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## Between Mesopotamia and India: Some Remarks about the Unicorn Cycle in Iran

Some years ago I offered a first attempt to analyse the myth of the Unicorn in the Iranian world.<sup>1</sup> 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 Enkīdu; created by the goddess Arūru in order to balance the evil behaviour of Gilgāmeš. Enkīdu 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: Enkīdu eats the grass with the gazelles (Tablet I, 93)<sup>2</sup> and, according to a fragment of the Gilgāmeš story found in Sultantepe (Tablet VIII, 3-4 of the Standard Babylonian version of the epic), his mother too was a “gazelle” (*šabītu*),<sup>3</sup> while, on the other hand, his father appears to be a “wild ass” (*akkannu*).<sup>4</sup> Enkīdu’s aspect is terrible for the hunter who meets him at a watering hole; Enkīdu helps all the animals so that they cannot be caught by the hunters. Then Gilgāmeš sends him Šamhat,

<sup>1</sup> Panaino, 1990b; this work, only edited in a standard form according to the Italian law in the Series of the Istituto Orientale di Naples (Etnolinguistica dell’Area Iranica, n. 4), unfortunately has never been truly published and has circulated in a limited number of copies; only a few scholars have read this first version. Thus I take the present opportunity in order to edit here an

up-to-date version of many texts already discussed in that work.

<sup>2</sup> Parpola, 1997a: 72; Pettinato, 1993: 126.

<sup>3</sup> Parpola, 1997a: 99, 139.

<sup>4</sup> Gurney, 1952: 26-27; Parpola, 1997a: 99, 119. See Della Casa, 1986: 11-24 (= 1998: 246); Restelli, 1992: 108, n. 8.

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),<sup>5</sup> his strength has decreased; but, on the other hand, his aspect is more human and he has become wise.<sup>6</sup> Thus Enkidu is driven by the prostitute to Uruk and its king, Gilgāmeš.

Now we have to move to India, where we find the legend of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga “he who has the horn of an antelope,”<sup>7</sup> who in the later version of the famous Buddhist Sanskrit text named *Mahāvastu* is called Ekaśṛṅga “Unicorn.” According to the *Mahāvastu* (141-52) versions of the legend (*Naḷinījātaka*),<sup>8</sup> Ekaśṛṅga represents one of the preceding existence of Buddha.<sup>9</sup> Son of an hermit, ṛṣi Kāśyapa, and of a doe<sup>10</sup> (which corresponds to Mahāprajāpatī, the mother of Buddha), Ekaśṛṅga lived on the river Gaṅgā with the animals. Thanks to the teachings of his father he attained the four *dhyānas* (“meditations”) and the five *abhijñānas* (“super-knowledges”). The king of Benares (who was without a son) wanted him as husband for his own daughter Naḷinī (who

corresponds to Yaśodharā, the wife of Buddha) and sent her to him. Ekaśṛṅga, who never saw a woman before, was attracted by the young lady and her maidens and thought that they were young *ṛṣis*. Ekaśṛṅga, notwithstanding his attraction for Naḷinī 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 Naḷinī came again and attracted him on the boat, where they got married by a *purohita*.<sup>11</sup> Once arrived at Benares, Ekaśṛṅga was accepted as heir to the king, and after his death he ascended the throne.

Della Casa<sup>12</sup> has rightly directed scholars’ attention to another version of the legend, attested in the Pāli Buddhist work titled *Naḷinikājātaka* (= *Jātaka* 526),<sup>13</sup> where the protagonist, here named Isisiṅga “he who has the horn of the ascetic,” was again son of a doe (*miga*).<sup>14</sup> Isisiṅga “became a sage of such severe austerity that the abode of Sakka (i.e. Indra) was shaken by the power of his virtue.”<sup>15</sup> 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

<sup>5</sup> Parpola, 1997a: 73; see Pettinato, 1993: 131.

<sup>6</sup> Pettinato, 1993: 131.

<sup>7</sup> As already noted by Lüders, 1897 (= 1940: 1, n. 1) Ṛṣyaśṛṅga is the normal orthography in classical Sanskrit literature, while Ṛṣyaśṛṅga is the one attested in the older texts; properly *ṛṣya-*, m., is the male of a species of antelope; see Mayrhofer, 1954: 124-25.

<sup>8</sup> See Jones, 1956, III: 136-47; Przulski, 1929: 329-31 (with direct comparison with the Chinese version of the story contained in the *King-liu-yi-siang*); Schlingloff, 1973: 298-303; Della Casa, 1986: 18-19 (1998: 241-42); Restelli, 1992: 86-88. See also Lüders, 1901 (= 1940b: 65-73); Pauly, 1987-88.

<sup>9</sup> But in the *Śātvat Saṁhitā*, *Ekaśṛṅgatanu* is mentioned as the thirty-ninth incarnation of Viṣṇu (see Sharma, 1957: 359).

<sup>10</sup> 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.”

<sup>11</sup> We may note that at this point Ekaśṛṅga 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 Sāhañjani. When the father found Ekaśṛṅga and his wife, he realised that it would have been impossible to separate them, and sent both to Benares, where Ekaśṛṅga became king. See Przulski, 1929: 330; Lüders, (1901 = 1940b: 65-67).

<sup>12</sup> Della Casa, 1986: 20 (= 1998: 244); Restelli, 1992: 89-90.

<sup>13</sup> Pāli text edited by Faussbøll, 1891: 193-209 (translated by Francis, 1895: 100-106); see Lüders, 1897 = 1940a: 26; 1901 = 1940b: 41-42; Przulski, 1929: 328-37.

<sup>14</sup> See Faussbøll, 1891: 193, ll. 11; Francis, 1895: 100; Lüders, 1897 (= 1940: 26); Rhys Davids - Stede, 1921-25: 532a.

<sup>15</sup> 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 Isisiṅga and asked to send him his daughter Naḷīnikā.<sup>16</sup> 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 Isisiṅga, realised that he had been seduced and put away the thought of that woman from the mind of his son.<sup>17</sup> Then Isisiṅga obtained the pardon of his father, who proclaimed to him the attainment of the Perfect State.

