Matteo Compareti - Simone Cristoforetti

New Elements on the Chinese Scene in the “Hall of the Ambassadors” at Afrāsyāb along with a reconsideration of “Zoroastrian” Calendar
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Undoubtedly, the hypothesis advanced some time ago by Ch. Silvi Antonini and B. I. Marshak, who recognize in the painting on the Western Wall the depiction of a royal Nawrūz, had a strong impact on our reading of the Northern Wall of the “Hall of the Ambassadors” at Afrāsyāb recently presented in St. Petersburg; a not too incautious reading since in both cases Summer solstice festivities have been identified. Moreover, our reading clearly reinforces Silvi Antonini and Marshak’s opinion; but it is worth noting too that our identification in the light of the Dragon Boats Festival (or Duanwu jie) was quite plausible even on the mere basis of a careful consideration of the very features and formal elements of the scene in question.

It is beyond the aim of the present paper to discuss this festival once more, particularly due to the conference dedicated to Afrāsyāb held in Venice where M. Compareti discussed additional elements pointing out a mixture of different Chinese festivities superimposed by the Sogdian artist, all having characteristics originating in New Year’s celebrations.

Here the writers intend

1) to cover some of the notable points dealing with the pictures in question at the iconographic level (Part I by Matteo Compareti);

2) to supply additional elements which support the thesis proposed in St. Petersburg based on a connection of the pictures in question with Nawrūz and the Summer solstice. In order to do so, it is helpful to attempt to shed more light on the complexities of the Iranian calendrical systems (Part II by Simone Cristoforetti).

1 Silvi Antonini, 1989; Marshak, 1994.
2 Compareti, Cristoforetti, 2005.
3 Compareti, 2006.a.
The paintings concerning Chinese themes at Afrāşyāb

by Matteo Compareti
Sino-Sogdian relationships are an historical fact attested to in Chinese chronicles and, less explicitly, in Sogdian sources as well. Important documents such as the so-called Sogdian Ancient Letters prove that, already in the beginning of 4th century CE, this Eastern Iranian people was present and had many representatives on Chinese soil, mainly for reasons connected with trade.

In the 6th century, during a period of territorial disunity in the Heavenly Kingdom, Sogdians worked in service of the Chinese “national” and “barbaric” dynasties and in many cases had important roles at court as ministers and translators. The discovery of several graves belonging to Sogdian dignitaries recently excavated in the area around Xi’an clearly supports such a view. The territorial unification achieved by the Sui and the Tang dynasties favoured the foreigner communities living within the boundaries of the Chinese empire and the Sogdians especially were able to maintain their positions at court. Famous artists of Sogdian origins are often mentioned in Chinese sources of this period but they recur also as traders, translators and soldiers. The exoticisms imported in China in all probability by the Sogdians were highly appreciated at court: in 605 the Sui Emperor Yangdi (604-618) even ordered He Chou, a man native of Kuşanya (a region between Samarkand and Bukhara), as head of an imperial manufacture where precious brocades and architectural decoration were produced according to Iranian taste4. During the Tang period, until slightly after the middle of the 8th century, the power of the Sogdians living in China reached

4 It is not clear whether He Chou was actually born in Kuşanya or simply his family hailed from that region of Sogdiana: de la Vaissière, Trombert, 2004: 941-942.
its apex: the most representative evidence is the rebellion of the Turco-Sogdian general An Lushan, which nearly caused the demise of the Tang Dynasty.

On the other hand, the knowledge that the Sogdians had about the Chinese can be traced in local arts (particularly paintings) and numismatic pieces and (less evident) also in literary sources and religious habits (mostly referred to Buddhism). As E. Kageyama has argued in an interesting study, the Sogdians also had knowledge of Chinese art which was adopted at Afrasyab as well and more could be said on this point.

The analysis of the Sogdian paintings at Afrasyab had revealed since the beginning of the nineties of the last century the presence of several figures identifiable as members of the Chinese aristocracy among whom the Tang Emperor himself in one part of the Northern Wall and the Empress in the other. The mural paintings at Afrasyab were discovered by chance in 1965 but the first study of the scene depicted therein was published by L. Al’baum ten years later. The Russian scholar was also the first to call the room where the main scenes were recovered, the “Hall of the Ambassadors”. Such a name was chosen because in the Western Wall several representatives of Asiatic countries in contact with Sogdiana are reproduced in procession and directed towards a main figure which was not preserved (most likely a sovereign or a divinity or, as argued by Markus Mode, two sovereigns).

Some fragmentary inscriptions on the same Western Wall report the episode of a delegation from Čaghanyān (a part of Bactria-Tokharistan) and Čāč to Samarkand in order to pay homage to the local king Varkhuman. It is not possible to establish exactly when the Sogdian inscriptions at Afrasyab were written and, consequently, if they are contemporary or subsequent to the paintings. In any case, the name of the king of Samarkand has fortunately been preserved in more than one inscription on the Western Wall. The name of this king was preserved also in Chinese sources referring to the early Tang period. According to the Jiu Tangshu (composed in 945) and to the Tangshu (or Xin Tangshu, composed in 1061), the Chinese emperor Gao zong (649-683)

“fit de ce territoire le Gouvernement de K’ang-kiu (Kangju) et donna le titre de gouverneur au roi de ce pays, Fou-hou-man” (Fuhuman, a Chinese transcription for Varkhuman).

5 Kageyama, 2002.
6 For new recent information see Livshits, 2006.
7 Chavannes, 1903: 135.
This episode occurred in the period corresponding to 650-655, that is to say, when the Western Turkish Qaghanate—including Central Asia and Transoxiana as well—was still in existence. The Chinese chronicles do not specify when Fuhuman died, however Naršaḥī wrote that when Saʾīd ibn ʿUṭmān ibn ʿAffān conquered Samarkand in 676, he did not find any king there. So it is possible to suppose that Varkhuman was already dead or had been deposed before 676 (or in that very year)⁸.

At the time of the Arab conquest, Samarkand and the rest of Sogdiana were supposed to have been under Tang jurisdiction and for this reason there are paintings at Afrasyāb which can be identified as scenes of the Chinese court. According to an interpretation accepted by nearly every scholar of Sogdian art, on the Western Wall there is a depiction of the Iranian New Year’s Festival (Nawrūz). Some other aspects of this festival are depicted on the Southern Wall, and an important personality (most likely the same sovereign) is represented larger in size paying homage to the temple of his ancestors, a practice possibly traceable to an Iranian custom performed on the occasion of Nawrūz. Finally, on the Eastern Wall we find a problematic scene probably connected with India which was preserved in a very fragmentary state. According to very recent hypotheses, also on the Eastern Wall there is evidence of the interest that the Sogdians had for astrological-astronomical matters⁹.

In the last few years, several papers have been published on this subject and the study of the whole composition of the Hall of the Ambassadors would merit a work devoted to this;¹⁰ the first part of the present study will focus only on some features of the “Chinese scenes” on the Northern Wall.

The Two Scenes on the Northern Wall

As already observed above, the scene represented on the Northern Wall can be divided in two parts: the one on the right is dominated by the massive figure of the Chinese Emperor hunting on horse (fig. 1), while the one on the left has its focus in the person of the Empress represented in a boat (fig. 2). The painting has commonly been referred to as a generic reproduction of the activities performed at the Tang court. The hunt was an activity in keeping

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with the Chinese Emperor who in some ways, could have been considered an
Iranian sovereign as well since he was officially the regent of Sogdiana. On
the other hand the section on the left was considered to be a scene
representing the pleasant activities of Tang ladies depicting racing in the
rivers or lakes while listening to musicians.

This identification is correct but the analysis of some Chinese sources
could give rise to a more precise one. Unfortunately, in the arts of the Tang
period there are no depictions which could constitute an exact parallel to the
paintings of the Northern Wall at Afrāṣyāb and the only other sources
(already considered by the present writer in a recent study\textsuperscript{11}) are all dated to
the Han period (207 BCE- 220 CE).

The Hunting Scene

In Tang funerary paintings there are also depictions of hunts which could
have had an Iranian source of inspiration (probably an imported metalwork
or a textile) or they could have been executed by one of the celebrated
Central Asian artists active at the Tang court\textsuperscript{12}. As is well-known, the
Chinese imported many luxury goods from Persia and Central Asia. Subjects
such as a hunter riding a horse and shooting an animal (a wild boar, deer or
lion in particular) in the position commonly known as the “Parthian shot at
flying gallop” were among the favored ones by the Sasanians and the
Sogdians definitely appreciated hunting scenes.

An interesting reconsideration of the origin of the “Parthian shot at flying
gallop” posture has been recently advanced by C. Lo Muzio, who observed
that the motif was probably borrowed in Sasanian art from Central Asia (and
not \textit{vice versa}) and it has been rooted in far eastern art since very ancient
times\textsuperscript{13}. Moreover, the position of the “Parthian shot” in Chinese art seems to
mirror local formulae not necessarily borrowed from Iranian culture\textsuperscript{14}. However, such an observation does not exclude the possibility that the

\textsuperscript{11} Compareti, 2006:a: 173-180. According to the sources, the hunting performed by the
\textsuperscript{12} Sirén, 1956: 68-77.
\textsuperscript{13} Lo Muzio, 2003: 529-533. In this sense it is interesting to consider the hunting scenes at
Ṭāq-i Bustān which represent an unicum in (late) Sasanian art and where several Central
Asian elements appear. In a recent article it was proposed that the hunts represented at Ṭāq-i
Bustān were intended to be officed for Cosroe’s \textit{fravasī}: Heidari, 2002. A few hundred meters
from the same site it is possible to observe the remains of a real enclosure dated to the late
Sasanian period. I wish to thank Dr. Siyāmak Khavidi of the Mīrāt-i Farhangī at Ṭāq-i Bustān
for providing me with a good map of such remains.
\textsuperscript{14} Takeuchi, 2004: 38.
Chinese considered the “Parthian shot” more appropriate for “barbarians” (hu), as it is quite clearly expressed in an inscription from the 2nd century Han tomb of Cangshan, in Shandong Province. The inscription describes, in a poetical manner, the presence of a “barbarian drawing his cross-bow” in the top left corner of a mural relief representing a procession of nobles crossing a bridge on horses and chariots. It is significant that the barbarian in question has a beard, a pointed cap, and is represented in the position of the “Parthian shot at flying gallop” while all the other horses are depicted in a more naturalistic posture. Between the Han and the Tang dynasties, Chinese tombs were mainly embellished with themes proper of Confucian thought. As J. Lerner observed, hunting scenes continued to be among the preferred representations on the coffins and funerary beds of the foreigners living in China. The same search for exoticism in Han art can be noted in a Tang funerary painting from the tomb of Li Shou (577-630), in Shaanxi Province, where, however, the hunter represented in the “Parthian shot at flying gallop” is now Chinese exactly as in the paintings of the Northern Wall at Afrasyab. 

Not many other specimens of Tang painting constitute a parallel for the Chinese themes at Afrasyab. Some Tang graves have a pictorial decoration clearly alluding to hunts with depictions of attendants with falcons, hounds and cheetahs, but the hunt itself is not reproduced. An interesting painted hunting scene represented in a very elementary manner has been recently found at Astana grave 04TAM408, which can be dated to the early Tang period. The only hunter in this painting is reproduced in the top left corner of the scene wearing a pointed cap and with a long spear in his hands. He could be identified as a warrior was it not for the dog and a horned animal beneath the horse; the camel and the man lifting the water from a well are

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16 Lerner, 2005: 15-16.
17 Interestingly enough, hunting scenes appear only in Tang tombs belonging to male members of upper classes: Zhang, 1995: figs. 1, 105-113. The common scenes observed in funerary paintings belonging to female people comprise processions of attendants and, in some case, soldiers but in none is there a depiction of a hunt: Zhang, 1995; Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology, 1997; Zhou, 2002. Some Chinese funerary statuettes (mingqi) of the Tang period represent also figures who can be recognized as particular female hunters with an animal on the back of the horse, most likely a cheetah: Department for the History of China’s Ancient Societies, 1998: col. pl. between pp. 188-89.
19 Administration of Cultural Heritage of Turfan Prefecture, 2004: fig. 1. The present author had the occasion to personally visit the grave during the Second Conference on Turfan Studies held in Turfan between August 25th-30th 2005. The chronology has been established by the excavators on the basis of the recovery of Tang coins.
clearly part of another scene represented in front of him (fig. 5). The composition does not seem to owe much to Iranian hunting scenes, however it could hardly be considered a specimen of Chinese art. Astana is in fact situated in a territory corresponding to modern Xinjiang Province which, even if under direct Tang control since 640, was inhabited by non-Han peoples like Tokharians, Iranians (mostly Sogdians) and Turks. The Chinese living there were considered to be influenced by “barbarian” habits.

At this point of our research, it is extremely difficult to say if the painting at Afrāsyāb is a faithful depiction of a Chinese hunt of the Tang period or if it is merely a Chinese hunt represented according to Iranian taste. In the event of a copy from a Chinese painting, there is the possibility that the Sogdian artists copied a scroll representing the Emperor Taizong (630-649) hunting according to the “barbaric style”. The ministers of Taizong, in fact, were scandalized by the “barbaric” attitude of their Emperor too inclined to participate in frequent imperial hunts but most likely the object of the scandal was his way of riding the horse and not the hunt itself which had been performed in the Shanglin Imperial Park since the Han period. In Chinese art of the Han period, possible depictions of such hunts can be observed in some funerary reliefs where the most important figures are represented as larger in size and normally riding a chariot. A Han funerary relief with the depiction of a group of hunters on horseback in the act of killing animals has been recovered at Mizhi (Shaanxi Province). The scene reveals a curious resemblance with the paintings of the Northern Wall at Afrāsyāb, especially due to the presence of the central figure of a hunter represented in the act of piercing a large feline with a spear (fig. 6). Unfortunately, in Tang art nothing similar exists and the chronology of the Mizhi grave (early 2nd century) does not allow us to establish any direct parallel with the Afrāsyāb paintings.

In none of these mentioned cases was the occupant of the grave a Han Emperor and it is not clear if he was ever admitted to participate to any imperial hunt. It is probable in fact that the deceased never participated in the hunts personally but merely desired a representation which recalled his status as a member of the upper class. This kind of depiction has a clear parallel in the depiction of imperial hunts in Sasanian art. In fact, several

21 Marshak, 2004: 47. In this way, the hunting scene at Afrāsyāb could be considered as the result of a Sogdian artist who copied a Chinese painting which was based on an Iranian (or Turkish) prototype!
22 Compareti, 2006.a; Compareti, 2005.
23 Jiang, Yang, 2003: 49, fig. 5.
metalworks executed according to Sasanian canons (but identified as goods intended for the peripheral nobility) continued to be produced after the fall of that Persian Dynasty.\(^{24}\)

As there is mention of the hunts of Taizong in Chinese sources it may be that at least during the early Tang period, some kind of hunt was still performed at court or there was a renewed interest for ancient habits, possibly due to the influence of the \(hu\). The nature of the hunts performed by the Chinese Emperor is not clear but they do not seem to have had a religious connotation: as B. Marshak suggested, they could have had just a social value, a sort of obligation of Taizong regarding his Central Asian subjects (and in fact their execution attracted Taizong’s ministers’ criticism)\(^{25}\). Some details of the imperial hunt at Afrāsyāb mirror formulae easily comprehensible by both Iranian and Chinese spectators. The position of the “flying gallop” has already been considered but there is another interesting element in this painting: the double representation of the animal pierced by the spear of the Chinese Emperor and dead beneath the horse. This is a well-known and well tested formula in Sasanian art where it referred to the infallibility of the Persian king beloved by the gods\(^{26}\). However, the feline beneath the figure of the Chinese Emperor is smaller than the one in front of him possibly because it was not intended to be the same animal doubled as an inseparable part of that specific image. In Afrāsyāb, the spirit of the composition does not reflect that of a Sasanian hunting scene where even the position of the dead animals in many cases reflects a kind of established iconography expressing solemnity. The large felines in particular are reproduced too realistically and the one fallen does not seem to be dead but rather writhing in a deadly agony. This could be another hint that there existed an original Chinese model copied by the Sogdians.

