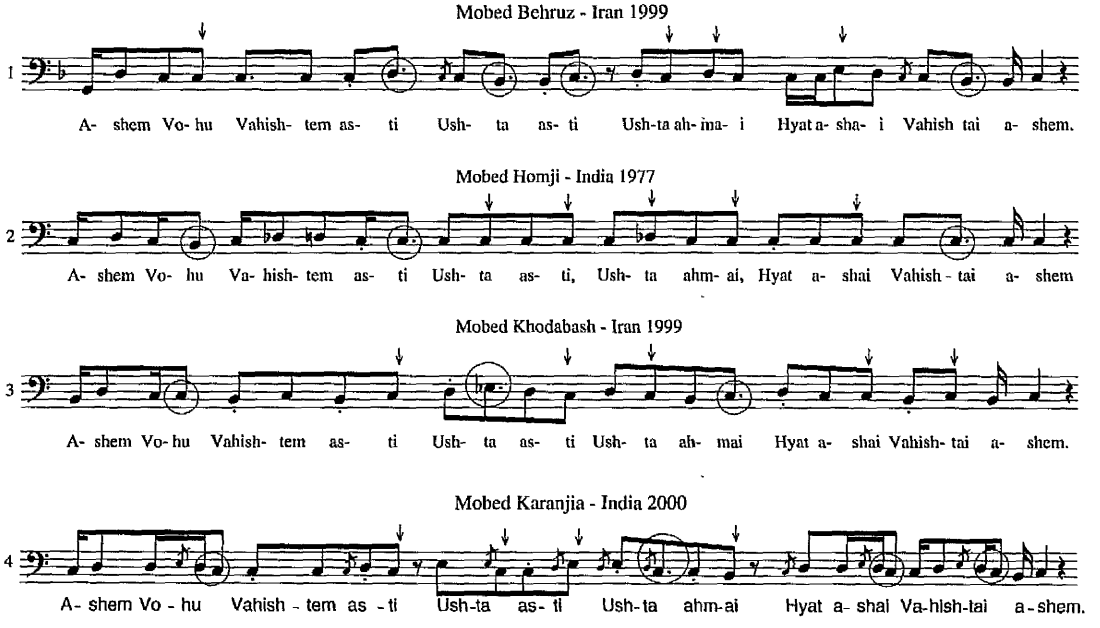
The languages of Zoroastrian prayer, Avestan and Pazand, also have long and short vowels, although the relationship between them is not mathematically prescribed. Mobed Bhedwar of London also confirmed that in practice, the longer vowels are not lengthened by any specific measure but were simply sustained longer than short vowels[119]. However, the impact of vowel length upon rhythm is not always maintained in performance.

In the following notation example the short prayer "Ashem Vohu" is performed by four different priests. The prayer has eight long vowels and these are in bold

[119] Interview August 2001.

in the text below. The circles on the staves mark each time a longer vowel length corresponds to a longer note length; the arrows above mark each time it should but does not.

Ashem Vohū, Vahishtem astī,
Ushtā astī, Ushtā ahmāi,
Hyat ashāi, Vahishtāi ashem.
(Kanga 1995: 1)



In theory each long vowel should have a duration longer than that for a short vowel. However it can be seen that in Mobed Behruz's performance this congruence occurs only four times. It happens twice for Mobed Homji, three times for Mobed Khodabash and four times for Mobed Karanjia.

This is a small sample but is nonetheless representative of performance practice. It indicates that vowel length does have an effect on note length and that there is often a direct correlation between the two. However the sample also indicates that this correlation is not absolute. This is also in accord with the different conditions under which a prayer may be said. In longer

ceremonies, time considerations may force all prayers to be performed with haste, in which case all note values are flattened out to a rapid delivery[120].

9.2 Impact of Text on Pitch

This chapter has thus far dealt primarily with rhythm and it is now possible to engage in an exploration of pitch.

While a degree of cause and effect can be postulated between the grammar of the text and the pauses in the sound, there is no such relationship between the text and pitch. This is not to say that no relationship is possible in any context. Some other studies such as Lord's study of South Slavic epic poetry and Coplan's work on songs and praise poetry of Lesotho have found a degree of congruence between pitches inherent in language and those used in performance, but these situations involve languages which are tonal. "In a tone language the relative pitch at which a syllable is uttered or the inflection given to it may be phonemic, that is, may affect the meaning of a syllable" (List 1961: 16). The "degree of fixity" of the text and music vis-à-vis a tonal language is also examined by Rulan Chao Pian in her study of the Peking Opera tradition. She noted that although in general the text was given precedence over the music, now and again musical consideration did come first (Pian 1993: 6). This points to a colloquial balancing act in the Peking Opera tradition which navigates a fine line between maintaining meaning and melodic progression. Broadly speaking, therefore, in all these traditions the music of a tonal language largely adheres to the tones of the language simply to maintain lexical meaning. However neither Avestan nor Pazand are, according to existing literature, tonal languages and so it is highly unlikely that any pitch patterns observed thus far have their origins in the text.

[120] Hwee-San Tan explores a similar phenomenon in Chinese Buddhist practice whereby the speed and subsequent length of a memorial rite for the dead may be determined by the amount a patron is willing

When Zoroastrian priests were asked if they thought that any tones or melodies arose somehow from the text itself, all responded in the negative. At one point it seemed that Dastur Noshirwan of Surat was suggesting that this very relationship may exist but it was then clarified that he was referring to stresses such as pauses, not pitches which arose from the text. There is no evidence therefore that the pitching of a feature such as ouvert-clos motion is (also) an extension of syllable structure. It could be conjectured that perhaps if a performer was already following a pattern of phrases that were alternating in a complementary rhythm, he might also vary the ending pitches simply to break up the tonal monotony. However this could be achieved by any selection of pitches not simply the consistent return to the tonic for the clos, or the frequent use of the subtonic for the ouvert phrase. Therefore no conclusive causative effect can be seen between any structure within the text and the pitches on which that text is voiced.

9.3 Impact of Performance Features On Text

The grammar, meaning and languages of the text do not appear to have shaped the sound of Zoroastrian prayer performance. Conversely, however, one can discern the impact of a prayer performance on the words. It must be distinguished that the following analysis addresses the question of "how" and not "why" certain performance features are used in particular ways. This is because, as previously noted, one cannot explore motivation based on testimonies from the priests. They are not aware of the way in which they shape their sound and so cannot provide reasons for their actions. Nonetheless it is possible to observe certain consistent phenomena without suggesting that priests intend to execute these effects. It should also be noted that when some of these findings were shared with priests, their reactions were uniformly that of discovering something about themselves that they never knew.

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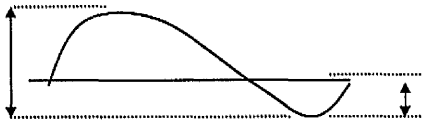
or able to pay. Effectively, smaller payments result in faster and shorter services (Tan 2002: 132).

A discussion of the effect of the sound on the text is, essentially, a discussion of the effect of the performance features on the text. The most noticeable effect they have is to give the text a sense of aural coherence. This occurs in the most rudimentary of ways, the first of which pertains mostly to rhythm and was explored above. However, some further expansion regarding tonal material is also useful. It has also been established that some priests simply deliver the prayers with a rapid expressionless monotone. The fact that this manner of delivery is not well regarded by either the community or the priesthood has already been noted. Yet many priests do, for various reasons, simply fall into this tonal rut and by doing so remove any tenable aural structure from prayer performance. Given that people do not understand the text as it is performed, a rapid monotone delivery would leave the listener (and often the performer) with absolutely no point of entry, no grip on the experience in front of them. They would be unable to make any sense of the sound whatsoever. They would have no idea when passages began or ended. However, the performance features miligate somewhat against this. They section the sounds into rhythmic and tonal points of departure and arrival and give the listener, and surely the performer as well, such a grip. It can be suggested that they provide a degree of tonal variety against the overwhelming tendency towards monotony.

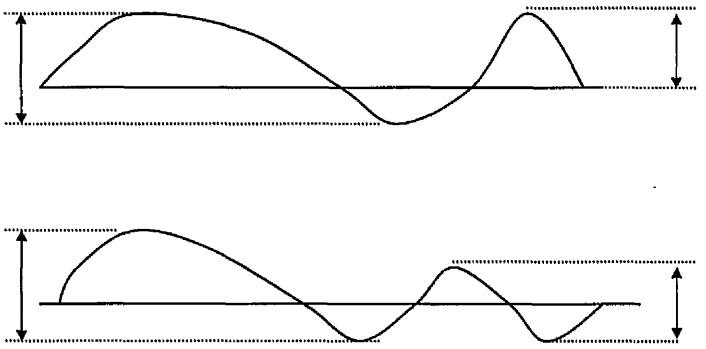
The presence and influence of the performance features can also increase as a performance goes on. The examples of Mobed Karanjia and Mobed Jamshed establish that they may begin with a textual base of reference for their pauses but can drift onto something else. Many priests such as Mobed Khushroo Kaikobad Dastur of Udvada and Mobed Mehraban of Iran, revealed that the longer a prayer is performed over years the more they are absorbed by the performance. Hence, it is possible that as a prayer progresses, grammar becomes less relevant and the pauses becomes less textual and more musical.

The ultimate effect of these pauses and pitch sequences and alternating melodic movements which demarcate sections of sound is therefore, to give structure to the delivery of the text where lexical meaning has been lost. The "sections" make aural syntactical sense, not verbal syntactical sense out of the sound experience. They allow the performer to take what would be a meaningless monolith of sound and parse it into digestible chunks. If the sections correspond to the start and end of a verse, the listener knows that a segment of text has begun and ended. If they don't, the listener still registers that a delineated segment of sound has passed by. The sense of completion is present in either case. Moreover the tonal as well as rhythmic symmetry of alternating melodic motion ensures that the sound of the text does not remain completely static. Overall, these features allow the performer and the listener to develop a sense of passage. This is encapsulated by feature 6, the melodic contour. The basic contour, drawn here below, rises at its beginning and lowers at its end.



The initial rising curve in the above wave occurs at the beginning of phrases and gives a line of text a sense of commencement. The descent and return to the finalis at the end of the curve imparts closure. This closure is also heightened by the leading tone effect of the subtonic close to or just before the finalis (feature 4).

In between these points the effect of the curve on pitch is to make the return approach to the tonic seem inevitable and yet also slightly prolonged. As illustrated in the following melodic contours, the prolongation comes from the gradual narrowing of the pitch range which, in moving from a wider to a narrower oscillation closes in on the tonic like a funnel.



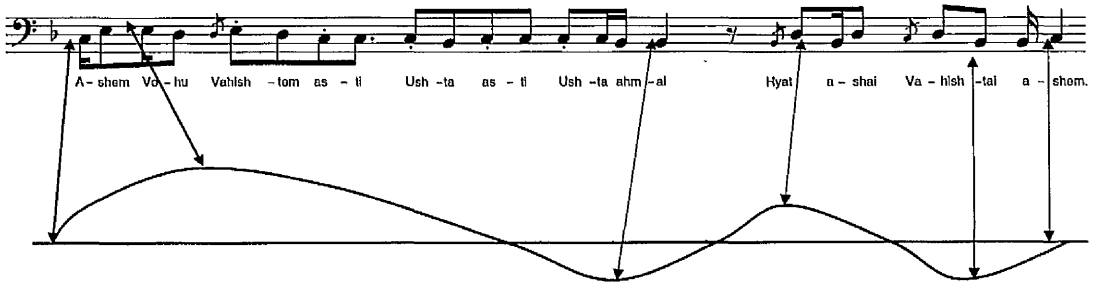
The other performance features, ornamentation, the tri-semitone and trichordal motion, can also be seen as having a diversifying effect on what would otherwise be a monolithic tonal experience. In this sense they not only make any delaying of the return to the tonic more palatable, they also cause it. The middle passage between beginning and ending is therefore justified by being given variety and alternate tones.

It is also possible that a feature such as ornamentation gives an emotional resonance to the words simply by making them slightly more varied and expressive. This also broadly fits in with a stated intention of some priests. Mobed Gonda, Mobed Niknaam and others have stated that during funeral prayers they have a desire to bring comfort to the families and to pray earnestly for the well being of the departed soul. Mobed Gonda in particular also maintained that he thought of bringing this comfort by singing "as if with some sort of sympathy, with some sort of emotion within me as if I am doing it for myself or for my own family member who is passed away. I get that particular feeling within me when I am doing it and when I am doing it, believe me I am doing it for others and then my hair stands on end."

When he was asked how this was expressed in sound he was unable to explain or demonstrate except to show that he raised his hand expressively as if to point the soul to heaven. It is observable however, that ornamentation (feature 5) appears strongly in his performance and that when singing emphatically he adds, not only volume to his performance but also these poignant upturns and

downturns of crushed notes. It could be that for a priest who wishes to be expressive, ornamentation provides a way. As always with this analysis it must be reiterated that the connection between a Mobed's intention and the sound of his prayers is at best conjectural.

Prolongation also comes from the ouvert-clos motion which, by cadencing on the subtonic or some other non-tonic note requires a second musical phrase as a counter-balance and so drives the melodic motion forward to its resolution on the tonic. This is demonstrated below on a small scale. The diagram also shows how the significant rises and falls of the curve are played out in the prayer. The opening interval of a major third narrows at the end to a minor second. The first half of the curve with its gentle slope is reflected in the prominence E and D receive before reaching down to B, which features more significantly in the second half. It must be remembered that any change occurring within a four note ambitus of limited movement which is centred on the tonic will achieve a significant aural impact.



In the above example the textual line is supported by the musical line. However, as demonstrated earlier with Mobed Jamshed, this congruence is far from consistent. This too in spite of certain factors. Ashem Vohu is the most fundamental prayer in the entire liturgy and is known instinctively by every Zoroastrian the world over. It is prayed on its own as well as part of longer prayers. A text as short and as well known as this might easily be thought to have a beginning, middle, and end that naturally fall into place. However this is not always the case and if a small prayer like Ashem Vohu can be dissected

without regard for its grammar, then the chances are even greater that it can happen in longer prayers. This is indicative of the degree to which musical momentum can override grammatical considerations which in turn reveals that on some level the priests contain within them a music they cannot control.

Mobed Aibara's Yasna 28 (tracks19 and 20, and transcription in Transcription chapter) is another clear example of how a priest's musical momentum can take precedence over the grammar of the text. The pauses that are grammatically indicated by the end of one stanza and the beginning of another are not, for the most part, observed. From the outset Mobed Aibara stops at various points which are not possible to predict. He stops in the middle of stanzas and sometimes in the middle of sentences (stanza 6 line 5). The duration of each section varies, and is very possibly a function of breath. What is also striking however is that a certain amount of musical material (the melodic contour) is always present within each section. No one section is complete without some performance features present, and from the sixth stanza onwards all features appear in each portion.

The most important aspect of this separation of textual and musical syntax is that the priest is following the musical momentum and so are the listeners. The text has been rendered secondary and the music has achieved its own, self-justified state of coherence. It could even be said that, for the longer more involved prayers, if priests were to re-arrange the text or leave out entire passages, the laity would not know it, or even notice anything amiss provided the musical syntax was maintained. A clear example of this is a wedding ceremony performed by Mobed Cyroos in Tehran. Much has already been made of the irregularities that pervade his prayers but here it must be noted that none of the audience present at a wedding ceremony that he performed noticed any of his mistakes. This includes myself. I was not aware of the transgressions until I presented a recording of the ceremony to Mobed Rustam Bhedwar who, although Indian, has studied the Iranian wedding ceremony and was able to

compare Mobed Cyroos' performance to that prescribed in Behram Kandin's book on the ceremony. It was discovered that Mobed Cyroos had abridged passages indiscriminately and had simply left others out. Occasionally there are conventions for abridging certain prayers but he had not observed any of these. In spite of this, and in spite of the fact that the audience surely must have attended other weddings by other priests whose prayers would be textually different from Mobed Cyroos', nothing untoward was noticed. The important point that must be re-emphasised here is that they were acceptable to an audience that didn't understand them as long as the prayers sounded as if they had a beginning, middle and end.

Neither the performer nor the listener can have any real confusion as to the very beginning or ending of a ceremony but without some aural markers, the prayer which make up that ceremony could pass by as one indistinguishable sonic chunk and would then be without any textual or aural significance whatsoever. The most important role of the performance features therefore is to provide these aural markers and therefore give Zoroastrian prayer performance a coherence it would otherwise lack.

9.4 External Purpose and Internal Structure

External purposes and internal structures address why and how a style, or particular performance, or composition sounds the way it does. Specifically these terms refer to the relationship between the mechanisms for producing a particular sound (or sounds) that make up a style of music (internal structure) and the overall guiding reasons for that production (external purpose).

The first preliminary step was to see if there were any similarities between Zoroastrian performance features and other known musical forms. There are some broad similarities with modal structure that prove useful, and these will

be discussed shortly. Nonetheless, the performance features do not immediately fit snugly into any existing, established musical category, Western or otherwise. A prayer performance does not, for instance, move with a specific sectional logic. It does not replicate the unfolding of a fugue, or explore first, tonality, and then rhythm, like the exposition of an Indian rāg. Neither are there modulations between modes as in the Turkish rendition of a maqām, nor is there a requisite selection of melodies (gushes) such as comprise the performance of a Persian dastgāh. The features are simply not a perfect analogue of any musical form with which the Zoroastrian community may have had contact in Iran or India or the West. Furthermore the features do not serve any obvious musical purpose such as providing a platform for improvised tonal or rhythmic explorations. Certainly, one does not hear such explorations and none are perceived in transcription. Also, priests confirm that in prayer performance, they do not intend to embark on virtuoso displays of technique and do not feel that they do so.

Even the relationships between the features do not reveal an obvious underlying musical purpose that connects them all together. The sort of audible connective logic to which I refer can be found in dhrupad. The various components of a dhrupad[121] performance, which are its internal structure, serve the musical goals of the exposition of a rāg (mode) and a tāl (rhythmic cycle)[122] which are the external purpose of the performance. The tradition of dhrupad also has goals which are spiritual and ultimately it may be argued that the musical goals are only there to serve the spiritual goals but for the sake of this analysis the discussion can be restricted to the technicalities of how performance features work together to achieve a musical result.

[121] Dhrupad is the oldest vocal style of North Indian classical music (see Widdes/Powers 2001 for details).
[122] Mode and rhythmic cycle are limited and incomplete definitions, but as they are broadly accurate they serve the needs of this discussion.