We find an allusion to Ṛṣyaśṛṅga also in the *Pañcatantra* (I, 44),<sup>18</sup> but it is in the *Mahābhārata* (III, 110-13)<sup>19</sup> that one of the most complete versions of this legendary cycle<sup>20</sup> is attested: Ṛṣyaśṛṅga 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 Urvaśī, a wonderful *apsaras*. The child, who wears an antelope horn in the front (and for this reason he is named Ṛṣyaśṛṅga), spends his life alone with his father in the forest without any knowledge of human beings but his father. In the mean-

time, the close town of Aṅga 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 Aṅga. The king sent messengers in order to find such a *muni*, and he got information about the ascetic Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, son of Vibhāṇḍaka. Then he started to plan how the hermit could be attracted to town, and he also invited some courtesans 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 *āśrama* ("hermitage") in a boat. In this way they sailed the river just to the place where Ṛṣyaśṛṅga 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

<sup>16</sup> A reference to the *Isis[imgiya]jā[ta]ka* is attested also on the stūpa of Bhārhut (see Müller, 1896: 528; Lüders, 1901 = 1940b: 41); Schlingloff, 1973: 305-306.

<sup>17</sup> See Faussbøll, 1891: 209, ll. 11-12; ch. 209 apud Francis, 1895: 106.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Bechis, 1991: 30; see Restelli, 1992: 78, *passim*. Cf. also the version attested in *Rāmāyana*, I, IX-XI.

<sup>19</sup> Translated by van Buitenen, 1975: 431-41.

<sup>20</sup> 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). Przulski (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 Przulski (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 Ṛṣyaśṛṅga. 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 Ṛṣyaśṛṅga's cycle see Lüders, 1897 (= 1940a: 2ff with a résumé of the story) and Przulski, 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 Ṛṣyaśṛṅga 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 *Urdrama* 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, *Ṛṣyaśṛṅga* 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 *Śāntā* to *Ṛṣyaśṛṅga* and appeased *Vibhāṇḍaka*; later, after the birth of his child, *Ṛṣyaśṛṅga*, as decided by his father, returned to the forest with *Śāntā*.

These of course are only few variants of the story,<sup>21</sup> which appears in various elaborations throughout different religious traditions, like those of the Hindus, the Buddhists and the Jains, but also in different languages like Sanskrit, Pāli, Prakrit, Tibetan, Chinese and Japanese.<sup>22</sup>

What turns out to be very relevant for us is that the two cycles – the one of *Enkīdu* and the one of *Ṛṣyaśṛṅga* – cannot be separated; a pure coincidence appeared improbable already to Jensen, but his “Pan-Babylonistic” enthusiasm<sup>23</sup> possibly made such a comparison unacceptable.<sup>24</sup> Later some scholars have noted the strict parallelism between the story of *Enkīdu* and the one of *Ṛṣyaśṛṅga*, 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, *Enkīdu* 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 *Ṛṣyaśṛṅga* 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 Schlingloff (1973: 304-305); the German scholar fittingly remarked that in a Jaina text, *Vasudevahiṇḍi*,<sup>25</sup> a young boy, named *Valkalacīrin*, 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 *Valkalacīrin*, 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 *Valkalacīrin* leaves the hermitage in search of the courtesans 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 *Valkalacīrin*.

Schlingloff (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

<sup>21</sup> See Lüders, 1897; 1901 (= 1940) Della Casa, 1986 (= 1998); Restelli, 1992; for a very useful bibliographic overview see Schlingloff, 1973: 298-99 and passim.

<sup>22</sup> See Müller, 1896: 524-30; Lüders, 1897, 1901 (= 1904a,b); Einhorn, 1976: 34-41; Restelli, 1992: 81-82.

<sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, a direct comparison between *Ṛṣyaśṛṅga* and the description of the unicorn in the west-

ern 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 Eittinghausen, 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.

<sup>25</sup> See Konow, 1946: 20-23.

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.<sup>26</sup>

We can immediately focus on a specific theme or subject, the one of the seduction<sup>27</sup> 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

<sup>d+</sup>EN.KI.[DÙ] AMA-ka *ša-bi-ti*  
ù a-ka-a-nu a-bu-ka ib-[nu]-ka ka-a-šá

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.<sup>28</sup> Actually<sup>29</sup> Enkidu is not a unicorn, nor is *Ṛṣyaśṛṅga*,<sup>30</sup> 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

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 Gilgameš mentions a gazelle (*ša-bi-tu*) as the mother of Enkidu (and not Arūru) and a "wild ass" (*akkannu*) as his father, a statement representing, on one hand, a very strong link between Enkidu and *Ṛṣyaśṛṅga* 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:

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

marked sexual strength of the hero to be seduced. We may specify that the unique horn on the front clearly represents a phallic element,<sup>31</sup> 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

<sup>26</sup> 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 *Physiologus* and the Indian background. On the other hand, we may note that Schlingloff omits the entire Iranian side of the problem.

<sup>27</sup> Restelli, 1992: 78-104.

<sup>28</sup> See Restelli, 1992: 108.

<sup>29</sup> As Restelli has again underlined (1992: 108-109).

<sup>30</sup> On the other hand we have to specify that the traditional iconography of *Ṛṣyaśṛṅga* presents him as an an-

thropomorphic unicorn, as in the relief from a stūpa of Chandara, now preserved in the Mathurā Museum (1st century BC), the one on the famous stūpa of Bhārbut, a relief fragment from Gandhāra, and on the main stūpa of Sāñci; 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).

<sup>31</sup> 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).