As is reported in some Han poems, the “barbarians” also participated in the hunts\(^{27}\). If the non-Han people had the permission to take part in the imperial hunt also during the early Tang period, then the Sogdians (who were clearly called \(hu\), “barbarians”, in Chinese literature\(^{28}\)) could also have been among them. The funerary monuments belonging to Sogdians found in the region of Xi’an reveal several representations of hunts

\(^{24}\) Marschak, 1986: figs. 29, 31.


\(^{26}\) De Francovich, 1984: 89-97.

\(^{27}\) Knechtges, 1976: 63.

\(^{28}\) On this problem see: de la Vaissière, Trombert, 2004.
performed by hu people as well and hunting was one of the favored activity among Iranian nobles. If some Sogdians had participated in imperial hunts in China, it is easy to imagine that they could have described the scene to the artists of Samarkand or, as is more likely, they could have imported some painted scrolls with hunting scenes which would have been comprehensible to them.

In the Northern Qi (550-577) funerary monument commonly known as the An’yang couch, B. I. Marshak had recognized scenes which could be connected with the celebration of the New Year according to the Sogdian habits observed also at Afrāsyāb. In other funerary monuments belonging to Sogdian immigrants living in China, banquets and hunting scenes can be discerned quite often but it is not clear whether such depictions are connected with a religious celebration. Some information can be found in Chinese sources and in fact, in the Xifan ji (a 7th century Chinese text on the habits of the western barbarians which survived in Du You’s Tong Dian, composed in the beginning of 9th century) it is clearly stated about the people of Kang (Samarkand):

ils font du premier jour du sixième mois le commencement de l’année; lorsque arrive ce jour, le roi et le people revêtent tous des habits nouveaux et se coupent les cheveux et la barbe; au pied d’une forêt qui est à l’est de la capitale, on tire de l’arc à cheval [maybe a kind of hunting scene?] pendant sept jours; lorsque arrive le dernier jour, on place une pièce de monnaie en or sur la feuille de papier (servant de cible); celui qui l’atteint a droit à être roi pendant un jour.

It is worth noting that among the reliefs of the 6th century sarcophagus belonging to the Sogdian Wirkak recently found around Xi’an, a man is represented kneeling, wearing headgear resembling animal pointed ears while hunting a deer with a bow. Other hunters around him are shooting arrows and piercing other animals from their horses (fig. 7). Very similar headgears can be seen on at least two painted caskets from the area around the Buddhist complex of Subaši (not far from Kuča) worn by musicians and dancers together with animal masks (fig. 8). It has been proposed in the past that in these scenes it could be recognized the depiction of a local festival.

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30 Marshak, 1994: 12-13. See also: Lerner, 2005: Table 2.
31 Chavannes, 1903: 133.
32 The Institute of Archaeology of Xi’an, 2005: fig. 27.
connected with the New Year celebration. In the *Youyang zazu* (a Chinese text on exoticsms written in the 9th century) it is recorded:

au pays de Yanqi (Agni), le 1er jour de l’année et le 8e jour du 2e mois, il y a *Pomožhe*婆摩遮; le 3e jour, on sacrifie dans les campagnes [sur les tombes]; le 15 du 4e mois, on va se promener dans les forêts; le 5 du 5e mois, Maitreya descend pour naître; le 7 du 7e mois, on sacrifie aux ancêtres; le 9 du 9e mois, on répand des grains de chanvre; le 10 du 10e mois, le roi fait le rite de renunciation; le roi sort chez un chef de tribu; un chef monte le cheval du roi, et pendant un jour et une nuit il administre les affaires royales; le 14 du 10e mois, on fait de la musique jusqu’à la fin de l’année.

The ancient inhabitants of Agni, Kuča and Turfan are all commonly known as Tokharians, a quite mysterious western “Indo-European” population who embraced Buddhism and disappeared with the turkization of the region. According to P. Pelliot, the Tokharians living in Turfan and Kuča performed a so called *Pomožhe* festival which was known under other names, such as *Poluozhe* (婆羅遮) or *Sumozhe* (蘇摩遮). The latter name could be compared to *Somakusa* (蘇莫者), a festival which was introduced from the west through China into Japan to be celebrated by musicians and dancers wearing animal and monster masks. The name *Sumozhe* (reconstructed according to the pronunciation of the Tang period as *samacha* or *somacha*) and *Somakusa* probably have some connections with the Indian god Soma and to the assumption of intoxicating beverages during specific celebrations: a habit well-known also among the ancient Iranians and in general among the ancient “Indo-European” societies, where the initiation of the young warriors was associated in some case to the consumption of intoxicating beverages and to an annual festival commemorating a dragon-slayer hero. The annual festival among the Iranians and the Tokharians could have coincided with the New Year’s celebration, when people played

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34 Lévi, 1933: 12-13 n. 1.
36 Eckardt, 1953. Specimens of these mask were preserved in the Shōsō-in Imperial Repository in Nara: Eckardt, 1953: fig. 3; Jiang, 1996: 536, fig. 3-4.
37 The reconstructions are the ones proposed by Pelliot. According to Pulleyblank, 1991 it should be rendered, more specifically, as *
38 Jiang, 1996: 529.
39 Ustinova, 2002: 105-115. It is worth remembering that the Sogdians were celebrated in Chinese sources as very fond of music, dance and wine: Chavannes, 1903: 134.
music and danced while actors performed wore animal masks\textsuperscript{40}. Most likely some hunts were performed exactly as is possible to observe in several Sogdian funerary monuments recovered in China and in some paintings from Panjakand,\textsuperscript{41} although it is not possible to establish the period of the year related to such scenes. One silver plate kept in the British Museum considered to be a provincial Sasanian work of art (possibly Kušano-Sasanian) displays scenes connected by M. Carter to the celebration of the Nawrûz (fig. 9). The upper half of the central part of this plate most likely depicts “the apotheosized monarch installing an official of government, and a drinking ceremony of the ruler in the midst of his court”\textsuperscript{42}. Other pseudo-Sasanian metalworks show enthronement scenes and in one case, in a 5\textsuperscript{th}-6\textsuperscript{th} century provincial Sasanian silver dish kept in the Hermitage Museum, the depiction of the king and four of his officials appears in a royal hunt\textsuperscript{43}. In the Hermitage plate the king is not represented in the act of swearing in one of the officials and in fact his hands do not hold a beribboned ring but lean on the sword (fig. 10). In any case, the reproduction of the court and the royal hunt in the same central space alludes to a very important occasion, probably an (annual?) elaborated celebration performed by the king himself. At least one other silver plate connected to the Sasanian taste shows a king and a queen sitting on a bed while performing a celebration with boar heads in the lower part of the scene (possibly an allusion to hunting trophies) but it is not clear whether there is any funerary connection\textsuperscript{44}.

Of course, the idea expressed is an hypothesis which merits further

\textsuperscript{40} On representations of plays in Sogdiana when actors wore special costumes, see: Marshak, Raspopova, 1994: 200.

\textsuperscript{41} Marshak, Raspopova, 1994: 202, n. 80.

\textsuperscript{42} Carter, 1974: 188. See also: Harper, Meyers, 1981: 108-110, fig. 35. The scene on this silver plate has been compared to a 4\textsuperscript{th}-5\textsuperscript{th} Sogdian painting from Jar Tepa depicting a hunt and an enthronement scene in the presence of Iranian divinities: Grenet, Marshak, 2001: 59.


\textsuperscript{44} Ghirshman, 1982: fig. 259. Another similar scene (but with the head of a ram below the scene) can be observed in a silver dish kept in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (see: Gunter, Jett, 1992: pl. 18) and in a seal (see: Harper, 1978: cat. 73; Gyselen, 1995). In the Iranian sphere many other examples of hunts and banquet scenes connected with funerals can be noted, like in Central Asian painting in general and, specifically, on the painted vase from Gjaur-kala (Merv): Silvi Antonini, 1996; Manassiero, 2003. See also the 8\textsuperscript{th} century Bactrian paintings from Tavka: Rahmanov, 2001: pls. 30-55; Solov’ev, 2005.
The paintings concerning Chinese themes at Afrāsyāb

Research but, in consideration of the Sogdian funerary monuments mentioned above (as well as the Afrāsyāb paintings, the provincial Sasanian metalwork and several Han funerary reliefs), it is clear that the hunt had a special funerary function expressed in the art of many ancient countries. The Chinese celebrated the imperial hunts in some poems of the Han period which could constitute an interesting parallel with a group of Han funerary reliefs and possibly with the paintings at Afrāsyāb (and consequently, with Tang art). In this manner, there are several hints to the funerary character of the Chinese hunt, as at the conclusion of the game, the Emperor was expected to dedicate the meat of the dead animals to the ancestors’ tombs or temples. This is clearly recorded in some sources referred to the Han period and the depiction of hunting scenes most likely connected with the imperial hunts performed in the Shanglin Park appears often in Han funerary reliefs.

The Aquatic Scene

It has been already observed that in Tang funerary paintings there is no exact parallel to the paintings of the Northern Wall at Afrāsyāb, but this is true both in the case of the hunting scene and of the aquatic scene. The attitude of the Empress (who most likely is Wu Zetian, 690-705) who is represented feeding the fish and of one attendant entering the water nearly nude with a stick (as if seeking something) constitute clear references to the Duanwu Chinese festival. Some other details may also be observed.

The celebration of the Duanwu festival as it is performed still today in China comes from the South and is strictly connected to the habits of peoples living in Indochina. This could constitute an interesting parallel since South East Asia was deeply influenced by Southern India where the Snake Boat mid-summer festivals are still performed today as with the Palliyodams or the Cambakulas chundan in Karnataka.

An interesting detail in the same scene is provided by the monstrous composite creature depicted beneath the boat which could be identified as

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45 See Silvi Antonini, 1996; Comparetti, 2006.a. According to É. de la Vaissière, who was so kind as to discuss with me the Wirkak sarcophagus reliefs, the interpretation of the hunter wearing animal-like-ear headgear is different and possibly mirrors the habits of the steppe people still performed in Mongolia. For a connection between hunt and banquet as well, see: Melikian-Chirvani, 1992: 118.
46 Comparet, 2005; Comparetti, 2006.a. Cf. also note 14 of the present article.
47 Comparetti, Cristoforetti, 2005.
48 Eberhard, 1968: 390-406. Traces of such festivals can be observed on the bronze drums very spread in ancient times in a big area from Indonesia into Yunnan Province (China): Heine-Geldner, 1932/1933; Feng, 1974: figs. 10-16.
the dragon of the Chinese New Year’s celebration, represented according to Iranian and Chinese iconographical features⁴⁹.

For the other figures of the aquatic scene an identification has also been advanced, while the male figure in the water with his right hand raised as if to beat one of the two horses swimming in front of him raises some issues. It should be noted that during the Song Dynasty (960-1260), in Hangzhou, the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar-solar Chinese calendar (that is to say, the day of the Duanwu festival) was the day of the horse, the animal associated with the element fire and with war⁵⁰.

A Chinese scroll kept in the Palace Museum collection (Beijing) could constitute an interesting parallel. As suggested in a recent study, this could help to identify the swimming horses in the painting at Afrāsīyāb⁵¹. This possibility is reenforced by the consideration of the hypothetical depiction of different phases of the Sogdian Nawrūz on the Western and Southern Walls, particularly if in the Youyang zazu, the two horses appearing in association with the River Oxus have something to do with the New Year celebration in ancient Bactriana⁵². However, in the Chinese scroll, the scene appears to simply refer to the habit of washing horses and it does not seem to be connected with any religious event, Chinese or Iranian. In Chinese sources, a Sogdian celebration similar to the Bactrian one just proposed is never recorded⁵³. Furthermore, in the Youyang zazu it is clearly stated that only one horse (the gold-colored one) emerges from the water of the River Oxus and later reenters⁵⁴, while in that painting at Afrāsīyāb there are two horses.

Most likely in the Sogdian painting the depiction is intended to be a Chinese scene and not an Iranian one. If the man about to beat the horses (who resembles the other male attendants of this part of the painting who seem to be Chinese) is intended to perform a ritual, then his gesture is not respectful if one is dealing with a “holy horse”. It could be

⁴⁹ Compareti. Recently, Irina Arzhantseva and Olga Inevatkina presented quite good drawings granting better comprehension of the dragon in the aquatic scene at Afrāsīyāb which allowed me to advance some hypotheses regarding its iconography and its presence in that scene: Arzhantseva, Inevatkina, 2006.b.
⁵⁰ Eberhard, 1968: 159.
⁵¹ Mao, forthcoming. For a reproduction of the scroll, see: 5000 ans d’art chinois, 1988: pl. 29. The scroll is probably a later copy of a Tang painting. Of course, the swimming horses and the man in the water at Afrāsīyāb could allude just to the passage of a river. This could be an explanation, however the choice by the artist for something so practical is perplexing when all the other elements of the painting in the Northern Hall have such a specific connotation.
⁵² This could be deduced from the seasonal position of the event in the 5th Chinese month, see: Cristofoletti, 2003.b: 59 n. 6; Panaino, 1995: 105-106.
⁵⁴ Chavannes, 1903: 201, n. 1; Drège, Grenet, 1987: 118.
argued that the Sogdian artist copied a Chinese scroll in a particularly realistic manner when the horses were forced to enter the water (possibly to reconstruct a kind of sacred play performed with real animals). This hypothesis is not entirely convincing and it would be necessary to examine similar depictions in Chinese art.

We may recall that in the Songshu (dated to the end of the 5th century) it is reported that


But although the horses at Afrāsyāb are of two different colors (one appears bright blue, the other one bright brown), they are not black and white and are definitely swimming, not walking on the shore. In any case, the contraposition between black and white is typical in the Iranian world.

In conclusion, although the Duanwu jie comprises a scene that may have been enriched with other nawrūzī elements56, a definitive identification of all the elements present in the scene on the Northern Wall at Afrāsyāb is still not possible. A series of new hypotheses have rendered the general view more comprehensible, but much work is still to be done. A promising field of investigation for the understanding of these paintings regards Chinese sources which require a specific approach. It is not to be excluded that new discoveries by Chinese archaeologists (particularly active today in the field of Tang and pre-Tang studies) could shed light on this episode of Sogdian art as well.

Appendix. The Eastern Wall

At present, many scholars agree in attributing the scene of the eastern wall to Indian representation mainly on the bases of the passage in the Tangshu concerning a royal pavilion in He (Kušanya, in central Sogdiana) whose walls were embellished with the sovereigns of neighbouring kingdoms57. The eastern wall in Kušanya had the representations of Brahmans (that is to say Indians) and Turks although no representative of the latter appears on that wall at Afrāsyāb (fig. 11). Unfortunately, the Chinese source is not

57 Chavannes, 1903: 145.
specific about the subject of the scenes depicted in the pavilion at Kušanya and the fragmentary state of the painting at Afrāsyāb renders the identification extremely hard.