One can isolate two broad goals of a dhrupad performance (and generally of many Indian musical styles) as the exploration of the tonal and rhythmic possibilities of a rāg and a tāl. In brief (and without being diverted by too much specific terminology) it can be perceived that in a dhrupad performance there is a progression from an exploration of tonality to an exploration of rhythm. Also, it can be seen that within each section of a performance, there is a progression from the simple presentation of material to the increasingly intense and expanded manipulation of that material. The various components which characterise a dhrupad performance all serve to create these progressions.

The slow drones at the beginning of the alāp[123] change to the regular and accelerating pulses at its end. After the alāp, the presentation of the lines of verse with the added accompaniment of the pakhāvaj (double-headed drum) signals the end of tonal exploration and the firm arrival of the manipulation of metre which subsequently climaxes with increasingly faster rhythmic subdivisions of the words of the text.

Also within each section it can be seen that material is first presented in its simplest form and is then treated with various techniques such as ornaments, glides and oscillations, which manipulate the sound in various ways until all possibilities have been explored. By the end of the performance the rāg has been presented in all possible octaves. The pitches of the rāg have been heard as long slow drones, as pulses, and in strings of rapid-fire bursts. The text has been expressed first, unaltered and then with increasing speed and intensity as words and phrases are subdivided into complex syllabic and rhythmic events. The characteristic melodies and phrases of the rāg have been heard greatly expanded and tightly compressed. By the end of the performance, therefore, the progression from tonality to rhythm and an exploration of the possibilities of the rāg and tāl have been realised via the various techniques of dhrupad.

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[123] In traditional dhrupad performances this is the first section in which the characteristic melodic sequences and the distinctive spirit of the rāg are set up and expanded.

Analysing the performance features of dhrupad via a progression from tonal to rhythmic exploration reveals not only how these techniques serve the overall goal but also how they work together. A drone at the beginning of an alāp is not merely contrasted with the rapid fire bursts at the end of an alāp to show that tonality can be explored slowly and also quickly, but rather, as one section of the alāp leads to another the drone mutates into a series of undulations which become gradually faster and faster oscillations which finally become the bursts. Someone who was unfamiliar with the structure of dhrupad performance would not know that it involved a sequential progression exploring tonality and rhythm, but upon hearing a performance they would still be broadly aware that this had occurred. In this sense it can be seen that the performance features of a dhrupad performance contain a structural external and internal logic i.e. There is a musical goal and the performance features combine to achieve that goal.

A similar coherence can be found in some traditions of Buddhist chanting. An example which is also used later in this analysis can be found in the *Ceremony In Praise of The Goddess Paldenlhamo*. The characteristic features of this ritual (as performed by the Buddhist Monks of the Namgyal Monastery, Dharamsala, India (Thompson 1989: 15)) is that the chanting is continuously maintained at extremely low pitches and this low rolling wave of bass is periodically "slashed" by harsh metallic sounds made by cymbals. Also, a roar of massive horns impacts unexpectedly upon the drone. The contrasting elements of the low rolling voices and the other elements which crash in upon them achieve the musical goal of combining a deep meditative sound with abrasive upheaval. This in turn reflects the nature of this particular ritual which praises a wrathful, protective deity and represents in sound her impact upon the world. Even leaving aside the spiritual aspect, it could be argued that whether or not a listener was aware of this goal, they would still perceive the interaction between the elements. They would still hear a low drone contrasted with other sounds that crashed into it. The individual elements of the music have,

therefore, a perceptible self-contained logic[124]. For both dhrupad and this example of Buddhist chanting, a key element of that logic is that the various elements need to be contrasted with each other to achieve the overall musical goal. For dhrupad there would be no progression without drones that became pulses and bursts and for the Buddhist chant the cymbals and horns would not be as abrasive an upheaval without the chanting.

There are no such connections to be found in a point-by-point analysis of Zoroastrian performance features. To begin with, there is, according to priests, no musical "goal" such as tonal or rhythmic exploration. Nor is there a programmatic goal such as the creation of a sound environment that reflects a particular deity or aspect of God. There is, therefore no external purpose. Furthermore, no internal structure within the features themselves is discernible when they are lined up in sequence or are contrasted with one another. For example, alternating melodic movement (feature 1) does not naturally mean that the melodic contour identified as feature 6, will appear. Nor does it mean that any of the other five performance features will manifest. In fact the features do not at all appear to operate with each other in a manner that achieves a particular musical result.

It may be argued that it is unfair to compare dhrupad and Buddhist chanting and Western classical music to Zoroastrian prayer as the four are from entirely different traditions. However, it must be remembered that the point being made vis-à-vis sound production, is not that Buddhism, dhrupad and Zoroastrianism have different or similar internal musical logics and external conceptual purposes, but rather that on the face of it, Zoroastrian prayer seems to lack both entirely. Even a tradition such as Synagogue prayer chant which has some basic features in common with Zoroastrian prayer performance, a solo voice renders religious texts into improvised unrhythmical melodic phrases, is

[124] The same logic is not applied to all deities. For instance, Avalokiteshvara the Buddha (or Bodhisattva) of Infinite Compassion receives a very different treatment involving silence and rolls on

differentiated by two important factors: Synagogue prayer chant is "highly systematised and distinctly prescribed by tradition" (Cohon 1950: 17). Zoroastrian prayer chant is neither systematised nor prescribed.

Therefore, when viewed in terms of musical goals and co-ordinated structures, the performance features can seem like points and clusters of unrelated data. However, when appraised simply as a general sound phenomenon, they coalesce into a specific aural structure. Returning to an idea stated at the beginning of the Transcription chapter, when one listens to different priests from different countries recorded over the years, one hears something faintly connective running through them all. Transcriptions then reveal "that faintly connective something" to be discernible underlying patterns that are identically found in the repertories of disparate people whose paths have never crossed. Furthermore, studies of the priests' training and performance practices illustrate that there is a common experiential narrative which runs throughout their training and performance practices. Therefore they all learn in the same way, perform with the same habits and their sound contains some common unifying features. All this suggests that there is an overall system of sound production in operation—perhaps a Zoroastrian model of prayer music; a cycle within the training and performance processes that gives Zoroastrian prayer a particular aural signature as the text is rendered into sound. The next section will fully explore this possibility.

9.5 The Model

In his Grove article on improvisation Bruno Nettl provides a useful definition of a model. He writes that "no improvised performance is totally without stylistic or compositional basis". He goes on to refer to this "basis" as a model, a point of departure for improvisation, and notes that it comprises a collection

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drums placed in ten different locations.

of obligatory features, the number and kinds of which vary from culture to culture (Nettl 2001: 96). Using this conceptual basis this research has revealed a Zoroastrian model for prayer music which is comprised of the following three points.

a). **A Body of Knowledge:** Zoroastrian priests possess a body of musical knowledge/performance practice which is akin to a modal system and constitutes the "things they must know" in order for their repertory to sound the way it does. This is comprised of the six performance features.

b). **Manifestation:** In performance priests adhere to the parameters of this knowledge but without forethought and without contemplating this phenomenon. It is, therefore manifested unconsciously.

c). **Transmission:** This knowledge is transmitted through aural absorption without verbal instruction. This is unconscious music knowledge, not conscious verbal knowledge[125]. It is transmitted from teacher to student like musical DNA, and with mutations.

When combined, these three ideas form the tripartite reality of the model and it will be demonstrated that all three elements must be present for the model to operate. Put another way, the sound that is peculiar to Zoroastrian priests is one that appears only when a priest possesses a certain body of music knowledge that he has received non-verbally and that he accesses unconsciously.

9.6 The Body of Knowledge/Performance Practice

This section will describe the functioning of the performance features and will demonstrate that they constitute a body of knowledge and that there is, in this case a parallel between a body of knowledge and performance practice.

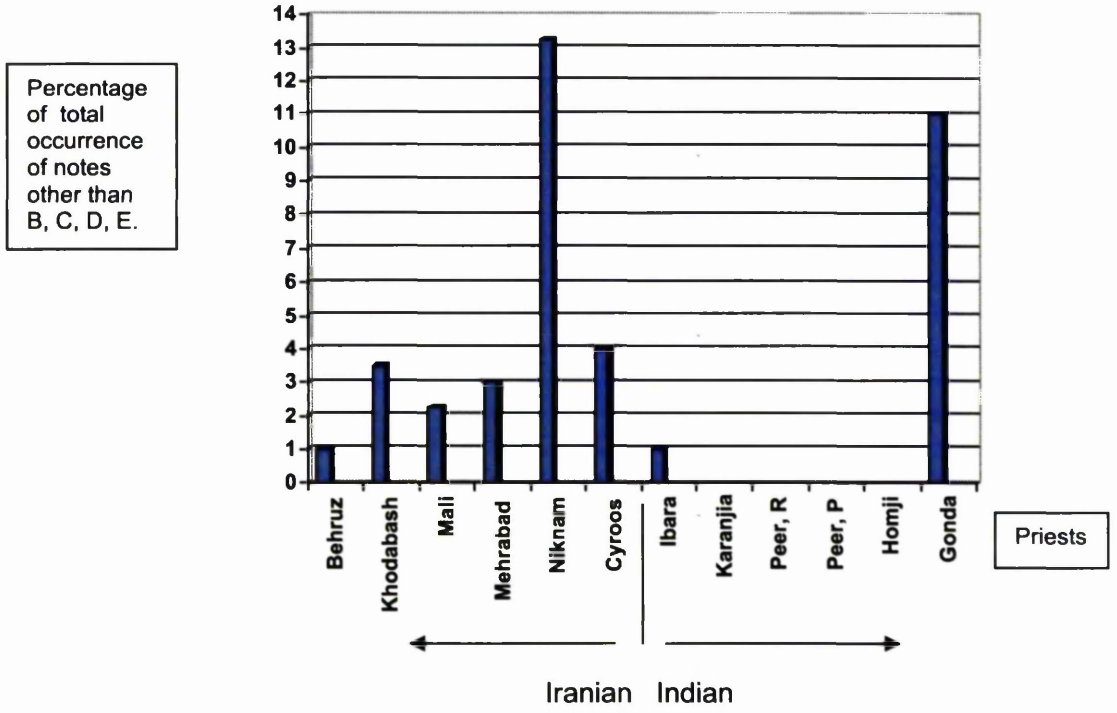
Also in his Grove article, Nettl posits that the most prominent model may be that of a mode(s) or a modal system(s). Of these, a rāg may (in one sense) be described as a collection of pitches in a hierarchical relationship and sets of

typical, and often obligatory, melodic practices, motifs and ornaments (Nettl 2001: 96). This is an apt description of the performance features. They too comprise a hierarchy of pitches, typical melodic practices, motifs and ornaments. It can be demonstrated that Zoroastrian prayers are indeed performed within "a collection of pitches in a hierarchical relationship".

Overall the range of pitches is extremely narrow. The columns in Image 12 (below) show the percentage of notes other than B, C, D, E that occur out of the total notes of two prayer performances. It is striking that the notes other than B, C, D, and E still only comes to 13% of the total. Clearly these four pitches are the most commonly and sometimes exclusively used by all the priests studied. Out of these four, C occupies a central role. It is the tonic, the finalis, the reciting tone. It is the most important pitch. B frequently occurs as the final note of an Ouvert phrase and also serves a cadential purpose when it functions as a leading tone at the ends of sections (feature 4). In both capacities it acts as an unstable pitch that propels the melody towards the tonic. D and E function largely as transitory pitches and mostly provide contrast to the ubiquitous C. They are both, occasionally the final note of an Ouvert phrase and most frequently are used in outlining a trichord (feature 3). It can therefore be seen that the other pitches are effectively roads that all lead to C and essentially serve to reinforce its centrality.

[125] These terms will be fully explored in a later discussion.

Image 12



Second, the performance features, like a modal system contain typical melodic practices and motifs. It can be seen that, to an extent, these melodic practices and motifs also reinforce C. Balancing motifs and Ouvert – Clos motion (feature 1) are both melodic frameworks that, by departing from and returning to the tonic, effectively fortify its presence. D and E are primarily used in outlining a trichord and in all trichordal motion (which is feature 3), C is either the anchor or the central point through which the other pitches continually pass. Finally, the Melodic Contour (feature 6) is itself defined entirely around the centrality of the tonic. Its oscillation is wide at the beginning of the contour and narrows at the end like a conical funnel closing in on its target—C.

The third similarity to a modal system lies in ornamentation. In the major vocal genres of Hindustani music—dhrupad, khayal etc—Widdes and Powers note that ornamentation (along with other characteristics) serves to give each style its own particular identity. Mīnd, āndolan and gamak are characteristic of

dhrupad, and gamak and kan-svara with rapid throat movement are particularly prominent in khayal (Widdess/Powers 2001: 191). For Zoroastrian prayer, ornamentation is also a stylistic marker of sorts. As has been noted thus far, the priests only use two types of ornamentation—crushed notes and melisma. The crushed note (notated with a grace note) is common to both Persian and Indian priests. Slight melisma, occurring in the first word of a new phrase, is common to 80% of the Indian priests and to one Persian priest.

The pitch hierarchy and the melodic practices and ornaments of the performance features do, therefore, function in a manner similar to that of a mode, i.e. "a collection of pitches in a hierarchical relationship and sets of typical, and often obligatory, melodic practices, motifs and ornament" (Nettl 2001: 96) . As applied to the Zoroastrian model this collection of musical elements is the common body of knowledge that is revealed in prayer performances across the spectrum of priests. Also as applied to the Zoroastrian model it can be argued that this knowledge is a crucial factor (one of three) to the sound of Zoroastrian prayers.

The idea that some kinds of music are created when a community of performers possess a particular knowledge which is essential for making their music can be found in many places, including Leo Treitler's work on Gregorian chant. Treitler discerned (1974: 352) that

> the general constraints exhibited by variant chants in the same melodic mode, such as 'consistencies from verse to verse with respect to the details of movement within each phrase ... the centrality of the recitation tones in all phrases, and the fixed order of the cadential tones', are analogues of the 'formulaic system' of oral epics. Consequently, they represent evidence for the kind of knowledge that singers possessed in order to sing chants during the period before the 9th century when they were orally transmitted.

The link between a body of knowledge and performance practice comes therefore in "defining performing practice not with respect to the details of a particular piece, but as the things musicians must know in order to perform a certain group of pieces or even an entire repertory" (Brinner 2001: 385). Brinner's description of the relationship between the priests and the performance features is highly applicable to the Zoroastrian context. There is, however, one key difference between the kind of knowledge to which Treitler and Brinner refer and that possessed by Zoroastrian priests. In the priests this knowledge is not a part of their consciousness; this is a direct result of the means by which they access it, which brings us to the second point of the model, manifestation.

9.7 Manifestation Of the Model

The earlier discussion of improvisation (section 9.5) has been useful in defining a model but it also gives rise to another question regarding its manifestation. That these melodic practices and ornaments are present is clear, but calling them obligatory as defined by Nettl is perhaps somewhat inaccurate. They are more habitual than obligatory. Zoroastrian priests do not so much "know what they do", as "do what they know". This leads to a question which goes to the heart of improvisation itself: in what sense are the priests improvising?

Improvisation is defined by the *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Music* as "A performance according to the inventive whim of the moment, i.e. without a written or printed score and not from memory" (Oxford 1996: 356). Other definitions of improvisation go on to note that it can include the elaboration of an existing framework etc. These definitions do not accurately capture the essence of what it is the priests are doing because implicit in all of them seems to be the assumption that on some conscious level the performer is aware of making music and is making choices. In the words of Nettl (2001: 95) "One of

the typical components of improvisation is that of risk: that is, the need to make musical decisions on the spur of the moment, or moving into unexplored musical territory with the knowledge that some form of melodic, harmonic or ensemble closure will be required".

Zoroastrian priests are not, by their own testimonies, making musical decisions. Furthermore, if improvisation involves risk, and risk involves knowledge of rules and the possibility of infraction (both creatively by the performer and judgementally by the audience) then another term or definition is required for what Zoroastrian priests do. They do not adhere to the parameters of the performance features out of any disciplined sense of following rules, but are simply reproducing patterns that have been ingrained in them. They do not make creative musical choices, but are simply and instinctively imitating and reinforcing the sound they absorbed during training. The prayers are not composed and yet they are not exactly improvised either. They are performed, more than anything, by habit. The model is effectively, a collection of habits, an aural autopilot, that lets the performer unthinkingly give voice to the text while it shapes the sound.

Musicians, on some tangible level, make choices while improvising. Zoroastrian priests are not trained as musicians, do not think of themselves as such and do not behave as musicians and yet, music is in their sound. Herein lies the paradox of this phenomenon. This is music that is being performed by men who, by their own criteria, are not musicians.

This is not to say that each priest, including those who are musically minded does not bring his own flavour to his performances. This is most emphatically the case and this is why each performer has his own style. Mobed Niknām of Iran is certainly very musically talented and his performances are some of the most expressive and elaborate of any priest studied. This is, however, simply his style and ultimately style is but the wrapping around the core material

which is the model. Therefore while the wrapping will definitely change from priest to priest, the core of their performances remains the same. This is also why the performance features are identically found within the performances of priests who, on the surface, may sound very different from each other.

The crucial element in this discussion therefore can be distilled down to the manifestation of the model, not its wrapping. While the external features will change from priest to priest and from country to country, the model remains intact. Furthermore, it is not accessed by choice but by habit. This is consistent with all the social conditions that surround the priesthood and the training of priests. The underlying sound of the prayers is the ultimate end product of a tradition that transmits its core aural material without ever contemplating or discussing it, but by continually performing it. The performance features are manifested in the same way they are transmitted, without contemplation. The essence of its creation is, therefore, unthinking habitual reproduction. The model must be manifested unconsciously. In the words of Mobed Cyrus Panthaki of Navsari "This voice is not coming by your throat it's coming by your heart." (Interview Feb 2000).

This proof of this can also be highlighted by its opposite. Not only does an unthinking performance manifest the model, but a performance that consciously crafts a basic sound prevents its processes. This is exemplified by Mobed Cyroos of Tehran, Iran. Analysis revealed that his prayers do not contain the performance features and in fact his case illustrates a conceptual boundary of sorts past which the model does not manifest.