## Περὶ μονοκέρωτος

Ὁ Ψαλμὸς λέγει: «καὶ ὑψωθήσεται ὡς μονοκέρωτος τὸ κέρας μου». ὁ Φυσιολόγος ἔλεξε περὶ τοῦ μονοκέρωτος ὅτι τοιαύτην φύσιν ἔχει· μικρὸν ζῷον ἐστίν, ὅμοιον ἐρίφῳ, δριμύτατον δὲ σφόδρα· οὐ δύναται κυνηγὸς ἐγγίσει αὐτό, διὰ τὸ ἰσχύειν αὐτὸ πολὺ, ἐν δὲ κέρας ἔχει, μέσον τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ. πῶς οὖν ἀγρεύεται; παρθένον ἀγνὴν [ἐστολισμένην] ῥίπτουσιν ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἄλλεται εἰς τὸν κόλπον αὐτῆς, καὶ ἡ παρθένος θηλάζει τὸ ζῷον, καὶ αἶρει αὐτὸ εἰς τὸ παλάτιον τῷ βασιλεῖ.

Φέρεται οὖν τὸ ζῷον εἰς πρόσωπον τοῦ Σωτῆρος: «ἤγειρε γὰρ κέρας ἐν οἴκῳ Δαυὶδ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν,» καὶ κέρας σωτηρίας γέγονεν ἡμῖν. οὐκ ἠδυνήθησαν ἄγγελοι καὶ δυνάμεις αὐτὸν κρατῆσαι, ἀλλ' ἐσκήνωσεν εἰς τὴν γαστέρα τῆς ἀληθοῦς ἀγνῆς Παρθένου Μαρίας [τῆς Θεοτόκου], «καὶ ὁ Λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν».

## 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 become 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,<sup>43</sup> 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,<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> 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*;<sup>46</sup> in fact

<sup>43</sup> 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).

<sup>44</sup> See in particular the scheme presented by Einhorn, 1976: 257.

<sup>45</sup> 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.

<sup>46</sup> See Ettinghausen, 1950: 92-93; Einhorn, 1976: 42-50; Shepard, 1930: 41-45 = 1984: 33-38; Restelli, 1992: 14-17.

Hebr. *rēm*,<sup>47</sup> pl. *rēmīm* (Akk. *rīmu*) was translated in the *Septuaginta* version as μονόκερως,<sup>48</sup> while it was more simply the “wild ox” [*Ps.* 21 (22):22;<sup>49</sup> 28 (29):6;<sup>50</sup> 77 (78):69;<sup>51</sup> 91 (92):11;<sup>52</sup> *Isaiah* 34:7, 1<sup>53</sup>].

The tradition transmitted by the *Physiologus* finds some interesting parallels in a passage from the *Kyranides*<sup>54</sup> (but strictly speaking with regard to the rhinoceros), a collection attributed<sup>55</sup> to Hermes Trismegistos:<sup>56</sup>

#### Περὶ ῥινοκέρου

1] ῤινοκέρως ἐστὶ ζῷον τετράπουν παραπλήσιον ἐλάφου, ἐν κέρασ ἔχον κατὰ τῆς ῥινὸς μέγιστον· ἄλλως δὲ οὐκ ἀγρεύεται εἰ μὴ μύρω καὶ εὐμορφία γυναικῶν εὐστόλων· ἐστὶ γὰρ ἔρωτικόν.

2] Τοῦτου ὁ εὐρισκόμενος ἔνδον τῆς ῥινὸς ἢ τοῦ κέρατος λίθος < καὶ > φορούμενος δαίμονας ἀποδιώκει.

3] Οἱ δὲ ὄρχεις αὐτοῦ ποτιζόμενοι ἢ τὸ αἰδοῖον ἀνδράσι καὶ γυναίξει σονουσίαν παρορμᾶ ἀκρότατα.<sup>57</sup>

#### 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.

<sup>47</sup> See Gesenius, 1975: 910a; see Scheftelowitz, 1912: 464-65.

<sup>48</sup> See Liddell and Scott, 1968: 1144b.

<sup>49</sup> σῶσόν με ἐκ στόματος λέοντος καὶ ἀπὸ κερᾶτων μονοκερώτων τὴν ταπεινώσιν 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.*

<sup>50</sup> καὶ λεπτυνεῖ αὐτὰς ὡς τὸν μόσχον τὸν Λιβάνου, καὶ ὁ ἠγαπημένος ὡς υἱὸς μονοκερώτων “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*”.

<sup>51</sup> καὶ ὠκοδόμησεν ὡς μονοκερώτων τὸ ἅγιον αὐτοῦ “and he built up as his sacrifice of the unicorns” (ed. Rahlfs, 1962: 86); see also *Latin Bible (Vulgate): et aedificabit sicut unicornium sacrificium suum*

<sup>52</sup> καὶ ὑψωθήσεται ὡς μονοκέρωτος 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.*

<sup>53</sup> καὶ συμπεσοῦνται οἱ ἄδρῳ μετ’ αὐτῶν ... “and the strong ones shall come down with them” (ed. Rahlfs, 1962: 610); see also *Latin Bible (Vulgate): et descendent unicornes ...*

<sup>54</sup> For the *Kyranides* see Ruelle apud de Mély (1898-99: 51ff); Wellmann, 1930: 18-81 (in particular pp. 46-48; Kaimakis, 1976; Perry, 1950: 1087, 1105-11; Della Casa 1986: 16-17 (= 1998: 241-42).

<sup>55</sup> See Festugière, 1950<sup>2</sup>: 201-16.

<sup>56</sup> See the text apud Ruelle apud de Mély (1898-99, II: 71); Wellmann, 1930: 47 [with reference also to Timotheos of Gaza: ὅτι γυναίκες ἄδουσαι θέλγουσιν αὐτὸν (sc. τὸν ἐλέφαντα) καὶ πρὸς θήραν ἄγουσιν, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸν κασσίτερον (καρτάζονον ? Haupt) παρθένος ἐξάγει “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.