The surviving fragments are concentrated just in the lower part of the wall. Starting form the left part, one can observe two sitting people facing each other in an attitude of teacher and student. Between them is a round object which was probably intended to be an armilla used for astronomical purposes. In a recent paper, F. Grenet recognized this image as a representation of the transmission of astrology from the Greeks to the Indians according to an iconography rooted in Classical art\(^{58}\). Next to them is a rider on a horse but this subject has not yet been identified. After the entrance, on the right portion of the wall, a second enigmatic scene can be discerned: a person wearing a long robe is carrying a child while two big birds spread their wings on an aquatic background. Grenet proposed to identify this scene with a representation of Kṛṣṇa and his foster-mother, Yaśodā, just before the attack of the crane-demon Putānā\(^{59}\). Above them, fragments of an image of a horse and the legs of a person could be intended as another episode of Kṛṣṇa youth, when he fought the horse-demon Keśin\(^{60}\). On the right part of the painting, the background is still aquatic but infant-archers and a man grabbing the tail of a bull together with a kneeling person appear among fishes, turtles, water-birds and flowers. Grenet identified the infant-archers as a multiple representation of Kama, the Indian god of love who was reproduced according to an iconography borrowed from Classical art\(^{61}\). However, as Grenet himself noted, Markus Mode had already observed that those archers should be better identified with pigmies fighting cranes exactly as it is described (although differently represented) in Roman sources\(^{62}\).

Among the different scenes which compose the representation of the eastern wall, the fragments of “teacher and student” with armilla and the inferior parts of the horse close to the legs of a person are bigger in proportions than the other figures in the same composition. Possibly, this last detail is not to be neglected especially for the scene identified by Grenet as Kṛṣṇa fighting Keśin since, on the other walls, bigger characters have very important roles.

The very presence of a horse represents an interesting element well fitting with the general interpretation of the whole cycle of paintings at Afrāsyāb. In

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\(^{61}\) Grenet, 2006: 45.

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fact, on the southern wall a funerary sacrifice is going to be accomplished in the presence of royal characters as a continuation of the Nawrūz on the western wall. The harnessed horse and the four geese were probably the sacrificial animals. On the northern wall the Chinese Emperor and Empress are performing local rituals connected with calendrical matters which correspond quite precisely to the Sogdian recurrences. Both in the scenes of Sogdian and Chinese rituals the presence of the horse seems to be a very important element. According to Persian literary sources of the Islamic period, the connection between the horse and water is clearly stated. Moreover, it is worth noting that two horses are swimming on the northern wall since the connection with the aquatic element should have been extremely important for the Chinese too. So, if the hypothesis of the Indian character of the eastern wall is correct and if that fragmentary painting actually represents the lower parts of a man with a horse, then one should expect to find also there the depiction of an Indian festivity or celebration connected with royalty when a kind of horse sacrifice occurred. Such a ritual is reported in Indian literary sources explicitly and it is described as the most important royal sacrifice that only important sovereigns could have afforded to celebrate since Vedic period: the aśvamedha.

The aim of the horse sacrifice, or aśvamedha, in ancient India was the recognition of a king as an universal sovereign. It took place around February-March or in Summer and had very clear calendrical connections. It was also a magical ritual with very ancient solar reminiscences celebrated in order to ensure fecundity to the kingdom and, in fact, the king was expected to accomplish it in the end of his reign, when it was almost time for the succession of the designated new king.

Other details of the eastern wall could be considered a precise parallel with the other three painted scenes at Afrāsyāb. Exactly as in the scenes representing Sogdiana and China, where the sovereign was depicted together with his queen, also for the celebration of the aśvamedha the presence of the royal couple was requested. The character of the Indian sacrifice concerned the legitimacy of a king and at Afrāsyāb the representation of such a concept can be observed on two opposite walls: the eastern (or Indian) one and the western (or Sogdian) one where the Nawrūz is celebrated in conjunction with the coronation of Varkhuman. Finally, all the scenes on the four walls present clear connections with astrological-astronomical matters which could

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63 Cristoforetti, 2006.a.
64 Riboud, 2003; Mao, forthcoming.
65 Compareti, 2006-07.
66 On the celebration of the aśvamedha, see Dumont, 1927.
be considered reciprocally (although not exactly) balanced: when a king decided to perform the aśvamedha, this had to happen around February-March, a period of the year quite close to the celebration of the Chinese New Year Festival (January-February) or in Summer, when the Sogdian Nawrūz fell. The Sogdian artists and their patrons were certainly aware of the astronomical-astrological common notions of ancient neighbouring countries such as India, Byzantium, Persia and China. For this reason they cleverly opted for representations of the Chinese New Year Festival, which fell approximately during the aśvamedha, and the Duanwu, which fell around the Sogdian Nawruz, on the northern wall.

In Indian art there are very few specimens which could be identified as representations of the aśvamedha. Nevertheless, an interesting horn cylinder seal from the Greco-Bactrian site of Takht-e Sangin that has been recently attributed to India67 presents a scene very similar, possibly, to the reconstruction of that detail of the Afrāsyāb painting reconsidered here. It is not possible to be too specific about the attitude of the man towards the horse in the horn seal since the scene is depicted too sketchily and it could represent just a rider with his steed or even a procession68.

It is possible to observe scenes very similar to the Takht-e Sangin horn seal in a problematic 7th century (?) textile fragment acquired on the antiquary market embellished with nine horses on three parallel lines with people wearing caftans bearing in one hand the bridles and in the other one a weapon or a stick. The position of those men denotes a clear hostile attitude towards the horses and for this reason the scene of the textile could be intended as a representation of a sacrifice69. That fragmentary textile which denotes a Persian execution or, at least, inspiration offers a good (enigmatic) parallel with the Indian seal from Takht-e Sangin.

If ancient Iranians knew the Indian iconography for the horse sacrifice and had even adopted it, then it could be considered likely that it is something similar that the Sogdians copied for the representation of India on the eastern wall at Afrāsyāb.

69 Kitzinger, 1946: fig. 46; Trilling, 1982: pl. 17.
CAPTIONS FOR THE FIGURES

Fig. 1. After: Al’baum, 1975: fig. 16.
Fig. 2. Elaboration of the reconstruction by Al’baum of left part of the Northern Wall at Afrasyab.
Fig. 3. After: Wu, 1998: fig. 1.a.
Fig. 4. After: Zhang, 1995: fig. 1.
Fig. 5. After: Administration of Cultural Heritage of Turfan Prefecture, 2004: fig. 1 (detail).
Fig. 6. After: Jiang, Yang, 2003: 50, fig. 5.
Fig. 7. After: The Institute of Archaeology of Xi’an, 2005: fig. 27 (detail).
Fig. 8. After: Sun Ji, The Holy Fire of China, Shenyang, 1996: fig. 28.
Fig. 9. After: Marschak, 1986: fig. 96.
Fig. 10. Scheme after: Harper, Meyers, 1981: pl. 19.
Fig. 11. Reconstruction of the fragmentary paintings on the Eastern Wall at Afrasyab after F. Ory in: Royal Nawrūz in Samarkand. Proceedings of the Conference held in Venice on the Pre-Islamic Paintings at Afrasiab, eds. M. Compareti and É. de la Vaissière, Rome, 2006: pl. 3 at p. 27.
The paintings concerning Chinese themes at Afrāsyāb

Fig. 3

Fig. 4
The paintings concerning Chinese themes at Afrāsyāb

Fig. 8

Fig. 9
The “Hall of the Ambassadors” paintings in the frame of the calendrical systems of the Iranian world

by Simone Cristoforetti
The epochal coincidence between Nawrūz\(^1\), the New Year’s Day of the official Iranian solar calendar (during the 7\(^{th}\) century, near to the Summer solstice—and for some years coinciding exactly with it), and the Duanwu jie, movable feast of the 5\(^{th}\) day of the 5\(^{th}\) month of the Chinese lunisolar calendar, which occurs ordinarily in June/July and when not coinciding exactly with Summer solstice, often celebrated in the days immediately preceding or following that date, could have constituted the impetus to undertake a cycle of paintings focused on the festivities of the season. In such a cycle everybody could have recognized something familiar.

The writer had occasion to draw attention to another interesting ‘medieval’ case involving contiguity (at the least) between an Iranian celebration and one from another cultural environment; it is the case of a wintry celebration; the Sada festival\(^2\). Naturally in the near-Eastern Christian environment, there are more historically confirmed interconnections with Iranian elements\(^3\). There is a particularly close relationship between Christmas and the Sada. Leaving aside the origins of these two

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\(^1\) For ease of use, I have preferred a uniform transcription of Iranian terms in the manner generally used for Arabic.


\(^3\) Testimony of this, for example, is the ritualism connected to the figure of the military saint on the white horse recognized in the Iranian-Armenian Saint Sergius, the Sūrp Sarkis of the Armenians from Kazzāz (area of Arāk, see Injawi-yi Šīrāzī, 2000-2001: II, 176-178), celebrated the third-to-last Saturday before Lent, in Ḥīḍr-Ilyās of the whole Iranian Azerbaijan, celebrated three days before the end of Bahman or the last Wednesday of Bahman (\textit{idem}: II, 73-76) and in Isfandārmād, celebrated the night of the 1\(^{st}\) of Isfand – i.e. the night preceding the 1\(^{st}\) of Isfand – in the region of Maḥallāt and Jāsb (south of Qumm, see \textit{idem}: I, 73-74). On the substantial functional sameness of these fabulous figures, see Cristoforetti, 2002: 275-278.
holidays, which could also be of a same root mythic type\textsuperscript{4}, there remains a contiguity which at times, though not always, is superimposition\textsuperscript{5}. The hypothesis formulated today therefore leads to a category of investigation which has been fruitfully investigated. The Iranian world has seen phenomena related to contiguity/superimposition of elements of different cultural types and seems particularly predisposed to syntheses of great breadth, which at times end up presenting themselves in an almost archetypal fashion when subsequently considered a posteriori as the sole lectio of more extensive cultural factors.

A few centuries after the era in which the Afrāsyāb pictures are situated, Central Asia itself came to experience a great taking up and rereading of the Iranian epic heritage by the Turkic world, largely in Persian language, and therefore fully part of the cultural and literary heritage of the Iranian world\textsuperscript{6}.

All of this stands to dispel doubts about the plausibility per se of an interpretation of the sort proposed. Such a proposal, which is not at all reckless, is actually yet another observation of a constant tendency towards osmosis and cultural synthesis common to the Iranian world. In any case, in addition to our underlying hypothesis, further points must be considered regarding the complex and varied calendrical situation in the Iranian world during the 7th century in general and require us to take into account for the first time some written Chinese sources in the following considerations. The authors permit themselves to make recourse to literature on the subject which has been too often neglected, perhaps because it is expressed in languages which are not usually taken into consideration, including, paradoxically, modern Persian.

During the 7th century, both the Nawrūz of the solar Iranian calendar (the ‘internal’ Nawrūz corresponding to that which is known as Yazdāgāri) and the ‘peripheral’ one (that of Armenians, Corasmians and Sogdians etc.), which differed from each other by 5 days, fell around the Summer solstice. In fact, given the nature of that calendar (which lacked an intercalary mechanism to match the civil year with the solar tropical year), any date from the two forms of that calendar was behind a day every four years with respect to

\textsuperscript{6} A typical case is that of Abū Muslim’s Romanza, see the still applicable Mélikoff, 1962. On the theme of Afrāsyāb, which re-emerges in our case as well, see Cristoforetti, 2006.a.
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a fixed seasonal date⁷. In the course of 7th century, Nawrūz moved from an initial period when it fell after the solstice, to a brief period of several years when Nawrūz and Summer solstice coincided exactly, afterwards reaching a period in which Nawrūz fell before the Summer solstice. More concretely, taking the date of the Summer solstice to be the 1° Cancris (June 19th of the Julian calendar during the 7th century)⁸, we observe the following cases of contiguity with the solstice:

1) dates of the Nawrūz of the ‘internal’ form of Iranian calendar

- years 612-615 June 21st
- years 616-619 June 20th
- years 620-623 June 19th (Summer solstice)
- years 624-627 June 18th
- years 628-631 June 17th

2) dates of the Nawrūz of the ‘peripheral’ form of Iranian calendar

- years 632-635 June 21st
- years 636-639 June 20th
- years 640-643 June 19th (Summer solstice)
- years 644-647 June 18th
- years 648-651 June 17th

However, the writer prefers to speak of moments of contiguity rather than coincidence because the exact determination of the solstice created some problems for ancient peoples, given that around the solstice, the daily variation in angles is minimal (barely exceeding 5°) so as to make the use of the astrolab impossible. In fact for several days around the solstice, just as indicated by the word itself (Solis statio), the sun does not appear to change its course in the

⁷ We are not dealing with the problems connected to the hypothetical presence of fixed Iranian calendars, not only regional (as is the case of some calendars from the Caspian region according to certain scholars), but also used by the state administration, a hypothesis on which Hūmand insists, 1996: 56, 85-88; see infra: 43-45.

⁸ This is the date of the Summer astronomical solstice (Sun at 90° of the ecliptic) which Grumel, 1958: 315, calculates for the year 650 on the basis of data from R. Schram’s tables. The date which I indicated in the summary presented at St. Petersburg (June 18th, cf. Compareti, Cristoforesi, 2005) was obtained from the Gregorian June 21st indicated as the “traditional” beginning of the astronomical Summer in La nuova Enciclopedia delle Scienze Garzanti, see “Stagioni”, Cernusco s/N (MI), 1998, where after having provided the traditional dates of the beginning of the seasons, it is specified that “the passage of the Earth through equinox and solstice, corresponding to the beginning of the seasons is never off by more than a day with respect to these”.

sky. An effective approximate method (which is simple to put in practice for expert astronomers) consisted in deducing the solstice point by mean of calculating the average time transpired between the two passages of the extremity of the meridian shadow of a gnomon (placed in a perpendicular manner in a vertical wall) in relation to the same point before and after the solstice.\(^9\) Other methods could make use of observation of star cycles such as the heliacal or cosmic rising and setting of some stars, on which basis a certain seasonal date could be observed etc. Such systems were known both in the Iranian\(^10\) and in the Central Asian world.\(^11\) We stress that given the previously mentioned difficulties, it is methodologically more appropriate to refer to the ‘solstice period’ rather than the exact Summer solstice. Whoever could individuate the solstice period simply making rapid daily observations from the same position with a point of reference (which can be natural: trees, hills, etc.); the sunrise or sunset is virtually the same for several days. Keeping in mind that as an alternative, it was possible to avail oneself of the liturgical-calendrical habits of Christians, such as the holiday for the birth of Saint John. And possibly this was a system widespread in urban settings.\(^12\) The Jacobite liturgical, Byzantine and Latin calendars considered it a fixed holiday on the 24th of June, while for Armenians the celebration of the birth of Saint John the Baptist fell on the Thursday of the second week of Pentecost (in this case with deviations which depended on the date of Pentecost itself). Or else one could refer to the Holiday of the Twelve Apostles which closes the Week of the Apostles of the Syrian Melkite liturgical calendar which (according to Birūnī) places the birth of John the Baptist on the 25th of Hazīrān (June 25th)\(^13\). This Sunday has remained known as “Nosardīl” (= “New Year”!) and it is the first Sunday of Summer\(^14\). It is clearly significant that it is called the first Sunday of Summer (see infra: 58-62). In any case, use of even a relatively fixed calendar such as the lunisolar Hebrew calendar could provide less certain guarantees for the identification of Nawrūz still in the time of Majlisī\(^15\).

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\(^9\) Birūnī, *Qīnūn*: II, 620-622. The method described allows to discern if the solstice occurred towards midnight (odd number of days passed) or towards noon (even number of days passed) of the intermediate day.


\(^12\) Between the end of the 9th century and the 60s of the 10th century, two official reforms of Iranian calendars in use in administration took place; they were implemented by the Caliph al-Mu‘taṣim and the Hā’arazmšāh Abū Sa‘īd. Both tried to stabilize Nawrūz making it correspond in both cases to a date of the Christian (Syriac) solar calendar. See Cristoforetti, 2003.b: 137-148.