In Mobed Cyroos' prayers, features 2, 3 and 5 (tri-semitone, trichordal motion and ornamentation) are all present but the other performance features are conspicuously absent. Mobed Cyroos' training is, according to him the same as for all Mobeds, therefore he should contain the body of music knowledge. However, as will be illustrated shortly, he chose not to manifest this knowledge

unconsciously. He chose instead to seek musical direction from the general Persian music around him and now it is that and not the Zoroastrian model that shapes his prayers. It must be specified, however, that simply seeking input from an external source is not enough to prevent the model manifesting, but rather it is the conscious act of music creation which blocks it.

This is convincingly illustrated by a comparison between Mobed Cyroos and Mobed Gonda of Lonavala, India. Both men revealed in interviews that they wanted to perform the prayers musically and (as will be discussed shortly) both have had input from their surrounding cultures, and yet Mobed Cyroos does not manifest the performance features while Mobed Gonda does. The crucial difference between these men, however, was that Mobed Cyroos actually sought out musical instruction from Persian musicians while Mobed Gonda simply seems to have imported tonalities from the popular music of his choice. The activities of these two priests raise further questions regarding the overall connections between priests to the cultures around them. Therefore before completing the section on manifestation it would be useful to divert briefly to establish the boundaries of the knowledge that priests pass to one another. To what degree is this collection of performance features purely Zoroastrian?

9.8 Connections Between Zoroastrian Prayer and Surrounding Culture

An important issue that straddles both manifestation and transmission is an examination of all the influences, both within and without the enclave of the Zoroastrian community, that can affect a priest's sound. This stems from the notion that although the performance features are first transmitted fairly hermetically from teacher to student, they are then maintained via performance practice, and like all sound materials and other aesthetic information that resides within a priest's head, they are susceptible to the influences of the

encompassing culture. This section will therefore explore the discernible connections between Zoroastrian prayer and its Indian and Persian surroundings.

The sound of Zoroastrian prayer and the general sounds of music in the cultures of Iran and India can be analysed on two levels. First there are those Zoroastrians who, although not quite isolationist, still regard prayer performance as private to the Zoroastrian community only and therefore resist any obvious external input. Then there are those who are knowingly open to the sounds around them and approve of their importation into the aural fabric of the prayers.

Addressing, first, the issue of Zoroastrians who regard prayer as private to the community and who would insist that external influences are not permissible and have not occurred, it must be accepted that no community is completely impervious to its surroundings and Zoroastrians are hardly isolated in either Iran or India. However, some weight must be given to the orientation of a minority community towards its larger host culture on such issues. Zoroastrians have adapted convivially to many cultural norms of India and Iran[126], but they retain some distance when it comes to their religion. Furthermore, even though, especially in the case of Indian Zoroastrians, elements of dress and food have, in rituals, been adapted from the surroundings, the learning and performing of prayers is an area that, as has been demonstrated thus far, has been closed off and protected from non-Zoroastrian contact. In India Mobed Karanjia insisted that before the 20th century priests lived in a great deal of isolation and did not attend the rituals of other faiths. In Iran, many Mobeds, including the head Mobed, Rustam Shahzadi, attested that due to persecution Zoroastrian rituals and the Temples themselves were maintained in as discreet a manner as

[126] Even though Zoroastrians are native to Persia they have effectively been marginalised and have been outside the prevailing hegemony since the Moslem conquest of the 7th century.

possible, and he also avowed that certainly no Mobed would make a practice of visiting a Mosque[127].

Nonetheless, in both countries (notwithstanding the exigencies of life in an Iranian theocracy) they live and interact with the larger Moslem and Hindu populations and form a vital part of the fabric of their respective societies as a whole. As part of that participation, Zoroastrians will hear, absorb and participate in the musical life of their countries as listeners and producers. When travelling through the metropolitan and rural areas of both countries I was particularly struck by how much music can be heard simply by walking in public. It is also a fact of life in many parts of India and in Iran (somewhat more so in Iran) that the Moslem call to prayer (and in some cases, the service as well) is publicly heard every day, periodically throughout the day. If nothing else, these are sounds that will register indelibly on people who have grown up with them as these two men, and indeed as all Indian and Iranian Zoroastrian priests have. It is natural therefore that some influences including musical ones must be exchanged between Zoroastrian and other communities.

Ultimately, when balancing the attempts of a community to preserve something from external influence against the inevitability of cultural exchange, it is reasonable to assume that at least some degree of permeation from the outside in will occur. A comparison of some concepts and practices will show that Zoroastrian prayer performance has some broad points in common with other musical traditions, and with chant traditions in general, and will also reveal differences. These conceptual and practical proximities and distances will also assist in demarcating Zoroastrianism's position relative to other religious traditions of music in worship.

The assertion from all priests that their sound "comes from the heart" can be found in many cultures for whom extemporisation is the prime operative

[127] From interviews with Mobed R. Karanjia, Feb 2000 and Mobed R. Shahzadi, Aug 1999.

feature of sound production. When interviewed about his Koranic cantillation, Sheikh Atiyya Elēganyeney, Imam of the London Central Mosque stated that

> it depend on the faith of the heart. I can't prepare my tone mmm-mmm (demonstrates a singer warming up and searching for the right note)...I can't imagine a tone and do it. ...It just comes. If I think of it, it will go bad. Because you are challenge Allah...this is different from the songs. Songs you can. You can. By the music or something you can control yourself. By the band or something. But this is...you can't challenge Allah. This is the word of Allah.[128]

The use of his words "it just comes" and "heart" is strikingly similar to the very same sentiment voiced by all Zoroastrian priests. A notable difference lies in his certainty that his cantillation is "different from songs", but then, as a product of orthodox Moslem clerical pedagogy, he has absorbed an ideology that discriminates ethically between cantillation and "songs". Although definitions of music in worship are a much debated topic in Islam, the very existence of such a debate places concepts of music in the conscious forefront of Islamic thought as opposed to the way in which music is "heard but not seen" and certainly never discussed in Zoroastrian circles.

In the chapter dealing with the training of priests it was confirmed that during a ritual performance, neither the laity nor the priests are aware of the meanings of the words of the text. All the priests interviewed revealed that during a ritual their awareness is trained on proper pronunciation and certain obligatory ritual gestures (plucking flowers etc) and that beyond these concerns they perform without thinking. At this point an inner guidance system, i.e. the Zoroastrian model, renders the words into sound, and this sound, as previously discussed, is the prime connective tissue between the priest and the audience, and between the priest and his own material. In this respect, a Zoroastrian prayer performance is more than anything else an experience in sound, not meaning.

[128] From Interviews July 1998.

A similar phenomenon is noted in *The Art Of Persian Music*. Jean During asserts that many poems of the thirteenth century mystic Mowlānā Rumi also exploit sonority rather than meaning. He goes on to cite "an anecdote about a religious singer who bet he could make his audience cry while singing words which had no meaning at all. He succeeded by imitating only the inflections and the attitudes of religious singers" (During 1991: 157). The similarity lies in the supremacy of form over meaning; but again, here, the crucial difference is that the singer of the anecdote had a formalised awareness of sound production and knew how to manipulate its constituent parts to achieve a specific result. Zoroastrian priests have much more limited grasp of what they do. The way they produce their sound is similar to the flow of an electric current. It is either on or off and the flow is not consciously manipulated.

This is further confirmed by an interview with Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal which was conducted by Dr James W. Boyd. Dastur Kotwal remarks that

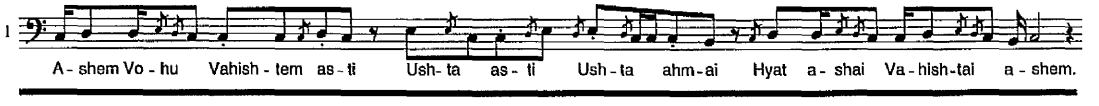
> (A Priest) must recite the holy words with utter devotion and attentiveness. He must concentrate and engross himself in the speech itself, not the conceptual meanings, given the Avestan words in interpretive translations. (Kotwal and Boyd, 1977: 37-38)

A final conceptual similarity between the Zoroastrian practice and other traditions is in the area of transmission. As was noted in the chapter on training new Zoroastrian priests are taught pronunciation in an oral tradition but ingest the sound of their prayers through aural absorption. This is essentially an imitative process. It is not formalised and it is not addressed by specific lessons. Similarly in separate studies of jazz, Javanese and Bulgarian music, Paul Berliner, Timothy Rice and Benjamin Brinner have noted that, as Rice has put it, "children in many traditions learn by imitation, often without the aid of lessons and through a process of trial and error" and that "in many oral traditions music is not taught in any formal manner whatsoever, but is learnt by children who observe adults or older children singing, playing and dancing in

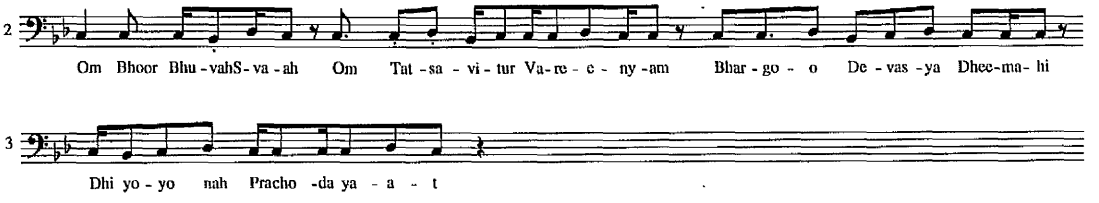
social and ceremonial occasions and then participate in these activities alongside adults" (Rice 2001: 697, 698). A crucial difference between Zoroastrianism and these other cultures is that for Zoroastrian boys there is no "trial and error". They are never corrected on their sound and so are never given any indication regarding the sound of their prayers that they have got it right or wrong. They do form a broad sense that they sound like their peers and teachers, but this happens without being taught the constituent elements of that sound in any formal manner.

In terms of technical features some common ground can be found between Zoroastrian practice and other chant traditions such as Ṛgvedic chant. In general, for both, the musical parameters are very limited. There is a narrow range of pitches used, the reciting tone occupies a central position and there are no highly developed melodic or rhythmic cycles in operation. The following notation examples (tracks 56 and 57) clearly demonstrate these similarities.

Mobed Ramiyar Karanjia. Mumbai, India. Ashem Vohu Prayer



Dr H.V.S Shastry. Mysore, India / London. Holy Gayatri Hymn



However, aside from these broad commonalties, the differences are immediately audible. These prayers are clearly not rendered along the same musical principles. Specifically, the Ṛgvedic example has a clipped precision of pitch and note duration neither of which are present in the performance of the Zoroastrian priest. Furthermore, multiple recordings verified that Dr Shastry performed the prayer each time with the exact same pitch sequence and rhythms whereas each of Mobed Karanjia's performances contain a significant

degree of pitch and rhythm variation. Finally, the slight melisma in the Zoroastrian sample is not found in the Ṛgvedic one.

An even broader difference can be heard between the Persian call to prayer (Tehran 1997, track 58[129]) and any of the examples of Zoroastrian prayer performance included on the CD. The call to prayer is highly melismatic and the performance is one that is informed by an understanding of the modal systems of Persia. Eckhard Neubauer writes that "In the Koran-reading schools of Egypt, Turkey and Iran, chanting is taught in the tonal tradition of certain maqamat[130] or extracts from them" (Neubauer 1980: 342). This may mean, for example, that although the performer is improvising he may spontaneously adhere to the tetrachords and modulations that are particular to a specific maqam. This is a widespread practice and a similar application of musical frameworks in Koranic cantillation is also described in detail by Kristina Nelson in her article on Egyptian Koranic delivery. In it Shaykh Ibrahīm al-Sha'ī shā'ī comments that "you must not even use the same *maqām* for every mention of Hell" (Nelson 1982: 42, 43).

Further differences can be heard in comparisons of Iranian and Indian folk songs and the sound of the prayers. We return to the examples of boys at the Cama Athornan priestly school in Andheri, Bombay. Twelve-year-old student Sarosh Sidwa revealed that he was fond of singing Gujarati songs. As was stated in the previous chapter, the boys at the Cama are taught some devotional songs by a local Hindu teacher. Also as was mentioned, the purpose of these lessons is to impart the general notion that singing is good, and that praying with a sweet voice is good. However neither the teachers nor the students ever explicitly make the connection that one should sing when praying, or that the prayers should be sung like the folk songs the boys learn. Tracks 50 and 59 are excerpts of Sarosh singing two Gujarati folk songs. Track 60 contains Sarosh

[129] Purchased London August 2001 from Centre for Islamic Studies .
[130] Maqam is the name for the modal systems of the Near Middle East.

performing two short prayers. The differences between the prayers and the songs is easily audible. The songs have specific time signatures (3/4 & 4/4) and very specific pitch sequences. A comparison between Sarosh singing O Ālam (track 50) and Kubcher, another student from the same school, singing the same folk song (track 51) shows that there is no doubt the boys have learned and are performing identical material: material that was taught as music and is remembered and manifested as such. However, comparing the boys' prayer performances shows little relation to the folk songs. The folk material does not appear to have entered into the liturgical sound.

Some examples from Iran further highlight the dissimilarities between the liturgical and secular realms. Track 61 is a recording of Mobeds Mali and Niknām performing prayers at the mountain shrine of Pīr é Sabz in Yazd during an annual festival. Track 62 is a sample of the crowd at that same festival singing a devotional song outdoors[131]. Track 63[132] features a group of Zoroastrian women at a recreation centre in Yazd city who performed spontaneously upon my visit there in 1999. Track 64 is an excerpt of guests enjoying a sing-along after a family dinner in Taft, Yazd. Tracks 65 and 66, also recorded at the same family dinner in Taft, are of two men each performing an unaccompanied song. The first is a humorous story of mother-in-laws told in a sing-song manner. The subject of the second song remains unknown[133]. There is very little, if anything, that connects these folk samples musically to any of the prayers heard thus far. All the folk songs have verses and choruses structures, specific melodies and progressions and rhythmic and tonal structures that could very likely be notated with traditional Western time and key signatures. As demonstrated thus far, none of these elements are present in Zoroastrian prayer. In fact the melisma of the lone gentleman on

[131] Both tracks taken from the BBC TV documentary In The Footsteps of Alexander 1997

[132] Tracks 61 - 64 were recorded by me in Taft, Yazd, Iran in 1999.

[133] These folk samples are somewhat rare in that they are all Persian Zoroastrian folk songs and very little of this material is available in recordings. The barriers between the larger Moslem community and the Zoroastrian minority mean that no anthologies of Iranian folk music contain any Zoroastrian contributions.

track 66 brings it closer in sound to the example of Persian Koranic cantillation heard above (track 58) than to anything within liturgical Zoroastrian practice. Likewise the Gujarati songs of the boys at the Cama school are very probably closer in musical content to the Hindu Gujarati tradition of their music teacher (Mr Vimadalal or his predecessor Mr Upadiya) than they seem to be to the prayers the boys are learning.

It seems therefore that even secular Zoroastrian folk music (whatever its connections to surrounding non-Zoroastrian culture) does not, of its own, seep into the prayer tradition. This is not to say that the music of surrounding non-Zoroastrian culture cannot at all seep into the prayers but, as will be discussed shortly, for that to happen takes conscious volition.

First, however, the differences in the above examples also reveal (among other things) the divergent ways in which each faith conceives of and teaches the sound of its prayers. There is a great degree of ambiguity in Zoroastrianism as to the classification of the sound of their prayers. Is it singing, chanting or recitation? As revealed in interviews, there is no consensus. It is very likely because it is not thought of as an entity unto itself that it is not addressed in training, and so when priests perform, they do so with the irregularity of men who do not have verbal, or any kind of precise knowledge of what it is they do every time they do it. By comparison, the precision of the Vedic chant exposes the underlying prescriptive method by which it was learned. Children who learn the Vedas are "made to recite each verse in different ways: in being conscious of the meaning and without, straightforward and in reverse, and according to charts or patterns, some of which are extremely complicated" (Daniélou 1950: 1). Brahmans are also consciously taught how to render the Vedas into sound and are given specific instructions regarding the pitching of the text. The body of knowledge regarding the sound of their prayer has, therefore been formalised.

> In the psalmodized texts, the musical indications are given by the usual accents for Vedic texts. The 'raised' notes (udātta) have no accent. The 'un-raised' notes (anudātta) or low notes, pronounced at speech level, are indicated by a horizontal line placed below the syllable. In the Sāma Veda the notes indicated by numbers, start from below. The letter R indicates that a note is held for double duration. (Daniélou 1950: 1).

This is a crucial difference between the Zoroastrian and Hindu tradition. Brahmans know they are making a particular sound and are aware in a goal-oriented manner of the means of its production. This awareness is made even more evident when comparing recordings of pairs or groups of priests from different traditions. The following group recordings serve to further demonstrate the differences between Zoroastrian prayer performance and other traditions within its cultural orbit.

Track 67 on the CD features the *Hymn to Agni* (opening Hymn of Ṛgveda, recorded Mysore 1966[134]). Track 68 is *the Ceremony In Praise of The Goddess Paldenlhamo*. The sutra being chanted by the Buddhist Monks of the Namgyal Monastery, Dharamsala, India is known as *Kangso* (recorded Dharamsala 1989)[135]. Track 69 is a group of Iranian Mobeds performing the initiation ceremony for a new Mobed (recorded Tehran 1992). Track 70 is the Zoroastrian *Ashirwad Ceremony* (Nuptial Blessings) by Mobed Peshotan Peer & Mobed Peshotan Kavas Anklesaria. (recorded Bombay, 1959). All these samples are excerpts only.

When priests perform together, the organisational logic of their performance is revealed more than when they perform alone. A single priest will be able to establish his own rhythm and pitch sequences and thus his sound will appear to be following a certain logic. However, priests performing together reveal whether or not their collective performance practice has a cohesive logic that binds them all equally. This is, of course only applicable to those traditions in

[134] Recorded by R. Levy. Taken from LP ASCH Mankind Series AHM 4126, "The Four Vedas".
[135] Taken from CD Tibet Buddhist Chant (I), JVC World Sounds.

which people pray together. Solo and group performances are both common in Zoroastrianism.

