“Between Mesopotamia and India. Some Remarks about the Unicorn Cycle in Iran”

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Some years ago I offered a first attempt to analyse the myth of the Unicorn in the Iranian world. I think it is time now to return on this subject with some fresh reflections and a revision of the problem. First of all – and this fact confirms the importance of the Melammu Project – because any discussion about the symbolic image of the unicorn cannot be studied within the limits of a specific domain but involves at least – as I will try to show very soon – the Mesopotamian, Iranian and Indian worlds, if we do not want to mention the Buddhist ramifications in Central Asia and China or the Mediaeval revivals of this mythical cycle, best represented in a paradigmatic form in the famous cycle on the tapisserie of the Lady and the Unicorn, which can be seen in Paris at the Musée du Moyen Age, aux Thermes de Cluny.

It is necessary to summarise briefly the problem and the data, which have produced an interesting debate with a number of contributions already going back to a seminal intuition of Edv. Lehmann (apud Ungnad - Gressmann, 1911: 95, n. 2), then followed and developed by Jensen (1913: 528, 1928: 108-12), Albright (1920: 329-31) and Przyluski (1929), and more recently offered by Schlingloff (1971, 1973), Haug (1964), Einhorn (1976: 32-37), Della Casa (1986 = 1998) and Restelli (1992), but which actually appear, notwithstanding some fresh research, mostly unknown or scarcely discussed by Assyriologists. Then I would like – specifically in the milieu of the theme we were asked to take into consideration in this symposium – to reflect on the methodological problems of Intercultural Influences.

All of you know, of course, the tragic history of Enkidu; created by the goddess Aruru in order to balance the evil behaviour of Gilgamesh. Enkidu lives in the steppe among the animals, practically like one of them. Now we have to introduce an apparently small datum, but which has to be carefully remembered, because it will become very significant later: Enkidu eats the grass with the gazelles (Tablet I, 93) and, according to a fragment of the Gilgamesh story found in Sultantepe (Tablet VIII, 3-4 of the Standard Babylonian version of the epic), his mother too was a “gazelle” (sabitu), while, on the other hand, his father appears to be a “wild ass” (akkammu). Enkidu’s aspect is terrible for the hunter who meets him at a watering hole; Enkidu helps all the animals so that they cannot be caught by the hunters. Then Gilgamesh sends him Šamhat,
a prostitute (harimtu), in order to seduce the wild man. This actually happens and after seven days, when Enkidu tries to come back among the animals, he realises his difference; the gazelles run away (Tablet I, 180), his strength has decreased; but, on the other hand, his aspect is more human and he has become wise. Thus Enkidu is driven by the prostitute to Uruk and its king, Gilgameš.

Now we have to move to India, where we find the legend of Śrasyaṅga “he who has the horn of an antelope,” who in the later version of the famous Buddhist Sanskrit text named Mahāvastu is called Ekaśrṅga “Unicorn.” According to the Mahāvastu (141-52) versions of the legend (Naśinījātaka), Ekaśrṅga represents one of the preceding existence of Buddha. Son of an hermit, ṛṣi Kāśyapa, and of a doe (which corresponds to Mahāprajāpati, the mother of Buddha), Ekaśrṅga lived on the river Gaṅgā with the animals. Thanks to the teachings of his father he attained the four dhīyānas (“meditations”) and the five abhijñās (“super-knowledges”). The king of Benares (who was without a son) wanted him as husband for his own daughter Naśinī (who corresponds to Yaśodharā, the wife of Buddha) and sent her to him. Ekaśrṅga, who never saw a woman before, was attracted by the young lady and her maidens and thought that they were young pāris. Ekaśrṅga, notwithstanding his attraction for Naśinī refused to follow her, but after her departure he became depressed and forgot his dues. Then his father forbade him to meet again other people, but Naśinī came again and attracted him on the boat, where they got married by a purohit. Once arrived at Benares, Ekaśrṅga was accepted as heir to the king, and after his death he ascended the throne.

Della Casa has rightly directed scholars’ attention to another version of the legend, attested in the Pāli Buddhist work titled Naśinījātaka (= Jātaka 526), where the protagonist, here named Isisiṅga “he who has the horn of the ascetic,” was again son of a doe (mīga). Isisiṅga “became a sage of such severe austerity that the abode of Sakka (i.e. Indra) was shaken by the power of his virtue.” Sakka, having discovered the origin of such a force, decided to break down his virtue, and hindered rain for three years in the kingdom of

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7 As already noted by Lüders, 1897 (= 1940: 1, n. 1) Śrasyaṅga is the normal orthography in classical Sanskrit literature, while Śrasyaṅga is the one attested in the older texts; properly ṛṣya-, m., is the male of a species of antelope; see Mayrhofer, 1954: 124-25.
9 But in the Śatāvat Sambhita, Ekaśrṅgagataana is mentioned as the thirty-ninth incarnation of Viṣṇu (see Sharma, 1957: 359).
10 According to ch. 143 of the Mahāvastu (see Jones, 1956, III: 139) the seer “passed water containing some semen into a stone pot. A certain doe, being thirsty, drank this urine under the impression that it was drinking water. The doe was ripe for conception, and while her mouth was smeared with the semen, she licked the orifice of her uterus with her tongue. She became stupefied and conceived.”
11 We may note that at this point Ekaśrṅga is virtually seduced but he does not yet have sexual intercourse with his wife, because he does not know any woman; in fact he will be instructed by some penitents at an hermitage near Śāhājāni. When the father found Ekaśrṅga and his wife, he realised that it would have been impossible to separate them, and sent both to Benares, where Ekaśrṅga became king. See Przyluski, 1929: 330; Lüders, (1901 = 1940b: 65-67).
13 Pali text edited by Faussbøll, 1891: 193-209 (translated by Francis, 1895: 100-106); see Lüders, 1897 = 1940a: 26; 1901 = 1940b: 41-42; Przyluski, 1929: 328-37.
14 See Faussbøll, 1891: 193, ll. 11; Francis, 1895: 100; Lüders, 1897 (= 1940: 26); Rhys Davids - Stede, 1921-25: 532a.
15 See Faussbøll, 1891: 193, ll. 15-16; Francis, 1895: 100.
Kāśi. After this time span the king was informed by Sakka about the existence of Issisīga and asked to send him his daughter Nalinikā. 16 The princess seduced him and went away, while Sakka caused rain. The poor young man, left alone, was seized by fever. His father, having heard some nonsensical talk pronounced by Issisīga, realised that he had been seduced and put away the thought of that woman from the mind of his son. 17 Then Issisīga obtained the pardon of his father, who proclaimed to him the attainment of the Perfect State.

We find an allusion to Rṣyaśṛṅga also in the Pañcatantra (I, 44), 18 but it is in the Mahābhārata (III, 110-13) 19 that one of the most complete versions of this legendary cycle 20 is attested: Rṣyaśṛṅga was son of a doe or gazelle which became pregnant after having eaten the semen involuntarily ejaculated by the ascetic Vibhāṇḍaka Kāśyapa at the vision of Urvāsi, a wonderful apsaras. The child, who wears an antelope horn in the front (and for this reason he is named Rṣyaśṛṅga), spends his life alone with his father in the forest without any knowledge of human beings but his father. In the meantime, the close town of Ánga was under the malediction of Indra, who had provoked a strong famine because Lomapāda, the local king there, had offended the Brahmins. A wise man then suggested to implore Gods’ help and to find a muni (a sage) who had never seen any woman; only if this muni would be able to perform a yāga (“a special sacrifice”), rain would fall again on the kingdom of Ánga. The king sent messengers in order to find such a muni, and he got information about the ascetic Rṣyaśṛṅga, son of Vibhāṇḍaka. Then he started to plan how the hermit could be attracted to town, and he also invited some courtiers to collect some suggestions about the way to achieve his goals. None of these women, except one, knew how to approach the ascetic; thus this nice woman, in company of a group of other maidens, went to the forest, and arranged a sort of floating áśrama (“hermitage”) in a boat. In this way they sailed the river just to the place where Rṣyaśṛṅga and his father lived. Thus the poor young man, in absence of Vibhāṇḍaka, met the beautiful lady, who used all her appeal in order to fascinate him. In a second

16 A reference to the Issisīga jāṭa[ka] is attested also on the stūpa of Bāhrūt (see Müller, 1896: 528; Lüders, 1901 = 1940b: 41); Schlingloff, 1973: 305-306.
17 See Faussbøll, 1891: 209, ll. 11-12; ch. 209 apud Francis, 1895: 106.
18 Cf. Bechis, 1991: 30; see Restelli, 1992: 78, passim. Cf. also the version attested in Rāmāyana, I, IX-XI.
19 Translated by van Buiten, 1975: 431-41.
20 See now Restelli (1992: 82-83). This does not mean that in the Mahābhārata we have the oldest Indian version of the legend: according to Lüders (1897 = 1940a: 12-24), the seduction by a prostitute was only a later development introduced in the Mahābhārata-story, while at the beginning the original version should have referred to the union of the hermit with the daughter of the king (i.e. the Buddhist story), because the later composers thought it was morally offensive that a princess might seduce a young hermit (see also Winternitz, 1908: 344, n. 2). Przyłęski (1929: 335-37) has discussed this problem assuming that originally the core of the story represented the union of the ascetic (whose strength was obtained through his tapas) and the queen; in any case Przyłęski (1929: 335, n. 1) did not contest the solution advanced by Albright (1920: 329-30) with regard to the Mesopotamian background of the Indian cycle of Rṣyaśṛṅga. It is to be noted that Pauly (1987-88: 304-305, and n. 5) suggests against Lüders’ interpretation that “it cannot be taken for granted that a courtesan was not originally the seductress in the story.” Other prudent remarks have been advanced by Schlingloff (1973: 302-303). I think that in any case it is time to essay a reassessment of the chronology of the Indian sources about the ascetic-unicorn in the light of the Mesopotamian and Iranian data. For the complete list of the sources regarding Rṣyaśṛṅga’s cycle see Lüders, 1897 (= 1940a: 2ff with a résumé of the story) and Przyłęski, 1929: 331-32; see also the detailed summary offered by Vettam Mani, 1975: 652-53. We can simply mention the thesis advanced by Hertel (1904: 158-65) and Schroeder (1908: 292-303), who assume that the story of Rṣyaśṛṅga derives from an ancient drama, but, as Pauly (1987-88: 305) notes, this explanation has not found general acceptance; in addition Schroeder (1908: 298-99) assumed that such an Udāna represented a sort of Generationsritus connected with the summer festival of the Sun, a solution which is quite far-fetched.
visit, again when the father was absent, Ṣusahaan was bound by the glamour of the courtesan, seduced and attracted to town, where finally it began to rain. Then the king offered his daughter Sánta to Ṣusahaan and appeased Vibhāndaka; later, after the birth of his child, Ṣusahaan, as decided by his father, returned to the forest with Sánta.

These are only a few variants of the story, which appears in various elaborations throughout different religious traditions, like those of the Hindus, the Buddhists and the Jainas, but also in different languages like Sanskrit, Pāli, Prakrit, Tibetan, Chinese and Japanese.