<sup>57</sup> 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;<sup>58</sup> 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,<sup>59</sup> we can mention the reports of Ctesias of Cnidos,<sup>60</sup> the doctor who spent

some years between 405 BC and 397 BC at the court of Artaxerxes II Mnemon, in his Ἰνδικά, 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:<sup>61</sup>

᾽Οτι εἰσὶν ὄνοι ἄγριοι ἐν τοῖς Ἰνδοῖς, ἴσοι ἵπποις καὶ μείζους· λευκοὶ δὲ εἰσὶ τὸ σῶμα, τὴν κεφαλὴν πορφυροῖ, ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχουσι κυανέους. Κέρας δὲ ἔχει ἐν τῷ μετώπῳ ἐνὸς πήχεος τὸ μέγεθος· καὶ ἔστι τὸ μὲν κάτω τοῦ κέρατος, ὅσον ἐπὶ δύο παλαιστάς πρὸς τὸ μέτωπον, πάνυ λευκόν· τὸ δὲ ἐπάνω, ὄξύ ἐστι τοῦ κέρατος, τοῦτο δὲ φοινικοῦν ἐστὶν ἐρυθρὸν πάνυ· τὸ δὲ ἄλλο, τὸ ἐν τῷ μέσῳ, μέλαν. Ἐκ τούτων οἱ πiónτες (κατασκευάζουσι γὰρ ἐκπώματα) σπασμῶ, φασίν,

*Rhinoceros animal est quadrupes, simile cervo, unum cornu habens magnum circa nares. Aliter enim non capitur nisi odore et formositate mulierum speciosissimarum: est enim animal lascivum in amore. Huius cornu vel lapis qui in naribus nascitur eius gestatus daemonia eicit. Testiculi autem eius aut genitale membrum bibitum viris et mulieribus concubitum incitat vehementer.*

See also the Old French book *Des secrez de nature*, the chapter *De l'unicorne*, apud Delatte, 1942: 340-41.

<sup>58</sup> See in particular Widengren, (1968: 65):

Comme ceux d'Iran, les textes de l'Inde soulignent le rôle du roi dans la dispensation de la pluie (ŚB IX, 3, 311; Loi de Manou VII, 7; Jâtakas 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 Ṛṣyaśṅga est très instructive. La princesse Śântâ étant parvenue à le séduire, la pluie tombe après s'être fait longtemps attendre; or c'est là que la pointe du récit. On a d'ailleurs supposé derrière lui un ancien mime liturgique. En Iran, cette idée passe au second plan et ne survit que sous forme de vagues allusions, de tendance eschatologique, par exemple à propos de la rencontre de la daēnâ, après la mort (v. III, 3). On peut se demander, en outre, si la prostitution sacrée des prêtresses d'Anâhitâ ne se justifie pas par l'idée qu'elles jouent le rôle des partenaires du héros de la hiérogamie.

<sup>59</sup> 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 Luristân area some bronze-figures, which could be identified with Enkidu and Gilgâmeš, 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 Apadâna

(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; Ettinghausen, 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; Ettinghausen, 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.

<sup>60</sup> 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.

<sup>61</sup> 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 Megasthenes; see Ettinghausen, 1950: 94-95.

οὐ λαμβάνονται, οὔτε τῆ ἱερᾶ νόσῳ, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ φαρμάκοις ἀλίσκονται, οὔτ' ἂν προπίωσιν, οὔτ' ἂν τοῦ φαρμάκου ἐπιπίωσιν ἢ οἶνον, ἢ ὕδωρ ἢ ἄλλο τι ἐκ τῶν ἐκπωμάτων. Οἱ μὲν οὖν ἄλλοι ὄνοι καὶ ἡμεροὶ καὶ ἄγριοι καὶ τὰ ἄλλα μώνυχα θηρία πάντα ἀστραγάλους οὐδὲ χολῆν ἐπὶ τοῦ ἥπατος ἔχουσιν. Οὗτοι δὲ καὶ ἀστράγαλον ἔχουσι καὶ χολῆν ἐπὶ τοῦ ἥπατος· τὸν δὲ ἀστράγαλον, κάλλιστον ὧν ἐγὼ ἐώρακα, οἶον περ βουὸς καὶ τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὸ μέγεθος· βαρὺς δ' ὡς μόλιβδος, τὴν δὲ χροάν ὡσπερ κιννάβαρι καὶ διὰ βάθους. Ταχύτατον δὲ ἐστὶ τὸ ζῷον τοῦτο καὶ ἀλκιμώτατον· οὐδὲν δὲ οὔτε ἵππος οὔτε ἄλλο τι διωκόμενον καταλαμβάνει. Ἄρχεται δὲ τρέχον βραδύτερον· ὅσον δ' ἂν πλέον χρόνον τρέχη, ἐντείνεται δαιμονίως, καὶ μᾶλλον καὶ θάσσον τρέχει.

Ἄλλως μὲν ἀθήρατόν ἐστὶ τὸ ζῷον τοῦτο· ὅταν δὲ τὰ τέκνα μικρὰ ὄντα [49a] περιάγωσιν ἐπὶ τὴν βοτάνην, καὶ ὑπὸ ἰππείας πολλῆς περιληφθῶσιν, οὐ βούλονται φεύγειν καταλιπόντες τοὺς πόλους, ἀλλὰ μάχονται καὶ κέρατι καὶ λακτίσμασι καὶ δῆγμασι, καὶ πολλοὺς καὶ ἵππους καὶ ἄνδρας ἀπολλύουσιν. Ἀλίσκονται δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ τοξεύομενοι καὶ ἀκοντιζόμενοι· ζῶντα γὰρ οὐκ ἂν λάβοις. Τὰ δὲ κρέα, διὰ τὴν πικρότητα ἄβρωτά ἐστίν. Θηρεύεται δὲ τῶν κεράτων καὶ τῶν ἀστραγάλων ἕνεκεν.