These sound samples effectively illustrate the degree of cohesion between Zoroastrian priests as compared to priests of other traditions. In brief, the other priests are much more cohesive. The pair of Brahmans on track 67 are more unified than the pair of Zoroastrians on track 70. The group of Buddhist monks on track 68 are much more cohesive than the group of Zoroastrians on track 69 . Furthermore the Buddhists are intentionally producing a particular sound. The sonic construction of this ceremony is based on a flow of continuous low ones produced by the male voices, and the unexpected slashing and upheaval of this flow by sibilance and (later in the ceremony) instruments that crash in upon the sound (Thompson 1989: 15). It is a clearly motivated performance and one that is achieved through training and practice. By contrast, the group of Zoroastrian Mobeds (track 69) have no direction or co-ordination whatsoever. The pair of Zoroastrians on track 70 sometimes achieve cohesion at times but it is, in part, a matter of following the text and possibly, coincidence. Some Zoroastrian priests who pair off and perform together for years can pray, as Rustam Bhedwar has commented "in one voice". However, as the recording demonstrates, this unity comes and goes and, like the sound of all Zoroastrian prayers, it is not formally institutionalised.

It does not seem, therefore, that the surrounding chant traditions have seeped to any great degree into the Zoroastrian fold. However, this may simply reflect two things. First it could be a consequence of the protective attitude of Zoroastrians that was discussed earlier. Second it could be that the sounds of these other traditions are not sounds with which Zoroastrian priests would come into contact. They don't frequent the Temples of other religions and so these sounds may not transfer into their own prayers. They would, however come into contact with publicly heard sounds such as the Moslem call to prayer as well the devotional, secular and popular music of their country. These

elements would stand a greater chance of informing a priest's ear than perhaps the chant of another religion. However, this does not seem to have happened for those priests who do not contemplate the sound of their prayers. The reasons for this could lie in the way they think about music and the sound of their prayers.

George List (1963: 3) notes that:

> Certain cultures make a distinction between what is referred to as speech or talking and what is referred to as song or singing. Other cultures do not necessarily make this distinction. Other cultures distinguish forms other than speech or song which to us may seem to be intermediate forms. The nomenclature applied to these intermediate forms will vary considerably from culture to culture as will the social function of the form.

This line of thought is applicable to a degree to Zoroastrian priests. In a sense, Zoroastrian prayer performance is thought of as an "intermediate form" between speech and song. As the interviews demonstrated, when priests are questioned about the sound of Zoroastrian prayer they are more able to define what it is not, rather than what it is. For instance they know what music is and their definitions of music were easily compatible with generic western concepts. With minor exceptions, the priests of Iran and India knew what singing and music were and did not think that their prayers fit into these categories. Music was what happened in the culture around them while Zoroastrian prayer was exclusive to the community. For these men, perhaps it was this cleavage which prevented popular music from contributing to their sound. If they don't think of their prayers as music they may not access that part of their creativity which stores musical information. It seems, therefore, that they are accessing something else when they perform. The common evidence found in diverse cases suggests it is the Zoroastrian model. Ultimately, for the majority of priests interviewed, even the popular sounds of their surrounding cultures may not penetrate and shape the body of music knowledge they receive in training and manifest in performance.

However, there are at least two individuals who have consciously discarded this insular attitude towards prayer performance. They reached out to the sounds around them and these are consequently heard, quite specifically and clearly, throughout their prayers. In comparison with them, the similarities between other Zoroastrian priests and the chant traditions of other religions are broad, generic and diffuse. Mobeds Gonda (India) and Cyroos (Iran) provide a clear demonstration of the kinds of external musical influences that can be imported into the prayers by those who are receptive to them, or indeed, seek them out.

As noted in the transcription commentary, Mobed Cyroos of Tehran said that although he had always wanted to sing the prayers it was not until some time around 1984 that he sought out the help of three classically trained (Moslem) musicians—Mr Hedoyati, Mr Akbar and Mr Hosseimi. He presented them with some prayer texts and asked that they be treated like "the poems of Hāfīz"[136]. He then claimed that using the dastgāhs[137] of shūr and bayāt-é-tork, they told him to "do it this way". Also as noted in the transcription commentary, "doing it this way" entailed him reading a passage of prayer out to them and them playing back a musical line which he would then copy. Nothing was written down and he simply memorised as many phrases as possible. He also insisted that the men were no longer in Tehran and were unreachable. It was ultimately not possible to get even general information about the music provided by these composers. Nonetheless, some interesting features are discernible in transcription, especially when comparing Mobed Cyroos' performance to features commonly associated with the dastgāh of shūr.

As noted in the transcription chapter, whatever the musicians may have presented him with, the only consistent aural features of Mobed Cyroos' prayers are: 1) frequent and irregular pauses resulting in a lurching, stop/start

[136] Hāfīz, Shams al-Dīn Muhammad (1325-90), renowned Persian poet.

rhythm, and 2) a descent to the finalis. This descent to the finalis is reminiscent of the predominant melodic contour of the darāmad of shūr, which is also descending (Zonis 1973: 49). The darāmad is the first melodic segment of a dastgāh and embodies its most characteristic elements. Also, the idea of a descent at the end of a section of music is, by itself, a pervading feature of performing a dastgāh. The exposition of a dastgāh typically involves ascending in segments to successively higher tessituras and then descending at the end of each segment to an original home pitch; this descent being effected via a particular melodic pattern called forud.

Other passing similarities between Shūr and Mobed Cyroos' performance lie in the range and pitch sequence of the dastgāh's lower tetrachord. Vis-à-vis the range, many gusheh are confined to a four-note or five-note ambitus located in a specific part of the range and Mobed Cyroos' performance is also limited to a similar range. However, it must be remembered that this is not a specific similarity between shūr and Mobed Cyroos as all Zoroastrian priests appear to have the same narrow pitch range.

Finally, as seen below, the lower tetrachord of shūr makes an appearance in Mobed Cyroos' performance. The notes were taken from system 1 of Mobed Cyroos' Yasna 28.

Lower tetrachord of shūr	C	D𝄭[138]	E♭	F
Mobed Cyroos' Yasna 28	C	D♭	E♭	F

These similarities do not suggest that Mobed Cyroos is rendering Zoroastrian prayers exactly or even broadly like a classical Persian musician would perform the exposition of a dastgāh. Nonetheless it is apparent that to a degree, some features of this classical Persian form are reflected in his performance.

[137] A dastgāh is a classical Persian (modal) system for making music and is comprised of multiple sets of melodies called gusheh.

[138] D𝄭 is one microtone below D (Zonis 1973: 55).

Mobed Gonda also stated that he always had a desire to render the prayers in an openly musical manner and he claimed that he had developed his sound on his own over the years. Immediately upon hearing him one is struck by how generically similar his sound is to North Indian music. The precise similarity will shortly be discussed. Interviews later revealed that for years he has listened every day (for pleasure) to TV broadcasts of classical and devotional Indian music. Unfortunately, unlike Mobed Cyroos, Mobed Gonda could not point to a specific source from which aural material could be drawn. A detailed comparison as performed above to the dastgāh of shūr is therefore not possible. Nonetheless, it can be observed that the sound of Mobed Gonda's prayers is noticeably pervaded by an Indian quality in a way that does not occur with other Parsi priests. This is, of course, a very vague description but nonetheless, I submit that as with so many of the paradoxes of Zoroastrian prayer performance, a degree of generalisation is sometimes necessary.

A useful alternative to "Indian tonality" was supplied by Richard Widdess a specialist on Indian music who (when pressed) suggested that I was referring to "an undifferentiated sound specific to Indian music". Given, therefore, that Mobed Gonda listens to various genres of Indian music with an untrained but admittedly eager ear it is likely that over time he absorbed music from his local environments—the storefronts, radio, television, cinema. A phrase here, an inflection there, perhaps the odd modulation between registers, a general proclivity to slide between notes and perhaps even timbre.

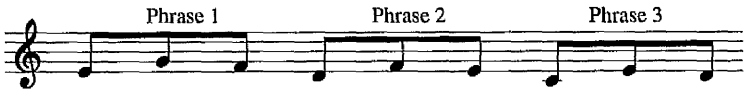
Similarly to Mobed Cyroos, he too adheres to a simple melody that repeats throughout his performance. As pointed out in the transcription commentary he seems to have a general melodic shape and also some habitual and expressive points of stress that are used in different prayers. However, unlike Mobed Cyroos, he never sought any compositions from anyone else and appears to have come up with these things on his own.

Mobed Gonda also presents somewhat contradictory testimony in that, he insists on the one hand that he does not premeditate his performance in any way, but on the other hand also insists that he has consciously tried to develop his sound. When questioned and asked to illustrate, it emerged that this did not involve anything specific, nor did it involve anything he was able to articulate or demonstrate. Nonetheless it became apparent that while Mobed Gonda did not compose a melody or set of melodies and stick to them, or design any rules for himself, he was indeed improvising. The basis for this improvisation was not only the Zoroastrian model but also the generic sound of music found in his surrounding Indian culture. Mobed Gonda has, with some intent, if not with detailed verbal knowledge, taken this sound and wrapped it around the core model. He is conscious, therefore of the wrapping which he has fabricated, but not of the core. By comparison, Mobed Cyroos seems to have gone a step further and is left with the wrapping but no core.

The most illustrative demonstration of what exactly both priests have imported from their surrounding cultures can be accomplished via some sound samples. The influence of Indian music upon Mobed Gonda is most clearly heard on track 71. While listening to him pray I was struck by the familiarity of certain melodic turns that he repeatedly used. They reminded me of a piece of music by Ravi Shankar, and closer investigation revealed that two of Mobed Gonda's performances contained parts that almost perfectly replicated one phrase from this Ravi Shankar composition[139]. The excerpts from Mobed Gonda and Ravi Shankar have been placed side by side in a sound file. They are first presented in segments. Mobed Gonda's first two lines are matched to the first two pitch sequences of the Shankar composition, and then his last line is juxtaposed to the composition's last phrase. The segments are then pieced together and presented in one continuous phrase each.

[139] Ravi Shankar composition *Reflections of Early Days* excerpted from the soundtrack to the film Gandhi (Shankar Fenton 1982).

As shown in the following notation, both the priest's performance and the composition follow the same descending pitch sequence. For this transcription the tonic is on D above middle C.



A similar occurrence can be found in the prayers of Mobed Cyroos. In his case I noticed a similarity between, some of his passages and a Persian violin piece by Habibé Budi'ie [140] (track 72). Although this is not perhaps quite as close as Mobed Gonda's comparison, the similarity is convincing indeed. In particular Mobed Cyroos' stop/start rhythm and some of his intonations sound convincingly like pared down versions of the more elaborated violin performance. It is also of note that one of the instruments that Mobed Cyroos' Moslem music teachers used was a violin. This comparison suggests that at the very least, some gestural characteristics of this instrument have been absorbed.

It is important to note that both Mobeds performed their first two phrases (together) in one prayer and their third in another prayer. They did not therefore, actually perform the three phrases exactly as shown here (and as heard in the sound files). This is also made clear by the fact that their ending phrases are obviously in a different tonality from the first two. Nonetheless the sounds of these and many similar melodic lines pervaded the prayers of both extensively. So much so that it is reasonable to extract and synthesise these samples to demonstrate how closely they replicate Indian and Persian music and also the degree to which the Zoroastrian tradition can be plugged into the traditions of the surrounding cultures of India and Iran.

[140] Excerpt taken from 1970s cassette Saīdreyesé featuring Habibé Budi'ie (violin).

In Mobed Gonda's case the features are possibly more diffuse than in other priests but they are nonetheless present. Feature 1 (Alternating Melodic Movement) is not so much a constructive as it is an organising element. In particular, the balancing motifs do not move in perfect pairs as does normally, ouvert-clos motion. Nonetheless both melodic movements set up a symmetry which, in the words of Ratner, "allows the listener to anticipate the final point of arrival"[141] (2001: 404). Features 2, 3, 4 and 6 are not as dense as in other priests but when they appear they are clearly expressed.

How is it then that both men sought to bring external music to the prayers and yet only one of them has done this while still accessing the Zoroastrian model?

I believe the answer to this lies in the defining feature of the model— unthinking habit. The performance features are, as has been reiterated, essentially habits and anything which disrupts the instinctive execution of the prayers prevents the appearance of those habits. Priests therefore, are not cognitively aware of the structures which underlie their prayers and cannot wilfully manipulate them. i.e. Priests can render the prayers either with musical expression or like expressionless speech— flat, monotone and rapid. Students and priests can demonstrate a prayer sound which is shaped by the performance features or one using nothing at all. They are only aware, therefore of the model's presence or absence. There is, of course a small grey area. Some like Dastur Kaikobad Firoz Dastur – High Priest of Udvada are broadly aware of such actions as achieving a loud volume at the start of a prayer (to signify its beginning) and to lower the same at the end (to signal its conclusion). Other priests such as Mobed Niknām of Tehran may unconsciously colour their performances with music absorbed from the culture around them, or, as in the case of Mobed Gonda they may consciously alter their sound but, and herein lies the key, they are all still performing the basics completely by habit and so

[141] Although Ratner's words are from an article describing the creation of Periods in Western music, the thought is applicable to Zoroastrian prayer performance.

the core model remains intact. However, when, like Mobed Cyroos, a priest chooses to knowingly shape the fundamental nature of his sound, he ceases to access the model (or accesses a different model).

Mobed Cyroos' case helps shed some light on various notions of authenticity of prayer performance that exist with diverse Zoroastrian communities. This topic touches on the connections between Zoroastrians and other communities as well as the sound as shaped by the performance features.

Regarding the influence of other communities, a primary broad distinction borne out in the interviews is that the prayers should not sound like the contemporary pop music of any culture, Western, Middle Eastern or Asian. This question was asked simply to delineate what was acceptable and what was not. The answer to the question itself was regarded by the priests and various community members as obvious and universally understood. Out of, if nothing else, an instinctive desire to maintain their sense of identity, most people interviewed (Mobeds Cyroos and Gonda aside) did not even want their prayers to sound like the prayers of any other community, much less like the pop songs of the world. There is, however, a qualifying condition to this—the prayers should not sound foreign during an actual ceremony, but outside of this context they are subject to a variety of treatments. In her oratorio *Ahura*, the Zoroastrian composer Meher Madon-Jansen rendered the texts of the Ashem Vohu, Fravarane and Tandarosti prayers as classical hymns for choir and arias for soprano. She has also collaborated with Dr Homi Dhalla of Bombay to set some of the Gathas to music for piano and solo voice. In Canada The Armenian Choir of Toronto has set the Ashem Vohu prayer to music for violin and choir. Although these examples are somewhat outside the confines of this thesis, I would suggest that they serve to emphasise the fact that notions of a rightly or wrongly performed prayer are only applicable within the context of ritual worship.

The area most associated with prayers set to music has been children's education. The late 20th century saw the Parsis of India gripped by concerns of diminishing population numbers and the general attrition of its youth's interest in the community and religion. Various efforts to counteract this took the form of compositions and recordings made with the intention of "getting the kids interested". The Dadar Madresa of Bombay has made recordings of prayers with little songs called meanongs (meanings + songs) intended to help children understand the meanings of prayers. All these examples have two elements in common, the basis of the music used was Western (classical and/or pop) and none of the compositions was ever intended to be used as part of a formal ritual. It is, therefore considered acceptable to render prayers within the style of any musical tradition, but not in the context of worship. This opinion is not based on any Zoroastrian theology, it is simply convention. Possibly the roots of this convention lie, as mentioned above, in the feelings of self-preservation to which a minority community is prone. Before the splitting of the community in the 10th century AD, Zoroastrians had lived under Persian Islamic rule for three hundred years, and so there is a distant possibility that this convention could also have broad connections to that line of Islamic thought which sharply separates concepts of secular music from the concept of cantillation used in worship.

There is also a final distinction to be made. All the priests interviewed were quite open to the suggestion that the prayers could be sung more openly as music in ritual provided the musical setting was not foreign to the religion. The definition of "foreign to the religion" would still, I feel, remain open to debate as at this juncture in time, both the musics of Iran and India are considered foreign to the religion. Nonetheless when the compositional possibility that could result from this research was put to priests, i.e. that knowledge of the performance features could be used as a basis to formally set the prayers to original compositions and so new Zoroastrian prayer music could be made that was informed in an artesian way, from within the religion itself, all were

approving of the concept. People were quite open to the thought that the prayers could be made to sound more musical but only if they still somehow had a reference to their original sound.

It is the notion of what this original sound may be that brings us back to the role of the model. As noted in the interviews, all priests maintained that if they tried to pre-meditate their performances in any way, the sound would not be the same. They did not exactly say that it would not be authentic. The application of such terms to the sound of their prayers was not within their normal thought processes. After all, it was demonstrated many times in interviews that they did not contemplate the correctness of one pitch sequence over another. Nonetheless, they also expressed what may be considered latent degrees of approval or disapproval regarding the sounds of prayers.

As with many things related to sound they were unable to specify what the transgressions would be but I submit that there is a strong correlation between what many priests and laity consider authentic and the manifestation of the model. When they hear something "authentic" they are referring unknowingly to prayers shaped by the model.

It was already demonstrated in the study of the training process and in interviews that priests do not regard a specific pitch sequence as right or wrong. Nonetheless, they know when they approve or don't approve of a particular sound. A flat monotone recitation is not well regarded and it would also be inappropriate to set the prayers to a pop melody in worship. By elimination this leaves the sound that is shaped by priests who pray with musical expression and this is the sound of the Zoroastrian model.

To a degree this can be simply construed as approval of that which is familiar but on balance the argument is convincing. A factor that strongly supports it is that during this research, when priests were asked to listen to recordings of

Zoroastrian prayer from all over the world, many were approving of those who sounded very different to themselves. They were able to recognise the differences that make up a great variety of individual styles and yet also indicated that they felt a certain correctness in the delivery of others.

Here again, the cases of Mobeds Cyroos and Gonda provide us with useful boundary markers. The priests discussed above consisted of those whose sound simply "came from the heart". Both Mobeds, Cyroos and Gonda, have to a large degree created their sound. They also claimed to have been performing in their chosen styles for the majority of their priestly careers and they would have over a long period reinforced the performance features of their musical choices. Given that both have drawn upon non-Zoroastrian material it would be natural for them to sound less like other Zoroastrian priests and more like Persian and Indian musicians and to a large degree this has happened. This should, in theory, lead to the disapproval of both of their styles—and yet it did not. Mobed Gonda was regarded with a mixture of interest and tolerance while Mobed Cyroos was generally regarded as highly irregular. It could be that Mobed Gonda, in performing, as has been discussed, instinctively still maintains a degree of commonality with other priests while Mobed Cyroos does not. Tracks 73 to 78 contain the first line of the short prayer Hazanghrem and serve to illustrate a variety of deliveries from different Mobeds.