What turns out to be very relevant for us is that the two cycles – the one of Enkūd and the one of Ṣusahaan – cannot be separated; a pure coincidence appeared improbable already to Jensen, but his “Pan-Babylonistic” enthusiasm possibly made such a comparison unacceptable. Later some scholars have noted the strict parallelism between the story of Enkūd and the one of Ṣusahaan, which can be considered now as an established datum. The pattern in any case appears the same in both traditions: a primitive/ascetic man, living in the forest with the animals, and in particular related to the gazelle, is seduced by a prostitute/beautiful lady or princess and attracted to the nearest town, where his arrival is in any case positive (beginning of rains and interruption of famine); in the Mesopotamian context, Enkūd becomes a friend for Gilgāmeš, and his “urbanisation” after the seduction allows hunters to wander free and without risk, but it also gives a very strong fellow and collaborator to Gilgāmeš. The seduction of Ṣusahaan on the other hand stops famine and causes rains to fall.

Another very interesting version of this story, but very fittingly connecting the Mesopotamian pattern to its Indian reflex, was mentioned by Schöninghoff (1973: 304-305); the German scholar fittingly remarked that in a Jaina text, Vasudevāhīndī, a young boy, named Valkalacirin, lives in a hermitage with his father, who is an abdicated king and not a brahmin; the young is grown without any knowledge of any woman, because also his mother is dead after his birth. On the other hand, the elder son of the ex-king, i.e. the elder brother of Valkalacirin, is still on the power in his reign and desires to find his brother. Then he sends courtesans to seduce the boy; they reach his hermitage and escape before the father returns. In his turn Valkalacirin leaves the hermitage in search of the court-sans and arrives in the town, where the courtesans dress and wash him, and he is received with honour from the king, his brother. The story ends with the marriage of Valkalacirin.

Schöninghoff (1973: 305) assumes that this version of the story clearly explains the reason for the abduction of the boy to the city:

The king allures the jungleman to win him over as brother and friend. This exactly is the motive in the Enkidu episode of the Gilgamesh epic. (...) The wild jungleman of

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22 See Müller, 1896: 524-30; Lüders, 1897, 1901 (= 1904a,b); Einhorn, 1976: 34-41; Restelli, 1992: 81-82.
23 Cf., for instance, the criticism expressed by Clemen (1912: 267-87) with regard to Jensen’s attempt to trace the major part of Jesus’ history to the Gilgāmeš Epic.
24 On the other hand, a direct comparison between Ṣusahaan and the description of the unicorn in the western sources was raised by Beal (1875: 124, n. 2), as noted also by Lüders (1897 = 1940: 25); this comparison was again focused on by Müller (1896: 531); see also Ettinghausen, 1950: 95, n. 96. But we may also note that Beal suggested some astronomical interpretations of the one horned image that seem to me quite peculiar. With respect to the Mesopotamian, Indian and Iranian influences on the Physiologus, see already Cohn (1896: 19-20) and Wellmann, 1930: 47.
the Babylonian epic who lived with the gazelles was taken to the king’s city by a courtesan in order to make him the friend of the king. Similar was the case of the Indian ascetic boy whom the Buddhist called Unicorn and whose seductress was no longer a courtesan but a virgin Princess.26

We can immediately focus on a specific theme or subject, the one of the seduction of the wild man, which – as we will see again – will be later transformed and adapted to that of the seduction of a wild animal, namely the unicorn.

Thus seduction appears as a form of civilisation and of humanisation of the extra-urban being; in other words it results in a sort of initiation. Another theme is that of the beneficial horn, which does not openly appear in the Enkidu story, but which seems to have been developed, probably on the basis of an elaboration of the story, where the wild and animal component of the hermit has been strongly marked through the horn symbolising Enkidu’s original lineage from a gazelle. I do not dare to venture to evoke the presence in the Mesopotamian tradition of horns as a mark of some divine beings, primarily because here the horn is only one. On the other hand, we may recall again that a tradition of the epos of Gilgamesh mentions a gazelle (ṣa-bi-tu) as the mother of Enkidu (and not Aruru) and a “wild ass” (akkanna) as his father, a statement representing, on one hand, a very strong link between Enkidu and Šašān and, on the other hand, between Enkidu and the Graeco-Iranian representation of the unicorn. Such a genealogy is presented in Tablet VIII 3-4 where we can read:

$$\text{EN.KI.[D]U} \text{ AMA-ka ṣa-bi-tu}$$
$$\text{ i} \text{ a-ka-a-nu a-bu-ka ib-[nu]-ka ka-a-šā}$$

Enkidu, your mother, the gazelle, and your father, the wild ass, have generated you.

However, it is to be noted that, according to some sources, horns, a tail and bull’s legs are attributed to Enkidu, and he is sometimes represented on seals in this way.28 Actually29 Enkidu is not a unicorn, nor is Šašān,30 who sometimes is described as having horns and legs of a gazelle, in other words resembling more closely the original image of Enkidu. The iconography of the frontal horn could be a later development based on the association of the seduction theme with those of the animal and of the marked sexual strength of the hero to be seduced. We may specify that the unique horn on the front clearly represents a phallic element,31 which evokes the sexual force of the animal, an idea which – not only in the past but unfortunately also today – has produced a sort of maniacal obsession towards the possession of the horn of a unicorn (or of a rhinoceros) or again of beverages containing the dust of this very horn. We may recall that the dust of the horn was considered (and is still supposed to be) useful

26 Very interesting for the history of the problem are Schlingloff’s remarks (1973: 301-302) against the criticism raised by Günter (1922: 65-74) against the comparison between the tradition concerning the Greek Physiologist and the Indian background. On the other hand, we may note that Schlingloff omits the entire Iranian side of the problem.
27 Restelli, 1992: 78-104.
29 As Restelli has again underlined (1992: 108-109).
30 On the other hand we have to specify that the traditional iconography of Šašān presents him as an anthropomorphic unicorn, as in the relief from a stupa of Chandara, now preserved in the Mathurā Museum (1st century BC), the one on the famous stupa of Bharhut, a relief fragment from Gandhāra, and on the main stupa of Sāñcī; see Sharma, 1957: 364; Schlingloff, 1973: 305-306 (ills. 3-4-5); Einhorn, 1976: 32-34; see Schlingloff, 1973: 305-307 and Restelli, 1992: 80-88 (both with fresh literature and illustrations).
31 See Einhorn, 1976: 264-69 with literature. By contrast, as a cup, the horn can be associated with the female sexual organ, as noted by Jung (1981: 473).
against poisons and a strong aphrodisiac.\textsuperscript{32}

It is not at all necessary to discuss again here all the data coming from the archaeological and in a second period also literary sources, which show a direct connection between the Mesopotamian world and the Indian Subcontinent from the 4th millennium BC onwards. We may mention at least one example, not much known among Assyriologists, following in this choice Della Casa,\textsuperscript{33} who has rightly pointed out the presence in Atharvaveda, V, 13, 6\textsuperscript{34} of an incantation pronounced against a black serpent, called Taimätät,\textsuperscript{35} which could represent an Indian echo of the Akkadian demoness Tiamat.\textsuperscript{36} On the other hand, Indra, as the enemy of Vṛtra, the mythical dragon who blocks the waters, is named, in the Rigveda, apsusiti,\textsuperscript{37} an epithet which can be plainly translated as “who wins in the waters” (with apsu as loc. pl. of āp-, f.), but which could also be interpreted as “conqueror of Apsu,” by assuming that here we have a distant reference to Apsu, the personification of the primordial watery abyss and also the husband of Tiamat.

Getting back to the two themes, the one of seduction and the one of the healing horn, which are not necessarily related to each other,\textsuperscript{38} we may simply recall that they had an enormous impact in the Late Antiquity and in the western Middle Ages; here we find some texts, mostly the so called Bestiarii, which in their turn ultimately derive from the Φυσιολόγος,\textsuperscript{39} referring to the Unicorn (μονόκερος) as a wild and very strong animal, which loves solitude, and cannot be captured without a trap. In particular this animal is attracted by virgins, before whom he appears to be without any strength; thus he becomes mild and can be conducted to the palace of the king (εἰς τὸ παλάτιον τοῦ βασιλεύτ)\textsuperscript{40} and captured by the hunters.\textsuperscript{41}

We can just quote the text according to the main version given in the manuscript tradition of the Physiologus:\textsuperscript{42}

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{32} About the use of the horn in pharmacology see Einhorn, 1976: 244-47. See also Karttunen, 1985: 168-71
\item \textsuperscript{33} 1986: 24 = 1998: 247.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Text apud Roth - Whitney, 1864: 87: āśītāyā taimātātāyā bābhīrārapadakasyā ca / sātrāsāhāsyaṁ ma- nyorava jāyāmativa dhvanvano vi mukcāmi rāthāṁ iva. See the translation of Whitney (Lamman), 1905: 243: “Of the Timātān (?) black serpent, of the brown, and of the waterless, of the altogether powerful (?), I relax the fury, as the bow-string of a bow; I release as it were chariots.” See also text and translation edited by Chand, 1982: 175. \textsuperscript{35} See Monier-Williams, 1899: 455b.
\item We may recall that in the Zoroastrian tradition the sky is compared to the skin (Ir.Bd. XXVIII, 4), while in the Manichaean mythology the Spiritus Vivens made the ten firmaments out of the skins of the Arconts, the eight circles of the earth out of their flesh and the mountains with their bones. These traditions cannot be separated by the myth of the origin of the sky and of the earth, created by Marduk with the body of Tiamat according to the description contained in the IVth Tablet of the Enuma Eliš. About this subject see Panaino, 1997: 258-59 with literature. \textsuperscript{36} See Grassman, 1996: 80.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Restelli, 1992: 155-56.
\item \textsuperscript{38} The Greek original can be dated to about 200 A.D., but in a Christian milieu in Alexandria of Egypt, the text was translated into Latin (with the title of Physiologus) about the 4th century; see Perry, 1950; see also Lauchert, 1889: 22-34 (German translation); 254-55 (Greek text); Sbordone, 1936a: 78-82 (but also pp. 262-65, and 321; in particular the third tradition will be discussed later in this article); 1936b: 57-64; Wellmann, 1930: 1-23; Zambon, 1982; Einhorn, 1976: 60-81; Della Casa, 1986: 15 (= 1998: 240); see also Lauchert, 1889: 254; Müller, 1896: 531 (the Greek text and the German version of the XIlth century), and now the edition of Kaimakis, 1974. \textsuperscript{39} On this very expression see Charpentier, 1916: 281 and n. 6 where he stated: “Man beachte speziell, daß es τῇ βασιλείᾳ heisst, nicht τοῦ βασιλέως Ρώμανων ως und direkt dem König zugeführt”; see again Della Casa, 1986: 17, n. 15 (= 1998: 243); Restelli, 1992: 20, n. 9.
\item \textsuperscript{40} On the hunt of the unicorn in the Arabic and Persian texts see Ettinghausen, 1950: 35-46.
\item \textsuperscript{41} Text according to Sbordone, 1936a: 78-82; but cf. the fresh edition of Kaimakis, 1974: 68a-b, 69a-b and the one based on mss. G and D by Offermanns, 1966: 84-85); see also Zambon, 1982: 60-61; Einhorn, 1976: 53-54.
\end{enumerate}
About the Unicorn

The Psalm says: «And my horn will be raised as (that) of the unicorn» [Psalms 91:11]. The Physiologus said about the unicorn that it has this very nature: it is a very little animal, looking like a kid, but very bitter. The hunter cannot approach it because of its enormous strength; it has a single horn in the middle of the head. How can it be caught? They dispose in front of it an undefiled [clothed] maiden, and (the unicorn) leaps upon her womb, and the maiden suckles the animal and leads it to the palace in the presence of the king.