\(^13\) Birūnī, *Ājūr al-bāqiya*: 299 r. 17.

\(^14\) Grumel, 1958: 342, and see infra.

\(^15\) See Walbridge, 1997: 90.
Farwardgān and Andargāh

Concerning the Iranian calendar situation of the 7th century, other observations on Farwardgān \(^{16}\) are in order. Farwardgān is the celebration for the temporary and periodic return to their homes of the “ancestors” \(^{17}\) (NP. farwahr / frawahr), immediately preceding Nawrūz. From the fact that Nawrūz in that time was solstitial, one could automatically deduce that the Farwardgān of Sogdiana was also situated immediately before Nawrūz in the position occupied by the five days of the Epagomenae (NP. Andargāh / Panja-yi duzdīda, Ar. Hamza al-mustaraqa) in the ‘peripheral’ form of the Iranian calendar and therefore also in the period of the Summer solstice. Caution is needed before postulating a mechanical relationship between Farwardgān and Andargāh, in that we have certain modern examples of non-coincidence \(^{18}\), as well as clues in this light which regard the more peripheral Iranian zones, given the possibility of a decoupling between Farwardgān and Andargāh conceivable even in Transoxiana \(^{19}\). It is a natural fact: a ritual celebration such as Farwardgān is phenomenologically tied to universal rituals of rebirth of the end of Winter/beginning of Spring. Therefore even in the presence of a Nawrūz which follows the seasons, due to its function of indicator of the first day of the year on a vague solar calendar, pulling with itself (as we will see better) the Epagomenae (Andargāh), Farwardgān (or that which corresponds it ritually) could easily conserve its fixed seasonal position at the end of Winter/beginning of Spring independently from any official calendar \(^{20}\).

If Nawrūz was at the Summer solstice at the time of the paintings of Afrāsyāb, it is possible to inquire about a progression of a cult of ancestors along with Nawrūz. Was the ritual nature of Farwardgān disconnected from the end of Winter and did it precede a Nawrūz which had become solstitial? Or were there perhaps two competing Farwardgāns, one around the official New Year and one immediately preceding the Spring equinox?

\(^{16}\) Here I use the NP. word corresponding to the Ph. Fravardīgān, rather than his arabicized form Farwardijān typical of the Islamic sources.

\(^{17}\) This is a practical simplification of the terms. On the gentilitial nature of these spiritual entities see Boyce, 2005: 6. For an analogy, see Apuleius, De deo Socratis: VI-VII, XV (where all the demonology is of Manes and Lares), and Plutarch, De genio Socratis: 591 E-F, where general “oriental” influences are evoked. It is however natural that the Chinese sources—see infra: 63-64 —spontaneously understand these farwahr / frawahr simply as ancestors.

\(^{18}\) In Abiyyāna ceremonies commemorating the dead (such as Farwardgān) lasted until the first half of the 20th century. They followed Andargāh, in the local calendar positioned between Bahman and Isfand; see لی "انساری-یی Abiyyāna, 1999-2000: 140-142.

\(^{19}\) Cristoforetti, 2003.a: 86-87.

\(^{20}\) Contra Boyce, 2003: 60.
We know as well (or we realize today at least) that Nawrūz had reached the Summer solstice by intrinsic and inevitable effect of the long retrogression (one day every four years) through the seasons due to the particular structure of the Iranian year (vague solar) and not to the inattention in carrying out of the planned intercalations, as Bīrūnī—who represents one of the most authoritative voices in the communis opinio of the Islamic age—asserts when dealing with kabiša (normally understood to be intercalation). Even only one intercalation in the official Iranian calendar not applied in Transoxiana would have displaced the ‘peripheral’ form of the calendar to a greater distance from the internal one than the five days of which Bīrūnī speaks. In addition, Bīrūnī (who writes more than three centuries after the years which interest us here), in order to lament the “forgotten” intercalations, moves from an idealization of the ancient Iranian calendar in which the collection of taxes (iftitḥāḥ ḥarāj) coincided with the first Summer period, which pleased the state administration and agrarian interests, and which was possibly true once upon a time. Yet Bīrūnī also was aware of the concept of an original Farwardīn coinciding with Aries, in the context of Iranian tradition which would prefer Farwardīn situated at the end of Winter. This is incoherent. But it is to stress specially that the very odd Birunian ‘Iranian style’ of intercalating is incoherent with the calculations performed by the same Bīrūnī in order to explain the happenings of the neglected intercalary system. As that scholar states, the Iranian way of intercalating consisted in doubling every one hundred twenty (or one hundred sixteen) years, one after the other, all twelve months, displacing Andargāh as a signal indicating which month had been intercalated. Therefore we arrive at “the elegant solution […] accepted by modern historians”, whose plausibility

21 Bīrūnī, Āḏar al-bāqiya: 233. This objection—for which cf. de Blois, 1996: 46-47—makes no longer sense if one postulates—see infra: 46-54—a kabiša taking place tacitly or popularly all over, independently from an official sanction. In such a case Central Asia could have remained exempt only from the displacement of Andargāh.

22 Bīrūnī, Āḏar al-bāqiya: 45. The order of the Iranian months is that of an ideal Iranian calendar starting with Farwardīn coinciding with the Aries and ending with Isfand coinciding with the Pisces. It is also the case of the official calendar nowadays used in the Islamic Republic of Iran. I indicate here the names of months as they are nowadays in modern Persian language. The order is the following: Farwardīn, Urdibihišt, Ḫurdād, Tir, Mūrđād, Sahrīwar, Mihr, Ābān, Āḏar, Day, Bahman, Isfand. The ordinal numbers indicating Iranian months in the follow refer to this mould.

23 See Bīrūnī, Āḏar al-bāqiya: 45, l. 36 and followings.

24 Bickerman, 1967: 199. To follow the stages of this “elegant solution” see idem: 197-199; cf. de Blois, 1996: 40-41. In any case, Bickerman, 1967: 203, wrote: “It is rather probable that the Persian intercalated haphazardly, according to need”. This scholar questioned the regularity of the intercalation, not its very existence, and it is Baliński who, when he uses the
had been at one time nearly universally taken as a given, according to which retrogression through the seasons regarded the ‘civil’ calendar, whereas the ‘religious’ calendar would have been rearranged periodically to maintain the correspondence Farvardin/Aries: for which only in the ‘civil’ calendar (that is the only calendar of which we have historical traces) the original Nawruz would have been displaced, occurring in Summer before returning to Spring. The 120-year intercalations (or 116-year intercalations) would have produced another calendar, the ‘religious’ one, whose seasonal ‘objectivity’, theoretically should not have been off by more than thirty days. There are literary traces of this ‘religious’ calendar, but it had no influence on daily life (which means it is as if it did not exist). Only the transfer of the Andargah from the position between Isfand (XII) and Farvardin (I) to that between Aban (VIII) and Adar (IX) would have been the sign, in the ‘civil’ calendar, of a ‘religious’ Farvardin collocated in its right place.

What to say therefore of an iftitah haraj put rendered problematic by its relationship to the ‘civil’ Farvardin? Each Islamic administration which considered the problem attempted obviously to stabilise the ‘civil’ calendar and not to adopt an imaginary calendar in some way fixed.

We do not know the attitudes of the religious currents present in the variegated Zoroastrian world of the late Sassanian and proto-Islamic era, yet we know nevertheless that there were considerable differences between different currents regarding calendrical matters: some groups were even contrary to the most ‘orthodox’ among the possible systematisations in theory of the calendar. In addition, there is a long-standing cultural practice term intercalation, first places it in quotes; he writes in 1990: 103 n.19: “The notion ‘intercalation’ [...] is also of an arbitrary character”.

25 See Taqzâda, 1937-1938, passim; but see infra: 46-53.

26 It would be lengthy, and superfluous here, to recall those who attempted to deal with this issue. For a historical reconstruction of the events, v. Cristoforetti, 2003.b: 118-166.

27 To an eventual objection that the governing Muslims had voluntarily ignored the values of the Mâjûs one may reply that given the legal impediments concerning alterations of the lunar calendar of Hejira, (at times extended to various operations on various calendars) and therefore given the absence of an Islamic practice regarding the issue, administrators found it natural to consider solar calendars used for fiscal purposes in various regions of the Islamic world, and took action while making reference to commonly used methods in various local traditions.

28 A polemic between Zoroastrians on the adoption of the new calendar with Andargah after Isfand, in addition to Brûnî, Qânûn: 1, 76 rr. 5-11, results from the content of a rivâyat, almost at the same time as the operation (1008), noted by J. de Menasce, C.H.I.: 553, and recently translated by de Blois, 2003: 142-143, who does not agree with the former on the person responsible for the operation indicated there. In any case, the reform was performed under Buwâhid rulers. The Qânûn translation by P. Bulgakov and B. Rozencjfed (Tashkent, 1973: 104) attributes the responsibility of such an operation to Magians. For the relevance in
among the Zoroastrian community (which has an extraordinary affection for the vague solar calendar, that of ‘their fathers’). Repugnance for the general confusion that the use of an intercalary day would have introduced in the liturgical system (an ‘angel’ for every day)? Certainly, the only official displacement of the Andargāh generally accepted and documented in pre-Islamic Iran, if not its first use, produced a greater disorder than would have an ‘empty’ intercalary day, ‘not to be counted’: a disorder later absorbed into a new liturgical system presenting reiterated holidays.

Though not generally accepted, ulterior wanderings of the Andargāh could have produced (and they did produce) a greater disorder. It is a fact that the attempted reform towards a solar astronomical fixed calendar with 4-year or 5-year intercalations of one day (as was done for the Jalālī calendar and as currently occurs with the official calendar of the Islamic Republic of Iran) between the 19th and 20th century brought about a schism of the Indian Zoroastrian community, at times with intense battles.

Given prevailing historical hostility to changes in the calendar in Zoroastrian quarters, when Bīrūnī expounds on his version of the theory of the kabīsa “of the Persians”, informing us of the fact that such a kabīsa occurred one by one to all of the months, he helps us understand what we are dealing with. In fact, an effective intercalation displaced month by month in 120- (or 116-) year turns is nonsensical: he who intercalates, always doubles the last month of the calendar or inserts a certain number of days, always at the end of the year. A kabīsa like that described by Bīrūnī reveals that which actually occurred: it was not an addition, but rather a popular (or an agrarian?) practice of delaying Nawrūz or the relative ā’īn month by month.

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29 But in this regard, for a supposed Iranian origin of the Julian system, see Boyce, 2005: 22.
30 No matter if this first calendar reform is of Achaemenian or Sasanian times; Boyce, 2003: 60.
31 See infra: 000.
32 The position at the end of the year of intercalary days seems to be a spontaneous fact. The position between the second and third month of the Julian/Gregorian intercalary day is indirect testimony of this fact, while Bickerman uses it in the other direction, C.H.I.: 788. In fact, when the solar year with a 4-year intercalary day was adopted (imitating the Ptolemaic Egyptian reform of 238 BCE) by the Julian reform, January became the first month of the year, but the Roman lunisolar calendar—used for religious purposes for long time to come—began with March, possibly preceded by the embolismal month Mercedonius occupying the final position in the course of the year.
33 Using the term ā’īn / āyīn (‘usage’, ‘custom’) I intend to take up the expression of
given the seasonal needs. Such a practice could disturb the sensitivities of many observant persons. This is not all: such a delaying of Nawrūz probably took place with a concomitant effect on Farwardgān (a religious fact tied to the natural renewal which follows the Winter season) but not necessarily on Andargāh (a structural element of the calendar)\textsuperscript{34}. It is interesting to note that in the region of Kashan (Kāšān), characterized by the presence of Isbandī, i.e. the celebration of the 1\textsuperscript{st} of Isfand\textsuperscript{35}, some villages transferred and kept Andargāh at the end of Bahman, and others (the majority) brought it to the end of Isfand. The calendar of Abīyāna still maintains Andargāh after Bahman, while Kashan’s follows the structure of the Jalālī calendar: Andargāh after Isfand in spite of the presence of the celebration for the 1\textsuperscript{st} of Isfand\textsuperscript{36}. The different position of Andargāh in calendars of the same area is therefore certain.

An analysis—even a brief one—of the regional names of Iranian months leads to the same results: a gradual movement of the months (of the same months) through the seasons. The months acquire modified names with respect to their new seasonal position as is the case of the “month of Nawrūz” which indicates the last month in the current Caspian calendars\textsuperscript{37}. We have some similar cases, in which the new names of the months are popularly explained by real para-etymologies somehow justifying their newly acquired seasonal position. For example, Barfnāmā-bād, indicating the central month of the summer in the local calendar of Gilan (Gīlān), is an evident popular transformation/deformation of the ancient name (Bahman) in a new name perceived to be currently meaningful\textsuperscript{39}. At a certain point, the term

\textit{Navrūznāma}: 11 l. 16 (ā ṯin-i ṯān, “their [calendrical] custom”; cf. also \textit{idem}: 10 l. 16, 11 ls. 11 and 14), which is perfectly suited to refer to practices linked to the popular Iranian calendrical custom. For a philological analysis of \textit{Navrūznāma’s} passages regarding the history of the Iranian calendar, see Cristofoletti, 2000: 60-66.

\textsuperscript{34} It is possible to discuss whether Nawrūz ‘attracts’ Farwardgān or vice versa (something of an academic question given that Nawrūz indicates here the beginning of Spring and therefore the seasonal moment immediately preceded by the rites of Farwardgān.

\textsuperscript{35} Injawī-ye Šīrāzī 1379/2000-2001: 1, 133-161. Such celebrations have pronounced nawrūzī characteristics, see for example \textit{idem}: I, 141: “In Qamār [Kashan area] for Šāb-i Isfand they practice the same customs as Šāb-i ‘Īd-i Nawrūz”.

\textsuperscript{36} For a detailed account of the situation of the calendar in the area of Kashan, see Taqīzāda, 1350/1971-1972: 139-154. For the situation in Isfahan during the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, see Cristofoletti, 2002: 64-69.

\textsuperscript{37} For “the Sangisar month Nūsūl […]”, an island in this archipelago, which “does not occupy the place of the Persian first month […] but that of the twelfth”, see Sims-Williams, de Blois, 1996: 159.


\textsuperscript{39} To see this, it is sufficient to compare the list of the months from Mazanderan and Gilan,
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Bahman had become inadequate. The following very common para-etymology explaining the month’s new name could have permitted the survival of the new month name itself: “warf + na + māh, i.e. ‘barf nayāmada māh’ i.e. month in which the snow did not fall”⁴⁰. In a similar way, “the mountain dwellers are saying: warf = barf, na mā = nayā mā > barf nayā mā [...] = month in which snow does not fall”⁴¹.

Another example regards the deformation of Šahrīwar-māh. In the local popular calendars, it is Šarīr-māh, i.e. literally “the severe month”. Surely, during the second half of the 19th century, it roughly “corresponded”⁴³ to the month of Day of the official calendar (December-January): if we consider this acquired position in a very cold period, full of snow, the new deformed name becomes quite understandable⁴⁴.

The transformation of Mihr-māh > Amīr-māh (i.e. “the month of the prince”) is also of great interest⁴⁵. Further, given the shifting of the months see Cristoforetti, 2000: 48, with the order of the months from the Iranian calendar. For these regional months’ names see Tāhībāz, 1963: 64; Für Karīm, 1968; Sutūdā, 1954; Pāyanda, 1976-1977: 131-139; Muẓaffarī 1979, 1981(a), 1981(b), 1981(c), 1990-1991; Hūmand, 1996: 57-64.