Track 73 - Mobed Karanjia, India
Track 74 - Mobed Behruz, Iran
Track 75 - Mobed Khushroo, India
Track 76 - Mobed Belivani, Iran
Track 77 - Mobed Gonda, India
Track 78 - Mobed Cyroos, Iran

These samples as well as all the notated examples provided thus far in this research also succeed in drawing a broad circle around a common area of delivery (the performance features) that is centrally occupied by all the Mobeds except Cyroos and Gonda. However, while Mobed Gonda could be said to be

on the periphery of that circle, he is nonetheless included within its borders while Mobed Cyroos is well outside of it.

Analysis aside, Mobed Cyroos simply sounds unlike any other Mobed encountered during the course of research or in my experience as a Zoroastrian. Much of this has to do with his pacing, which as has been discussed, is a primary performance feature of his. The text is often rendered entirely unrecognisable. His tonality also plays a role in that he does not use ouvert-clos motion or the subtonic as leading tone and does not follow the melodic contour present in all the other priests studied. This makes his sound seem quite alien to the laity, and when combined with his textual transgressions it is responsible for his peers' perception of his impropriety.

This, however, is not a universal perception of him, as is clearly evidenced by the fact that in Tehran he performs regularly at weddings and other private functions. Nonetheless, other priests in Tehran disapproved of many aspects of him, including his sound, and he even revealed in interviews that he faced opposition from other priests for his style of praying. By contrast, Mobed Gonda has received a small amount of criticism but overwhelming approval and support from the benefactors of his temple as well as from his congregation. Because there is no authoritative body in the Zoroastrian religion, the consensus of those who have control over a particular situation constitutes approval or disapproval. Mobed Gonda receives the approval of the priesthood as well as of the laity while Mobed Cyroos only enjoys the patronage of some of the laity. Outside of Iran the reaction to recordings of his prayers has been uniform among the British and North American Zoroastrians, of both Persian and Indian extraction; they feel he is somehow irregular and "not quite right".

As with all issues dealing with the sound of prayers, no details are given as to why a priest sounds correct or not. In fact this analysis reveals that there is a

great and almost universal acceptance of the sounds of many priests. Apparently it is only the extremes which meet with disapproval i.e. no expression whatsoever, or that which is entirely foreign or any combination of these that renders the text or sound unrecognisable. There is therefore an "on or off" notion of authenticity that is tied into the presence of the performance features.

The reaction to these two men and the priesthood's somewhat bipolar notion of authenticity is traceable to the training process and to the many sociological factors surrounding the priesthood which shape a priest into a man who never contemplates the music of his prayers. His situation is analogous to that of a man who for his whole life has worn a small skullcap without ever looking at it. He can instinctively put it on and take it off. He will feel when it is present or not, but he won't be able to describe it. This is the unthinking habit that is the key element in the manifestation of the model. It is to this that priests refer. As revealed in interviews, this "unthinking habit" takes root during a boy's priestly education which is of course, when transmission occurs.

9.9 Transmission Of The Model

The process of transmission is relatively simple and yet, like the circumstance of the Zoroastrian community which is unique among the religions of the world, so too is this process not quite like any other. It contains elements of different traditions and so to capture its precise workings and nuances will require the use of various metaphors. The three areas that will be discussed are the specific mechanism of transmission, the way in which this defines the materials being transmitted and the possible origins of the materials.

The first broad issue in discussing transmission is that, regarding sound, an instructor never makes a conceptual distinction between performing the prayers

and teaching them. For Zoroastrian priests, therefore, the acts of manifesting and transmitting the performance features (to the next generation) are so closely related that they are virtually indistinguishable from each other. Manifestation becomes transmission which in time becomes manifestation and so on. The only real difference is that manifestation is what the priests do in performance and transmission occurs when the performance features are continually manifested alongside a student over the years of the training period. The first specific point of transmission that will now be addressed is that precise mechanism of transference that occurs during training.

To briefly recap the process already outlined in the chapter on training, a child will first start absorbing the sounds of prayer within his home from a very young age. Then as he undertakes his formal priestly training he absorbs the performance characteristics of his teacher's voice by praying alongside him for years. The sound of the prayers is the one facet of the priesthood that is never discussed. The only elements of performance that are discussed and corrected are pronunciation and memorisation. Later in life as the priest becomes a father and/or instructor the cycle of absorption without questioning is continued.

This cycle fits the description of what Timothy Rice describes in his Grove article on Transmission as an aural rather than oral process.

> Firstly, a distinction is made between oral and aural transmission. Oral implies transmission by mouth in the medium of words, and in literature refers to the artistic medium itself and its spoken quality. In music, oral transmission refers to instruction in words, such as 'play this passage louder' or 'breathe at the end of this phrase'. Aural transmission, on the other hand, refers to learning music by ear from the sound itself, without the aid of words, which is done in both written and oral traditions (2001: 697).

It is natural then to wonder why, given these conditions has musical material been found at all—why does a priest sing if he doesn't have to and has never been taught? The answer is that to a large degree a priest learns not only what

he is consciously taught, but also absorbs what he is unconsciously shown. He is taught pronunciation and memorisation, but he is also shown music in performance. However, although the above process is broadly identical for most priests it needs the injection of some variables to help explain why some priests pray with music and some don't. First, it is a reality of a priest's professional life that time constraints, working conditions and the size of some prayers can sometimes necessitate a swift, monotone delivery which effectively flattens any musical expression and renders the prayers into plain, rapid-fire speech. If this becomes the norm, the music will cease to manifest within a priest's performance and subsequently will not be transmitted to any student of his.

Second, if from the very beginning a boy is entirely lacking any capacity or inclination for music whatsoever, then it is unlikely that he will absorb the musical aspects of his teacher's performance. If that boy then becomes a teacher, he will have no music for his students to absorb. As was noted earlier, the student Kubcher at the Cama Athornan had simply not absorbed any of the musical material which even younger students had, even though he had experienced the same training process. Subsequent demonstrations revealed that he had a serious inability to carry a tune and a general inability for handling musical material. The result was that the performance features contained in the voices of his teacher and peers were absent from his own sound.

This reveals a vulnerability in the process of transmission. In terms of its success rate it is, as described in an earlier analogy, akin to an electric current; it is either on or off. It either gets through or it doesn't, and because the issue is never addressed in training there is no guarantee that it will. Although the precise numerical impact of this on the priesthood has not been measured in this study, it is nonetheless reasonable to deduce that over generations this must have diminished the numbers of priests whose prayers are shaped by the model.

9.10 Impact of Transmission By Osmosis Upon The Performance Features

This unquestioning process of osmotic transmission also dictates the nature of the information being passed on. As outlined in the model, the performance features constitute a body of knowledge. However, because it never enters the realm of discussion it is not cognitive, verbal knowledge. Nevertheless, even though they are not able to manipulate this knowledge at will, they can demonstrate its presence. It exists, therefore, within priests, as "music knowledge".

To approach this notion from another angle, if conventional knowledge can be said to consist of thoughts in words, then conventional knowledge of music consists of words about music. Music knowledge, however, consists not of words about sound, but rather thoughts formed by the sound itself (Seeger 1977: 30). For example, if asked to describe the melody of a popular song, a person could do so in two ways. If he possessed a musical vocabulary he would be able to name the notes of its pitch sequence, perhaps pick out a key signature and other structural features. This is an articulation of the verbal knowledge of the music. If he lacked a musical vocabulary he would probably simply whistle its main tune. This is music knowledge.

This raises a further layer of distinction between Zoroastrian priests and others. Even with the lack of a musical vocabulary, the whistler mentioned above would be completely aware of manifesting the sound and its specifics. He would know when his voice went up or down in pitch and he could teach (by demonstration) this specific melody to others. He could break a melody up into segments and teach it bit by bit while correcting the student. He would simply lack the words to describe the sound. A Zoroastrian priest is one step removed from this. He does not teach by demonstration but by imitation. i.e. he simply

performs continuously and the students imitate whatever they can. The Zoroastrian priest would not be able to impart a specific melody or parts of one to anyone and is most often unaware of the manner in which his pitches rise and fall. The whistler knows that he knows the sound but not the words. He is conscious, therefore, of the knowledge he possesses. By contrast, the Zoroastrian priest simply never broaches the subject at all. He simply performs by habit. He possesses, therefore a quite subconscious body of knowledge.

Another quality imparted by this process of transmission is that the performance features are not a palette of choices from which an improvising musician can draw. They are, rather, the core of a priest's performance. Each priest has a teacher from whom he inherited his basic sound materials yet he will also have an individual manner of praying. This individuality which is also bound with an underlying common thread has a parallel in another area of life. One could say that because the performance features are passed in such an osmotic fashion from teacher to student a genealogy of sorts is created; a family tree of Zoroastrian priests. The workings of the performance features, their manifestation and transmission, in short the way in which they shape the sound of a community's prayers is therefore analogous to the workings of genetics. I submit that the performance features thus far perceived can be termed Musical DNA. I believe the term DNA invokes a suitable metaphor because like DNA these features are passed on unconsciously, or in this case, through a process of osmosis. Also, like hereditary DNA, these features act as musical building blocks around which a performance develops. Also like DNA, they are present in the prayers of each priest but the full expression of the prayers is not limited to the building blocks only.

This is borne out by the comparisons of the various father/son recordings available for this study. In India, Royinton Peer, Khushroo Dastur and Peshotan Mirza all stated that they wanted to sound like their fathers and all three spent

considerable time praying with their fathers. Nonetheless, none of the men sounds exactly like his father.

On the whole, however, apart from the above, when we hear, for example, Royinton Peer, we do not perceive, simply on the basis of his sound that he is the son of Mobed Peshotan Peer or the student of Mobed Aibara. He manifests exactly the same performance features but he still manifests them in the same way as many other priests. Royinton Peer does not manifest the balancing motifs of his teacher Mobed Aibara, nor does he have anything that connects him particularly to his father as opposed to any other priest. This is a key point in understanding the transmission and manifestation of the performance features—the only connection between teacher and student is not that the features make a student sound specifically like his teacher but the connection is in the fact that the features are transmitted at all and that they appear in the student's performances. The presence of the performance features does not therefore mean that to the naked ear a student will sound identical to his teacher but rather, that as a priest he is inherently plugged into the collective formative experiences of the priesthood, and to the general tradition of Zoroastrian prayer performance.

The case of Hormazdiar and Peshotan Mirza is slightly distinct from the other two in that analysis revealed that there are sound elements in Peshotan Mirza's prayers (feature 1 - balancing motifs) that seem identical to those of his father. This shows therefore that in addition to being plugged in to the general sound of the Zoroastrian priesthood there are specific similarities that link the two men to each other and thus their case also establishes the degree of variety that is possible within the tradition of the priesthood. For the most part, priests do not sound specifically like one other person so much as they collectively sound like each other. This point largely underlies this whole study. However, the two Mirza men demonstrate that it is also possible in some cases for specific aural traits to have been preserved. It cannot, however be claimed that they were

preserved by being consciously copied. This last notion is important because Peshotan claims to have no specific knowledge of his own sound or that of his father. He is broadly aware of, as he puts it "a lilt", but beyond this general impression, he is unable to articulate through any means exactly what it was about his father's sound that he liked and what it was that he copied. He could not, either with words or a demonstration complete the sentence "I liked and copied _____".

It appears therefore, that even with the motivation of conscious volition, Peshotan cannot access the sound material of the prayers on a conscious level. Nonetheless, he does seem to have absorbed it subconsciously and quite probably it is from this level that it manifests. Put another way, the case of Hormazdiar and Peshotan Mirza demonstrates that as can occur with all families, some sons more than others will simply resemble their fathers more obviously.

In conclusion, although all these sons have their own aural identities which are largely a factor of the sound of their voices combined with the minor differences that set them apart, it is still, nonetheless, shown in transcriptions that they all possess the same musical building blocks i.e. the same performance features which make up the same musical DNA as their fathers. As noted already, this is because they prayed alongside their fathers for their formative years and absorbed performance features. Therefore in the same way that a son will not be an exact replica of his father although they share the same building blocks, and in the same way that a particular gene may be isolated to an insular community, so too are these performance features, this musical DNA, endemic to Zoroastrian priests.

9.11 Possible Age Of Performance Features

Thus far, six common performance features have been identified within the prayer sound of the Zoroastrian priesthood, and, having been passed from teacher to student in the manner of musical DNA, they are part of a model for prayer music. A final issue of transmission that therefore remains to be discussed is the possible origin of this DNA. Some questions that arise are: To what degree has it been passed without alteration from priest to priest? How far back into the history of the community is it traceable? What is its possible origin?

The degree of change that might occur during transmission can be measured by the fact that the same specific materials have been found in priests separated by time and space[142]. This is, *prima facie*, a good indication of a remarkably faithful degree of preservation. Furthermore, it must again be reiterated that at no point will a priest ever discuss the sound of his prayers. I would claim that because neither teacher nor tudent discuss the musical material passing between them that this material very likely remains unchanged: the instinctive habits of one person are simply impressed unchanged upon another person who in time impresses them upon someone else and on it goes. It appears then that the unquestioning atmosphere which is a liability in other respects, here acts as a safeguard to the material. The silence is in effect a sort of hermetic seal around the DNA. Put another way, a messenger who does not know he is carrying a message cannot alter it.

What is, therefore, the origin of this DNA? Recordings and transcriptions from Iran and India (Mobeds Peer, Aibara, Anklesaria and Shahzadi) which date from 1958 show that these performance features have been present in the

[142] It must be remembered that a varying degree of contact has always existed between Iranian and Indian Zoroatrians, but with regards to the training process, each community has almost exclusively trained their own priests. Of the priests in this study, only one, Mobed Shahzadi of Iran, spent some time in India, but this was after his basic training was already completed in Iran.

community for at least forty years. Furthermore, Dastur Hormazdiar was born in 1907 and the men who were recorded in 1959 were also born close to the early part of the 20th century. Research has demonstrated that these performance features remain intact throughout a priest's life, and the DNA is therefore traceable to these men's childhood when they would have learned their prayers in 1920s. It can also be reasonably assumed that these priests absorbed the structures from their own teachers who would have been born in the previous century, taking the evidence of DNA back to the 19th century.

Beyond this point, one could conjecture that the DNA has been passed on unconsciously from teachers to students and preserved in this manner for an untold period of time—centuries, possibly millennia. Furthermore, the fact that this musical material has been found to be shared between men in Iran and India whose personal histories have never crossed paths suggests that it was possibly common to both communities before Zoroastrians fled from Iran to India in the early 10th century AD. Therefore these performance features could indeed be over one thousand years old.

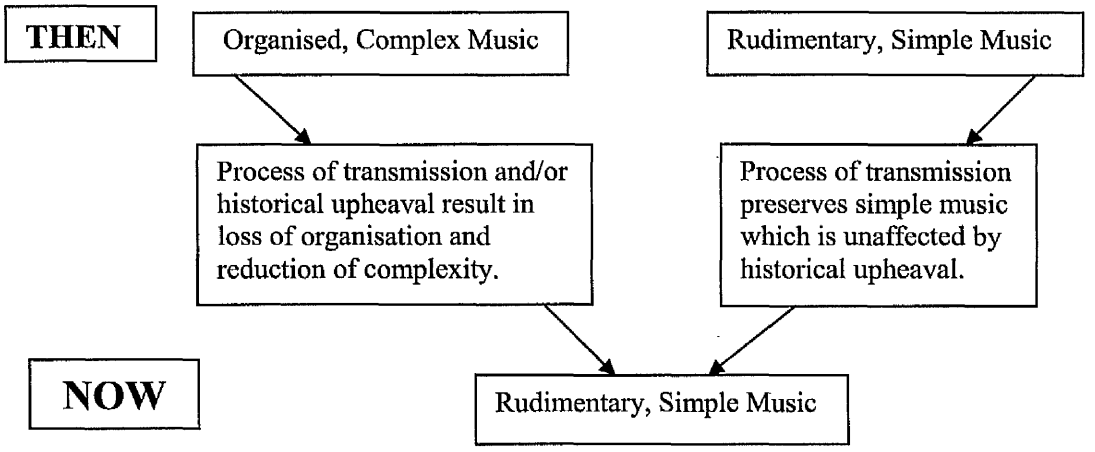
Chapter 10 Possible Origins

The performance features discussed in the previous chapter may well be over one thousand years old. If so, they lead us to ask, what was the tradition from which they have descended?

In the absence of any solid musical evidence from one or two thousand years ago, there is no real way to answer this question but it is possible to make some deductions. Care must be taken to avoid the surrounding pitfalls of ascribing to ancient history either an unsubstantiated state of grace or primitivism. The approach therefore, will be to try and make whatever extrapolated connections can be made between the present and the past to determine how known factors could have formed the existing prayer performance out of different ancient possibilities. However, before attempting to speculate on the characteristics of any ancient tradition, one fundamental question needs to be addressed: are the performance features merely microscopic remnants of what was once a more organised and complex music, or, are the performance features and their rudimentary simplicity all that has ever existed of Zoroastrian prayer sound, and have they perhaps remained relatively unchanged from their original state?

10.1 Ancient Complexity vs. Simplicity

The factors which impacted the most upon the performance features are the process of transmission and the historical events that had the greatest effect upon the Zoroastrian community. The elements at play in this problem are laid out in the diagram below. "Then" simply refers to that time which lies beyond even the furthest arguable reaches of this study, i.e. before the early 10^{th} century AD.



The conflicting trajectories laid out in the above diagram are not presentations of evidence. Rather, they are logical arguments which can be extrapolated from the few knowable facts surrounding this subject. They must, therefore be assessed as such.

First, the integrity of the process of transmission needs to be scrutinised. As revealed in the notations, the performance features are stronger in some priests than others. For instance, in the prayers of Mobed Behruz, feature 2, the tri-semitone recurs pervasively. However for Mobed Karanjia, ouvert-clos motion (feature 1) dominates his sound. This difference can, on the one hand, simply be called variety. However, if a feature is so faint that it has virtually disappeared from a priest's sound it is also reasonable to assume that he may not then pass it on to a student. This is attrition and it opens up the possibility that, perhaps over time, a feature with a weak presence could disappear entirely from the repertory.