Then it is assumed that (this) animal (is) an image of the Saviour, in fact: «(he) raised a horn in the home of David, our father» [Luke 1:16], and it became for us a horn of safety. The angels and the powers might not rule over him, but he has taken abode in the womb of the true and undefiled maiden Maria [the Mother of God], «and the Word has became flesh and has taken abode among us» [John 1:14].

The Christian interpretation of the legend, where the Unicorn in its turn can represent the Church, the Cross, Jesus (and the virgin Mary) or the Saints, but also, on the other hand the evil forces,\footnote{Perry, 1950: 1087-88; Einhorn, 1976: 91-104 and passim; see also Della Casa, 1986: 13-14 (= 1998: 238-39). See also the long note of Giorgio R. Cardona in appendix to the critical edition of Polo’s Milione (1994: 750-51).} is already attested in the Physiologus. Thus, notwithstanding that some specialists of Classical and Renaissance studies have tried to limit the basic patterns of the legend of the unicorn to the Mediterranean area, by following some recent works, as those of Haug, Einhorn,\footnote{See in particular the scheme presented by Einhorn, 1976: 257.} Della Casa and Restelli, we can assume on a strong basis a certain Oriental background for this legend, which ultimately goes back to Mesopotamia. Its ramification possibly entered Classical and Christian literature through some Indian literary works like the Pañcatantra (where the Ascetic horn of a deer or of a gazelle is mentioned), and the Buddhist Jātakas, but also through some Iranian elaboration.\footnote{It is perhaps necessary to recall that the Pañcatantra arrived to the Arabic and Western world through a Pahlavi version, which was translated into Syriac. For an up-to-date bibliography see Panaino 1999: 83-85, notes 5 and 6.} On the other hand we have briefly to mention that the “real” existence of the unicorn was accepted in Western countries because of a misinterpretation of the name of an animal attested in the Old Testament;\footnote{See Ettinghausen, 1950: 92-93; Einhorn, 1976: 42-50; Shepard, 1930: 41-45 = 1984: 33-38; Restelli, 1992: 14-17.}
Hebr. *rēm, 47* pl. *rēmîm* (Akk. *rinu*) was translated in the Septuaginta version as μονόκερος, 48 while it was more simply the “wild ox” [Ps. 21 (22):22; 49 (50):28 (29):6; 77 (78):69; 91 (92):11; 77 (78):7].

The tradition transmitted by the *Physiologus* finds some interesting parallels in a passage from the *Kyranides* 44 (but strictly speaking with regard to the rhinoceros), a collection attributed 45 to Hermes Trismegistos.

Περί μονόκερου

1) Μονόκερος ἐστὶ ξόνον τερατῶν παραπληγίων ἐλαίῳ, ἐν κέρας ἐχον κατὰ τῆς μῦνός μέγασταν. Ἀλλὰς δὲ οὐκ ἀγρεῦεται εἰ μὴ μύρῳ καὶ εὐμορφίᾳ γυναικῶν ἐυστόλων ἐστὶ γὰρ ἑροστικόν.

2) Τούτῳ ὁ εὐρισκόμενος ἔνθον τῆς μῦνός ἢ τοῦ κέρατος λίθος καὶ κροκόμενος δαίμονας ἀποδίωκε. 46

3) Οἱ δὲ ἄρχεις αὐτοῦ ποτίζομενοι ἢ τὸ αἰδοῖον ἀνάρασι καὶ γυναῖξι συνωσίαν παρομήν ἀκρότατα. 57

About the rhinoceros

1) The Rhinoceros is a quadruped animal resembling a deer, with a single enormous horn in place of the nose. It cannot be otherwise caught if not with women’s sweet oil and beauty. In fact it is amorous.

2) The stone which is found inside the nose or the horn of this, when it is carried, chases away the demons.

3) Its testicles given to drink or the sexual organ extremely stimulate the intercourse for men and women.

48 See Liddell and Scott, 1968: 1144b.
49 σῖδον μὲ εἰς ετήσιους λεοντοειδείς ἀπὸ κεφαλῶν μονόκερων τὴν ταυτίσεως μου “Save me from the lion’s mouth, and (save) my insignificance from the horns of the unicorns (…)” (ed. Rahlfs, 1962: 20); see also Latin Bible (Vulgate): salva me ex ore leonis et a cornibus unicornium humilitatem meam.
50 καὶ λεπτινὲς ἔστε ὡς τῶν μύσχον τὸν ἄγιον, καὶ ὁ ἄγιον εἰς τὰς μονόκερων “He makes them also to skip like a calf of Lebanon and the loved one will be like the son of the unicorns …” (ed. Rahlfs, 1962: 27); see also Latin Bible (Vulgate): et comminuet eas tamquam vitulum Libanis et dilectus quemadmodum filius unicornium.
51 καὶ συντιθέμενοι τὸν αὐτὸν μὲ τὸν ἀγαθὸν τὸν αὐτὸν “and he built up as his sacrifice of the unicorns” (ed. Rahlfs, 1962: 86); see also Latin Bible (Vulgate): et aedificabit sicut unicornium sanctificium suum.
52 καὶ ἐξανθισθεὶς ὡς μονόκερος τὸ κέρας μου “and my horn will be exalted as (the horn) of the unicorn” (ed. Rahlfs, 1962: 101); see also Latin Bible (Vulgate): et exaltabitur sicut unicornis cornu meum.
53 καὶ συμπαίσοντας τὸν αὐτὸν “the strong ones shall come down with them” (ed. Rahlfs, 1962: 610); see also Latin Bible (Vulgate): et descendunt unicornes …
55 See Festugière, 1950: 201-16.
56 See the text apud Ruelle apud de Mély (1898-99: II: 71); Wellmann, 1930: 47 [with reference also to Timotheos of Gaza: ἵππον ἀγαθὸν τὸν αὐτὸν (sc. τῶν ἐλέφαντα) καὶ πρὸς ἥραν ἀγωνίαν, ὅπερ καὶ τὸν καταστερεῖν (κατάζησιν ? Χαμπ) παρθένου εξέχει “the women enchant it (i.e. the elephant) by singing and bring it to the chase, as a virgin leads out the tin (the rhinoceros) ?”) also]: Sbordone, 1936b: 60-61; Delatte, 1942: 3-9; Perry, 1950: 1087.
57 See also the Latin translation of the 12th century according to Delatte’s edition (1942: 125):
And in Iran? The Iranian area does not seem to attest any elaboration of the seduction theme, as earlier noted by Widengren;\(^{58}\) in contrast, it is the beneficial importance of the horn of the unicorn that is fully developed and that possibly had an enormous impact on future traditions.

Before analysing the Zoroastrian sources and without going into the archaeological data in detail,\(^{59}\) we can mention the reports of Ctesias of Cnidos,\(^{60}\) the doctor who spent some years between 405 BC and 397 BC at the court of Artaxerxes II Mnemon, in his Ἰνδικό, transmitted in the excerpta made by Photius (according to the text and the French translation by Henry [1959: 143-44]). Notwithstanding that the report is referred to India, the Iranian context in which Ctesias lived and the close parallelism shown by the following passage and some descriptions of the unicorn in Pahlavi Zoroastrian literature, make its analysis very significant.\(^{61}\)

\(^{58}\) See in particular Widengren, (1968: 65):

Comme ceux d’Irak, les textes de l’Inde soulignent le rôle du roi dans la dispensation de la pluie (SB IX, 3, 311; Loi de Manou VII, 7; Játakas VI, 252). Mais ce qui est particulièrement caractéristique de l’arrière-plan rituel des origines, c’est que dans les textes indiens, le fait de répandre l’eau est généralement étroitement lié au fait que le roi se livre à la hiérogamie; autrement dit, pluie et fécondité ne sont que deux aspects du même acte mythico-rituel. L’histoire de ᾿Εξαιρέγια is très instructive. La princesse Sāntā étant parvenue à le séduire, la pluie tomba après s’être fait longtemps attendre; or c’est là que la pointe du récit.

\(^{59}\) Apparently a small (4 cm. high, 6.5 cm long) bronze one-horned animal, looking like a horse or an ass, has been found in Amlaš (see Ghirshman, 1982: 36; Beer, 1977: 7, pl. 1). It seems that in the Luristan area some bronze-figures, which could be identified with Enkidū and Gilgâmēš, have been found (Born, 1942: 105). On the other hand, as I have earlier noted, any attempt to identify the Persepolis representation of the bull in the so-called lion-bull combat, as portrayed on the Apadāna (at the entrance of the Tripylon and in the Palace of Darius), with an image of the unicorn (hypothesis ultimately suggested by M. Lochbrunner (1975: 295) and attributed to Niebuhr, 1778, II: 126ff) (by Shepard, 1930: 298-99, n. 36 = 1984: 278-79, n. 36 with additional bibliography; see Charpentier, 1911-12: 402) is ill-grounded and completely far-fetched (see earlier Lassen, 1874, II: 651; Schrader, 1892: 576, 580). For a more prudent explanation see Ghirshman, 1961: 39-40; Root, 1979: 232, 236; Bivar, 1969: 74; 1975: 60-63; Schlingloff, 1973: 296; Restelli, 1992; Etinghausen, 1950: 69, 149. On the lion-bull combat see Hartner, 1965, and 1985: 737-38. In any case we have to note that other representations of one-horned animals seem to be attested in the Achaemenid world, like that of the Persepolis monster, with a head of a lion, wings and tail of a scorpion, fighting with the Achaemenid king (see Schrader, 1892: Taf. V, Fig. 8; Benveniste, 1929: 347; Etinghausen, 1950: 43-44); on this subject we may recall that Schrader (1892: 577-80) and Benveniste (1929: 373-74) assumed that the notion of the real rhinoceros and of the mythic unicorn were transferred from the Mesopotamian world – where both were known – to the Iranian culture.

\(^{60}\) It is clear that Ctesias’ reports cannot be assumed to be historical sources even with regard to more reasonable events (see Drews, 1973: 97-132), and we know that Photius amplified these limits of Ctesias’ original. On the other hand, and specifically in this case, we wish to emphasise only the structural aspects of the unicorn-myth, where Ctesias’ information seems to fit well with other sources on the same subject.

\(^{61}\) As earlier underlined by Benveniste (1929: 372-73), Ctesias’ description of the unicorn has had an enormous impact on later Greek and Latin literature, and it is quite possible that the Greeks may have had knowledge of the rhinoceros before the period of Ctesias, and in any case before the age of Megastenes; see Etinghausen, 1950: 94-95.
Megastenes (350-290 BC) was an Ionian who visited the kingdom of Candragupta Maurya (gr. Sandrēkottoj) in particular the town of Pataliputra as ambassador of Seleucus I between 302 and 291. He wrote a work titled ‘Indikē, in four books, the first of which was dedicated to geography, the second and the third to the political systems and the last one to the religion, mythology and archaeology of India. See also Karttunen, 1997: 184-86.