⁴⁰ Muẓaffarī, 1981(a).
⁴¹ Pāyanda, 1976-1977: 137. Of course it is very curious, and suspect, to stress that there is no snow in a Summer month. But this para-etymology may have been favoured by the difficulty in perceiving the passage from the original wintry month called Bahman-māh, first to Barf-nimāh (or Barf-numāh, “month which shows snow”) in keeping with a cold period, subsequently slightly modified in Barf-na-māh (“month in which there remains no snow”) in an era (more recent) in which the month ended up occupying a position in Summer. In addition, it is noteworthy that the meaning “avalanche” of the term bahman leads lexicographers to stress that one is dealing with snow which breaks away subsequent to an increase in heat: an allusion to a midway season in which the snow thaws.


⁴³ Generally, even scholars who do not believe in the fixed nature of Caspian calendars such as Tāhībāz, 1963: 64-65, and P. Ḥānlarī (see Pāyanda, 1976-1977: 138-139), speak of “correspondence” which certain months of the official solar Hejira calendar, which are obviously stable. Another sound reason for placing this term in quotes is the fact that the correspondence is not exact even in the current historical moment: one should say “such a date currently corresponds” and point out the equivalent date in a solar calendar which is notoriously and unequivocally fixed.

⁴⁴ The tendency to link the months’ names to the seasonal position in which the months nowadays occur by means of para-etymology is also widespread among the shepherds of the Caspian area. For example, about the para-etymology of Šarīr-māh, of Murāl-māh and of Siyāmāh, see Pāyanda, 1976-1977: 134-136.

⁴⁵ In Wūznāma-yī buzurg-i ṭabarī, 1: 176, we find an “Amīr mā/Mīrmā/Mīremā” in “correspondence” with Isfand (!); see Taqīzāda, 1937-1938: 24; Muẓaffarī, 1990-1991: 409; Hūmand, 1996: 114; Pāyanda, 1976-1977: 135. The Caspian name of this month, if seen in relation to the seasonal moment indicated, leads one to think of a reference to the custom of
throughout the seasons, it is possible to discern the meaning of Tīr (IV) as “Autumn” (moreover attested to by the literary lexicography\textsuperscript{46}). This could be of particular interest in the field of researches about Tīštrya\textsuperscript{47}.

However, at least in Mazanderan (Māzandarān), we find ‘dialect’ forms of months’ names of the official calendar that are identical to the traditional ones. Thus, if there are no mistakes or misunderstandings on the concept of ‘correspondence’ (a very ambiguous word in this matter), “Owne-mā” is the name of the month followed by the five Epagomenae days in the local solar calendar as well as the ‘dialect’ form indicating the month Ābān of official solar calendar used in the country\textsuperscript{48}. In addition, there are not only shifts, but also stratifications of successive shifts different from place to place and which regard even single months of the calendar of the same place. As we do not possess a general repertory on this matter, for the moment we have one certainty: some shifts, with repeated use (in different spots) of the same 12 months’ names (always recognizable, even with alterations), have undoubtedly taken place. This is the only clearly established fact when facing the puzzling question of the Iranian calendar and its kabīşa.

\textbf{The “kabīša of the Persians”}

The written sources (therefore of a certain cultural level) deal with practices of a different type, in which the retouching of months names is just more sophisticated and self-conscious. One of these is from the 11\textsuperscript{th} century. According to the \textit{Zīj al-mufrad} by Abū Ja’far Muḥammad ibn Ayyūb al-Ḥāsib al-Ṭabarī:

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\textsuperscript{47} Cf. Boyce, 2005: 2.

The calculation of the kabīsa by the Persians in antiquity was a month in every 120 years, and now that practice has been left behind. [...] Their practice was the following: when the Sun reached the First Point of Aries in the first of the month of Day, they called this month ĀŸar-māh and Ābān the month of Āyar. And the five stolen days [scil. the Andargāh] were counted at the end of the month of Ābān, four months remaining before the entrance of the Sun into Aries. The day Hurmaz [= 1st] of the month of Day, Yazdajird was killed and the usage of kabīsa was discontinued ".

A difficult arises. At first sight, one could think that the order of the two last sentences has been reversed. In such a case, the passage could be plainly understandable: the fall of the Sasanian sovereignty involved a fossilization of the late-Sasanian calendrical scheme with Andargāh positioned between Ābān and Ādar. But the verbal forms āmadī ... Ệndàndì ... dàštandì induce to think of a logical sequence, thus averting from this hypothesis, while introducing the possibility of an inserted gloss (i.e. Ệhār māh mānda tā äftāb ba-hamal šawad). I rather think that this important text—on which the writer has been working for sometime—explicitly refers to a new kabīsa, which occurred after the “last” one, recorded by Bīrūnī; but there is a sort of contradiction due to an extreme form of synthesis. In the first part, the text explains clearly the ‘intercalary’ mechanism as a renaming of the months with explicit reference to ancient times (dar qadīm) i.e. to the moment (Sasanian age) in which the month Ādar was astronomically the first month of the Spring. Time passes and the mechanism implies that, when the Sun enters Aries on the 1st of Day, the month of Day must become the new Ādar, and thus the month of Ādar must become the new Ābān. This mechanism is

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49 Ms. (Browne) O.1.10 of the Cambridge University Library: 3a.
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blocked by the fact that just when the new kabīsa should have been operated, Sasanian sovereignty came to an end. Therefore, given the non-functioning of the mechanism, the Andargāh remains positioned in a point in which four months remain before the entrance of the Sun into Aries: a situation which reflects at the same time the ‘ideal’ scheme (Farwardīn in Aries) and the ‘real’ (actual, contemporary to the author) scheme of the calendar. In other words sometime before the moment in which the author wrote his work, the Andargāh (positioned between Ābān and Āoğar) fell in fact four months before the period in which the Sun reached the vernal equinox point. In any case, the most relevant fact in the text is that for this author the kabīsa of the Persians implied a veritable ‘renaming’.50

Another interesting testimony concerning the problem comes from an illustrious author of the 13th century. In the section of the Ājāyib al-maḥliqaṭ wa ḡarāyib al-mawjūdāt dedicated to the Persian months, Abū Yahyā Zakariyyāʾ ibn Muhammad ibn Mahmūd al-Qazwīnī refers to the Ḥamsa al-ahāra (= Andargāh)51. He says that these five days fall on the end of the year (fī āḥar al-sana)52, clearly according to the Iranian calendrical situation of his own times. Some pages later53, he gives the description of the month of Ābān. Here, Qazwīnī affirms that the Ḥamsa al-ahāra occurs in this month and he explains that these are the days devoted to the return of the “souls” (arwāḥ) of dead people to their homes. In this case the stated position of the Ḥamsa al-ahāra reflects a typical attitude of a person who spends his time over the books. Then, he continues:

50 The current natural equivalence Āoğar = Aries witnesses for the plausibility that the so-called 8th intercalation was the only one ever operated or at least the only one that had an appreciable impact on the Iranian sensibility. Curiously enough, a “Latter Ābān” could “be understood as a later name of the 9th month”, but so according to “a document written in the year 260 = A.D. 492” (!), cf. Sims-Williams, de Blois, 1996: 155. A certain degree of confusion can not be excluded in the sources used by Tabari.

51 Sarton, 1975: 869 writes: “The establishment of the original text and its dating is thus exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. The two shorter versions are dated 1262-1263 and 1275-1276; these seem be nearer to the original”. The authorship of the testimony could change but not the testimony per se.

52 Qazwīnī, Ājāyib al-maḥliqaṭ: 79.

53 Qazwīnī, Ājāyib al-maḥliqaṭ: 82.
“Among them [sic. the Persians] there exists divergence on this, some people asserting that the Ḥamsa al-aḥjira pertains to Ābān-māh [sic] and some people asserting that the Ḥamsa al-aḥjira pertains to Āḏar-māh [sic]; they keep to this scrupulously, because this is one of the pillars of their religion”.

Given the importance of this divergence, which involves “a pillar of the religion”, it is clearly rather a divergence on the right occurrence time of Andargāh than a mere academic question whether the Andargāh is the end of Ābān or the beginning of Āḏar. It is on this matter that the Zīj al-mufrad is enlightening. While in the Zīj al-mufrad we find the explanation of a sort of ‘refined’ theory on the Persian ‘intercalary’ system (other than the mathematical-astronomical theory on Persian intercalation elaborated by Kūšyār and Bīrūnī)\textsuperscript{54}, in this text we find just an information regarding a position of the Andargāh (following Āḏar) which is different from the traditional position (following Ābān). In the case of an Andargāh following Āḏar two possibilities may be noted:

1) someone has simply moved the Andargāh to after Āḏar.  
2) someone has done that which Muḥammad ibn Ayyūb says in his Zīj al-mufrad, i.e. he has called Ābān the month of Āḏar, and has placed the five days of Epagomenae after a new Ābān (which is \textit{the facto} an old Āḏar).

In both cases, he who moved the Andargāh and then states that “the five days pertain to (i.e. follow) Āḏar-māh” expresses himself in traditional terms, i.e. referring to the traditional scheme of the calendar, ignoring any renaming of the months. However the Andargāh after Ābān could also be attributed to those who had moved it and renamed all the months of the year. Both the mere moving and the moving along with months’ renaming are defined kabīsa in the texts.

We lack evidence on a further kabīsa moving the Andargāh to a position between Day and Bahman, but we have many on a subsequent kabīsa moving it to a position between Bahman and Isfand. Its memory is so effective as to be reflected or reproduced even in the Jalālī calendar. This

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\textsuperscript{54} For the section of the ms. in Berlin of the Zīj al-jāmī by Kūšyār on the intercalation of the Persians, see Ideler 1825-1826: 547-548 (transl.), 624-625 (text). Bīrūnī, Āṯār al-bāgiya: 10 l. 21 and foll., 44 l. 8 and foll.
concerns the Ā‘īn-i Isfand, the “usage of Isfand”; an ‘old’ Nawrūz which everyone remembers. Innumerable testimonies (more or less explicit) on the Nawrūz of Isfand speak to his diffusion in large part of the Iranian territory and beyond. A. Krasnowolska, who does not demonstrate particular interest in our problem: “The first of Esfand as the year’s beginning is still known in some regions of Central Iran (Kāšān, Natanz, Sāve) [...]. This seems to be a relic of a non-intercalated, early Sasanian year. In the Kāši time-reckoning where the months have 30 days each, the panje falls between Bahman and Esfand. A festival held on the first of Esfand combines the features of Nouruz and of the ancient Esfandarmaz day. It appears as a duplicate Iranian New Year: “in numerous instances an equivalent to Nouruz (replacing or doubling the ordinary Nouruz) was celebrated on the first of Esfand, in Iran and Tajikistan as well as among the Zoroastrians in India (Nouruz-e Daryā’i or Zavoli)”.56

Indirect testimonies in this regard are numerous and are largely cited in the valuable book by A. Injawī-yi Širāzī on Winter festivals, customs and beliefs. We have already made reference to Šab-i Isfand, or Isbandī, particularly present in the area of Kashan. In Karūd (near Talaqān) the month of Āftāb ba-hūt (“Sun in Pisces” = Isfand) is considered part of Spring. The first day of Āftāb ba-hūt is a holiday particularly appreciated by locals, characterized by typical nawrūzī customs. In Alwīr (baš-i Ḩarqān, šahristān-i Sāwa) the holiday is held the 1st of Isfand and explicitly called Nawrūz-i qadīmīn (“New Year’s Day of the ancestors”).57

The author of the Zīj al-mufrad, contemporary of Alp Arslān and the Seljukid ruler Malikšāh, gives his own interpretation of the question of the Iranian time-reckoning regarding a calendrical practice still in use possibly in his time in some areas or some environments—recognized as typical of the “old” calendar. As we know, this practice would have consisted in displacing the

55 For a description of the holiday in the era of Šāh ʿAbbās II see the Šarb-i ā‘īn-i sipand in Wāḥīd Qazwīnī, ‘Abbāsnāma: 198-199.
57 Krasnowolska, 1998: 67. The identification of the Parsi holiday with the customs of the 1st of Isfand is incorrect, see infra: 56-57. This oversight was incautiously accepted by Cristoforetti, 2000: 131-132.
58 See n. 93. Just as occurs on the Caspian for the names of the months, in Kashan they attempt to attribute to the Nawrūz of Isfand (Isfand 1st), which is in reality simply a Nawrūz from another era, some current and local seasonal attributes: so that the certitude of the end of the bad season would be more important and solemn than the Nawrūz of Farwardīn itself!
Andargāh to the following month with renaming of all the months. When al-Ṭabarî states “now (aknūn) it has been abandoned” (now, not in the times of Yazdgard III) this could also be a reference to the new Jalālī reforms, intended to stabilize the calendar. But, while identifying the new Nawrūz could have always been simple enough, possibly the displacement of the Andargāh could have been more difficult, an act requiring sovereign assent. A precise echo of this matter may be found in the discourse on chronology of the Muntahā al-ıdrāk fi taqāṣīm al-aflāk by Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Almād al-Ṭābitī al-Ḥarāqī. Concerning the year 500 Yazdgārdī (beginning Feb. 12th, 1131, ending Feb. 11th, 1132), the author writes:


“The Saturday, 12th of the month of Rabī‘ II in the year [52]5, year 500 in the era of Yazdajird, the turn of the kabīsa returned to the month of Urdibhišt and therefore we held kabīsa in the month of Farwardin and we added the 5 epagomenal days to its last days and so its days numbered thirty-five”.

61. *Infra*; see also Cristoforetti, 2000: 64-66 e 138-142.

62. In some manuscripts, such as the Berliner one studied by Taqīzāda (see n. 123), he is called Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Jabbār ibn Muḥammad. He was a Persian astronomer, geographer and mathematician of the first half of 12th century, writing in Arabic. His name refers probably to the village named Ḥaraq near Marw. For that reason he is also called al-Marwāzī. He composed the text in 527 ca. (1132-1133). He died in Marw in 533 (1138-1139).


64. Taqīzāda, 1937-1938: 151, (who studied the Ms. Lbg. 33 from the Königlichen Bibliothek of Berlin) translated the passage as follows: “...dar rīz-i šanba-yi 12 rabī‘ al-āḏār-i sana-yi 525 hijrī mutābīq-i sana-yi 500 yazdgārdī navbat-i ------- [illegible term] ba-urdibhišt bar ġāst wa mā farwardin-māh-rā kabīsa karda wa ḥamsa-rā ba-āḏār-i ān ilḥāq kārdīm wa farwardīn 35 rīz šud...”. The Iranian scholar following the illegible term adds “(? zāhīrān kabīsa)”, i.e. “evidently kabīsa”; this conjecture is confirmed through comparison with the ms. from Florence, in which we clearly read nawbat al-kabīsa. Here we find the words between double square brackets wich do not appear in the Berliner Ms. Lbg. 33, expunged by me. It was not possible for me to proceed to a further comparison with the Ms. 2499 in Paris.
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So at this time (Rabi‘ II 12th, 525 Hijrī = March 14th, 1131 = Urdibihisht 1st, 500 Yazdgardī = vernal equinox) the Andargāh was shifted to the end of Farvardīn, but the place and the person responsible for this operation are not indicated in the text. The same information is to be found as a prevision in Šahmardān b. Abī al-Ḥayr Rāzī’s Rawḍat al-munajjinīn (ms. Or. Quart. 848 of the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin: fol. 1. For the restitution of this title to the incomplete ms. containing it, see Taqīzāda, 1937-1938:

“... when the Sun will reach the first of Aries in the month of Urdibihisht it will be necessary to operate so that Isfandārmad becomes a 30-day month, the five epagomenal days being shifted to the end of Farvardīn”.