On the whole one could ask if the aural vocabulary of the priesthood is simply comprised of a wide variety of sound configurations which more or less always remain present even if in differing strengths, or are those performances in which certain features barely appear, indicative of progressive attrition? If the latter is true then it also holds that at one point there could have been more

performance features than the six noted in this study and they have simply disappeared over time.

Approached another way, it follows that if the majority of priests contain all the six features and each feature is reasonably present in all their sounds, then all six features will be preserved. If, however, through generations, the demographic of the priesthood shifts towards those for whom a particular performance feature has a weak presence, it is possible that over time that feature will disappear.

The fact that there are no conscious aural safeguards to preserve the features as may be found in Vedic practice[143] also opens the door to the possibility of the loss of performance features. However, this door is not simply open to loss, it is open to change and it follows that gain as well as loss could very well enter through the same door. Nonetheless, one very important factor suggests that gain has not occurred and this is the fact that there are no core features that are common to Iranian priests and unknown to the Parsis and vice versa. If the process was open to gaining features, it would follow that the two communities would have core differences as well as similarities. However, as transcriptions reveal, they have core similarities and surface differences. This suggests that the transmission process has been operating in identical ways in India and Iran and while, as outlined above, it is, in theory open to loss as well as gain, there is no evidence to show that gain has occurred.

There is, however, an important counter argument that must be voiced here. While the process of transmission is vulnerable to loss in theory, such an

[143] "The Vedas are taught in a manner that creates such an automatism that the performer can never make the slightest change, neither a syllable nor an accent. These methods are called *vikṛtis* (alterations). Children are made to recite each verse in different ways: in being conscious of the meaning and without, straightforward and in reverse, and according to charts or patterns, some of which are extremely complicated. The simplest of *vikṛtis* is the krama (order) in which one pronounces the first word, then the second; one repeats the second word followed by the first; then the third word etc. As a result, only an absolute automatism of memory makes it possible to perform the Vedas." (Danielou 1950: 2).

occurrence has not been proven. The study has detected that the features are present in differing strengths in different priests but all six features are nonetheless present. There is no priest who consistently manifests, for example, only four or five of the features. When it comes to the performance features, priests seem to either have them entirely or not at all. It is, therefore possible that in addition to not having gained any features, loss has also not occurred over centuries.

Overall therefore, the evidence from this study suggests that in current practice, the process of transmission results in neither loss nor gain of performance features. Also, given the possibility of attrition as outlined above, it seems theoretically more probable that over time dating back to antiquity, the transmission process is more susceptible to loss than gain.

The second factor to be examined is the effect of political/social upheaval upon prayer performance. It could be argued that the loss of an empire, the erosion of Zoroastrian culture following the onslaught of Alexander, Islam, and the eventual diaspora which turned half of all Zoroastrians into a permanently exilic community and the other half into a persecuted minority in Iran, all combined to put certain practices out of existence. Mary Boyce broadly argues that the incursion by Islam and its resulting cultural changes which included a shift towards scribesmanship, combined with the dissipation of the Zoroastrian community was directly responsible for the disappearance of an oral tradition of Parthian minstrelsy which had been popular in the Sasanian empire (Boyce 1957: 33) If the Islamic invasion and persecution of Zoroastrian culture could erode a secular musical tradition perhaps it could have the same effect on a liturgical musical tradition.

The change from an oral to a written tradition could also have played a role vis-à-vis musical practices in general. It cannot be denied that having the prayers written down must have greatly enhanced their chances of survival. Perhaps the

pronunciations and texts of prayers (and not musical instructions) were committed to the page not because they were considered more important but merely because conventions of musical notation had not yet taken root in that part of the world. It could also have been that the Persian mindset was not one that was inclined to invent notation by which music could be preserved in writing. Musical notation was not all common in the Middle East until centuries after the fall of the Persian empire. A musical practice could therefore have been orally codified but simply not committed to writing.

Furthermore, if then a great number of Zoroastrian priests, perhaps senior priests, or a certain class of musician priests (if they ever existed) were killed by the invaders and if these priests had served as oral storehouses of musical performance practices, the musical knowledge would have died with them. Perhaps the simple act of being driven into hiding resulted in the abandonment of singing prayers out loud in any manner attracting attention. The possible loss of a class of musician priests would also have resulted in a shift away from a conscious tradition of sound production towards the present mindset in which such matters are not considered.

A final historical observation regarding loss is that, until a certain point in the past, the texts were understood and this must surely have had implications at least for segmentation in chant, if not also for pitch contour variety. Loss of understanding could have also resulted in changes to that pitch contour variety.

The main historical counter argument in support of a prior equal simplicity lies in the lack of codification of any ancient complex practice. This suggests that nothing was lost through the upheavals of history because there was nothing to lose. This argument follows the line of thought that the prayers and their pronunciations (on which so much importance is still placed) were codified in writing with an alphabet specifically invented for them during the Sasanian empire, before the invasion by Islam. If music had been as important an aspect

of prayer performance as pronunciation, it too would have been codified. The fact that this did not happen broadly suggests otherwise.

Also, concerning the effects of the Islamic invasion, it can be countered that this, by itself, may not have resulted in the loss of an entire tradition. Jewish people have been an exilic community many times in their long history, and yet both forms of their religious prayer chant, the un-notated Cantorial tradition as well as the Biblical tradition in which accents (musical phrases) are preserved in writing in the Torah, have survived and are proof of the ability to preserve music, even in exile.

Regarding the vulnerability of the oral tradition to violent invasion, it can be argued that Vedic performance has largely been preserved through an oral tradition and yet for centuries India, like Persia was also invaded and ruled by successive Islamic forces. Here, however it could also be counter argued that the Islamic forces in India were perhaps not as overwhelming as in Persia as evidenced by the simple fact that, unlike the complete occupation of Persia, Islam never conquered the entire Indian subcontinent.

It can be seen that the arguments in favour of ancient complexity or simplicity have virtually equal strengths and weaknesses and neither scores a decisive victory. However, when combined, all the factors do tip the balance in favour of a prior ancient complexity. First, and it must be said, somewhat less substantially, all the references noted in Chapter 2 (References To Music) can again be brought to bear here. It may be possible to argue that they all point to an attitude of greater musical complexity than is detectable in contemporary prayer practice. It could be that this attitude was commensurate with prayer music that was equally complex. Although none of those references has any basis in provable fact, it is possible to see them collectively as smoke remaining from a fire that has been reduced to its last embers. The performance

features could very well be those embers and "Greater Complexity" could very well have been that fire.

Second, if one accepts that change is inevitable and that the process of transmission is at least in theory, more open to loss than to gain, then whatever is present today, must logically be less than whatever was present in antiquity.

The third factor builds further on the inevitability of change. For the prayers to sound today exactly the way they may have sounded over one thousand years ago (and more), especially given the lack of any safeguards to preserve them in any particular shape, contradicts a fundamental lesson of history—things change. However, change can occur in many different ways and often the ability to trace change can reveal what was altered and what stayed the same.

Perhaps in examining possible changes, a middle ground can established between the two opposing views of similar ancient simplicity or greater complexity. If an ancient, more complex practice existed, many parts of it were lost following cataclysmic events. The process of transmission that was in place over time favoured the survival of only the simplest of elements but those that survived, were well preserved. They are the six performance features, the musical DNA that are still in existence today. In the absence of any safeguards or codification, complex things are harder to copy and are more vulnerable to attrition. Simple things are easier to copy and have better chance of survival. The six performance features could have therefore survived for no other reason than because they are simplicity itself. They are easily executed sound phenomena that occur within a narrow range of pitches and are possible to perform by even the most rudimentary vocal abilities. The critical factors of the sound they make lie in their unconscious transmission and manifestation. It is perhaps, therefore, because of their simplicity and being out of the conceptual sight of performers that this musical DNA remains, arguably, the only traceable

legacy of an ancient and more complex tradition of music in Zoroastrian worship.

10.2 Possible Performers and Form

If one accepts that it is likely that there was an ancient tradition of prayer music that was systematised and more complex than the present practice, it is reasonable to conjecture as to what might have been some of the characteristics of that tradition? Again, it must be stated that in the absence of any solid evidence, there is no way to re-construct the workings of an ancient musical practice of Zoroastrian religious music. Nonetheless, one can make note of the characteristics of other related traditions that were present in the area at the same time. It is impossible to gauge as to whether or not a concurrent Zoroastrian tradition would have (at least in part) resembled any of these other traditions, but at least in theory, the possibility exists, and the purpose of this line of enquiry is to present various relevant possibilities in the hopes of generating further research.

Gathic and Vedic cultures are genetically linked in that they both spring from the same Indo-Iranian tribe whose language was the root of Sanskrit and Avestan. The strength of this link is most clearly seen in the following extract of a line from the Avestan Yasht 10.6 (a hymn to the Iranian God Mithra) which is compared to a line from the Ṛgveda and a reconstruction of Proto-Indo-Iranian forms (Mallory & Adams (ed.)1997: 304).

Yasht 10.6

Avestan	T m amavant m yazat m
Old Indic	Tám ámavantam yajatám
Proto-Indo-Iranian	*tám ámavantam yajatám
	This powerful deity

Avestan	Sūr m dāmōhu s višt m
Old Indic	śū́ram dhā́masu śáviṣṭham
Proto-Indo-Iranian	*cūram dhā́masu ćávištham
	strong, among the living the strongest

Avestan	miθr m yazāi zaoθrābyō[144]
Old Indic	mitrám yajāi hótrābhyaḥ
Proto-Indo-Iranian	*mitrám yajāi jháutrābhyas
	Miθra, I honour with libations

There are also some surviving similarities to be seen between current Zoroastrian and Vedic practice. As noted earlier, the Gathas of Zoroastrianism are hymns. The Vedas (divided into four parts) also have a body of hymns, the Ṛgveda. The others are: sacrificial formulas (the Yajurveda); chants (the Sāmaveda) and magical formulas (the Atharvaveda) (Staal 1958: 1). Many of the Vedic hymns are addressed to deities such as Indra or Agni. Zoroastrian Yashts, too are hymns dedicated to individual deities.

To be a Zoroastrian priest is a hereditary position belonging to boys of an Osti family. The Vedic tradition is exclusively in the hands of boys born into the Brahman caste. Young Zoroastrian boys are trained to be priests in an ostensibly oral tradition for seven years roughly between the ages of seven and fourteen. Young Brahmans learn their texts by heart during several years between the ages of five and twelve[145].

Zoroastrians wear a sacred protective woven cord called a kusti. Brahmans wear a sacred thread called a kṛṣṇājinam as well as a sacred rope, the mekhalā.

Zoroastrian ritual has traditionally involved the use of juice from the *haoma* plant. The śrauta ritual in the Vedic tradition involves the juice of the *soma* plant. Soma is the Indian name for *haoma*. Vedic rituals involve altars, fire,

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[144] | = 'th'.

[145] On the transmission of the Avestan and Vedic texts, see A. Hintze, 'Zur Überlieferung der ältesten Zeugnisse indoiranisher Sprachen' in Y. Nishina (ed.), Europa et Asia Polyglotta. Sprachen und Kulturen. Festschrift für Robert Schmitt-Brandt zum 70. Geburtstag. Dettelbach: Röll, 2000, 67-85.

oblations and animal sacrifice. Most of these were also elements of ancient Zoroastrian practice.

Both religions involve a system of patronage in which the priesthood is paid by the laity to perform rituals on their behalf. There is also a connection in the way that both traditions view meaning and sound. As has been established, Zoroastrian priests do not contemplate the lexical meaning of the texts as they are performed and neither do their Vedic counterparts (Staal 1989: 372). Staal also notes a striking similarity between Indo-Iranian fire altars and those used in 20th century Vedic practice (Staal 1983: 125).

Of particular interest in the Vedic tradition is the Sāmaveda. This Veda is chanted whereas all the others are spoken. Ancient works such as the 5th century B.C. *Ṛkprātiśākhya*, a phonetic treatise, prescribe that "in the chant of the Sāmaveda a large number of musical notes are to be used" (Staal 1958: 8). The Sāmaveda is essentially the singing of the text of the Ṛgveda, however the words are often modified beyond recognition by lengthening syllables and redistributing words and syllables over prescribed breath pauses. The same verse can be chanted to different melodies. Track 67, heard earlier, is the opening hymn of the Ṛgveda. Track 79 is the opening hymn of the Sāmaveda. The greater musical complexity of the latter is immediately discernible. There are more notes being used[146]. The melodic structures are more developed and melismatic elongation pervades throughout.

One especially striking link is in the titles of priests. The Gathic and Vedic traditions shared a common word for priest, *āthravan/atharvan* (Boyce 1982: 19). In the Vedic tradition, different types of priests are vested with distinct ritual functions. It is especially of note that the Sāmaveda is specifically to be chanted by a special class of singer priest, the *Udgaṭṛ*. In the Younger Avestan

text Uzayarin gah, eight different priests with distinct ritual functions are described (see Appendix B). More specifically, the priest whose function it is to recite the text of the Ṛgveda is called the *Hotṛ*. Similarly named in Zoroastrianism, the main reciting priest is called a Zaotar in Avestan (Zōt in Pahlavi).

There are also two striking similarities between Sāmavedic practice and Zoroastrianism. First, the Sāmaveda is regarded as containing magical force. Some of the chants are viewed as dangerous if heard by the uninitiated and so these texts are obscured by a syllabication process that inserts consonants and replaces syllables until the final chant that is heard is meaningless. It is also a commonly held view by many Zoroastrians that their prayers are imbued with a force that, if not magical, is certainly considered mystical. Second, priests are trained to perform some passages of prayer in "baj", a soft, unintelligible murmuring. While there is no thought that these passages are considered dangerous, the exact reason for this practice is not known.

Given that the Vedic and Zoroastrian traditions share the same roots and still retain some striking similarities, it is possible to suggest that the two cultures evolved up to a point with similar practices, but then one culture lost a certain feature which the other culture retained and continued to preserve. That feature could be music. Vedic culture developed a systemised singing of its texts, the Sāmaveda, and perhaps originally, Zoroastrianism also had such a specifically musical arm of the religion. This similarity would not be out of character given the other commonalities that have been thus far noted. Furthemore, such a tradition might have survived had not Zoroastrianism in Persia undergone political and social upheavals which were not suffered by Vedic culture in India. It could very well be that in this musical Veda and its chanters, the

[146] There are, of course, regional styles of Sāmavedic chant, some of which reduce pitch content to almost a monotone, however one of the core principle of Sāmavedic Chant is that it incorporates many more notes than that of the Ṛgveda.

Udgatṛs, we see the modern, evolved, Vedic counterparts to what was lost in Zoroastrianism.

Furthermore, given that the Achaemenids coexisted closely with Greeks, Jews and Babylonians, one might also be able to hypothesize certain features that were common to the religious music of that era and region and that might have filtered into an ancient religious Zoroastrian musical practice.

Regarding language, both Sanskrit and ancient Greek contain pitch accents as does the Proto-Indo-Iranian language from which Sanskrit and Avestan originate. This sort of accent system is musical in nature and denotes pitch relations within a word. In the Vedic system (to which the Greek largely corresponds) the accented syllable (*udātta*) rises in tone relative to the unaccented syllable (*anudātta*) and the syllable which follows the *udātta* (the *svarita*) falls in tone (Beekes 1995: 148-150). Therefore, descended as Avestan is, from a language with pitch accents, and flanked as it is, by two concurrent languages with similar features, it is likely that Avestan itself, at one point contained pitch accents which are now lost to us. If so, these accents would have been an internal system for pitch relation when performing the text.

On the subject of performers, there could also have been a Zoroastrian equivalent to a hereditary musician class of priests like the *Udgatṛs*. The Zoroastrian priesthood is still today, a hereditary institution and indeed, the 6th and early 5th centuries B.C. the Magi are regarded more than anything, as a tribe[147], a priestly group among the Medes, much like the Levite tribe among the Hebrews (Schwartz 1985: 141, 696). The neighbouring Mesopotamians, also had specially designated classes of religious singers such as lamentation priests singers (Kilmer 2001: 484). The Jewish community had the Levites who were the hereditary choristers of the Temple. Another similarity lies in the post

[147] According to the evidence both of Herodotus (1.101) and the Bīsutūn inscription (SS11, 52 etc) (Schwartz 1985: 141).

Temple Cantorial tradition of the Synagogue. There too, as in Zoroastrianism, is a lone figure at the head of a congregation solemnising a religious text, and, as in Vedic culture, he is rendering the text in a specifically musical manner. Connecting the Medes, the Jewish Levites, and Achaemenid Zoroastrians is the 6th century B.C. Babylonian empire. Under Nebuchadnezzar II, the Medes and Babylonians made Babylon the dominant city of Mesopotamia and held Jews captive there until the city's conquest by Cyrus in 538 B.C. It was Cyrus who then allowed and aided the Jewish people to their return to their homeland to rebuild their temple.

With regard to the possible form of an ancient Zoroastrian religious music, it may have been prescribed with, for example, a system of pitch relations as exists in Vedic practice. Just as the Ṛgveda is to the Sāmaveda, so too could present Zoroastrian prayer practice be to an ancient tradition which has been lost. The Ṛgveda is recited and the Sāmaveda is sung. More specifically, today the Ṛgveda is pitched on three notes and the Sāmaveda on seven (Daniélou 1950: 1). My thesis has thus far shown that Zoroastrian prayers are, today, mostly pitched on three to four notes. Perhaps at one point they too were consciously pitched on seven or more.

Each Sāmavedic chant (*sāman*) is composed of a number of *parvans*, which are divisions or sections made up of melodic phrases that are divided by *dandas*, vertical lines which indicate when a breath is to be taken. In the Rānāyanīya school of Sāmavedic chant (Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, India with ties to South India) there are around three hundred *parvans* from which chants are assembled/'composed'. This basic compositional principle of constructing a chant through an assembly of melodic formulas is called centonization. Significantly, it is also found in ancient Hebrew chant (*ta'amin*), in Byzantine chant (*echoi*), in the Arabic system of *maqāms*.