The description of the Indian unicorn is very interesting; this beast is in fact a white ass (λέυκος δὲ εἶσι τὸ σώμα), and its horn is very effective against epilepsy and poisons, and it can be used as a cup for drinking; the unicorn is very fast, notwithstanding its weight and dimension. This ass can be caught only when it is with its foals, but it will fight till its death.

Another source we shall quote and compare to that of Ctesias is attested in Aelian’s Historia animalium, (XVI, 20, 3), but it goes back to Megastenes’ Ινδική62 (4th-3rd c. BC); fragm. XV (text according to Schol-
And in these same regions there is said to exist a one-horned beast, which they call *Cartazonus*. It is the size of a full-grown horse, has the mane of a horse, reddish hair, and is very swift of foot. Its feet are, like those of the elephant, not articulated and it has the tail of a pig. Between its eyebrows it has a horn growing out; it is not smooth but has spirals of quite natural growth, and is black in colour. This horn is also said to be exceedingly sharp. And I am told that the creature has the most discordant and powerful voice of all animals. When other animals approach, it does not object but is gentle; with its own kind however it is inclined to be quarrelsome. And they say that not only do the males instinctively butt and fight one another, but that they display the same temper towards the females, and carry their contentiousness to such a length that it ends only in the death of the defeated rival. The fact is that strength resides in every part of the animal’s body, and the power of its horn is invincible. It likes lonely grazing-grounds where it roams in solitude, but at the mating season, when it associates with the female, it becomes gentle and the two even graze side by side. Later when the season has passed and the female is pregnant, the male Cartazonus of India reverts to its savage and solitary state. They say that the foals when quite young are taken to the King of the Prasii and exhibit their strength one against the other in the public shows, but nobody remembers a full-grown animal having been captured. (tr. by Scholfield, 1958, 3: 289 and 291; see also the It. tr. by Maspero, 1998, II: 915-17).

See also Megastenes’ fragment quoted by Strabo, XV, I. 56 [710-711] (Schwanbeck, 1846: 103-104; Benveniste, 1929: 372; Jones, 1930, 7: 92-93):

Megastenes says that the monkeys are stone-rollers, and, haunting precipices, roll stones down upon their pursuers; and that most of the animals which are tame in our country are wild in

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63 People living in the North of Bengal (see Benveniste, 1929: 372 and in particular Karttunen, 1997, passim).
It is clear that Ctesias and Megastenes (but we could also quote Aristoteles, De partibus animalium, III, 2, 9,\(^{64}\) and other classical sources)\(^{64}\) refer to a sort of mytho-

theirs. And he mentions horses with one horn and the head of a deer (μονοκέρωτος ἐλαφροκέρων); and reeds, some straight up thirty fathoms in length, and others lying flat on the ground fifty fathoms, and so large that some are three cubits and others six in diameter.

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\(^{64}\) It is clear that Ctesias and Megastenes (but we could also quote Aristoteles, De partibus animalium, III, 2, 9,\(^{64}\) and other classical sources)\(^{64}\) refer to a sort of mytho-

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\(^{64}\) See Philostratus, Vita Apollonii, III, 2:

Καὶ τοὺς ὀνόμας ὑπὸ τῶν ἄρρητων ἄλογων ἀναληκτεῖαι, εἶναι δὲ τοῖς ἠθείως τοιούτοις εἰς μετάπτως κέρας, ὁ τεταρτὸς τε καὶ όὐς ἀγριόνομος μέχριν.

And they say that the wild asses are also to be captured in these marshes, and these creatures have a horn upon the forehead, with which they butt like a bull and make a noble fight of it; the Indians make this horn into a cup, for they declare that no one can ever fall sick on the day on which he has drunk out of it, nor will any one who has done so be the worse for being wounded, and he will be able to pass through fire unscathed, and he is even immune from poisonous draughts which others would drink to their harm. Accordingly, this goblet is reserved for kings, and the king alone may indulge in the chase of this creature. And Apollonius says that he saw this animal, and admired its natural features; but when Damis asked him if he believed the story about the goblet, he answered: “I will believe it, if I find the king of the Indians hereabout to be immortal; for surely a man who can offer me or anyone else a draught potent against disease and so wholesome, will he not be much more likely to imbibe it himself, and take a drink out of this horn every day even at the risk of intoxication?” For no one, I conceive, would blame him for exceeding in such cups” (see Conybeare, 1969: 234-37).

Solinus, Collectanea rerum memorabilium, 52, 39-40:

Sed atrociissimam est monoceros, monstrum mucis horrido, equino corpore, elephanti pedibus, cauda suilla, capite cervo, cornu e media fronte eius protrudit splendore mirifico, ad magnitudinem pedum quattuor, in acetum ut quidquid imperat, facile ictu eius perforatur. vivus non venit in hominum potestate et interimi quidem potest, capi non potest (see Mommsen, 1958: 190).

logical or semi-mythological animal, which sometimes has been associated or identified with the rhinoceros (πινκόσκο). But this is not the right moment to deal in detail with the discussion of the etymology of κράνος⁶⁶ and its possible relationships with Skt. khaḍga-, m.,⁶⁸ the compounds khaḍgāhva-, “idem,” khaḍga-dhenu- and khaḍga-dhenukā-, f. “female rhinoceros,” khaḍgaviṣṇu-, m., Pāli khaṭgaviṣṇa-, “rhinoceros,” or with Pahl. karg [kgl],⁶⁹ NP kargadān,¹ Ar. karkadān (see also Syr. karkadan) and Turkish gārgādan, Ethiopic karkanda,¹⁴ Akk. kurkizannu,⁷⁵ and their

⁶⁷ If Charpentier (1911: 402-403) suggested that Gr. κράνος derives from Skt. khaḍgavīṣṇu-, Pāli khaṭgavīṣṇa-, because of a weakening of the inner syllable -vi- between two strong stresses, Benveniste (1929: 375-76) supposed that κράνος should be emended as κρανός, but he assumed that this word would have been of Pre-Indo-European origin; in fact some apparently similar forms (karkizān, *kargszn, kargadūn, etc.) are attested in various Indo-European and Semitic languages; thus he posed a Pre-Aryan stem *kr-ku- (*kark-gel-n, from which, for instance, also the Skt. name of the rhinoceros khaḍgā- should derive. Benveniste (1929: 376), following Wüst (1927: 274), insisted however on the presence, already on Harappan and Mohenjo-Daro seals, of images representing the rhinoceros (see also Sharma, 1957: 361-64 plus ill.; Ettinghausen, 1950: 83-84). Chantraine (1969: 501a) in his turn, following Benveniste, simply wrote: "Il faudrait écrire κρανός et la forme répondrait ainsi exactement au perse karya dān. See below the solution of the problem as proposed by Kuiper.


¹ The present hypothesis has been discussed by Ettinghausen (1950: 94, n. 90), who follows a personal communication of B. Geiger; the German scholar in fact suggested a derivation of NP karg from Skt. khaḍga- (1) “sword,” (2) “horn of a rhinoceros,” (3) “rhinoceros,” while NP kargadān, Ar. karkadān should derive from Skt. khaḍga-dhenu-; in addition Geiger refused the etymology proposed by Ferrand (1930: 36 = 1984: 26), according to which Ar. karkadān derives from Skt. khaḍga-danta- “having sword-(like) teeth” (– but, as earlier noted by Benveniste, 1929, n. 3, such a compound does not exist in Sanskrit –). The comparison advanced by Shepard (1930: 36 = 1984: 26) between Skt. karrṭājan (sic) “lord of the desert” and Gr. κράνος is far-fetched (see Mayrhofer, 1954: 173). We may also note that Lüders (1916: 314 = 1940: 429) assumed that Skt. khaḍga-, m. “sword” was etymologically connected with khaḍgā-, m. “rhinoceros,” against the opinion of Wackernagel (1957, I: 177). See also Lüders, 1942: 56. On the other hand Benveniste (1929: 375) rightly objected that the derivation of NP kargadān from Skt. khaḍga-dhenu- is far-fetched, because this word is attested in later lexicographic works, and the only form to be taken into consideration is khaḍga-.

¹⁰ The Arabic form could be derived from a Persian word through an Aryan intermediary, as suggested by Benveniste, 1929: 375; on the Arabic sources see Ettinghausen, 1950: 6-11 and passim.

¹¹ As noted by Ettinghausen (1950: 149-50) this word was mentioned as the Persian designation of the rhinoceros in the Syriac translation of the Pseudo-Callistenes, while Nöldeke (1890: 13-17; see in particular p. 16, n. 9) in his turn had assumed that this very translation was probably made by a Nestorian at the end of the Sasanian period. As Ettinghausen consequently deduced, we should admit that such a word already existed in Pahlavi.

¹² See Benveniste, 1929: 375 (see earlier Schrader, 1892: 581); in particular it was to be noted that the Egyptian form is an hapax attested as a translation of Hebr. rē'ēm.

¹³ Oppenheim (personal communication apud Ettinghausen, 1950: 94) noted: “the context (of kurkizannu) clearly indicates the meaning ‘young pig’ and the correctness of this translation has been borne out recently by such occurrence as e.g. ‘one pig and his kurkizannu.’ The karkadān in Arabic, Syriac, Ethiopic (here karkand) etc. can therefore not be connected with kurkizannu.” But cf. Benveniste, 1929: 375; see also Schrader, 1873: 708; 1874: 152. See Meissner - von Soden, 1965, I: 811a [sub kurkizannu(m) “Ferkel”]; CAD, 1971: 561b [sub kurkizannu (kurkuzannu, kukkuzannu) “piglet, young pig”].
eventual common derivation from a non Indo-European stem, which seems to be attested also in the Proto-Munda dialects. On
the other hand we have to note that a specific characteristic of the unicorn cycle appears again: the idea of the purificatory force of
the horn.

We can now present the Iranian data: the unique17 Avestan mention of an ass (Av. xara-, m., Pahl. and NP xar, Skt. khara-, m.), which will be more clearly described as a unicorn in the later Zoroastrian
literature, is attested in Yasna 42, 4 (ed. Geldner, 1886: 139), where this animal is given the ritual sacrifice (see the presence of the yazamaide-formula)18 and is considered asauanu- "pious, righteous": we worship the pious Ass
which stands in the middle of the Sea Vourukaša.