The persistence of this practice is confirmed by observations on the modern calendars of at least two regions of Iranian world: one from the extreme eastern periphery, Pamir, and one not far from Tehran (Ṭalaqān), although the zones are both very isolated due to the mountainous and difficult terrain. In Pamir (in many centers of Badakhshan such as Āwšān e Šūganān and surrounding areas) there are three Nawrūz coexisting today: the ‘regular’ Nawrūz of 1st of Farvardīn, one preceding 17-18th February (end of Bahman)65 and one following Urdibihisht66.

On the uses of the area of Ṭalaqān (ca. 30 km south of Fūman—region of Rašt in the Gilan province) located in a mountainous area, we have the following report: “Panje days begin from 25th of Farvardin of every year called ‘Panje Pitok’ in Taleghan and its surrounding villages. Like people of other cities, people of Taleghan calculated every month for thirty days which totally became 360 days in every year. By this calculation, there were five days that belonged to none of the months; even people did not consider these days as the days of their age [in the old fashion]”67. While in the case of Nawrūz of Urdibihisht of Pamir the author of the article does not provide any information on Andargāh, in the case of Ṭalaqān, it is evident that we are in the presence of a memory of an Andargāh situated between Farvardīn and Urdibihisht68.

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65 The holiday, characterized by lighting of bonfires, implies precisely a Wednesday. This must have to do with the typology of the Čahāršanba-yi sūri, the eve of the Wednesday preceding Nawrūz, which in some regions expands to cover all the Wednesdays of the month of Isfand; see Cristoforetti, 2002: 69.
66 Karamšâhyef, 1997: 687-688; unfortunately, the author does not specify the exact days.
68 A verse by Daqīqī, included in the Šāhnāma by Firdawsī, recites, Wolff, 1935: 15-155, hamī tājī bar jahān yaksarra cī urdibihisht āfāb az barra, “...as the Sun in the month of Urdibihisht which shines in the Zodiac sign of Aries”. Taqīzāda, 1937-1938: 175 n. 336, had
The shift of the Andargāh must have occurred after the reform of Malikšāh (1076-1079), i.e. even after the moment in which officially and scientifically the method for maintaining Nawrūz on the 1° Arietis was established\(^6\). In these places (rather different) the displacement of Nawrūz was accomplished by following an ancestral system.

Seventy years before the Seljuk reforms of time-reckoning, in fact, the Nawrūz of the vague solar calendar, due to slowly falling behind, ended up occupying the position of 1° Arietis (March 15\(^{th}\)) during four years (1004-1007). For the first time, the official Nawrūz was located in proximity with the seasonal moment to which it ideally belonged according to the Iranian tradition; vernal equinox. In the Iranian world, this event was seen to be relevant. This is witnessed by the fact that in the time of the Buwaihid rulers of the Caliphate the Andargāh of the Yazdgardi calendar was moved from the position between Ābān and Āḏar, which it occupied officially in the Sasanian era, to the year’s end after the twelfth month (Isfand). We have already observed that in the time of Daqīqī (second half of the 4\(^{th}\) century of the Hejira; corresponding to the last four decades of the 10\(^{th}\) century and first decade of the 11\(^{th}\)) in the month of Urdībihišt the Sun was not in Aries but between Taurus and Gemini, and that “even calculating like those who considered that Ḥamsa-yi mustaraqa fell at the end of Isfandārnād—i.e. those whose Nawrūz fell five days later—it is not possible that a day in the month of Urdībihišt fell in Aries before 374 Hijrī Qamarī [sic: evidently Yazdgardi]”.

Therefore, if the Sun could not have been in Aries during Urdībihišt before the end of the first decade of the 11\(^{th}\) century (in that period the 1\(^{st}\) of Urdībihišt began to fall in Aries in the last days of that astronomical month) the correspondence given in the text could denounce an interpolation in the original operated between the beginning of the 11\(^{th}\) century and the first half of the 12\(^{th}\), or some time later, while the memory of an Urdībihišt practically contemporaneous with Aries was still vivid; consider that the 30\(^{th}\) of Urdībihišt still coincided with the vernal equinox in 1244-1247. The accurate Ḥālīqi Mutlaq’s edition of the Šāhnāma: 90 see. 148, n. 22, does not recognize interpolation, but it is significant that the verse in question is missing in the Cod. L, i.e the British Or. 1403.

\(^6\) This happened under the Turk sovereigns, who far from forbidding the Zoroastrians to intercalate, rather attempted to induce them to intercalate in a scientific manner. In fact, a certain propensity to maintain ties with the ancient sensitivity may be deduced from the beginning of the Jalālī calendar on the 19\(^{th}\) of the Zoroastrian Farwardīn of the time, that is the day of the Nawrūz-i Ţahrāzmshāhī, the day of Sun exaltation. Historically, the first in Iran to definitively fix (i.e. astronomically fix) the Nawrūz to the vernal equinox was the Turk sovereign, Jalāl al-Dawla Malikšāh, who instituted the calendar known as Jalālī or Malikī. Previously, the idea of the necessity of a Nawrūz fixed to the solar year, in addition to numerous projects and attempts at reform of the Persian calendar by the Caliphs, is reflected in Nuṣayrī literature. In Majmūʿ al-aʿyād, the “Book of Festivals”, Abū Saʿīd Maymūn b. Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī (d. 424/1034-I035) opens the chapter on Nawrūz saying: “[Nawrūz] always falls on the fourth day of April” [my italics]; see Bar-Asher, 2003: 21. The Yazdgardi Nawrūz fell April 4\(^{th}\) in 924-927. Therefore the author could not have made reference to the 1° of Farwardīn Yazdgardi, but rather to the Nawrūz-i Ťahrāzmshāhī at 19° Arietis.
already mentioned the initial hostility of certain Zoroastrian circles. However, the whole of the Zoroastrian communities ended by accepting the new calendrical form; and this is the only change to the calendar generally considered by all Zoroastrians. This is the era in which we find the first, and for time to come, the only, solar Iranian dating (certainly a dramatic event!) in a monumental inscription\textsuperscript{70}. These data confirm the general tendency to place Andargāh at the end of Winter. In the isolated regions mentioned above people simply retouched the calendar by repeating the operation of 1006. Probably around the 20s of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century—when, in a calendrical system which still remained solar and vague, Nawrūz was behind by roughly a month with respect to the beginning of Spring—the Andargāh and Nawrūz were displaced by a month, thus giving birth to a calendar with Nawrūz on the 1\textsuperscript{st} of Urdibihist and Andargāh immediately before, i.e. at the end of Farvardīn (putting into practice the ‘intercalary’ method mentioned in \textit{Muntahā al-īdrāk}).

Later, due to the contact with the fixed and official forms of the calendar, an automatic identification of the local months’ names with the official ones was probably performed there, celebrating the Nawrūz of the 1\textsuperscript{st} of Farvardīn, while maintaining the memory of the presence of an Andargāh at the end of Farvardīn; this was the case of Ṭalaqān. In the case of Pamir, side by side with the ‘regular’ Nawrūz of Farvardīn, the memory of a Nawrūz of Urdibihist has survived. There we find no evidence of the survival of Andargāh too, but the question requires an on-site investigation to confirm.

The Indian Parsees appear to have applied another kind of \textit{kabīsa}, the one described in the \textit{Zīj al-mufrad}, paraphrasing which, one could describe it in the following manner: when the Sun reached the First Point of Aries on the first of Urdibihist, they called this Farvardīn, and Farvardīn became Ḩisārmaš. In spite of a prevailing hostility to changes in the calendar in Zoroastrian quarters, rather than think of the only effective insertion of a supplementary month in the entire history of the Iranian calendar\textsuperscript{71}, it is preferable to conceive of it as something that is amply testified as widespread throughout the Iranian world. Yet again a \textit{kabīsa} according to a traditional custom.

\textsuperscript{70} See Cristoforetti, 2004: 10-14.

\textsuperscript{71} Boyce, 2005: 20, writes: “[...] when the reform of 1006 was implemented, it was resolved among all Zoroastrians concerned that regular intercalations of a month every 120 years should be maintained thereafter". But only the Parsees - and not “their co-religionists in Iran”, “[...] made the only intercalation of a month ever actually attested in the history of the Zoroastrian calendar".
So the cultured Parsi priests performed a renaming of the months, evidencing a reasoning concerning the topic. In Iran in popular environments, the inevitable contradictions were resolved through the use of popular para-etymologies. The result at any rate is the same\textsuperscript{72}. Subsequently, nothing similar was apparently done by the Indian Parsees, but it would be necessary to investigate the matter in a more specific venue.

In conclusion, the mechanism afterword defined by Arabographic astronomers as \textit{kabīsha} was extremely simple, but gave rise to various confusions. There was no true intercalation but rather a periodic readjustment, with or without renaming of the month. This practice occurred only on the popular—also provincial in case—level, as officially only once in the Sasanian era the Andargāh seems to have moved to a place following Ābān\textsuperscript{73}. At the beginning of the 11\textsuperscript{th} century, something similar was done displacing the Andargāh until after Isfand, but during the whole of Islamic age we can observe less thoroughly welcomed practices.

\textit{The 5-day discrepancy between the ‘internal’ and ‘peripheral’ form of the Iranian calendar}

We have now to deal with the question of the origin of the disjunction between the ‘internal’ form and the ‘peripheral’ form of the Iranian ‘civil’ calendar. This (according to most scholars) had presumably to do with a displacement of Andargāh in the original common calendar. The positioning of it after Ābān would have taken effect only on territories under Sasanian control, leaving out Transoxiana and Armenia (a fact inducing to think of a sovereign act)\textsuperscript{74}.

\textsuperscript{72} If the great cycle of the Iranian vague solar calendar – which includes as many years as it takes for Nawrūz to return to the First Point of Aries (“\textit{wa āftāb ba-farwardīn-i Ḩūš ba-awwal-i hamal bāz āmad}”, see \textit{Nawrūznāma: 8 ll. 7-8}) after having gone backwards through all the seasons, was over in 1004, it should have begun roughly one and a half thousand years prior. See Bickerman, 1967: 198, 204. De Blois, 1996: 48, writes: “[...] the attempts by scholars, from Bērūnī to Marshak, to calculate the date of the introduction of the Zoroastrian calendar by counting the number of supposed intercalations and then reckoning backwards from the assumed date of the last intercalation, are all of no avail”. However, both in the case in which one affirms the existence of an effective intercalary system and in the case of \textit{kabīsha} as described in the \textit{Muntahā al-idrāk}, the difficulty in tracing the origins of the Iranian calendrical system remains the same.

\textsuperscript{73} Baliński, 1990: 101, hypothesizes two displacements of Andargāh: one in Parthian and the other in Sasanian age.

\textsuperscript{74} Boyce, 2003: 59, coherently with his own theory, finds “traces of the same double
Regarding the official reasons for the displacement of Andargāh, so following Ābān, the question is open. If the readjustment was done to place Andargāh in the natural position of Farwardgān, this must have occurred in an era in which Nawrūz fell at the beginning of Ādār and in which Ādār was the first month of Spring. Apart from the real motivations of this official displacement, it could have produced the ‘disorder’ of which we have written, that is the 5-day discrepancy between the two calendar forms. Caution is needed on the matter, as M. Boyce objected many years ago: “All such explanations fail, however, because of a fact that has hitherto passed unnoticed, namely that the duplication affected not only Nō Rōz and Mihragān, but also all six gahāmbārs, and so ran right through the religious year. No mere mistake following an intercalation could have had so general a result; and no discrepancy in placing the Epagomenae could have affected all months of two different calendars”. This is certainly true. We know that recurrence of doublings covers the entire arc of the calendar, but one can also turn the reasoning around: the presence of doubles may lead one to imagine the occurrence of many a kabīsa, even if not attaining official status. The problem is complicated by the fact that these interventions can have taken place not everywhere, not at every moment theoretically available and—what is worse—at times here and at times there. With the additional consequence that what may have had place is not only iterations in one calendar, but also holidays celebrated in the same moment, which is identified by a date which differs by five units in two different regional variants of the calendar: one variant (which underwent kabīsa) dating from a certain 10th, the other (which did not undergo kabīsa) dating from the 5th. One may think—but other scenarios are possible—of the case of Bar-Sada of the 5th of Bahman, which Bīrūnī records, without specifying further (in spite of the use, common also to other authors, of mythological webs woven to

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75 On the question see de Blois, 1996: 47. G. Scarcia, 2003 has provided us with a hypothesis based on the exegesis of a passage from Bīrūnī. Higgins 1939: 1-21 also touched upon the issue.

76 Boyce, 1970: 514.
explain the distinction between the two holidays)\textsuperscript{77}. We know that the data collected by Birūnī concern several levels, not a single system with a general internal coherence\textsuperscript{78}. Therefore, the Birunian Bar-Sada or Naw-Sada could be the fruit of the recording in a one and only Iranian scheme of holidays of news regarding the same occurrence of a holiday, originating from various sources who refer to two variants of the Iranian calendar. He who refers to a calendar undergoing kabīsa will speak of Sada as the holiday of the 10\textsuperscript{th} of Bahman; he who refers to a calendar not undergoing kabīsa will say that that Sada falls on the 5\textsuperscript{th} of Bahman and is the “new” Sada, i.e. that of those who follow the new calendar, i.e. have undergone kabīsa\textsuperscript{79}.

A situation that is not identical but is related to the same correspondence mechanism between a calendar which has undergone kabīsa and one which has not, is found in India. With the Šenšāī Parsee faction—“[…] which […] begins all of his months exactly 30 days later than the Qadīmī months with the same name”\textsuperscript{80}—there is a holiday of the 6\textsuperscript{th} of Isfand (Awardādsāl\textsuperscript{81} or Nawrūz-i daryāī or Nawrūz-i zāwuli\textsuperscript{82}) which coincides with the Nawrūz of

\textsuperscript{77} See Cristoforetti, 2002: 203. It is to be kept in mind that the ‘peripheral’ Bahman is a month that keeps pace with the ‘internal’ one.

\textsuperscript{78} The following note by Belardi is vital in this regard, 1977: 84: “Al-Birūnī riferisce ora per esperienza personale, ora sulla base di testimonianze, ora riportando opinioni di ‘interpreti’ della tradizione persiana, ora, infine, corredando il suo discorso di citazioni derivate da dottrine cosmologiche arcaiche”.

\textsuperscript{79} During the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, we find a Sada in the 5\textsuperscript{th} of Bahman in Ḫūr (baḥāī Jandaq wa Bībābānak); see Cristoforetti, 2002: 73. In this case there is an ulterior complication constituted by the presence of a monthly Jalālī scheme, or even by the adoption of the Hijrī Šamsī calendar (in use in Iran from March 25\textsuperscript{th}, 1925). It should also be considered the possibility that, for example, in certain areas of Mazanderan and in the region of Sangsar near Simnān, the five days of Epagomenae did not occupy the final position in the local Jalālī calendar, rather following the month of Ābān by inertia and were not counted since they were not present between Isfand and Farwardīn; in this case, the 5\textsuperscript{th} of Bahman of that local calendar would correspond to the 10\textsuperscript{th} of the official one. Šahrwīnī, 1978: 55, speaks of the 10\textsuperscript{th} of Bahman referring to the custom of Ḫūr, in spite of the fact that he cites expressly Yaḡmāī, 1946: 34, who speaks of the 5\textsuperscript{th} of Bahman.

\textsuperscript{80} de Blois, 1996: 50.

\textsuperscript{81} Boyce, 2005: 20: “Awardādsālgāh, ‘Time of the abandoned (New) Year’ or, in colloquial Parsi Gujarati, Sōdī Nahrōj, ‘Given-up Nō Rūz’”.