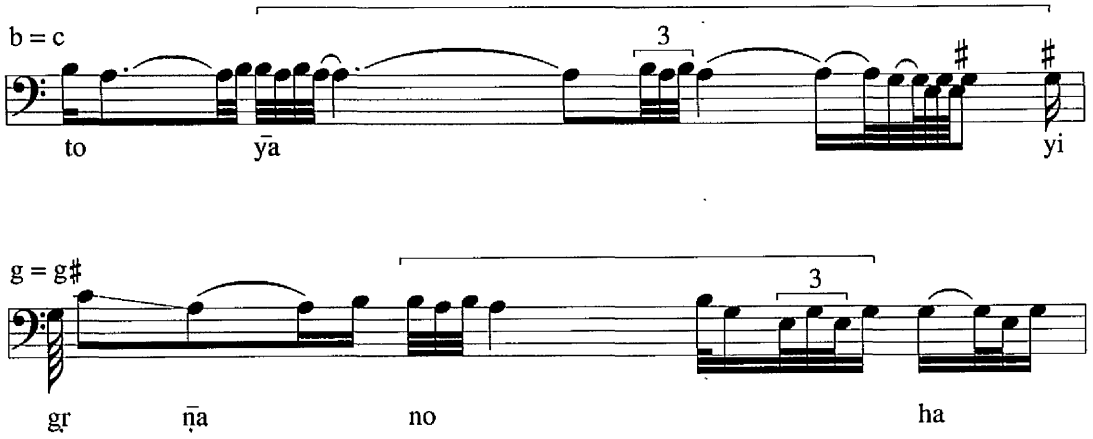
In the Indian *rāga*, the Syrian *risqolo*, as well as the oldest Gregorian chants, the Tracts (Howard 1977: 120-122, 528) and (Stolba 1994: 34). Such a pervasive compositional technique which can be found in cultures connected to, and extending over the thousand year (interrupted) lifetime of the Persian empire, may also have been found within the religious practices of the empire itself.

It may also have been, as in the Sāmaveda and Jewish Cantillation, that Zoroastrian text was treated with melisma, and/or extended ornamentation through various devices and formulae such as the prolongation and insertion of syllables.

The following notation and text of two parvans (Howard 1977: 122-123) illustrates some of the Sāmavedic melodic possibilities as well as the notational system of the *Rānāyanīya* school tradition. In this system, a combination of numbers and letters placed above and within the text denote the melodic phrase to be employed at that point.

1
/ to kā yā pre yi / = / to yā 2 yi /

o o 1 r 2r
/ gṛ kā ṇā no ha / = / gṛ ṇā no ha /



Alternatively, instead of set melodies there may have there may also have been an improvisatory dimension, or a combination of improvisation and set formulas, all within defined guidelines with such as may be found in the modal musics of the Middle East or South Asia. It has already been noted that the current model of Zoroastrian prayer performance has elements of modal music. Perhaps in ancient times there was a more developed modal system which, like the ancient Cantorial Jewish tradition, involved different kinds of prescribed melodic motifs that were only used at various points of a performance. Cohon describes these as Beginning, Intermediate, Pausal, Modulations, Pre-concluding and Concluding phrases. He describes the purpose of each mode as helping to "determine the character of the music" through "a combination of traditional phrases within a given scale". Beginning phrases introduce a sentence or paragraph, Intermediate phrases carry the main body of the selection to be chanted. Pausal phrases act as a musical comma. Modulations are linking phrases used during complicated harmonic progressions. Pre-concluding phrases heighten the need for the resolution of the traditional concluding notes which appear in the Concluding phrases (Cohon 1950: 18, 19). A degree of similarity can certainly be noted between pre-concluding phrases and the subtonic as leading tone (feature 4, see page 70). It may also have been the case that certain scalar structures, motifs and ornamentation were used for some prayers and not others. For instance, the prayers for the dead may have been differentiated from the marriage ceremony by musical as well as textual considerations.

It is also possible that theoretical knowledge (an equivalent to the *Ṛkprātiśākhya*) as well as a repertory may have been committed to writing as was the case in the Mesopotamian cultures that preceded the Zoroastrian empire by hundreds of years and was then absorbed into it. According to nearly one hundred cuneiform tablets dealing with tuning instructions (such as the "Philadelphia tablet" dating from the middle to late first millennium B.C.) the

Mesopotamians had developed a heptatonic scale and had separate names for the octave, sixths, fifths, fourths, a tritone, major and minor thirds and possibly for a single whole tone (M. Duchesne-Guillemin 1963: 3-17). Furthermore, when several octave species were projected upon this scale to form modes, they matched the Greek modes of Ptolemy's system. For example, Mesopotamian mode *Išartu* 'normal' mode matches Greek Dorian mode D E F G A B C D, Mesopotamian *Kitmu* 'closed' mode matches Greek Hypodorian mode E F♯ G A B C D etc. (Kilmer 2001: 485). Another text dating from 1800 B.C. or earlier also shows that the cycle of 5ths was known.

Mesopotamian tablets have also preserved extensive song lists for various (quite specific) occasions. Often the titles include the accompanying mode for a song (Kilmer 1971: 143).

Song of the woman in travail
Great song
Song for different voices
Great unison song
Sacred song
Boat (man's) song
Song of the kalû priests' craft
Song of the musician's craft
Incantation song
Song of heroism
Song of lordship
Song of manly valour

There are catalogues containing lists of hymns to deities and hymnodic performance instructions which include the accompanying mode for a song. The latter contain performance instructions which indicate the presence of antiphonal singing, choral and solo vocal performances with and without instrumentation (Kilmer 1971: 143). Whether such a degree of musical complexity and organisation once existed within Zoroastrianism is impossible to say, but as was stated from the outset of this chapter, it is useful to know what existed before and during the time of the Persian empire.

10.3 The Disappearance

We now arrive at the final question of this study: if there was an ancient Zoroastrian equivalent to the Sāmaveda and *Udgaṭṛs* (and/or the Levites or Mesopotamian class of musician/priests), when did it exist and how and when did it disappear?

First, to establish when this ancient musical tradition may have been present, the simplest and most probable answer is that it could have originated, or been formalised by the time of the prophet (1,500 –1000 B.C.) and would have been in practice by the time of the invasion of the Persian Empire by Alexander in the 4th century B.C.. By this later point in history, Zoroastrianism had come into contact with Judaism in Babylon as well as with the rich and musically complex cultures of Mesopotamia. The 5th century B.C. *Ṛkprātiśākhya* proves that the tradition of the Sāmaveda in India was also present by this time and, assuming a roughly similar timing in the development of Vedic and Gathic peoples, its Zoroastrian correspondent could have also been present in Iran. The fact that no singer/musician priest is named in the Sasanian era list of eight categories of priests in the Younger Avestan prayer Uzayarin Gāh (Appendix B), suggests that by the early centuries A..D., there was no such priest. This is not, of course, conclusive but the inference can certainly be made.

If the music and its performers existed before and up to the time of Alexander, it is also most likely that they perished at the hands of his forces. Furthermore, any written records of their practices would also have likely gone up in flames along with the libraries that were torched. The invasion of Persia by Alexander was notable for its slaughter of priests and destruction of buildings, perhaps libraries and other storehouses of knowledge. A Sogdian fragment records that Alexander "killed Magi", and a Pahlavi text (Arda Viraz Namag 1.9) reports that he "slew many teachers, lawyers, herbads and mobads". Another Pahlavi text attests that he "quenched many fires", referring probably to holy fires in

Zoroastrian temples. Greek accounts relate the sacking of the Fratada temple at Persepolis and of another temple at Ectabana (Boyce 1979: 78). Taken together these reports speak of a tremendous loss of priests and the information they would have carried within them as part of an oral tradition. It could be argued that it might seem unusual for only one particular part of the priesthood, such as singer priests, to have been slaughtered entirely, but it can also be countered that these priests might have, out of all the priesthood, been particularly at risk as they would have been at a temple rather than at an administrative post. Furthermore the highly specialised kills of singer priests would have been exceptionally vulnerable. That a tradition can disappear due to the demise of its practioners such as a particular class of priests is also reflected in contemporary Vedic practice. The Sāmaveda is now very rare in India, mostly due to the shrinking population of priestly families that have historically been its guardians (Howard 1977: 76).

Ultimately, all sources on the Zoroastrian tradition record a loss of the majority of the religion's writings and knowledge at the hands of Alexander. This is also evident in examining surviving material. According to the Denkard, a 9th century A.D. encyclopaedia of Zoroastrian tradition, the Avesta of the Sasanian period was originally comprised of 21 divisions (nasks). In one account in the Denkard, these 21 nasks were already written down under King Vīštāspa, the prophet's benefactor. Two copies of the Avesta were made, one of which was deposited in the King's castle and the other in the "house of archives". Following Alexander's invasion, the Avesta was destroyed or dispersed by the Greeks. Returning again to the point that it may seem odd for only musician priests to not have survived Alexander, it must be stressed that we actually have no idea how many priests were killed. Nonetheless all references indicate that a very high percentage, almost all, perished. Indeed, one account (*Abdīh ud sagīh ī Sagastān*)[148] speaks of the loss of all priests except for one child who had memorised an entire single nask through which the tradition could be

saved. It follows that if this was not a musician child, the musical tradition would not have been saved.

According to the Denkard, the Avesta began to be reassembled under one of the Parthian kings, Valāxš, (Hintze 1998: 148, cf. 157). This work was continued under Sasanian kings and was completed at the time of King Ardašīr (c.224 A..D.) under the supervision of Tansar, a high priest. Tansar himself writes in a letter[149] that Alexander destroyed the Achaemenian codex which was written on 12,000 ox-hides and kept in *Iṣṭaxr*. Of these, one third survived in oral traditions. This third, however, was comprised of legends and traditions. The law books and decrees had been lost and in time the legends and traditions also disappeared. Tansar writes, therefore, that between Alexander and Ardašīr, the Avesta had been lost completely and was entirely re-created during the reign of Ardašīr (Hintze 1998: 148,149). Today, of the original 21 nasks of the Avesta committed to writing at the time of Zoroaster, nothing remains. Of the Sasanian Avesta as compiled and written down hundreds of years later through what survived of the oral tradition, only two out of 21 nasks have been preserved completely to the present day. Three are entirely lost, and of the remaining sixteen, only parts and fragments survive (Kellens: 1989: 35). If any information about a Zoroastrian religious music had survived Alexander, it may have disappeared with those parts of the Denkard that are no longer to be found.

Even if all the priests were not killed during the Alexander's actual invasion they may have passed away during his reign and or during the following Seleucid regime (312/311 – 248/247 B.C.). It may have been that during this time the priesthood was scattered, or in hiding and simply unable to pass knowledge on to a younger generation. One hundred and seven years is long enough for an oral tradition to pass away if it is not passed on. If this was the

[148] Hintze 1998: 148 n.7 with references.
[149] See Boyce (1968: 24) regarding the dating of this letter.

case then these musical priests would have died before the Parthian and Sasanian empires could acquire and preserve their knowledge and practices in writing.

To summarise, if an ancient and more complex tradition of Zoroastrian religious music existed, it would have been active up until the invasion by Alexander and it would have passed away with his coming, as would have any written records. This tradition would likely have been practiced by a hereditary branch of musician priests. Its form could have involved various scalar structures, melodic motifs and ornamentation with specific musical matter being prescribed for individual religious texts. It may have involved compositions and/or improvisation within parameters such as in a modal system. The six performance features and the model discovered in this study of current Zoroastrian practice could be a residual remnant directly descended from this more complex ancient tradition, or, the ancient practice could be related to the present one in the way that the Sāmaveda is related to the Ṛgveda – connected by text, but fully musical.

Postscript

The goal and scope of this thesis was to introduce music in Zoroastrian prayer as a subject worthy of ethnomusicological research and to place all currently available information on the musical map. It is hoped that further research may reveal even more about the liturgical music of this ancient community whose future is not at all certain. Given the present population and the state of the priesthood, this information was gathered just in time. As we enter a new millennium I cannot help but feel that one thousand years from now there will be no Zoroastrians, much less Zoroastrian priests left to study. It is my deepest wish to be proved wrong.

Leaving aside speculations of the distant past and distant future we return to the issue at the heart of this research. Ultimately, the answer to the core question of what exactly is it that Zoroastrian priests are doing, is that whether they are reciting, chanting or singing, when they manifest the performance features, the musical DNA, they are making music. Ancient music.

Glossary[150]

Agiary	Parsi term for a Zoroastrian place of worship, a fire temple.
Ahuna Vairya, Ahunvar	The holiest Zoroastrian prayer, equivalent to the Lord's Prayer in Christianity.
Amesha Spenta	'Holy Immortal', a term for one of the divine beings of Zoroastrianism, evoked by God; often used especially of the six greatest among them.
Anjoman	'Assembly', a gathering or council of local Zoroastrians.
Ataklish, Atash	'fire'.
Ataklish i Aduran, Ataš Aduran	'fire of fires', a sacred fire of the second grade.
Atakhsh i Varahram, Atash Bahram	'Victorious Fire', a sacred fire of the highest grade.
Atash-zohr	'offering to fire'.
Avesta	The sacred books of the Zoroastrians.
Avestan	The Iranian language spoken by Zoroaster, in which the Avesta is composed.
Barashnom	Ritual ablution, part of a prolonged rite of purification.
Baresman Barsom	Bundle of twigs held by the officiating priest at acts of worship.
Behdin	'The good religion' i.e. Zoroastrianism; also 'of the good religion' i.e. a Zoroastrian.
Dadgah	A sacred fire of the third grade.
Daeva, Dev	An evil god, abjured by Zoroaster; later, a demon.
Dakhma	'Grave'; later a place of exposure for the dead, a 'tower of silence'.
Dastur	One in authority, a high priest.
Drug	'Disorder, falsehood', a principle opposed to asha.
Gahambar	One of six holy days of obligation enjoined on his community by Zoroaster.
Gathas	The hymns composed by Zoroaster.
Getig	'Physical, tangible, corporeal' (opposed to menog).

[150] Taken from Boyce 1979.

Haoma, Hom	The sacred plant crushed for its juice at the main Zoroastrian act of worship.
Herbad, Ervad	Name for a Zoroastrian priest; in modern usage one less highly qualified than a Mobed.
Kavi, Kkay	Title of Vishtaspa, Zoroaster's royal patron, and of others of his dynasty.
Kusti	'Sacred cord', worn as girdle by Zoroastrians.
Magus (plural, Magi)	Latin form of Old Persian magu, 'priest'.
Menog	'Spiritual, intangible' (opposed to getig).
Mobed	Leading priest; in modern usage one more highly qualified than a Herbad.
No Ruz	'New Day', the holiest day of the Zoroastrian devotional year, and the seventh feast of obligation.
Pahlavi	The language of the later Zoroastrian books.
Saoshyant	The coming World Saviour.
Spenta	'Holy, furthering, increasing', an adjective which characterizes the good creation.
Staota Yesnya	The central and oldest part of the yasna.
Sudre	A thin white shirt made of cotton. Considered to be a protection against extraneous evil.
Vahram fire	see Atakhsh i Varahram.
Vendidad	'Code against demons', a book of the Avesta, read during a night office.
Visperad	'(Service of) All the Masters', solemnized especially at the gahambars and No Ruz.
Yasht	A hymn to an individual divinity.
Yasna	'Act of worship', the main Zoroastrian religious service.
Yasna Haptanhaiti	'Yasna of Seven Chapters', part of the Staota Yesnya.
Yenhe hatam	A short, ancient prayer.
Zand	Translation of the Avesta, with commentary. In a vernacular.

Appendix A - Prayers Used In Notation

Ashem Vohu

Ashem Vohu Vahishtem asti Ushta asti, Ushta ahmai Hyat ashai Vahishtai ashem	Holiness is the best of all good. Well is it for it, well is it for that holiness which is perfection of holiness.

Yatha Ahu Vairyo (Ahunavar)

Yatha Ahu Vairyo, atha Ratush ashat chit hacha vangheush dazda manangho, shyaothanam angheush mazdai khshathremcha Ahurai a yim dregobyo dadat vastarem.	The will of the Lord is the law of holiness: the riches of Vohu-Mano[151] shall be given to him who works in this world for Mazda and wield according to the will of Ahura the power he gave him to relieve the poor.

Yasna 28

(Translation Almut Hintze)

Yanim Mano, Yanim Vacho, Yanim
Shyaothnem, Ashaono Zarathushtrahe.

Fra Amesha spenta
gathao geurvain,
nemo ve gathao ashaonish.

1. Ahya yasa nemangha,
ustanazasto rafedhrahya,
Manyeush Mazda pourvim,
Spentahya asha vispeng shyaothna,
Vangheush khratum manangho ya
Khshnevisha geushcha urvanem. (Repeat twice).

2. Ye vao Mazda Ahura,
Pairi-Jasai vohu manangha,
Maibyo davoi ahvao,
Astvatascha hyatcha manangho,
Ayapta ashat hacha yaish, rapanto
Daidit khathre.

---

[151] Truth.

Yasna 28 (contd)

3. Ye vao asha ufyani,
Manascha vohu apaourvim,
Mazdamcha Ahurem yaeibyo
Khshathremcha agzaonvamnem,
Varedaiti Armaitish, a moi
Rafedhrai zavengjasata.

4. Ye urvanem men gaire,
vohu dade hathra manangha,
Ashishcha shyaothananam,
Vidush Mazdao Ahurahya,
Yavat isai tavacha avat,
Khshai aeshe ashahya-

5. Asha kat thwa daresani,
Manascha vohu vaedemno,
Gatumcha Ahurai sevishtai,
Sraoshem Mazdai,
Ana mathra mazishtem vaurounaidi,
Khrafstra hizva.

Vohu gaidi manangha daidi
Asha-dao daregayu,
Ereshvaish tu ukhdhaish Mazda,
Zarathushtrai aojonghvat rafeno,
Ahmaibyacha Ahura ya daibishvato,
Dvaeshao taurvayama.

6. Daidi asha tarn ashim,
Vangheush ayapta manangho,
Daidi tu, Armaite Vishtaspai,
Ishem maibyacha,
Daostu, Mazda khshayacha ya
ve mathra srevima radao.

7. Vahishtem thwa, vahishta yem
Asha vahishta hazaoshem,
Ahurem yasa vaunush naroi
Frashaoshtrai maibyacha,
Yaeibyascha it raonghaonghoi,
Vispai yave vangheush manangho.

Yasna 28 (contd)

8. Anaish vao noit Ahura Mazda
Ashemcha yanaish zaranaema
Manascha hyat vahishtem yoi
ve yoithema daseme stutam,
Yuzem zevishtayaongho,
Isho khshathremcha savangham.