The text, only apparently in Old Avestan, is more simply in Later Avestan but was fixed with formal (orthographic) arbitra-
This particular aspect can be explained because Yasna 42 forms a L.Av. moreceau inserted between two of the most sacred texts in Old Avestan: the Yasna Haptaŋhāti (= Y. 35-41) and the Gāthā Uštavaitai (Y. 43-46). The identity,19 the role, and the peculiar characteristics of this "archetypal" animal, according to the very fitting definition of
[10] HMRA Y 3# 3 9' d l'd YMRRWNYt AYK md'y'N Y zlyh Y pl'hkwrt YKOYMWNYt AP8 LGLE 3 W cšm 6 W gwš 9 W gwš 8 W slbw' ywk LOYŠE 85 hšyn' tn' spyt mynwkw-hwššn 'hlwb'. [11] AP8 ZK 6 cšm 2 PWN cšm-g's W 2 PWN b'l'yst' Y 84 LOYŠE W 2 PWN 85 kwp-g's 86

76 Kuiper (1948: 137-38), following Benveniste, suggests a Proto-Munda origin for the name of the rhinoceros: in fact he notes that both the Iranian and the Semitic forms seem to contain the Proto-Munda prefix k-,
while the root should be kadh- / gad- (the first form showing a voiceless consonant of dialectal origin) plus the suffix element -n (also of Proto-Munda origin). The radical gad would be attested also in another stem meaning "rhinoceros," i.e., gandva-, a pre-nasalised form of the root ga-да-. Kuiper insists on the fact that the difference between OIr. *kargadān (with *-z-) and NP kargadin (with *-d-) does not reflect the old alternation between Av. z and OP *=d, but corresponds to two originally different Proto-Munda forms, transmitted outside of the Indian area: *karg / kash ‘karg / kashan or *karg / kasdan and *kargadin, which would be variations (in any case with the kar-prefix) derived from *ga-na-, *ga-na-, and *khad-gа-. See again Mayrhofer, 1956: 299. We may note that Hansen (1950: 167), dis-
cussing the origin of Russian krepzenia (kerzerdor?) "hippopotamus" (Vasmer, 1953, I: 550) – clearly a (16th century) borrowing from NP karkadin through a Turkotatar intermediary (Çagatai) – suggested that in its turn
NP karg was derived from Skt. khadga-, “da in Ent-lehnungen buddhistischer Termini nach Zentralasiens Skt. d meist durch r wiedergegeben wird ….” In any case Hansen also remarked: “Es ist daher wahrscheinlich, daß die Bezeichnung nicht aus der indogermanischen Sprach-
schicht des Sanskrit stammt.”

77 Windischmann’s idea that in Yt. 8, 33, there is a reference to this ass is groundless.


80 In the It. tr. 1981 see in particular pp. 459-61 (see also the German text, the chapter about the unicorn 1944: 585-631).

81 TLTA LGLE I’d YMRRWNd in K20, 44, 1, 4: the Pâz. vers. has sari talatāt pāi rā gōt (Antîa, 1909: 2).

82 cšm šš in K20, 44, 1. 5.

83 LOYŠE hšyn omitted in K20, 44, 1. 6.

84 K20, 44, 1. 8; omitted in TD1 and TD2.

85 TD2; TD1, 126, 7, omits.

86 K20, 44, 1. 8: kwp-n’g’s; Pâz. vers. pa kuhän-gah (Antîa, 1909: 3).

87 syc is omitted in K20, 44, l. 9, while syc'wmndyh is correctly written; TD1, 126, l. 8: syc'lnwmd; TD2 151, 12: syc'lnwmd. In K20, again, Y SLYt omitted. Páž. vers. cašm špalmant sš.88 K20, 44, l. 9 adds MHYT; but see Justi, 1868: 45 (text): 'MHYTWNyt (i.e. ináed 'he strikes') according to ms P (see again, Justi, 1890: 102 in the critical appendix, and 23b in the glossary). TD1, 126, 9 adds wswyt (?). Páž. vers. tsántít (Antíá, 1909: 3).89 K20, 44, l. 10 sl. 90 PWN kwp omitted in K20, 44, l. 10, but attested (as PWN kwp'n) in the ms. tradition of the Ind.Bd. (see Justi, 1868: 45 [text] and 102 in the critical appendix). 91 The ms. transmission of this passage is disturbed; TD1, 126, l. 10, has: W 3 'ndlw'd; TD2, 151, l. 14: 3 PWN [blank space] 'ndlw'n; I assume that andarody 'air' is a mistake for andarówdy "inside" within", TD20, 44, l. 11, adds 'ndlw'n. Páž. vers. pa andarům. 92 In Pážánd in TD1 and TD2; in K20, 44, l. 12: hwnwd; Páž. vers. hunaau (Antíá, 1909: 3). 93 K20, 44, 13: PWN. 94 K20, 44, 13: omites. 95 K20, 44, 14: YYTBWNd. 96 K20, 44, 14: ŠDRWNd. 97 K20, 45, 15: ŠWSYA. 98 K20, 44, 15: in Pážánd valdu; TD1, 126, l. 14: wlylw; Páž. vers. gýrdû (Antíá, 1909: 3). 99 K20, 44, 16: wlylwnd; Páž. vers. gardánt (Antíá, 1909: 3). 100 K20, 44, 16: PWN. 101 K20, 40, 4, 16: has 3 ms P has 2; see Justi, ibid.; 2 in TD1 and TD2; Páž. vers. dò pós (Antíá, 1909: 3). 102 K20, 44, 16: MNW ZK BRA w[t]lylwty [kš an he wærdénéd "which they will encompass"]; see Justi, 1868: 102. 103 K20 44, l. 17: MNI. 104 K20, 44, 16: plš; cš omitted. 105 K20, 44, 15: zš. 106 K20, 44, 19: zš. 107 In Ind.Bd. 'wmnd is omitted (only kwhššnyh), and hlpstl'n (xrafpstsrón) inserted; see K20, 45, 1, 1 (see Justi, 1868: 45 and 102). Páž. vers. has: knáss (sic for kóxššnyh) "xrafp sûr sšž ba zandý ba talvntý (Antíá, 1909: 3). 108 TD1, 127, l. 2 and TD2, 152, l. 8 omit; attested only in the Ind.Bd.; see the preceding note. 109 TD1, 127, 3 has TLYWNt. 110 Repeated in TD2 but not in K20, 45, l. 2. 111 K20, 45, l. 3; 's'myt (Justi, 1868: 63; 45; see also West, 1880: 69). The Páž. version has asmnýt (Antíá, 1909: 3) 112 Repeated in K20, 45, 4; vacat in TD1, 127, 1, 4; TD2, 152, l. 10. 113 K20, 45, l. 4: cndtynt. Páž. vers. cindít (Antíá, 1909: 3). 114 šypt in TD1, 127, l. 5; TD2, 152, l. 11 has šypt; K20, 45, l. 4: šylynt (see also West, 1890: 69); Páž. vers. ba šyptý (Antíá, 1909: 3). 115 K20, 45, l. 4: dw'lnd. 116 Twice repeated in TD1, 127, l. 5; omitted in TD2, 152, l. 11. 117 K20, 45, l. 5: 'pyk. 118 K20, 45, 4: NKB. 119 Thus in TD1, 127, l. 6; TD2, 152, l. 11: 'ps; K20 45, l. 5: d'm'n 'pws'n BRA YWHWNd; Páž. vers. dámgn ábabastın ba hânt (Antíá, 1909: 3). 120 K20, 45, l. 6: 'pyk. 121 TD7, 127, l. 7; TD2, 152, l. 13; K20, 45, l. 6. 122 K20, 45, l. 6: w'ng. 123 TD7, 127, 1, 7; TD2, 152, l. 13: YWHWNd; TD2, 125, l. 13: YWHWNd. 124 KYA Y repeated in TD1, 127, l. 8-9. 125 K20, 45, l. 8: hpt.; Páž. vers. pa haft (Antíá, 1909: 4). 126 K20, 45, l. 8 inserts here ME. 127 K20, 45, l. 9: AMT HMIRA hm'k PWN MYA (the order of the first three words is reversed, while PWN does not occur in TD1 and TD2); Páž. vers. kš hámt šxô pa áv (Antíá, 1909: 4). 128 Thus K20, 45, l. 10; TD1, 127, l. 11 and TD2, 153, l. 1 omit; see the preceding passage: 'BYN zlyh mycft. Páž. vers. vàdár av mázânt (Antíá, 1909: 4). 129 Vacat in K20, 45, l. 10. 130 K20, 45, l. 11 omits it and inserts BRA.
HWE'T, hlwsp 'p-n'133 BRA132 'psyht131 HWE'T134 'hwkwnyş'135 gn'k mnywk QDM OL MYA YBLWN1 YKOYMWNYT PWN mlgýh109 Y d'm133 Y 'wrmgd. [20] tyšěl MYA MN zlyh Y PWN hdyb\lyh <Y> HMRA Y 3 LGLE141 f'd 'pythl YNSBWNYt [W]' m'brc139 pyt'k AÝK slgyn140 Y HMRA Y 3 LGLE141 [AYT]142 MEHT144 KBDc145 mnywk-hwšñ AÝT AHLc ZK nm <W> plw'l146 Y MYA144 PWN swl'khy145 OL tn146 OZLWNYt <W> PWN gwynyc <W> slgyn LAWHL LMYTNYt.


[10] As regards the Three-legged Ass, (He)111 says: “It stands in the middle of the Sea Frâxkward and has three feet, six eyes, nine testicles,142 two ears, one horn, a dark-blue head,
white body, and spiritual food, (and he is) holy. 153 [11] And of those its six eyes, two are in the
eye-sockets, 154 two on the top of the head, two on the hump, and by means of those six eyes it overcomes [the danger and] the worst destruction. [12] And of those nine testicles, three are on the head, three on the hump, and three inside the flanks; and each testicle is as large as a house and as big as the Mount X’antvant (Xanuqad in Pəzand). [13] And when each one of those three feet has been placed, it covers as much ground as when a thousand sheep sit down in a circle by sitting together; a pattern of (its) foot is such as a thousand men with horses and a thousand chariots can pass in throughout. [14] And those two ears surround the districts of Mazandarān. [15] That one horn is as it were golden and hollow (or “that horn is golden like a trumpet [i.e., a horn]). Another thousand horns have grown therefrom, some of which are as big as a camel, some (are) as big as a horse, some as big as an ox and some as big as an ass, great as well as small; by means of that horn it destroys and shatters all that worst pest of the fighting xəstafs. [16] Then when that Ass takes a round in the sea (and) bends its ears, all the waters of the Sea Frāxwārd furiously tremble, (and) (its) sides and centre are in turmoil. 155 [17] When it brays, all the Ohrmazdean female water-creatures become pregnant, and all the pregnant xəstafs of the water, when they hear that bray, cast as corpses (their young). [18] When it stales in the sea, all the water of the seas – which is in the seven Kišwars of the earth – becomes purified. For this reason all the asses, when they see water, they stale in it. [19] As (He) says: “If 156 the Three-legged Ass would not have purified the water, all the waters would have perished because of the contamination which the Evil Spirit (Gunnog Mənəg) had brought on the water for the death of the creatures of Ohrmazd. [20] Tištar can seize more water from the sea with the assistance of the Three-legged Ass. And ambergris – it is known – is the dung of the Three-legged Ass; for, (even) if its food is mostly spiritual, the moisture and the nutrition of the water goes to (its) body throughout the pores and (the Three-legged Ass) casts (it) away as urine and dung.” 157

Then we quote the brief reference given to the Three-legged Ass in the Pahlavi and Pəzand versions of the Mənəg i Xrad, LXII, 26-27 (Sanjana, 1895: 86; Anklesaria, 1913: 165-66; cf. West, 1893: 111; Bausani, 1963: 174-75, 177):

(Pahl. text; transliteration): [26] HMRA Y 3 p’d mdy’n ’<Y> zlyh Y wlkš YTYBWNyt. [27] h’mwdyn MYA Y OL ns’y W dšt’n W ’p’ryk hyhl [W lynmyhl] w’lyt AMT OL HMRA Y 3 p’d YHMTWNyt h’mwdyn PWYN wynšn DKYA Y wywš’šl OBYDWNyt

(Pahl. text; transcription): [26] xar i sê pây mayôn <î> zrêh t warkašt ništêd. [27] hâmûyên āb i o nasâ ud daštân ud abârîg hîx [ud rêmanîh] 158 wârêd ka o xar i sê pây rasêd hâmûyên pad wênîn pâk ud yojdahr kûnêd.