Ctésias dit qu'il existe aux Indes des ânes sauvages aussi gros que des chevaux et même plus gros; ils ont le corps blanc, la tête pourpre, les yeux d'un bleu sombre. Cet animal porte une corne au milieu du front; elle mesure une coudée; la base de la corne, vers le front, est toute blanche sur environ deux pouces; la partie supérieure, la pointe de la corne, est pourpre d'une teinte vive; la partie intermédiaire est noire. Ceux qui ont bu dans ces cornes (car on fait des vases à boire) ne sont sujets, dit-on, ni aux convulsions ni au haut mal et les poisons mêmes ne peuvent leur nuire pourvu qu'avant ou après l'absorption du poison, ils aient bu du vin, de l'eau ou n'importe quelle autre boisson dans ces vases.

Les autres ânes, apprivoisés ou sauvages, et tous les autres solipèdes n'ont ni astragale ni fiel au foie, mais ceux dont il est question ont un astragale et un fiel au foie; leur astragale est le plus beau que j'ai vu; il a la grosseur et la forme de celui du bœuf, la lourdeur du plomb et la couleur du cinabre dans toute son épaisseur. Cet animal est plus rapide et plus robuste que nul autre; il n'en est pas, cheval ou autre, qui puisse le joindre à la poursuite. Sa mise en train est plutôt lente, mais, à mesure que la course s'allonge, sa vigueur s'accroît merveilleusement et il court toujours plus longtemps et plus vite.

Il n'y a pas d'autre moyen de s'en emparer à la chasse que celui-ci: quand ils conduisent leurs petits au pâturages, s'ils sont cernés par de nombreux cavaliers, ils se refusent à fuir en abandonnant leur progéniture et ils se battent à coups de corne, ruent, mordent, mettent à mal force chevaux et chasseurs; eux-mêmes succombent sous les flèches et les javelots, car vous n'en pourriez capturer un vivant. La chair de cet animal est amère au point de n'être pas comestible; on le chasse pour ses cornes et ses astragales.

The description of the Indian unicorn is very interesting; this beast is in fact a white ass (λευκοὶ δὲ εἶσι τὸ σῶμα), 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 Megasthenes' Ἰνδικά<sup>62</sup> (4th-3rd c. BC); fragm. XV (text according to Schol-

<sup>62</sup> Megasthenes (350-290 BC) was an Ionian who visited the kingdom of Candragupta Maurya (gr. Σανδράκοττος) and in particular the town of Pataliputra as ambassador of Seleucus I between 302 and 291. He wrote a work titled

Ἰνδικά, 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.

field, 1958, 3: 288 and 290; see also ed. 1911-12: 400-401; Benveniste, 1929: 371-  
Schwanbeck, 1846: 104; Charpentier, 73):

Λέγεται δὲ καὶ ζῶον ἐν τούτοις εἶναι μονόκερων, καὶ ὑπ' αὐτῶν ὀνομάζεσθαι καρτάζωνον. καὶ μέγεθος μὲν ἔχειν ἵππου τοῦ τελείου καὶ λόφον, καὶ λάχνην ἔχειν ξανθὴν, ποδῶν δὲ ἄριστα εἰληγέναι. καὶ τοὺς μὲν πόδας ἀδιαρθρώτους τε καὶ ἐμφορεῖς ἐλέφαντι πεφυκένας, τὴν δὲ οὐρὰν ἔχειν σῦός· μέσον δὲ τῶν ὀφρῶν ἔχειν ἐκπεφυκὸς κέρασ οὐ λείον ἀλλὰ ἐλιγμοὺς ἔχον τινὰς καὶ μάλα αὐτοφυεῖς, καὶ εἶναι μέλαν τὴν χροάν· λέγεται δὲ καὶ ὀξύτατον εἶναι τὸ κέρασ ἐκεῖνο. φωνὴν δὲ ἔχειν τὸ θηρίον ἀκούω τοῦτο πάντων ἀπηχεστέρα τε καὶ γεγωνοτάτην. καὶ τῶν μὲν ἄλλων αὐτῷ ζῶον προσιόντων φέρειν καὶ πρᾶον εἶναι, λέγουσι δὲ ἄρα πρὸς τὸ ὁμόφυλον δύσεριν εἶναι πως. καὶ οὐ μόνον φασι τοῖς ἄρρεσιν εἶναι τινα συμφυὴ κύριζιν τε πρὸς ἀλλήλους καὶ μάχην, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς τὰς θηλείας ἔχουσι θυμὸν τὸν αὐτόν, καὶ προάγοντες τὴν φιλονικίαν καὶ μέχρι θανάτου <τοῦ> ἠττηθέντος ἐξάγουσιν. ἔστι μὲν οὖν καὶ διὰ παντὸς τοῦ σώματος ῥωμαλέον, ἀλκὴ δὲ οἱ τοῦ κέρατος ἄμαχός ἐστι. νομάς δὲ ἐρήμους ἀσπάζεται, καὶ πλανᾶται μόνον· ὥρα δὲ ἀφροδίτης τῆς σφετέρας συνδυασθεὶς πρὸς τὴν θήλειαν πεπράνυται, καὶ μέντοι καὶ συννόμω ἐστίν. εἶτα ταύτης παραδραμοῦσης καὶ τῆς θηλείας κυούσης, ἐκθηριούται αὐθις, καὶ μονίας ἐστὶν ὅδε ὁ Ἰνδὸς καρτάζωνος. τούτων οὖν πῶλους πάνυ νεαροὺς κομίζεσθαι φασι τῷ τῶν Πρασίων βασιλεῖ, καὶ τὴν ἀλκὴν ἐν ἀλλήλοις ἐπιδεικνύσθαι κατὰ τὰς θέας τὰς πανηγυρικὰς. τέλειον δὲ ἀλώναί ποτε οὐδεὶς μέμνηται.