9. At yeng ashaatcha voista, vangheusha
Datheng manangho, Erethweng
Mazda Ahura aeibyo
Perena apanaish kamem,
At ve khshmaibya asuna vaeda,
Kharaithya vaintya sravao.

10. Ye aish ashem nipaonghe,
Manascha vohu yavaetaite,
Tvem Mazda Ahura fro ma
Sisha thwahmat vaochanghe,
manyeush hacha thwa ee aongha,
yaish a anghush pouruyo bavat

Ahya yasa nemangha,
ustanazasto rafedhrahya,
Manyesuh Mazda pourvin
Spentahya asha vispeng shyaothna
Vangheush kharatum manangho ya
khshnevisha geushcha urvanem.
(pray twice)

Yatha Ahu Vairyo 4, Ashem Vohu 3.
(to be recited in full)

Ahyayasam haitim yazamaide.
Yenghe hatam aat yesne paiti vangho,
Mazdao Ahuro vaetha ashat hacha,
Yaonghamcha tascha taoscha
yazamaide.

Yasna 28

1. With veneration and hands outstretched I ask all (of you) for actions of his help, O Wise One first (for the help) of the bounteous spirit, by which you may listen through truth
To the intellect of good mind and to Geush Urvan (Soul of the Cow[152]).

2. I want to walk around you, O Wise Lord, with good mind
(Entreating you) to grant me (the attainments) of both lives, of the corporeal and of the one of the spirit,
On the basis of truth (the attainments) by which one might place one's friends into well being.

3. In an unprecedented (way), I want to praise you, O truth and good mind
And the Wise Lord to (all) of whom right-mindedness increases (Strength) and unfading rule. Come to my calls for support.

4. For the song, I pay attention, with good mind, to the soul
And to the rewards for the actions, knowing of the Wise Lord.
As much as I can and am able, so long shall I look out in the quest for truth.

5. O truth, shall I see you and good mind as I am finding
For the strongest Lord, the Wise One, a walk-way and hearkening
(Which is) greatest through the following formulation: "May we ward off the noxious creatures with the tongue"?

6. Come with good mind! Grant through the truth the gift of long life
For exalted words, O Wise One, (grant) a strong support to Zarathushtra
And to us, O Lord, so that thereby we shall overcome the hostilities of the enemy!

7. Grant, O truth, this reward, the attainments of good mind!
Grant you, O Armaiti, strength to Vishtaspa and to me!
Grant you, O Wise One, and rule through this formula by which we may hear of your bounties!

8. You, the Lord, O Best one, who is in harmony with the best truth,
Do I lovingly entreat for the best for Frashaostra, the hero, and for myself
And (for those) on whom you may bestow it for a whole lifetime (of good mind).

9. May we not, by these entreaties, anger you, O Wise Lord and truth
And best mind, we who are arrayed in the offering of praises for you!

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[152] The 'soul of the cow' is regarded by various scholars as a metaphor for (a) God's flock (b) the good vision (c) the sacred poetry (d) the Bounteous Spirit. (Hintze 2001: seminar 5, page 6).

Yasna 28 (contd)

You (are) the swiftest invigorations and the rule over strengths.

10. (Those) whom you know to be just through truth and good mind
(And) worthy, O Wise Lord, to them fulfil their longing with achievements!
I know swelling, resounding, desirable praises for you.

With veneration and hands outstretched I ask all (of you) for actions of his help, O Wise One first (for the help) of the bounteous spirit, by which you may listen through truth

To the intellect of good mind and to Geush Urvan.

11. You protect truth and good mind through these for eternity.
You, O Wise Lord. Teach me with your mouth to speak
In accordance with your spirit, through which primeval life came about.

ATASH NEYAYESH[153]

Khshnaothra Ahurahe Mazdao.
Nemasete, Atarsh Mazdao
Ahurahe hudhao mazishta yazata.

Ashem Vohu.

Pa name yazdan
Ahura Mazda Khodae
awazuni gorje khoreh awazayad.

If before Atash Behram - Atash Beheram Adar fara.
If before Atash Adaran - Atash Adaran Adar fara.
If before the fire in the house - Atash dadgah Adar fara.

Az hama gunah patet pashemanum; az harvastin dushmata duzhukhta duzhvarshta, mem pa geti manid, oem goft, oem kard, oem jast, oem bun bud ested. Az an gunah manashni gavashni kunashm, tani ravani geti minoani, okhe awakhsh pasheman pa se gavashni pa patet hom.

Us -moi uzareshva Ahura
Armaiti tevishim dasva
Spenishta Mainyu Mazda,
Vanghuya zavo ada,
Asha hazo emavat vohu
Manangha feseratum.

Rafedhrai vouruchashane, doishi
Moi ya ve abifra,

ta khshathrahya Ahura ya
vangheush ashish manangho;
fro Spenta Armaite Asha
daenao fradakhshaya.

At ratam Zarathushtro tanvaschit
khvakhyao ushtanem
dadaiti, paurvatatatem mananghascha
vangheush Mazdai,
shyaothanahya ashai yacha
ukhdhakhyacha seroshem khshatremcha.

[153] Taken from Kanga 1995: 73-86.

Atash Niyayesh (contd)

Khsnaothra Ahurahe Mazda.
Nemase-te Atarsh Mazdao Ahurarhe hudhao mazishta Yazata.

Ashem Vohu 3

Fravarane mazdayasno Zarathushtrish vadaevo ahura-tkaesho (Gah according to time of day) frasastayacha.

Athro Ahurahe Mazdao puthra, tava atarsh puthra Ahurahe Mazdao. Athro Ahurahe Mazdao puthra, khvarenangho savangho mazdadhatahe airyanam khvareno mazdadhatanam kavayehecha khvarenangho mazdadhatahe, athro Ahurahe Mazdao puthra. Kavoish haosravanghahe, varoish haosra-vanghe asnavantahe garoish mazdadhatahe chaechishtahe varoish mazdadhatahe, kavayehecha khvarenangho mazdadhatahe, athro Ahurahe Mazdao puthra. Raevantahe garoish mazdadhatahe, kavayehecha khvarenangho mazdadhatahe, athro Ahurahe Mazdao puthra. Atarsh spenta rathaeshtara, yazata pouru-khvarenangha, yazata pouru-baeshaza. Athro Ahurahe Mazdao puthra, mat vispaeibyo aterebyo, khshathro-nafedhro nairyo-sanghahe yazatahe khshnaothra yasnaicha vahmaicha khshnaothraicha frasastayaecha, yatha Ahu vairyo zaota fra me mrute atharatush ashat-chit hacha fra ashava vidhvao mraotu.

(1) Yasnemcha vahmemcha huberetimcha ushta-beretimcha, vanta-beretuncha, afrinami, tava Atarsh puthra AhuraheMadao, yesnyo ahi vahmyo yesnyo buyao vahmyo nmanahu mashyakanam Ushta buyat ahmai naire, yase-thwa badha frayazaite, aesmo-zasto, baresmo-zasto, gao-zasto, havano-zasto.

(2) Daityo aesme buyao, daityo baoidhi buyao, daityo pithwi buyao, daityo upasayene buyao. Perenayush harethre buyao, dahmayush harethre buyao, atarsh puthra Ahurahe Mazdao.

(3) Saoche buye ahmya nmane, mat-saoche buye ahmya nmane, raochahi buye ahmya nmane, vakhshathe buye ahmya nmane, dareghemchit aipi zrvanem, upa suram frasho-keretim, hadha surayao vanghuyao frasho-keretoit.

(4) Dayao me Atarsh puthra Ahurahe Mazdao, asu khvathrem, asu thraitim, asu jitim, pouru khvathrem, pouru thraitim, pouru jitim, mastim, spano, khshviwrem hizvam urune ushi, khratum paschaeta masita mazaontem, apairi-athrem, nairyam paschaeta ham-varetim.

(5) Eredhvo-zangam, akhvafnyam thrishum asnamcha khshafnamcha asito-gatum, jaghaurum, tuthrusham, asnam frazaintim, karsho-razam, vyakhanam,

Atash Niyayesh (contd)

ham-raodham, hvapam. anzo-buzim hviram, ya me fradhayat nmanemcha visemcha zantumcha, dakhyumcha danghu-sastimcha.

(6) Dayao me Atarsh puthra Ahurahe Mazdao, ya me anghat afrasaonghao, nuremcha yavaechataite, vahishtem Ahum ashaonam raochanghem vispo-khvathrem zaze-buye vanghaucha mizde, vanghaucha sravahi urunaecha dareghe havanghe.

(7) Vispaeibyo sastim baraiti Atarsh Mazdao Ahurahe yaeibyo aem ham-pachaite khshafnimcha suirimcha vispaeibyo hacha izyeite huberetimcha ushta-beretimcha vanta-beretimcha, Spitama.

(8) Vispanam para-charentam Atarsh zasta , adidhaya. Chimhakha hashe baraiti fracharethvo armaeshaidhe. Atarem Spentem yazamaide, takhmem hantem rathaeshtarem.

(9) Aat yezi-she aem baraiti aesmem va ashaya beretem, baresma va ashaya frastaretem, urvaram va hadhanaepatam a-he paschaeta frinaiti Atarsh Mazdao Ahurahe, khshnuto atbishto haghdhanghum.

(10) Upa-thwa hakhshoit geush vanthwa, upa viranam pourutas. Upa-thwa verezvatcha mano, verezvaticha hakhshoit anguha. Urvakhsh anguha gaya jighaesha, tao khshapano yao jvahi, Imat, athro afrivanem, y ahmai aesmem baraiti hikush, raochas parishtan ashahe bereja yaozdatan.

(To recite in Baz) Ahura Mazda Khodae, awazunie mardum, mardum sardagan hama sardagan, hambayaste vehan, oem behedin mazdayasnan agahi astavani neki ra-sanad; aedun bad. (To recite loudly) Yatha Ahu Vairyo 2.

Yasnemcha vahmemcha aojascha zavarecha afri-nami athro Ahurahe mazdao puthra, tava atarsh puthra Ahurahe Mazdao, athro Ahurahe Mazdao puthra. Khvarenangho savangho mazdadhatahe, airyanam khvareno mazdadhatanam, kavayehecha khavarenangho mazdadhatahe, athro Ahurahe Mazdao puthra. Kavoish Haosravanghahe, varoish Haosravanghahe, Asnavantahe garoish mazdadhatahe, Chaechistahe varoish mazdadhatahe, kavayehecha khvarenangho mazdadhatahe, athro Ahurahe Mazdao puthra. Raevantahe garoish mazdadhatahe, kavayehecha khvarenangho mazdadhatahe, athro Ahurahe Mazdao puthra.

Atash Niyayesh (contd)

Atarsh Spentarathaeshtara, yazata pouru-khvarenangha, yazata pouru-baeshaza, athro Ahurahe Mazdao puthra mat vispaeibyo aterebyo khshathro-nafedhro nairyo-sanghahe yazatahe.
Ashem Vohu 3.

At toi atarem Ahura
aojonghvantesn Asha usemahi
asishtem, emavantem, stoi-
rapentem, chithra-avanghem
At mazda daibishyante zastaishtaish
dereshta aenanghem.

Ashem Vohu, Ahmai raeshacha, Hazanghrem, Jasa me Avanghe Mazda
Kerfeh Mozd.

Roz nek nam, roz pak nam, roz mubarak (falan), mahe mubarak (falan), gahe (falan), namaz dadare gehan daman. Khashnaothra Ahurahe Mazdao, nemase-te atarsh Mazdao Ahurahe hudhao mazishta yazata.

Ashem, Vohu .
Gorje Khoreh awazayad

If before Atash Behram - Atash Beheram Adar fara.
If before Atash Adaran - Atash Adaran Adar fara.
If before the fire in the house - Atash dadgah Adar fara.

Adaran Shah pirozgar, Adar Gushasp Adar Khordad, Adar Burzin Meher avare adaran o atashan, ke pa dadgah neshast ested gorje khoreh awazayad minokarko amavand pirozgar amavandih pirozgarih. Dad Din beh Mazdayasnan, agahi ravai goafarangani bad hafte keshvar zamin; aedun bad, man ano awayad shudan, man ano awayad shudan, man ano awayad shudan. Ashaone Ashem Vohu .

Dadare gehan dine mazdayasni dade Zarthushti. Nemase-te ashaum seyishte Aredvi Sura Anahite. Ashaone Ashem Vohu.

Nemo urvaire vanguhi mazdadhate ashaone Ashem 'Vohu 1.
Khshnaothra Ahurahe Mazdao nemase-te Atarsh Mazdao Ahurah hudhao mazishta yazata. Ashem Vohu 1

Appendix B – List of Priests in Uzayarin Gah[154]

1 *Zaotar-* is the chief officiating priest who does most of The recitation and rituals. *Zōtī*
among Parsi priests.

2 *Hāuuanan-* denotes the performer of rituals concerned with the *hacma-* twigs.

2 *Ātrauuaxša* - the priest who tends the fire. Parsi priests use the Gujarati term atrōkhī for acting as an assistant priest who looks after the fire, especially in an outer ceremony.

4 Frabðrðtar - denotes the priest who brings ritual objects like the *barðsman* twigs and firewood for the ceremony.

5 *Ābarāt* - denotes the priest who brings the water in a ceremonial way from for ritual work or for administering the *barðšnum.*

6 Āsnatar - The name of the priest who purifies ritual implements for the ceremony and administers *barðšnom* to purify an unclean person.

7 Raēiβiškara - priest who ceremonially arranges ritual apparatus on the stone table after preparing the mixture of hōm juice in the prefatory ceremony *(paragnā)* and apportions the milk *(jīwān)* where it is required.

8 *Sraošāuuarðz* - denotes the priest who commands obedience and supervises functions of all other priests.

[154] Hintze/Kotwal forthcoming 2003.

Appendix C - List of Priests Interviewed

Priest, Location, Year of Interview	Language of Interview
Dastur Hormazdiar Mirza, Bombay, India 2000	English
Dastur Kaikobad, Udvada, India 2000	English
Dastur Noshirwan M. Dastur, Surat, India 2000	Gujarati[155]
Mobed Noshir B. Andhyarujina, Bombay, India 2000	Gujarati
Mobed Behruz, Yazd, Iran 1999	English and Gujarati
Mobed Cyroos, Tehran, Iran, 1999	
Mobed Cyrus Panthaky, Navsari, India 2000	English and Gujarati
Mobed Edul Iraji Kanga, Navsari, India 2000	Gujarati
Mobed Goshtasp Belivani, Sharifabad, Yazd, Iran 1999	Persian
Mobed Keki Panthaki, Bombay, India 2000	English
Mobed Khodabash, Yazd, Iran 1999	Persian
Mobed Khushroo K. Mirza, Bombay, 1999	English
Mobed M. Gonda, Lonavala, India 2000	English
Mobed Mali, Yazd, Iran 1999	Persian
Mobed Mehraban, Yazd, Iran 1999	Persian
Mobed Niknām, Tehran, Iran 1999	Persian
Mobed Peshotan Mirza, Bombay, India 2000	English
Mobed R. Karanjia, Bombay, India 2000	English
Mobed R. Karanjia, Bombay, India 2000	English
Mobed Rostam Shahzadi, Tehran, Iran, 1999	Persian and English
Mobed Royinton Peer, Bombay, India 2000	English
Mobed Rustam Bhedwar, London, UK, 1998	English
Mobed Shiavax Sidwa, Bombay, India 2000	English and Gujarati
Mobed Turel, Surat, India 2000	Gujarati
Dr H.V.S. Shastry, London, UK, 1998	English
Sheikh Atiyya Elēganyeney, London, UK 1998	English

List of Students Interviewed

Eric Dastur, Bombay, India 2000	All student
Jehan Charna, Bombay, India 2000	interviews
Kubcher Dadajan, Bombay India 2000	conducted

[155] All interviews in Gujarati translated by Nina Wadia. All interviews in Persian translated by Kamrān and Kaivān Daryush-Nejad.

Nikshad Fatakia, Bombay, India 2000
Sarosh Sidwa, Bombay, India 2000

in English
and Gujarati.

Appendix D Language and Dates of Liturgy

Liturgical Work	Language(s)	Date
Yasna – 72 chapters from different ages	Older Avestan Younger Avestan	1,500 -1000 BC 600 - 400 BC
Visperad – 24 texts of praise.	Younger Avestan	400 - 330 BC
Vendidad – Book of Laws	Younger Avestan	250 BC – 224 AD
Yashts – hymns to deities.	Younger Avestan	Earlier passages, 600 BC Later passages, 400 – 300 BC
Khordeh Avesta – includes individual daily prayers.	Younger Avestan Some Older Avestan Some Pazand (Middle Persian)	600- 400 BC 1,500 – 1000 BC ca 480 BC – 380 BC[156]

[156] Please note that this is approximately when old Persian developed into Middle Persian.

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Sound Recordings

The sacred Koran : Islamic chants of the Ottoman Empire (CD)	(1985) JVC world sounds *Subject ISBN/ISSN* VICG5006
The Four Vedas (LP)	(1957 – 1966) Recordings by J Levy and J.F. Staal. ASCH Mankind Series AHM 4126
Tibet Buddhist Chant (I) Notes by Tsutomu Oohashi & Robin Thompson (CD)	(1989 June 17), JVC World Sounds, Buddhist Monks of the Namgyal Monastery, Dharamsala, India.
In The Footsteps of Alexander (VHS)	BBC TV documentary. Narrated by Michael Wood. 1997
Ravi Shankar and George Fenton (LP)	(1982) *Gandhi* Soundtrack. Columbia Pictures Industries Inc. RCA stereo ABLI-4557
Habibé Budi'ie (violin) (Cassette)	(1970s) Saīdreyesé Also featuring Jahangir é Malaké (tombek), and Javader Muarrefi (piano). The exact date of this recording was not provided on the cassette which was purchased in Tehran in 1999. However Dr Nargis Farzad of the Department of Near Middle Eastern Studies, Languages and Cultures, SOAS, was able to suggest that the recording very possibly came from the 1970s when these three musicians were known to have worked togather.

Dr Mary Boyce (Reel to Reel ¼ inch tape)	Field Recordings of Zoroastrian priests made in Iran 1963/64. Private Collection.
Dr Hanns-Peter Schmidt (Reel to Reel ¼ inch tape)	Field Recordings of Mobed P. Peer, Mobed Aibara, Mobed Anklesaria and others made in Bombay, India 1958. Private Collection.

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