The twenty-ninth enigma he asked (was): “What is that has ten feet, three heads, six eyes, six ears and two tails and three (pairs of) testicles and two hands, and three noses, and four horns and three backs and the life and preservation of the whole world (come) from it?”

The difficult question is answered by Jōšt i Fryân only with the help of Nēroṣanga, sent by Ohrmazd; see III, 72: pas ohrmzd t swdâd nēroṣanga yazad pad pâyûm d jōšt i frûn frêsted Judaism uf kû frâlîn paxâs dâh *kû ēn gôw-jêst asê u bûhî mard kē kûr u daw xar bûd. Afterwards, Ohrmazd the lord sent Nēroṣanga the angel, with a message to Jōšt i Fryân, and he said to him thus: “Give the answer of the enigma, which is this: It is a yoke of oxen, with a man who performs ploughing and tillage” (…). (see Haug - West, 1872: 260-61; Weinreich, 1992: 72-77; Cereti, 2001: 185-86).

In any case I think that in this context it is the hyper-phallic strength of the unicorn that is to be exalted, a fact which was probably put under a taboo by the later Zoroastrian tradition. Also very important is the mention of the beverage obtained from the testicles of the rhinoceros and in particular the mention of its horn as an instrument against the demons in the Kyranides. 155 See Y. 42, 4: xarâmca yim ašawunam yazamaîd. 156 Lit. “in the position of the eyes.” 157 See Fr. 8, 31; Panaino, 1990a: 55. 158 See also the hypothetical period (irrealis) contained in Yr. 8, 52-53. 159 Cf. Anklesaria, 1956: 195, 197. 160 Anklesaria, 1913: 166; Sanjana, 1895: 86, omits.
The Three-legged Ass sits in the middle of the Sea Walkaš. [27] (It) completely polishes and purifies with (its) watchfulness (pad wênisîn) all the water which rains on the dead matter (nasû), on the menstruation (daštân) and on the other excrement (bîxtîr) (and on the filth—), when it arrives to the Three-legged Ass.

The direct identification between the xara- of Yasna 42 and the xarî xê pâyî is undisputed among Iranologists, but its background deserves a more systematic analysis. Apropos of this we may point out that the Three-legged Ass, as stated in ch. XXIV D of the Ir.Bd. [and XIX of the Ind.Bd.] is one of the hâmkarân “assists” of Tištreya, the star Sirius, which is the Iranian protagonist of the myth of the liberation of the water. This collaboration is again mentioned in ch. XXI, 5-6 of the Ir.Bd. (ms. TD1, ed. Tehran: 112, 10-16; TD2, ed. Anklesaria, 1908: 135, ll. 15-16, ll. 1-7; not extant in DH; see Bailey, 1933, II: 68):

[5] AMT MN ʼhwkynšînî 166 Y ŠDYAʼn phlywbwty t ʼpywbwty wzyn W yzdîn W ʼhwkynšîn Y ktk ktkî 165 wʼl ʼwylt tyšîl MYA MN hmʼk 164 zlyh Y YNSBWNYt BRA MN zlyh Y plʼxwtr wʼyš YNSBWNYt, [6] cywg 1YMRKWNYt AYK HMRA Y 3 p d Y BYN zlyh Y plʼhwkr ptʼc ywmbynî 166 hmʼk MYA Y zlyh PWN 165 šypʼn ʼşpyt, MYA BRA OL kwstʼn Y zlyh LMYTNYt, tyšîl PWN hdyb ʼlyh Y plwʼhl Y ʼhiwbʼn AHRNe W mywnkʼn ʼygʼn plwt YATWNYt (…).

[5] ka az aḥōgēnīnî h dēwān frehbdīhā wizend ud cyzān ud aḥōgēnīnî h kardag h kardag wâran wârêd tîshār dab az hamāg zreh stânēd be az zreh î frîxkward wâl stânēd. [6] cîyn gówed kà xarî xê pâyî h andar zrehî x frîxkward fráz jumbêndî, hamâg dab x zrehî pad

162 See in general Panaino, 1990a; 1995; cf. Gignoux, 1998. It is to be noted that Darmesteter (1877: 147-48) assumed with reference to the urine and the rain that:

1. In the urine is the essence of an animal yellow. 2. The essence of an animal yellow is the urine of a mortal. It is the water. The existence of the first conception is well-known; she is indo-european and it is restored in the texts in France and in the mythology of Asia, we now return to a hymn vuelve of a real damage, the third of the A-herva. The Perse enfin possess and this conception and the second that it is the essence of an animal yellow, and she is the essence of the high, the word same that the induction we make libre à lui the liturgy, with this last time different if he.live under the name of an animal another than the taurer, whose name is not another mere slaves. Lâne à trois pieds.

See also Przybysz, 1928.

161 See also Ir.Bd. XIII, 36 (TD1, ed. Tehran, 82, 9-11; TD2, ed. Anklesaria, 1908: 99, 14 – 100, 1), where it is stated: bûd andar gawûn dîn i cîyn gów gaw xwîy xê hâ-daireb-i swânêndî; andar xarîn xarî h xê pâyî ud andar maruwîn-ič camrîlî. There was among the oxen that one, such as the ox Strûgî, which they call ʼHadayâşʼ, amongst the asses the Three-legged Ass, amongst the birds too, the ʼCamrîʼ (see Anklesaria, 1956: 127); Ir.Bd., XVII, 8 (TD1, ed. Tehran, 99, 12; TD2, ed. Anklesaria, 1908: 120, 13-14); … xarî i spêd i gurbaq-pây warên rad ʻthe white ass with the paws of cats is the chief of the assesʼ (see Anklesaria, 1956: 155).

160 See Windschmann, 1863: 91; W. Geiger, 1882: 361-62; Darmesteter, 1892: 276, n. 7; Jackson, 1928: 64; Nyberg, 1938: 285; Voigt, 1937: 30; Panaino, 1990b: 6. We shall note that Pahlavi literature only apparently seems to mention another one-horned animal, different from the Three-legged Ass; it is a big and peculiar sheep, dowered with a great horn, named kûrsîyag (Pâz. kûrisîg, kûrîk; see Nyberg, 1974: 121). According to the Bundahîn [Ir.Bd. ch. XIII, 13-14 (see Anklesaria, 1956: 121); Ind.Bd. XIV, 15-16 (see West, 1880: 48)] it is of the same dimension of a horse, with a large horn and three humps. This animal is mentioned in the Bundahîn and in the Wizîdaghtîh â Zadspram (IX, 19-20) as the steed of Manûlîchîr (see West, 1880: 181-82; Ankaraimsa, 1965: LXXIX); see also Wizîdaghtîh â Zadspram, ch. III, 61 (Gignoux - Tafazzoli, 1931: 52-53). It is clear that the animal is the moufflon, as explained by Mirza, 1974.
When it rains owing to the defilement of the demons with excess and deficiency, (and with) harm, damage and contamination of the various divisions (of the earth), Tištar takes water from the entire Frāwkard Sea. [6] As (He) says: “The Three-legged Ass, which causes to move (the waters) in the Frāwkard Sea, and agitates all the water of the sea, pours down the water on the sides of the sea. Tištar descends with the help of the frawahr of the right ones and also of the other celestial divinities (…)” (cf. Anklesaria, 1956: 175).

Another tradition concerning the Three-legged Ass, which links this mythical animal to astronomical phenomena, is attested in the Paḥlivī Rewāyat accompa-

nying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg, ch. 35a5/a6 (here quoted according to the edition and translation of Williams, 1990, I, 144-45; II: 62, 190):

[35a5] ZNE wyl Y MN 'bl 'wptyt ME.

[35a6] 'whrmdz gwpt AYK ZNE šk 'AYT AMT 'bl MYA YNSBWNx PWN nylvk Y w't W ywmbšn Y ŽK HMRA Y LGLE Y BYN md'y'n Y zlyh ystyt 'COLr. 'nldw'd BRA OZLWNyt W dwlšt 't pyt W glm OBYDWNyt AMT 'wptyt OL ANŠWA'Ta'n W gwspnd'n BRA YKTLWNyt W 'hînm sthmktl YHWNYtr.

[35a6] Œn wlr t az abrösťed čē

[35a6] ohrmzd guf t kô en sâg ast ka abr āb stôned pad nérôg t wâd ud jumbšn t ân sâr t sê pýt t andar mâyân t zrêh ēstêd <ö> andarwôy be šawêd ud drust tábêd ud garm kunêd ka òffôd ô mardômân ud göspandân be òzanêd ud ahremân stahmagtar bawêd.

[35a5] (Zoroaster asked:) “What (is) this thunderbolt which falls from the cloud?”

[35a6] Ohrmzd said: “This is a stone; when the cloud draws (up) water (from the sea), through the power of the wind and the movement of the three-legged ass which stands in the middle of the sea, it [i.e. the water] goes up (to) the atmosphere and burns and is heated severely, when it falls on men and beneficent animals it kills them, and Ahriman becomes more oppressive.”

I do not think it would be useful to repeat here in detail the various arguments which permit us to compare some functions and characteristics of Tištrya (which, e.g., is represented as a white horse) to those of the white Three-legged unicorn Ass,\(^{168}\) nor to

\(^{168}\) See Panaino, 1990b: 8-9: Y. 42, 4 (zaromča yim aš-numma yazamađē yô hituitê màiđīm zraâiptôh vou-
rukāsēhē) can be directly compared with Yt. 8, 32 (us pâši aš-šâhitit šâitama zarûhštēra tištrirô reaûnô s'asâiptôh zraâiptôh haca vourukâsēhāti). In Y. 42, 4, Ir.Bd., XIV, Ind.Bd. XIX, and MX. XII, 26, the sar is in the Walkāš, in Y. 8, 32 Tištrya rises from the Vouru-
kāša. The ass has three legs, nine testicles, two ears and is white: Tištrya/Tištar is a white horse with golden ears and bridles; the ass has a golden horn with a thousand horns of camels, horses, oxen and asses, while Tištrya, when he assumes the form of a bull, he has golden horns (Yt. 8, 16), and in the form of a horse he receives the strength of ten camels, ten mountains, ten waters (Yt. 8, 25); the ass will defeat the pollution of the waters with its horn; then he agitates the waters with this horn, while when he brays, he fecundates the watery animals and then helps Tištar; in its turn Tištrya frees the waters imprisoned by the demon Apaoša (Yt. 8, 29), agitates and pours out the waters of the Vourukaša (Yt. 8, 31), and brings a good harvest and fecundity (Yt. 8, 36). In MX XII, 27 the ass is related to the rains purifying the dead matter, while Tištrya brings the rain after his victory over Apaoša (Yt. 8, 40). The ass fights for the purification of the waters contaminated by the demons and the devilish beings, while Tištrya (Yt. 8, 12, 54-56) fights for the liberation of the waters and for the defeat of the Pairikā Dužayārā (“the Witch of the bad year”).