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 their 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<sup>63</sup> 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 Megasthenes' fragment quoted by 1846: 103-104; Benveniste, 1929: 372;  
Strabo, XV, I, 56 [710-711] (Schwanbeck, Jones, 1930, 7: 92-93):

Φεσὶ γὰρ (sc. ὁ Μεγασθένης) πετροκυλιστὰς εἶναι κερκοπιθήκους, οἱ λίθους κατακυλίουσι κρημνοβατοῦντες ἐπὶ τοὺς διώκοντας· τὰ τε παρ' ἡμῖν ἡμερα ζῶα τὰ πλείιστα παρ' ἐκείνοις ἄγρια εἶναι· ἵππους τε λέγει μονοκέρωτας ἐλαφοκράνους καλάμους δέ, μήκος μὲν τριάκοντα ὀργυῶν τοὺς ὀρθίους, τοὺς δὲ χαμαικλινεῖς πεντήκοντα, πάχος δέ, ὥστε τὴν διάμετρον τοῖς μὲν εἶναι τρίπηχυν, τοῖς δὲ διπλασίαν.

Megasthenes 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

<sup>63</sup> People living in the North of Bengala (see Benveniste, 1929: 372 and in particular Karttunen, 1997, *passim*).

theirs. And he mentions horses with one horn and the head of a deer (μονοκέρωτας ἑλαφοκράνους); 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.

It is clear that Ctesias and Megasthenes (but we could also quote Aristoteles, *De*

*partibus animalium*, III, 2, 9,<sup>64</sup> and other classical sources)<sup>65</sup> refer to a sort of mytho-

<sup>64</sup> Ἔστι δὲ τὰ πλείστα τῶν κερατοφόρων δίχαλα, λέγεται δὲ καὶ μώνυχον, ὃν καλοῦσιν Ἰνδικὸν ὄνον. Τὰ μὲν οὖν πλείστα, καθάπερ καὶ τὸ σῶμα διήρηται τῶν ζώων οἷς ποιεῖται τὴν κίνησιν, δεξιὸν καὶ ἀριστερόν, καὶ κέρατα δύο πέφυκεν ἔχειν διὰ τὴν αὐτὴν αἰτίαν· ἔστι δὲ καὶ μονοκέρατα, οἷον ὁ τ' ὄρυξ καὶ ὁ Ἰνδικὸς καλούμενος ὄνος. ἔστι δ' ὁ μὲν ὄρυξ δίχαλον, ὁ δ' ὄνος μώνυχον. ἔχει δὲ τὰ μονοκέρατα τὸ κέρασ ἐν τῷ μέσῳ τῆς κεφαλῆς.

Most of the horned animals are cloven-hoofed, though there is said to be one that is solid-hoofed, the Indian Ass, as it is called. The great majority of the horned animals have two horns, just as, in respect of the parts by which its movement is effected, the body is divided into two – the right and the left. And the reason in both cases is the same. There are, however, some animals that have one horn only, e.g. the Oryx (whose hoof is cloven) and the “Indian Ass” (whose hoof is solid). These creatures have their horn in the middle of the head. (...) (see the ed. and tr. by Peck, 1961: 218-21; see also Ettinghausen, 1950: 74-78).

See also Aristoteles, *Historia animalium*, II, 1 (446b):

Ἔστι δὲ καὶ τὰ μὲν κερατοφόρα τῶν ζώων τὰ δ' ἄκερα. τὰ μὲν οὖν πλείστα τῶν ἐχόντων κέρατα δίχαλα κατὰ φύσιν ἔστιν, οἷον βοῦς καὶ ἑλαφος καὶ αἰξ. μώνυχον δὲ καὶ δίκερων οὐδὲν ἤμιν ᾧπται. μονοκέρατα δὲ καὶ μώνυχα ὀλίγα, οἷον ὁ Ἰνδικὸς ὄνος. μονόκερον δὲ καὶ δίχαλόν ὄρυξ, καὶ ἀστράγαλον δ' ὁ Ἰνδικὸς ὄνος ἔχει τῶν μονύχων μόνον.

Further, some animals are horned, some hornless. Most of the horned ones are cloven-hoofed, e.g., the ox, the deer, and the goat; we have seen no solid-hoofed animal with a pair of horns. But a few, e.g., the Indian ass, have a single horn and are solid-hoofed. The oryx has a single horn and cloven hooves. The only solid-hoofed animal with a huckle-bone is the Indian ass – ... (see Peck, 1965: 88-89).

<sup>65</sup> See Plinius, *Naturalis Historia*, 8, 76 [XXXI]:

*in India et boves solidis unguis, unicornes, et feram nomine axin hinnulei pelle pluribus candidioribusque maculis, sacrorum Liberi patris – (Orsaei Indi simias candentes toto corpore venantur) – asperrimam autem feram monocerotem, reliquo corpore equo similem, capite cervo, pedibus elephanto, cauda apro, mugitu gravi, uno cornu nigro media fronte cubitorum duum eminente. hanc feram vivam negant capi* (see Rackham, 1967: 56-57).

See also *NH*, 8, 71 [XXIX]:

*Isdem ludis et rhinoceros unius in nare cornus, qualis saepe, visus. alter hic genitus hostis elephanto cornu ad saxa limato praeparat se pugnae, in dimicatione alvum maxime petens, quam scit esse molliorem. longitudo ei par, crura multo breviora, color buxeus* (see Rackham, 1967: 52-53).

See Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii*, III, 2:

Καὶ τοὺς ὄνους δὲ τοὺς ἀγρίους ἐν ταῖς ἔλεσι τούτοις ἀλίσκεσθαί φασιν, εἶναι δὲ τοῖς θηρίοις τούτοις ἐπὶ μετώπῳ κέρασ, ᾧ ταυρηδὸν τε καὶ οὐκ ἀγεννῶσ μάχονται, καὶ ἀποφαίνειν τοὺς Ἰνδοὺς ἔκπομα τὸ κέρασ τοῦτο, οὐ γὰρ οὔτε νοσήσῃ τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην ὁ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ πίων, οὔτε ἂν τρωθεὶς ἀλγήσῃ, πυρός τε διεξελθεῖν ἂν καὶ μηδ' ἂν φαρμάχοις ἀλῶναι ὅποσα ἐπὶ κακῷ πίνεται, βασιλέων δὲ τὸ ἔκπομα εἶναι καὶ βασιλεῖ μόνῳ ἀνεῖσθαι τὴν θέραν. Ἀπολλώνιος δὲ τὸ μὲν θηρίον ἐωρακέναι φησὶ καὶ ἀγασθῆναι αὐτὸ τῆς φύσεως, ἐρομένου δὲ αὐτὸν τοῦ Δάμιδος, εἰ τὸν λόγον τὸν περὶ τοῦ ἐκπόματος προσδέχοιτο. «προσδέξομαι.» εἶπεν, «ἦν ἀθάνατον μάθω τὸν βασιλέα τῶν δεῦρο Ἰνδῶν ὄντα, τὸν γὰρ ἐμοί τε καὶ τῷ δεῖνι ὀρέγοντα πῶμα ἄνοσόν τε καὶ οὕτως ὑγιές, πῶσ οὐχὶ μάλλον εἰκόσ αὐτὸν ἐπεγγεῖν ἑαυτῷ τούτου καὶ ὁσημέραι πίνειν ἀπὸ τοῦ κέρατος τούτου μέχρι κραιπάλης; οὐ γὰρ διαβαλεῖ τις, οἶμαι, τὸ τούτῳ μεθύειν.»