\textsuperscript{82} The existence of a holiday with this ‘marine’ name among the Indian Parsees—attested to by the second half of the 14\textsuperscript{th} century, Kattrak, 1960: 110—in addition to reveal an obvious relation with the coastal areas of the Persian Gulf, if compared with the Nawrūz-i daryāī / Nawrūz-i ‘arab of the Hurmuzgān Region, tells us probably that that adjective is used to counterpose a popular local Nawrūz to an official one. But why a Nawrūz-i zāwuli, which presupposes a background of a different nature? One could think of the Sistanic reform of the calendar by Ḥalaf ibn Aḥmad of which we read in Nawrūznāma. In this case the Sistanic ruler
the Qadimī calendar (= Yazdgardī calendar post 1006), in which there is no a similar festival in the 6th of Isfand. Dastūr Mollā Fīrūz (belonging to the Qadimī current) maintained in 1830 that the holiday of the 6th of Isfand was instituted by the Parsi Indians, when they used an “intercalary month”, forming the Parsee or Šenšāī calendar, to commemorate Nawrūz of the Qadimī (= Yazdgardī) calendar that they had used up to that point. Therefore, contrary to Krasnowolska’s claims that the Parsee Awardāsīl corresponds to the customs of the 1st of Isfand, we see the record of a holiday (Nawrūz) of a first day of the month celebrated in a sixth day, separated by five days.

But problems of this type can be found also in Central Asia, where the non-occurred displacement of the Andargān should not have provoked reiterations. In this venue we are interested instead in the eventuality of reiterations in Central Asia as well. In fact, what do we know about a curious ‘Nawrūz of the sixth day’ in Central Asia as well where it should not occur? From a passage of Naršāhī’s Ta’rīḥ-i Buḥārā it is possible to deduce the importance of the 6th day of the first Sogdian month. Moreover, some clues about the importance of the 6th day of the first Sogdian month could be deduced from the Firdawsian statement according to which, the coronation of Bahram Cūbin—for better or worse the supposed ancestor of the Samanid dynasty of Bukhara—would have taken place in the 11th of Ādur. The fact that we are dealing with Ādur and not the obvious Farwardīn is no bother, since we are dealing with the ‘true Farwardīn’ of the time, i.e. the month of Aries. The 11th of Farwardīn in Ctesiphon corresponded to the 6th day of the 1st Sogdian month, i.e., in such a case, to a hypothetical “Great Nawrūz” of the Sogdians. All this to say that could have attempted to fix the Nawrūz of Isfand. This hypothesis was not considered in Cristoforetti, forthcoming.

84 For a detailed discussion, see Cristoforetti, 2006.b.
85 The possibility of the coronation of Bahram Cūbin on the 11th of Ādur after meeting with nobles (a Firdawsian statement) could reverse the judgement of Inostrancev, 1909: 92. This scholar, concerning the attribution of six segments of five days each in which the month of Farwardīn was divided, preferred Kasrawī’s testimony to that of Bīrūnī. In fact, while Kasrawī speaks of the first segment (1st-5th of the month) as that of the “nobles” and of the second segment (6th-10th of the month) as that of the “king”, in Bīrūnī we have the opposite situation: the segment dedicated to the nobles is the second one (6th-10th of the month).
86 Higgins, 1939: 10, tried to explain the 11th of Ādur in Firdawsi’s Šāhnāma as a 6th of Ādur (= 6th of Farwardīn = “Great Nawrūz”) placed on the 11th in consequence of the “cut” of the five days of Epagomenae by Jusras II. According to G. Scarica, 2000: 199, Higgins can be criticised given that, if that cut is the cause of the subsequent duplication of Nawrūz (and therefore of the becoming into existence of the Great Nawrūz), how is possible to have a reference to a Great Nawrūz in the same time of this cut of five days?
one can not exclude a priori some eventual relevance of the 6th day of the 1st month even in Central Asia (6th day of the 1st month of the ‘peripheral’ form of Iranian calendar = 11th day of the 1st month of the ‘internal’ one). Such a relevance would be indispensable to some of F. Grenet’s arguments87.

The Summer Nawrūz

One final issue: there are many modern traces of a Nawrūz or popular New Year close to the Summer solstice or in the middle of Summer. On the basis of informations provided by Ṣan‘atī88, in the area of Kerman (Kirmān) known as Lālazār (in the district of Bardsīr/Sīrjān), beside the official calendar and the Hejira lunar calendar used for religious purposes, there is a local calendar divided in two variants: an “agrarian” (rūstā’ī) variant and a “shepherds’” (čūpānī) variant. The former begins the year with vernal equinox. The latter, according to the local expression, begins the year az ḥawāli-yi nawadum, i.e. “around the 90th day [after the vernal equinox]”. This indicates that the vernal equinox is the canonical seasonal reference point. The first five days from nawadum cover the Summer solstice period exactly89. These are called days “not to be counted” (nābur) and represent the local form of Andargāh. The remaining 360 days are divided into months of 30 days in the ancient style90. The months’ names of the local calendar correspond more or less to the astrological ones (Hamal, Ṭawr etc.) with some noteworthy exceptions91, and the modern ‘Zoroastrian’ months’ names came into use only in the last century with the spread of schooling.

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87 Grenet, 2005. On the importance of the 6th day in universal phenomenology, see Belardi, 1977: 72-75.
89 The correspondence is with the period Ḥur dād 29th-Ṭīr 2nd of the official solar calendar, and Ṭīr 1st-5th of the Jalālī calendar, i.e. June 19th-23rd; current average Summer solstice date = June 21st.
90 Along with the ‘astrological’ division of the year in twelve months / Zodiac signs, there is another way to divide the principal seasons (Summer and Winter), in “big” and “small” čilla (periods of 40 or 20 days) according to a widespread Iranian model.
91 Ṣan‘atī, 1980-1981: 693, records, for example, a Mīzān (= Libra) oddly corresponding to Šahrīwar, which is the month of Sunbula / Ḥūša (= Virgo). The month of Libra is the following month (Mihr), called locally Mihrjūn, with clear reference to the holiday of Mihr gān which in ancient times characterised that month. Displacements such as the one mentioned lead one to imagine readjustment periods on this calendar with archaic characteristics, even if, given the unsystematized facts supplied by the Iranian scholar (interesting for the anthropological aspects of the local traditions) it is not possible to formulate a precise hypothesis on the matter.
Beside this Nawrūz-i čūpānī falling on the Summer solstice, widespread on the Persian Gulf coast there are various testimonies of a Nawrūz differing from the official Spring Nawrūz and clearly connected to the sea. However this Nawrūz is not as much solsticial as it is rather related to mid-Summer. The local scholar Sadīd al-Saltāna reported: “The Nawrūz-i daryā or [Nawrūz-i] ‘arāb92—on the basis of which the captains unfurl the sails and undertake the voyage—is really the ancient Nawrūz, the Nawrūz-i āmma. Its beginning is from the first of the ancient month of Farwardīn, which corresponded to the sign of the Lion and the Western month of August […]”93. Sadīd al-Saltāna records the information in an approximate manner. Defining Nawrūz-i āmma (“common”) this Summer New Year of the Persian Gulf coast, he creates a curious pastiche of modern data and literary notions, which after a few lines is reflected in the definition he gives of the official Nawrūz of the 1° Arietis as Nawrūz-i ḥāṣṣa (“particular”). The approximate nature of these informations can be seen by comparing the dates of the Nawrūz-i daryā (which seems to correspond to the 1° Leonis, conventionally considered the 1st of Murdād = July 23rd) and the dates indicated in a sort of proverbial almanac reporting the subdivisions of the year and the principal atmospheric events characterizing it94. Well, on the basis of the correspondences indicated, the Nawrūz-i daryā should correspond to the 31st of Murdād (= August 22nd) of the official calendar, i.e. between the sign of Leo and that of the Virgin! I. Rā’in, informing us that Nawrūz-i daryā is considered the beginning of the year and nautical activities following the end of the 60-day typhoon, gives us the precise date: the 9th of Murdād (= July 31st)95. Z. ʿAršī, who while knowing of the text of Sadīd al-Saltāna bases himself on the dates of Rā’in, speaks of the local peasant custom in starting the year in Summer: “The people of the sea had their own particular calendar and, coherently with the agrarian (mahallī) and marine (daryāʾī) calendars, consider the 9th of Murdād [= July 31st] to be the start of Farwardīn-i daryāʾī”96.

92 This name formally recalls one of the musical modes dedicated to Nawrūz; see Amīnī Sum, 1993: 89-90.
94 The author places this almanac after the lines quoted in the text. Given its relative interest for the matter discussed here, I excerpt the following in translation: “Sixty days after Nawrūz[-i daryā] there will be the lukīth typhoon; eighty days after Nawrūz[-i daryā] a Virginis will rise [...]; the 212th day is the 1° Arietis, the Nawrūz-i ḥāṣṣa [...]; the 260th day, the Pleiades set [...].”
96 ʿAršī, 1997: 18. Unfortunately, ignoring at the moment the local months’ names, I have no way to know if ʿAršī’s name for the first month of this Gulf calendar corresponds effectively...
The New Year’s Day in the sign of Leo of the Persian Gulf coast finds its equivalent in Gilan, where the year begins with a month named significantly the “month of Nawrūz” close to the halfway through the sign of Leo: “The most important holiday of the Daylamits [of Gilan] is that of the harvest in mid-Summer at the start of Nawrūzmā, the start of the new year in the Daylamī calendrical system (Nawrūzmā goes from the 14th of Murdād [August 5th] to the 12th of Šahrīwar [September 3rd] and counts thirty days. The Daylamī year begins the night of the 15th of Murdād [scil. the night following the sunshine of the 14th of Murdād]. People at sunset [...] to greet the New Year, light a great pyre similar to that of Sada which they call Nawrūz-bal (pyre of Nawrūz)”\(^97\). This date does not coincide with that provided by the editorial of the local magazine Gīla-wā, dedicated to “Nawrūz-bal”, which provides the 10th of Murdād instead\(^98\). The local scholar Hūmand provides yet another date for the New Year of Gilan in 1996 (1375) and 1997 (1376), i.e. Murdād 17th (= August 8th)\(^99\).

Beside the Nawrūz-bal of Gilan we have the Šabarī New Year of the Mazanderan whose first month (“Ferdine-mah”) begins fifteen days before the calendar of Gilan, the 2nd of Murdād (= July 24th)\(^100\).

We have testimony on the importance of the Summer solstitial moment as a moment that ‘separates’ in an article dedicated to the meteorological calendar of Kamara (near Ḵumayn). M. Farhādī deals with the traditional division of the seasons in various periods characterised by particular atmospheric phenomena influencing activities related to the local agrarian economy, but does not provide precise information on the structure of the traditional calendar. He informs us that in the villages in the area of Kamara, the five days of the end of Spring and start of Summer are called Ḥamsa,
“the five (days)”, a typical name for Andargān. This name does not recur in the rest of the year. In addition, the last three days of Spring and the first three of Summer are called “Ruzāye tarr” or Āftāb-i muhallaq, names which hark back to the idea of a year with a “sharp break” 102. These days are marked by ominousness of natural phenomena; the ominousness is another characteristic of the Epagomenae. Therefore, even if the author does not say that the year begins or was considered to begin at the Summer solstice, there are good reasons to believe that the Kamara calendar reflects a situation similar to that of the čūpānī calendar of Lālazār in Kirmān.

Along with the modern testimonies, one should also note the following ancient traces. The first is Birūnī’s, the second dates from the 16th century.

Indirect testimony on the importance of the “mid-Summer” (Ajḡār) in Ḥārāzam is found in Birūnī’s report about the local calendar reform attempted by the third Ḥārāzamšāh of the line of the Banū ʿĪrāq, Abū Saʿīd Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪrāq ibn Maḥsūr 104 in 1270 of the era of Alexander (Oct. 1st, 958-Sept. 30th, 959). In those years (956-959) the local New Year Day fell on the 1st of Nīsan (= April 1st), but it was moved to the 3rd of Nīsan (or 2nd of Nīsan) 105 and fixed in this new position with the adoption of the Julian intercalation. According to Birūnī, the reform was enacted with the precise scope of regulating agrarian dates such as sowing, harvest, etc. The fixed Spring position of the Chorasmian New Year was above all a consequence of the sovereign aims: the stabilizing of the holiday of mid-Summer (Ajḡār) 106. In fact, following the reform, it should have always fallen on the 15th of Čīrī corresponding to mid-Tammūz (= July); then the 3rd (or 2nd) of Nīsan was reached by calculating backwards. Such a reform reflected a typical need of the agrarian economy, in that seventy days after Ajḡār the people should proceed to sowing. Making reference to Ajḡār to divide the year in periods can be considered a clue of the importance of that seasonal moment for the local population 107.

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101 Farhadi, 1986: 42.
104 For the uncertain dates of his reign see Fedorov, 2000: 73-74.
105 Birūnī, Persian Taḥfīm: 272.
106 Birūnī, Āṯār al-bāqiya: 241-242. Here unlike many other works on reforms of the Iranian calendrical system in an Islamic context, there is a novelty: collection of taxes is not spoken of in conjunction with Nawrūz. Was the collection connected to Ajḡār? That could be an additional reason for taking into particular consideration this occurrence.
107 For other reasons, different from those adopted by Birūnī, that could have induced the local sovereign to reform the calendar, see Cristoforetti, 2003.b: 141-146.
The possible meanings of Nawrūz are not clear in the case of Nawrūz-i Ṭabarī reportedly recorded by Mullā Mužaffar-i Gunābādī. The famous astronomer of Šāh ʿAbbās I, in his Šarḥ-i bīst bāḥ, could speak in fact of Ābrīzgān (holiday on the 13th of Tir) as Nawrūz-i Ṭabarī108. In many villages of Mazanderan there is a holiday the evening before the 13th of “Tir-ē māḥ” in the regional calendar, which currently corresponds to the 12th of Ābān109. Keeping in mind that the 3rd of Tir in the official calendar ‘corresponds’ to the 1st of “Nurzē- māḥ” (“month of Nawrūz”) of the local calendar110, it is possible that Mullā Mužaffar, knowing that in the Caspian region the 13th of Tir was celebrated and that there was a Summer New Year’s Day, put the two things together, given that according to the monthly Jalālī scheme, Tir was the first month of Summer. In any case, the holiday for the evening before the 13th of “Tir-ē māḥ” of the Ṭabarī calendar is characterised by customs that “are very similar to those of the night before Nawrūz”111.

Taking into account the whole of previous considerations, it follows that in the 7th century, when the official Iranian calendrical Nawrūz ended up in covering Summer solstitial positions, it could have coincided more or less with one of these popular New Years. The coincidence between a holiday specifically connected to the idea of royalty and a diffuse popular sentiment which recognized in that moment of the year a sort of summing up of the past and triumphal starting of a new cycle could have had an impact in a pictorial project which celebrated the sovereignty in the most comprehensive manner.

The Chinese sources

The ten Chinese sources mentioned in the following table were pertinent to a period of five centuries (from the beginning of the second half of 6th century until the first half of the 11th century). They deal with the calendar holidays of the Iranian peoples. Here follows a summary:

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108 Rajabī, 1996-1997: 86, n. 2. This point does not appear in the bāḥ XV, 13, where Ābrīzgān is concerned, in the lithographic edition of Tehran (1267/1851) in my possession; probably P. Rajabī used an edition unknown to me.
110 Hūmand, 1996: 118.
### The 6th month is for them the beginning of the year.

- They pay particular attention to the 7th day of the 7th month and the first day of the 12th. In those days, from the most humble stratum of the people to the highest, all exchange invitations, hold get together, play music in great joy.

- The 20th day of the 1st month they honour ancestors

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### Zhoushu (625)

- They make the 6th month the beginning of the year.

- The 7th day of the 7th month a large party is held.