It is interesting to note that the Chinese name of the unicorn, ch‘i-lin, could be put in connection with ch‘i-lin, the Yiieh-chih form attested for “heaven” (according to Pulleyblank (1966: 30-36), because the unicorn was the heavenly horse.
list any Mesopotamian aspect of the Iranian cycle of the arrow-star Sirius and other similar arguments.\(^ {169}\) It is more important to recall that some aspects of the Three-legged Ass\(^ {170}\) will be seminal for the later development of the idea of the beneficial horn we find also in Greek, Mediaeval and Renaissance literature, where we can identify a far echo of the purificatory force of its immersion in the water. In Vedic India, however, another elaboration of the topic of the purification of the water throughout the horn can be found. The most important document is attested in a hymn of the Atharvaveda, III, 7 (text apud Roth - Whitney 1856: 33-34) against a “disease” called \(kṣetriyā\):\(^ {171}\)

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harinasya raghusyado 'dhi śīrśaṁ bhesajam
sa kṣetriyam viśānayā viśādtaṁ aṁānaśat
ānu tvā hariṇo vyāśa padbhīśa caturbhir akrami
viśānē vī sva gupsitaṁ yad avya kṣetriyam hṛdi
ado yad avarocate catuspakaṁ ṛva cchādiḥ
tenā te sarvaṁ kṣetriyam aṅgēbhāṁ nāśayāmāsa
ānā ye dīvī subhage vīcetaṁ nāma tārake
vi kṣetriyasya muñcatām adhamām pāśaṁ uttamām
āpa id vā u bhesaṁtī ṛpo amvācātanīh
āpo vīvāsya bhesajāṁ tāṁ tvā muñcatu kṣetriyāt
yad āsuteḥ kriyāmāṇiādhyā kṣetriyāṁ tvā vyānāyē
evadāhāṁ tayā bhesājam kṣetriyāṁ nāśayāmi ṛvat
apavāśe naksatṛānām apavāśa uṣhasām uta
āpaṁmat sarvaṁ durbbhāmat ama kṣetriyam uccatu
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On the head of the swift-running gazelle (harina) is a remedy; he by his horn hath made the kṣetriyā disappear, dispersing. After thee hath the bull-gazelle stridden with his four feet; O horn, do thou unfasten (vi-sā) the kṣetriyā that is compacted (?) in his hearth. What shines down yonder, like a four-sided roof (chadis), therewith we make all the kṣetriyā disappear from thy limbs. The two blessed stars named Unfasteners (vicēft), that are yonder in the sky – let them unfasten of the kṣetriyā the lowest, the highest fetter. The waters verily [are] remedial, the waters disease-expelling, the water remedial of everything; let them release thee from kṣetriyā. If from the drink (?) āsūṭha that was being made the kṣetriyā hath come upon (vi-aś) thee, I know the remedy of it; I make the kṣetriyā disappear from thee. In the fading out of the asterisms, in the fading out of the dawns also, from us [fade] out all that is of evil nature, fade out (apa-vas) the kṣetriyā.


This topic is also attested in other countries, as in China,\(^ {172}\) in the Islamic tradition\(^ {173}\) and in the Western world.\(^ {174}\)

But a very striking element which relates the Iranian cycle of the Three-legged Ass,\(^ {175}\) to the theme of the seduction (of Mesopot-
mian and Indian derivation) is attested in a 14th century Greek ms. of the Physiologus (Codex B), which contains the following statement:176

Περί τοῦ μονοκέρου

"Εστὶν ζῷον μονόκερος οὕτως καλολεμένος· ἐν δὲ τοῖς τόποις ἔκεινοι ἕνι λίμνη μεγάλη, καὶ συνάγονται τὰ θηρία ὡστε πεῖν· πρὶν ὡς τὰ θηρία συναχθοῦσι, πορεύεται ὁ ὦφις καὶ ρίπτει τὸν ἵνα αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι. τὰ γυναῖκα θηρία, αἰσθανόμενα τοῦ φαρμάκου, οὐ τολμᾶσι πεῖν, ἀναμένοντες δὲ τὸν μονόκερον, ἔρχεται, καὶ τυθέος εἰσερχόμενος ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ καὶ σταυρὸν ἑκτοποίος τῷ κέρατι αὐτοῦ, ἀποτεῖξε τοῦ φαρμάκου τὴν δύναμιν, καὶ πιόν ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος, πίνοντι καὶ τὰ θηρία πάντα ἔκεινα.

Δεύτερα φύσει αὐτοῦ. τοῦτο τὸ ζῷον, τὸν μονόκερον λέγομεν, ἀγαπᾶ σφόδρα τὴν χαράν· τί δὲ ποιοῦσιν οἱ τοῦτο θηριόντες; λαμβάνοντες μὲν ἑαυτῶν τύμπανα, σάλπιγγας, κυνάρια καὶ ὡς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐπινόοντες, ὑπαγοῦσιν ἐν τῷ τόπῳ ἐνδαθανεῖν τὸ ζῷον καὶ συνεστώσως χορὸν, κρούοντες τὰς σάλπιγγας καὶ εἴ τι ἔχονταν ἔτερου, βοώντες μεγάλες ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ μίνας δὲ γυναῖκα καθηκαντες ἐν ἑτέρι τόπῳ ἐν τινὶ δενδρῷ πλῆθος αὐτῶν, κοσμοῦσι τευτὴν καὶ διδόουσιν αὐτῷ ἀλόσων δεδεμένην ἐν τῷ δενδρῷ. ο ὁ μονόκερος, ἀκούων τὰς μεγάλας βοῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τὰς σάλπιγγας, ἔρχεται πλῆθος τῶν χορῶν καὶ θεωρεῖ καὶ ἀκούει ὧπερα αὐτοῦ δρόσα, καὶ οὐ τολμᾶ ἐγγίσαι αὐτοῦς; θεωροὺς δὲ μόνην τὴν γυναίκα καθηκοῦνταν.177 ὑπάγει ἀλλ<.;>άμεος ἐπ᾽ αὐτῆς, καὶ τοῖς γύναις αὐτῆς προστρέμομεν, καὶ ὑμᾶλισον αὐτὸν ἡ γυνὴ, ἀμφήτευς; ἔτι σεμαίνει αὐτῶν τῇ ἄλλης, καὶ οὕτως ἀφίσσει αὐτῶν καὶ ὑπάγει. ὁ δὲ μονόκερος ἐξενέκλιναν καὶ μη δυνάμενος πορεύθηνα, ἀπετῇ ἡ ἄλλης κεκρατημένης ὅπως, δορεῖς παλλά, ὀφίστη τῷ κέρας αὐτοῦ καὶ ὑπάγει, καὶ τῷτο λαμβάνοντι αὐτῷ οἱ θηριόντες, ἐστὶ δὲ εἰς τὸ φαρμάκον τοῦ ὄφεως χρήσιμον.

About the Unicorn

There is an animal called monokeros ("unicorn"); in those places there is a large lake (where) the wild animals come together to drink. But before the beasts have gathered together, a serpent arrives and pours down its own venom in the water. Then the wild animals, having taken perception of the poison, do not dare to drink, but wait for the unicorn; it comes and soon enters into the lake, having formed (the image of) a cross with its horn, destroys the strength of the poison, and while it drinks from the water all those animals also can drink.

(This is) its second nature:178 this animal – I mean the unicorn – loves very much the joy. Then what do the people who want to catch him do? They take with themselves drums, trumpets, kinnors and everything has been invented by men; they go to the place where the animal is, and start to dance, playing the trumpets and anything else they have with them, heavily crying aloud during the dance. Having placed a woman in another place close to them at the feet of a tree, they adorn her and give her a chain bound to the tree. Then the unicorn, hearing the big noises of men and of the trumpets, advances near to the place, sees and hears whatever they are doing, but does not dare to approach them. When it sees the woman alone, apparently asleep, it advances to leap over her and rubs on her knees, and while the woman calms it, (the unicorn) falls asleep. Then she binds it to the chain and thus leaves it and goes away. The unicorn, when it wakes up and realises to be no longer capable of walking, being in fact

176 Text according to Shbordone, 1936a: 321. See Ettinghausen, 1950: 150, n. 20; Einhorn, 1976: 55; for the Oriental versions see also Peters, 1898: 34-35.
177 Sic in the mss.; about the use of the masculine participle instead of the feminine see Langholf, 1977.
178 About the philological background and the textual relations of this second part of the chapter see the discussion offered by Shbordone, 1936b: 62-64.
held by the chain, by continuously skinning loses its horn and frees itself; then the hunters keep it (i.e. the horn). It is useful against the poison of the snake.

Apropos of this we may introduce another source which seems to reflect a more specifically Iranian point of view: it is the (fictitious) description of the Marmara Sea by Johannis Witte de Hese (a priest from Utrecht), during his travel to Jerusalem in 1389. He says\textsuperscript{179} that still at his time some poisonous animals (\textit{animalia venenosa}) come at twilight to infect the waters of the Sea and that the good animals (\textit{animalia bona}) cannot drink any water; but each day, after dawn, the unicorn comes and he enters the waters purifying them from the poison and allowing other animals to drink during the day [\textit{De mane vero post ortum solis venit unicornus ponens cornu suum ad predictum fluuium expellendo venenum ex illo vt in die cetera animalia sumant potum quod idem ipse vidi}]. The strict relation between the purification of the Sea and the unicorn, the function of the horn,\textsuperscript{180} and the dualistic opposition between \textit{animalia bona} and \textit{venenosa} seems to reflect a Zoroastrian pattern, which fittingly coincides with that of the description of the Three-legged Ass of the \textit{Bundahišn}, but also with that attested in Codex B of the \textit{Physiologus}.\textsuperscript{181} In addition we may recall the presence also in the \textit{Kyranides} of the pattern of the beverage obtained from the testicles of the rhinoceros and of its horn as an instrum for chasing away the demons.

Next we have to summarise the facts and to discuss comparative and methodological problems:

The cycle of Ṭṛṣyaśṛṅga with its variants cannot be separated from that of Enkidu; the patterns of both cycles show too many parallels and no historical, geographic or cultural element prohibits such a connection, as already underlined by Della Casa.\textsuperscript{182} In addition we may note that the topic of the seduction/initiation and of the travel to the town and its king are the same as is also the link to the gazelle, which is attested – in different but recurring forms – in both traditions. The gazelle-theme probably provides an explanation for the timid behaviour of the wild being living in the forest without contact with other humans. The development of the role and importance of the horn in India is most probably linked to its symbolic value in the sphere of sex and fertility. This different theme was in turn linked to the Indian saga of Ṭṛṣyaśṛṅga (whose arrival in the town brings rains) but it appears also in some descriptions of the wild unicorn according to Ctesias and Megastenes, while it grows particularly in the Iranian Zoroastrian milieu; here in fact the Three-legged Ass purifies waters with his horn, fecundates the good animals and provokes the abortion of all of the devilish beings living in the Cosmic Sea. On the other hand, the mention in the \textit{Atharvaveda} of the horn of the swift-running gazelle as a remedy against the \textit{kṣetriyā}-disease seems to be an element which offers a – perhaps tenuous but very impressive – link between the cycle of Enkidu / Ṭṛṣyaśṛṅga and the theme of the beneficial horn. It is clear that we do not have elements to claim a direct relation between the Iranian unicorn and Enkidu or Ṭṛṣyaśṛṅga, but – and this fact seems to me to be very difficult to be denied – we are moving in a sort of kaleido-

\textsuperscript{179} See \textit{Itinerarium Joanis de Hese presbyteri ad Hierusalem}, 1499; discussed by Einhorn, 1976: 242 (with a literature and primary sources at n. 762), and Shepard, 1930: 152, 236 = 1984: 179, 286-87.