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 atrocissimus est monoceros, monstrum mugitu horrido, equino corpore, elephanti pedibus, cauda suilla, capite cervino, cornu e media fronte eius protenditur splendore mirifico, ad magnitudinem pedum quattuor, ita acutum ut quicquid impetat, facile ictu eius perforatur. vivus non venit in hominum potestatem et interimi quidem potest, capi non potest* (see Mommsen, 1958: 190).

See Benveniste, 1929: 372-74. Cf. Karttunen, 1997: 185-86. On the traditions attested in the *Physiologus* and the other texts see Sbordone, 1936b: 58-64.

logical or semi-mythological animal, which sometimes has been associated or identified with the rhinoceros (ῥινόκερος).<sup>66</sup> But this is not the right moment to deal in detail with the discussion of the etymology of καρτάζωνος<sup>67</sup> and its possible relationships with Skt. *khadgá-*, m.,<sup>68</sup> the compounds

*khadgáhva-*, “idem,” *khadga-dhenu-* and *khadga-dhenukā-*, f. “female rhinoceros,” *khadgaviṣāṇa-*, m., Pāli *khaggavisāṇa-*<sup>69</sup> “rhinoceros,” or with Pahl. *karg* [klg],<sup>70</sup> NP *kargadān*,<sup>71</sup> Ar. *karkadann*<sup>72</sup> (see also Syr. *karkadan*<sup>73</sup> and Turkish *gárgádan*, Ethiopic *karkand*),<sup>74</sup> Akk. *kurkizannu*,<sup>75</sup> and their

<sup>66</sup> See Benveniste, 1929, passim; Steier, 1935; Perry, 1950: 1087-88. Cf. Karttunen, 1997: 184-86.

<sup>67</sup> If Charpentier (1911: 402-403) suggested that Gr. καρτάζωνος derived from Skt. *khadgaviṣāṇa-*, Pāli *khaggavisāṇa-*, because of a weakening of the inner syllable -vi- between two strong stresses, Benveniste (1929: 375-76) supposed that καρτάζωνος should be emended as \*καργάζωνος, but he assumed that this word would have been of Pre-Indo-European origin; in fact some apparently similar forms (*kurkizānu*, \**kargazān*, *kargadān*, etc.) are attested in various Indo-European and Semitic languages; thus he posed a Pre-Aryan stem \**kr-kz-n / \*kr-gd-n*, from which, for instance, also the Skt. name of the rhinoceros (*khadgá-*) 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 καρτάζωνος et la forme répondrait ainsi exactement au perse *karyadān*”. See below the solution of the problem as proposed by Kuiper.

<sup>68</sup> See Mayrhofer, 1956, I: 299; Wackernagel, 1957: 170; Benveniste, 1929: 375-76; Kuiper, 1948: 137-38.

<sup>69</sup> See Charpentier, 1911-12: 402; Rhys Davids - Stede, 1992: 230ab.

<sup>70</sup> Ettinghausen (1950: 149, n. 16) quotes information attributed to B. Geiger, for whom “kark occurs in Pahlavi only in the meaning ‘hen’ and in the Avesta only in the compound *kahrkāsa* ‘vulture’ (literally: hen-eater). Another modern Persian word for rhinoceros *arj*, ارج, which is identical with Pahlavi *arz*, occurs in the *Bundahishn*, though it is there among fish.” On the other hand, we may note that while *karg* [written klg] is the normal Pahlavi word for “rhinoceros” (MacKenzie, 1971: 50), it is *kark* [written klk; thus another word] to mean “chicken, hen” (MacKenzie, *ibid.*). With reference to NP *arj*, Steingass (1892: 34) registered the following meanings: “price, worth, value; esteem, rank, honour, dignity; limit, bound, measure; separation, extraction; a bird with soft plumage, a swan; a rhinoceros.” Cf. Pahl. *arz* “worth, value” (MacKenzie, 1971: 11; Nyberg, 1974: 30); *arz* or *araz* seems to be attested as the name of the mythic fish *Kar* in Ir.Bd. XVII, 14 (see ms. TD2, Anklesaria, 1908: 121; tr. by Anklesaria, 1956: 155).

<sup>71</sup> It was already Paul de Lagarde (1866: 61, number 155) who tried to derive NP *kargadān* from Skt. *khadga-dhenu-* (see already Vullers, 1855-64, II: 820a-b); Steingass, 1892: 1024; Rubincik, 1970, II: 321a; Coletti - Coletti Grünbaum, 1978: 624; Piemontese, 1974: 115).