- The 1st day of the 12th month there is a large party with dance and music.

- The 20th day of the 1st month they honour ancestors

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112 According to Daffinà, 1983: 123, the text is dated 554, while according to Needham, 1981: 336, it was composed by Wei Shou in 572.

113 Daffinà, 1983: 164.

Beishi
(629)

- They make the 6th month the beginning of the year.
- The 7th day of the 7th month a large party is held.
- The 1st day of the 12th month there is a large party.
- The 12th day of the 1st month they make sacrifices to the ancestors.¹¹⁵

- In the 6th month there is a holiday in honour of ancestors and the nobles from neighbouring towns take part.¹¹⁶

- On the 6th day of the 1st month the sovereign honours ancestors and the nobles from neighbouring towns participate.¹¹⁷

Suishu
(636)

- They honour the ancestors and the nobles from neighbouring principates participate.¹¹⁸

- On the 6th month they honour the ancestors and the nobles from neighbouring towns participate.¹¹⁹

- On the 6th day of the 1st month the sovereign honours ancestors.

- On the 15th day of the 7th month they honour the ancestors.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Yu, 2005: 563-564.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Persia</th>
<th>Samarkand</th>
<th>Čāč (Tashkent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xifan ji</td>
<td>- They make the 1st day of the 6th month the beginning of the year.</td>
<td>- They make the 1st day of the 6th month the beginning of the year.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(7th century)</td>
<td>Starting from this day, during the seven days which follows it, in the</td>
<td>Starting from this day, during the seven days which follows it, in the</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>forest in the eastern neighbourings of the capital they shoot by bow.</td>
<td>eastern neighbourings of the capital they shoot by bow.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The last day there is the competition of gold; who wins is honoured as</td>
<td>The last day there is the competition of gold; who wins is honoured as</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a king during one day.</td>
<td>a king during one day.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- They maintain that the heavenly boy died in the 7th month and his</td>
<td>- They maintain that the heavenly boy died in the 7th month and his</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>body got lost. They search for that body leaving off on the 7th day.</td>
<td>body got lost. They search for that body leaving off on the 7th day.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tong Dian</td>
<td>- They make the 1st day of the 6th month the beginning of the year.</td>
<td>- They make the 1st day of the 6th month the beginning of the year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(812)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiu Tangshu</td>
<td>- The 1st day of the 6th month is for them the beginning of the year.</td>
<td>- They consider the 12th month as the beginning of the year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(954)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- They consider the 12th month as the beginning of the year.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- They beat a drum asking for cold and reciprocally squirting water for</td>
<td>- They beat a drum asking for cold and reciprocally squirting water for</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fun.</td>
<td>fun.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

120 The original text got lost. This passage is recorded in the Tong Dian.
121 Chavannes, 1903: 133; Xu, 2002: 122.
123 Daffinà, 1983: 164.
124 Chavannes, 1903: 135.
| **Tang huiyao**  
by Wang Pu;  
Song age  
(960-1279) | - The 1st day of the 6th  
month is the  
beginning of the  
year125. |
|---|---|
| **Xin Tangshu**  
(1043) | - The 12th month is the  
beginning of the  
year126. |

| Western Regions  
(probably Sogdiana) | Marw | The Nine Families’ Barbarians | Judejian  
(Qubādyān, area of Bactriana) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Jing xinji**  
(probably 9th  
century)127 | - Traditionally they make the 5th month the  
beginning of the year128. | - Traditionally they make the 5th month the  
beginning of the year129. |  |
| **Youyang zazu**  
(863) | - They consider the 5th month as the  
beginning of the year130. |  | - In the Western Regions131 they make the 5th  
month the  
beginning of the year132. |

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125 Xu, 2002: 122.
126 Xu, 2002: 121-122.
127 This text was composed after the Talas’ battle (751), probably in the beginning of the 9th  
century. The famous man of letters Du You (735-812), author of this text and also of the Tong  
Dian was a nephew of a Chinese soldier captured by Arabs in this battle. The Chinese captive  
lived for longtime in the regions of Central Asia subjected to the Arabic rule and was an  
eyewitness of many of the events later recorded by his nephew.
128 Xu, 2002: 123.
129 Xu, 2002: 122.
130 Xu, 2002: 123.
131 The texts clearly refers to Judejian.
132 Chavannes, 1903: 201, n. 1; Drège, Grenet, 1987: 118.
Two of the five texts which mention Persia are nearly contemporaneous (Zhoushu and Beishi). These are chronologically preceded by a text composed at least fifty years prior (Weishu). There are two remaining texts, the first (Tong Dian) composed nearly two centuries after the first two, while the other (Tang huiyao) is from the Song era. All five speak of a Persian New Year occurring at the start of the 6th Chinese month (= June-July). Supposing that the most ancient text speaks of the Nawrūz of Farvardīn 1st, it should record data relating to the coincidence between the 1st day of the 6th Chinese month and the Nawrūz taking place in a period between the 6th and 7th century (average date for the start of the 6th Chinese month = July 4th; Nawrūz between 576 and 629 moved back from the 30th of June to the 17th). Supposing that Zhoushu and Beishi speak of the Nawrūz of Farvardīn 1st, these two texts should also record news regarding the coincidence between the 1st of the 6th Chinese month and Nawrūz taking place in a period between the 6th and 7th century. The Tong Dian—a work composed roughly two centuries after Zhoushu and Beishi—either repeats this information verbatim from more ancient texts, or it speaks of a fully Summer Nawrūz, according to a possible popular custom of Iranian peoples. For the Tang huiyao the same observations may also be effective. Two possibilities exist:

1) the text uses ancient materials;
2) between the 10th and 13th century, in addition to the Yazdgardī and Jalālī Nawrūz (the first coinciding with the First Point of Aries during 1004-1007, to then fall back to the final months of Winter; the second fixed to the vernal equinox from 1079 on) a Summer New Year’s Day was in use, as it is still today in certain areas of the Iranian world.

The three most ancient texts, which seem to be related among themselves, provide us with other informations as well referring to celebrations on the 7th day of the 7th month and on the 12th month. In this last case, it is specified: there is a holiday on the 1st day of the 12th month, and it is described like that of the 7th day of the 7th month. Regarding the following celebrations in honour of ancestors the first two texts (Weishu and Zhoushu) diverge from Beishi: they are performed on the 20th day according to Weishu and Zhoushu and on the 12th day according to Beishi. Regarding the holiday of the 7th day of the 7th month, it should be said that the information—nearly identical in the three texts—is recorded with additional details in a lost text cited in the Tong Dian, the Xifan ji, probably from the same era of the others, which speaks however of things relating to Samarkand (see infra). The average date for the 7th day of the 7th Chinese month is August 9-10th. The texts could be recording either the Yazdgardī Nawrūz or a popular Summer’s New Year.
Alternatively, looking at what the text says regarding Samarkand (Xifan ji), one might think of Tīrgān (Tīr 13th), in which case see infra. The average date for the 1st day of the 12th month is January 5-6th. In the years 596-603, Mihrgān (Mihr 16th) fell firstly January 6th, then January 5th. Again we find possible coincidences at the turn of the 6th century.

The difference of eight days in the two texts concerning the date of the “ancestors’ holiday” of the 1st month could be a clue in favour of the reciprocal independence of the two sources. The average dates are 12th day of the 1st month = February 14-15th, 20th day of the 1st month = February 22-23rd. Between the end of the 6th century and the 30s of the 7th, the five days of Epagomenae between Ābān and Ājar moved from February 21st-25th (592-595) to February 13rd-17th (624-627). Once again both of them seem to refer to the turn of the 6th century, reflecting plausible Chinese correspondences of celebrations of a Farwardgān coinciding with Andargāh, slightly before Spring.

There are two later texts (Tong Dian and Jiu Tangshu) separated by a century and a half, which speak similarly of a Persian New Year: the 6th month is the beginning of the year. Jiu Tangshu (the latter of the two) specifies that it is the 1st day of the 6th month. The texts seem to repeat more ancient sources, unless they are referring to popular customs regarding the Summer New Year given that between the beginning of the 9th century and the first half of the 10th, Nawrūz fell back every four years from the beginning of May to the end of March.

The five texts which speak of the calendrical customs of Samarkand can be divided in two groups: the first dating from the 7th century, composed of Xifan ji, which has a Sogdian New Year on the 1st day of the 6th month, and Beishi and Suishu, which speak in a nearly identical manner of festivities in honour of ancestors during the 6th month. If, given the remarkable similarities, Suishu had taken from Beishi, we can stress that Beishi is the text informing us also about the ancestors’ festivities in Persia on the 12th day of the 1st month. This could be considered a clue in favour of the existence of two dates for the ancestors’ festivities: the period of the Epagomenae between Ābān and Ājar (Persia), the period of the Epagomenae between the 12th and 1st month (Sogdiana). Between 592 and 639, the five days of Epagomenae immediately preceding the 1st of Nawasard, the Sogdian New Year, moved from the period of June 26th-30th (592-595) to June 18th-22nd (624-627), a well situated day for such a celebration near New Year. Once again the texts seem to refer to a situation close to the turn of the 6th century. Moreover, Beishi and Suishu record the presence of foreign ambassadors. Here we should recall the processions for
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The games and the competition and the “King of one day” following New Year constitute an isolated report, provided to us by means of the Tong Dian by the Xifan ji only. The custom of the “King of one day” is typically nawrūzī. This latter text records another particularly interesting isolated fact concerning the celebration of the “heavenly boy”, consisting in the search for his body during the first seven days of the 7th month. In my opinion, it should be connected to the information concerning a great holiday of the 7th day of the 7th month found in two more ancient sources (Zhoushu and Beishi), which speak of Persia however. The report on the lost body of the divine boy seems to recall the myth of the dismembering of Āriš and therefore Tīrgān. But we have no information on the existence of a Sogdian equivalent of this Persian holiday. In the event that the Chinese text gives us the only testimony of the celebration of a Central Asian Tīrgān, a correspondence with the 13th day of the 4th Sogdian month, such as it could be provided by Xifan ji could be plausible for the 8th century, i.e. for an era following that of the text itself. However, that very evocative scene could also induce us to think of another possible data for a Central Asian celebration.

A second group is formed by two texts, composed considerably later: Jiu Tangshu (10th century) and Xin Tangshu (11th century). They present a nearly identical information on New Year: it occurred in the 12th month. Nevertheless, the average date for the beginning of the 12th month is January 5-6th. The Sogdian New Year from the 10th century until mid-11th century moved back from April 15th (900-903) to March 11th (1040-1043), occupying the vernal equinox position of March 15th during 1024-1027; thus excluding reference to the New Year. In his important essay on the historic-cultural significance of the Sogdian calendar B. I. Marshak writes: “In Tang Shu the January new year is mistakenly attributed to the Sogdians, possibly on the information of some Christians there who used the Julian calendar”. However there is another possible explanation, which does not require a Christian connection. Looking at the table on Sogdian festivities in Birūnī we see that in the 10th Sogdian month there is a holiday period of ten days from the 5th to the 15th. This period at the start of the 10th century occurred in January 4th-14th (900-903) before falling back regularly one day every four years. This means that the 10th Sogdian month nearly matched January. In addition, the Birunian table on Chorasmian holidays indicates the Nimḥāb

festival in the 15th of the 10th month. Given that the holiday in question constituted locally the opposite pole of the mid-Summer holiday (Ajgar), being one of the two poles in which traditionally (and not calendrically) the year was divided, there is the possibility that the texts record informations concerning this great celebration, which existed in Sogdian and Chorasmian areas, calling it New Year.

Another particularly interesting fact appears only in Jiu Tangshu: the people asking for cold with water jokes vividly recalls Baharájašn of the 1st of Ājar (with the custom of Rukūb al-kawsaj = Kūsa), which is not attested in Sogdian areas. Did the text confuse Persian and Samarkandan matters? In such a case, the correspondence leads to think of information pertaining to the first years of the 10th century.

Concerning the area of Čāč (Tashkent), two 7th century texts (Beishi and Suishu) speak of the sovereign custom of honouring ancestors on the 6th day of the 1st month (average date: February 8-9th). The report, which refers to the presence of foreign ambassadors, recalls that concerning Samarkand recorded by the same texts (where the holiday is placed in the 6th month), and recalls the informations on ancestors’ festivities in Persia from Zoushu and Beishi. We have already seen that between the end of the 6th century and the 30s of the 7th, the five days of Epagomenae placed between Ābān and Ājar moved from February 21st-25th (592-595) to February 13th-17th (624-627). This could mean that in Čāč it was customary to celebrate Farwardgān during the five days of Epagomenae, following a typical 'internal' scheme. In such a case, Suishu should be checked against a problematic passage by Kūšyār, which seems to speak of the five days of Epagomenae positioned after Ābān somewhere in Transoxiana. However this text adds another interesting report on another ancestral celebration of the 15th day of the 7th month (generally August 17-18th), i.e. in full Summer. The correspondence is in agreement with an Andargāh positioned before Nawrūz in the Sogdian manner only on condition that the report is from a period prior to that of the texts’ composition. But, as we have realized, in other cases the texts furnished correspondences in agreement with the end of 6th and the beginning of the 7th century. The report could alternatively regard a local religious holiday such as the Sogdian Rāmūš Āgām (Nawasard 28th) or

140 Cf. supra: 68.
something like Farwardgān (Farwardīn-rūz-i Farwardīn-māh) of Farwardīn 19th. But in this last case, it would be necessary to suppose the existence in Čāč of holidays calculated according to an ‘internal’ calendrical order. In such a case, we would be dealing with the turn of the 6th century. On this problem Marshak writes: “They were, most probably, the principal festivals of the year, as they are the only ones mentioned. In the texts concerned with the beginning of the year in one or other of the moons, the numeration of the months is, naturally enough, Chinese, since for the Sogdians the New Year month was always the first; but in this instance the numeration is possibly Chāchian. If this is so, then one may detect in the two Chāchian festivals the Greater Nau Rūz and the eve of Mihrāgan”142 (= 15th of Mihr, the 7th Iranian month).

Scarce informations on the Western Regions, Marw, Nine Families’ Barba-
rians, Judejian (Bactriana) appear in texts composed in the 9th century. They all speak of a New Year’s Day in the 5th Chinese month. They seem to refer to a ‘civil’ Nawrūz (probably according to Sogdian custom) of the second half of the 8th century. The most interesting aspect is the décalage of the date of the Iranian New Year from the 6th month to the 5th month between the most ancient sources (7th century) and those thereafter (9th century). This clearly demonstrates
1) that the reference goes clearly, naturally enough, to Chinese months;
2) that the New Year’s Day most considered was the mobile one of the
Iranian solar calendar, which moved back through the seasons.

In conclusion, the Chinese sources give us a varied picture of the Iranian holidays, reflecting regional differences as well. In any case, nothing is possible to infer from them that could constitute a barrier to recognize the holiday of ancestors close to the Summer solstice New Year, in spite of the possibility that somewhere Farwardgān was observed in its ‘natural’ position at the end of Winter. The situation is described in Chinese terms (days and months)143, except possibly for information contained in Sui shu, which could reflect a Chāchian numbering, as hypothesized by B. I. Marshak.

142 Marshak, 1992: 151.
143 A definitive proof on the matter is provided by comparing two testimonies recorded respectively in Beishi and in Zhoushu, i.e. two nearby coeval text. They speak of the same Iranian celebration in honour of ancestors: in the first text it is positioned on the 12th and in the other on the 20th day of the 1st month.
ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

Ar. = Arabic
*C.H.I.* = *The Cambridge History of Iran.*
*E.I.*,*2* = *Encyclopédie de l’Islam*, 2
NP. = New-Persian
Ph. = Pahlavi
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