\textsuperscript{180} See Scheftelowitz, 1912: 464.


\textsuperscript{182} This confirms that the third version of the \textit{Physiologus} contains a later tradition, which could have been influenced, through Arabic or Persian intermediation, by the Zoroastrian description of the unicorn ass.
scopic box, where different facts are mixed together or make their appearance separately. Thus it will be for instance in the Mediaeval and Renaissance legends\(^{183}\) (but also in the later redaction of the *Physiologues*), that both themes will be joined – that of the beneficial horn and that of the seduction – through the introduction of a wild unicorn which becomes mild and sweet in the presence of a virgin. Thus also the origin of the wild Enkidu, sometimes attributed with horns and tail, living with the gazelles and, in certain versions, son of a gazelle and of a male ass is something which goes beyond the limit of mere coincidence.

We may remember that the association of a strongly virile being with the ass is not fortuitous at all and actually is attested in different cases; the identification with an ass appears in fact in the cases of Enkidu (Tablet VIII, 49-50), of Enkidu’s father (Tablet VIII, 4), of the Indian unicorn ass (Ctesias and Megastenes), of the pious being of *Yasna* 42, and of the Three-legged unicorn of the Pahlavi literature. Why an ass? It would be an enormous mistake to assume that the ass or the donkey was chosen because bizarre or ridiculous; this view did not correspond to that of many ancient peoples, in particular in the Mesopotamian area. The ass was in fact a royal animal, and its sacrifice, for instance among the Amorrites,\(^{184}\) was more significant than that of the horse. Its sexual strength was enormously considered and it appeared to be a royal animal *par excellence*. For instance, Jesus’ entrance in Jerusalem on a little donkey (*Mark* 11:1-11; *Luke* 19:29-38; *John* 12:12-15) or on a she-ass with a little foal (*Matthew* 21:1-11) can only superficially be explained as an act of humility; that was the parade of a real king. Thus the identification of the unicorn(-s) with an ass, and the same genealogical link in a version of Enkidu’s genealogy (as the identification of Enkidu with an *akkannu* in Tablet VIII 49-50) must be reconsidered.

On the other hand, the presence of an aṣauna - (“pious, righteous”) ass in *Yasna* 42, which is mentioned without any clear explanation about its identity, but with reference to its presence in the centre of the Sea Vouruḵaš – the place where the cosmic mountain rise, where the sacred tree grows, i.e. close to the *axis mundi* of the Iranian world – deserves attention. This personage was certainly considered more significant

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183 This is for instance the case of the story written in the 15th century by Giovanni da Sanseverino (ed. M. Guglielminetti, 1985: 94-95), who describes the hunting of the unicorns in the land of the “Gran Cane,” at the border of the kingdom of the Priest Jean (“Prete Gianni”). It has to be noted that the original orthography is respected here:

Alora ci menò in uno cerchiovito, dov’erono da ses santa leocorni, legati con catene d’oro, perché sono molti feroci e molto bravi. E non si può appressar a lloro nessuna persona se none donzelle vergini, perché è animale molto avulterato più che animale che sia al mondo; e mangiono iscorze d’alloro. Noi domandamo come si pigliavano. Rispose: “Io ve lo farò vedere; e domani saremo insieme, e vedrete la più strana cosa che voi vedessi mai.”

E l’altro di noi fummo alla caccia discosto cinque giornate, dove lui stà in uno paese molto disabitato; ed e’ vi grandi boschi, ed e’ vi molti istagnoni d’acque: e in questi stagnoni abita molti serpenti di più ragioni, e abitavi molti leoni e molti leocorni e altri animali; e chiamasi el detto paese Somaete. E nessuna bestia usa mai bere a questi stagnoni per insino a tanto che li alicorni non vengono a mettere il corno nelle dette acque, e di poi beono; e quando anuo beuto, gli’altri animali beono.

E sapiate che questo signore a certe donzelle vergine, e mettele intorno a questi laghi, e co’ molti cavalli fa cacciare questi alicorni; e come il leocorno sente a l naso le dette donzelle, conviene che truoi le dette vergine; e, giunto a lei, le mette il capo in grenbo, e adormentasi. E queste donzelle sono ammaestrate dal loro signore, e con certe corde lo legano, e menello dov’ella vogliono. E se la detta donzella non fosse vergine, subito l’amaza. E veduta questa caccia, tornamo alla detta valle.

Io vi giuro per la nostra fede che di questi unicorns ne fue presi ventiquattro in ispazio d’otto di.

than the attested three lines can show. On the other hand we have to note that an “ass” (*rāsabha*, m.)\(^{185}\) was the typical steed of the Vedic Aśvins (Ṛgveda, I, 34, 9; 116, 2; VIII, 85, 7).

Another aspect which strongly emerges from some recent considerations proposed by Simo Parpola,\(^{186}\) concerns a not explicitly stated, but quite probable esoteric doctrine about the auto-castration of Enkidu; Parpola in fact remarks that Enkidu cuts off the “right hand” (*imittu*, a pun on *imittu* “shoulder”) of the Bull of Heavens and flings it at the face of Ištar in Tablet VI of the Gilgamesh Epic; Parpola compares this expression to the passage attested in Mt. 5:29: “If your right hand is your undoing, cut it off and fling it away (…)”, by noting that “in both Mt. 5:29 and Gilg. VI 157, the ‘right hand’ clearly is a metaphor for ‘penis.’” In addition Parpola insists on the fact that “in Tablet X of the epic, Enkidu is several times referred to as a ‘rejected mule’ (*kudanu ṭardu*),” suggesting that this expression implies his emasculation, which could have occurred only in connection with the Bull episode of Tablet VI. Thus we could assume that, if Enkidu’s seduction opened for him the access to civilisation and wisdom – in other words he was initiated to a higher level of life and knowledge – this newly discovered sexual force revealed itself to be too strong for him to be dominated. Then, according to Parpola, Enkidu’s intercourse with the harlot actually plays a parallel role to that of the effeminate *assinnu*\(^{187}\) encountered by Ereškigal in the Descent of Ištar. More precisely Parpola writes:\(^{188}\)

In the Descent of Ištar, the *assinnu* is sent to rescue the fallen goddess, who, thanks to his intervention, is reborn and gradually ascends to her celestial home. In the Gilgamesh Epic, Enkidu plays a similar role: he is the “helper/rescuer of a friend” (*mušeibri*, Tablet I 250, 270), without whom Gilgamesh’s gradual transformation into a “perfect king” would not have been possible.

On the other hand, I would like to emphasise that in Tablet VIII 49-50 (see also Tablet X 54-55, 128, 227) Gilgāmeš addresses Enkidu as follows:\(^{189}\)

\[
\text{ib-ri ku-da-nu ṭar-du ak-kan-nu šá KUR-i nim-ra šá EDIN}
\]

\[
\text{EN.KI.DU ib-ri ku-da-nu ṭar-du a-ka-nu šá KUR-i nim-ra šá EDIN}
\]

“O my friend, rejected mule, wild ass of the mountains, panther of the steppe; Enkidu, O my friend, rejected mule, wild ass of the mountains, panther of the steppe ....”

Here Enkidu is not only a “rejected mule” (*kudanu ṭardu*), but also a “wild ass” – an *akkanu* like his father according to Tablet VIII, 4 – and a “panther” (*nimru*). The association with these three animals does not strictly pertain to an emasculated or castrated being, but seems to be in contradiction, perhaps because Gilgāmeš is mentioning this way three different aspects (or periods) of Enkidu’s life; in any case I think that the scattered references to Enkidu and Enkidu’s father as a wild ass cannot be separ-

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\(^{185}\) In the Ṛgveda *khara-*, m. is not attested; here we find *gardabhā-, m. and rāsabha-*, m. (Gräfmann, 1996: 387; 1162-63); the first one occurs only three times; in VIII, 56, 3, one hundred asses are given to the priest, but in 29, 5, Indra is invoked in order to slay that ass. Dinsshaw (1932: 98-87) tried to emphasise the comparison between the Three-legged Ass and the ass of the Aśvins, by assuming in particular that it was thanks to the ass that the Aśvins won their bride, the daughter of the Sun, i.e. Sūryā. Such a suggestion remains in my opinion far-fetched.

ated from the later Iranian developments of the wild unicorn-ass and its sexual strength.\textsuperscript{190} We may also underline the fact that its three legs clearly are an allusion to its virile member, as in the case of the three-legged Priapus and Kubera.\textsuperscript{191}

In its turn, the Indian elaboration of the story, notwithstanding that it is reassessed according to Hindu and Buddhist patterns, seems to focus – paradoxically by reversing it – on an inner aspect of Enkidu’s behaviour and psychic dimension, i.e. the one of the necessary confrontation with the sexual force and its initiating strength. Ṛṣyaṣṭiṅga and his alter egos are in fact ascetics, and not wild beings, but their (sexual?) strength appears to be overwhelmingly remarkable and has to be liberated or/and dominated (the final falling of the rains). Then, the Indian side of the saga seems to be a sort of mirror in front of the Mesopotamian background, where some hidden aspects have assumed a different status. On the other hand, the Iranian Three-legged Ass, a clearly hyper-phallic animal [with its 9 (pairs of?) testicles], cannot be separated from the sexual connotation of the present mythological cycle (nor can we dismiss the extremely clear witness of the \textit{Kyranides}). Here, again paradoxically, the animal aspect, that of the ass with its sexual and regal implications, plays a significant role. But this very ass acts, however, as an important helper of the god Tištrya, the star Sirius, who represents, in the form of a white horse, the heavenly liberator of the cosmic waters, struggling against the demon of famine (Apaša, in the form of a black horse).

All these aspects signify in my opinion that we are facing a situation in which legendary cycles and cultural elements were moving from one area to another; during these trips new and old elements were elaborated according to patterns which reflect different systems of thinking, but which did not prevent the stimulating attraction towards foreign ideas or symbolic elements. Thus, if the impact of the Gilgâmeš Epic on the oldest Greek literature, in particular on the \textit{Iliad},\textsuperscript{192} is an established fact, its influence on more eastern countries, such as India and Iran, has at the same time remained underestimated, and looking in both directions can offer a more balanced view on the role and diffusion of such a tradition.

\textsuperscript{190} Enkidu’s wild sexual force is clearly evoked in Tablet I, 160, where its is expressly stated that Enkidu used to have sexual intercourse with wild animals, and in I, 161-62, when “Šamhat saw him, the primordial man, the young whose sexual virility (comes) from the deep of the steppe.” See Parpola, 1997: 73; Pettinato, 1993: 130.
\textsuperscript{191} See Albright, 1920: 333.
\textsuperscript{192} In particular we can mention the work of Burkert, 1995, passim (see p. 200, where all the most pertinent literature has been mentioned). I would like to underline however the importance of the contributions given in this very conference by my colleagues T. Abusch (The Epic of Gilgâmesh) and of C. Grottanelli (Combabos, Absalom and the Epic of Gilgamesh) for new and stimulating reflections about the western ramification of the Gilgâmesh Epic. See also Momigliano, 1989: 24-26.
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