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. *khadga-* (1) “sword,” (2) “horn of a rhinoceros,” (3) “rhinoceros,” while NP *kargadān*, Ar. *karkadann* should derive from Skt. *khadga-dhenu-*; in addition Geiger refused the etymology proposed by Ferrand (1913-14, II: 675), according to which Ar. *karkadann* derives from Skt. *khadga-danta-* “having sword-(like) teeth” (– but, as earlier noted by Benveniste, 1929, 375, n. 3, such a compound does not exist in Sanskrit –). The comparison advanced by Shepard (1930: 36 = 1984: 26) between Skt. *kartājan* (sic) “lord of the desert” and Gr. καρτάζωνος is far-fetched (see Mayrhofer, 1954: 173). We may also note that Lüders (1916: 314 = 1940: 429) assumed that Skt. *khadgá-*, m. “sword” was etymologically connected with *khadgá-*, 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. *khadga-dhenu-* is far-fetched, because this word is attested in later lexicographic works, and the only form to be taken into consideration is *khadga-*.

<sup>72</sup> The Arabic form could be derived from a Persian word through an Aramaic intermediary, as suggested by Benveniste, 1929: 375; on the Arabic sources see Ettinghausen, 1950: 6-11 and passim.

<sup>73</sup> As noted by Ettinghausen (1950: 149-50) this word is 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.

<sup>74</sup> See Benveniste, 1929: 375 (see earlier Schrader, 1892: 581); in particular it was to be noted that the Ethiopic form is an *hapax* attested as a translation of Hebr. *rēēm*.

<sup>75</sup> 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 *karkadann* 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 *kurku/izannu(m)*] “Ferkel”; CAD, 1971: 561b [sub *kurkizannu* (*kurkuzannu*, *kukkuzānu*)] “piglet, young pig”.

eventual common derivation from a non Indo-European stem, which seems to be attested also in the Proto-Munda dialects.<sup>76</sup> 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 unique<sup>77</sup> Avestan mention of an ass (Av.

... *xarəmcā yim*  
*ašauuanəṃ yazamaidē yō hištaitē*  
*maidim zraiaṃhō vourukašahē.*

This text, only apparently in Old Avestan, is more simply in Later Avestan but was fixed with formal (orthographic) archaisms (like, e.g., the long final vowels); this particular aspect can be explained because *Yasna* 42 forms a L.Av. *morceau* inserted between two of the most sacred texts in Old Avestan: the *Yasna Haptaṃhāiti* (= *Y.* 35-41) and the *Gāθā Uštavāiti* (*Y.* 43-46). The identity,<sup>79</sup> the role, and the peculiar characteristics of this “archetypal” animal, according to the very fitting definition of

*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)<sup>78</sup> and is considered *ašauuan-* “pious, righteous”:

we worship the pious Ass  
 which stands in the middle  
 of the Sea Vourukaša.

the famous psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung,<sup>80</sup> can be detected thanks to a chapter of the *Iranian* and of the *Indian Bundahišn*.

I will quote the version of the *Ir.Bd.* XXIV, D, 10 [see **TD1**, ed. Tehran: 126, l. 3-128, l. 2; **TD2**, ed. Anklesaria, 1908: 151, 8-153, 9; see Bailey, 1933, II: 76-77; the text is not preserved in **DH**; see also ch. XIX, 1-12, of the *Indian Bundahišn* (Justi, 1868: 25; West, 1880: 67-69; see ms. **K20**, ed. Westergaard, 1851: 44, 4-19; the Pāz. version has been edited by Antiâ, 1909: 2-4)]:

[10] HMRA Y 3<sup>81</sup> p'd l'd YMRRWNyt' AYK mdy'n' Y zlyh Y pl'hwkr't' YKOYMWNyt' APŠ LGLE 3 W cšm<sup>82</sup> 6 W gwnd 9 W gwš 2 W slwb' 'ywk' LOYŠE<sup>83</sup> hšyn' tn' spyt' mynwḱ-hwlšn' 'hlwb'. [11] APŠ ZK 6 cšm 2 PWN cšm-g's W 2 PWN b'lyst' Y<sup>84</sup> LOYŠE W 2 PWN<sup>85</sup> kwp-g's<sup>86</sup>

<sup>76</sup> 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 *kar-*, while the root should be *kaḍ- / gaḍ-* (the first form showing a voiceless consonant of dialectal origin) plus the suffix element *-n* (also of Proto-Munda origin). The radical *gaḍ* would be attested also in another stem meaning “rhinoceros,” i.e., *gaṇḍa-*, a pre-nasalised form of the root *ga-ḍa-*. Kuiper insists on the fact that the difference between OIr. *\*kargazān* (with *-z-*) and NP *kargadān* (with *-d-*) does not reflect the old alternation between Av. *z* and OP *d* (both from IE *\*ǵ*, *\*ǵh*), but corresponds to two originally different Proto-Munda forms, transmitted outside of the Indian area: *\*karg / kažān* or *\*karg / kajān* and *\*kargaḍān*, which would be variations (in any case with the *kar*-prefix) derived from *\*ga-ṇa-*, *\*ga-ṇḍa-*, and *\*khaḍ-ga-*. See again Mayrhofer, 1956: 299. We may note that Hansen (1950: 167), discussing the origin of Russian кергерденъ [*kergerden*] “hippopotamus” (Vasmer, 1953, I: 550) – clearly a (16th century) borrowing from NP *karkadān* through a Turkotatar intermediary (Čagatai) – suggested that in its turn

NP *karg* was derived from Skt. *khaḍga-*, “da in Entlehnungen buddhistischer Termini nach Zentralasien Skt. *ḍ* meist durch *r* wiedergegeben wird ...” In any case Hansen also remarked: “Es ist daher wahrscheinlich, daß die Bezeichnung nicht aus der indogermanischen Sprachschicht des Sanskrit stammt.”

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

<sup>78</sup> See Schlerath, 1968: 64; Kellens - Pirart, 1989: 36-39. About other traditions related to the worship of divine asses see Albright, 1920: 331-32.

<sup>79</sup> Bartholomae, 1904: 532; Voigt, 1937: 32-33.

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

<sup>81</sup> TLTA LGLE l'd YMRRWNd in K20, 44, l. 4; the Pāz. vers. has *xari talātā pāi rā gōiṭ* (Antiâ, 1909: 2).

<sup>82</sup> cšmk šš in K20, 44, l. 5.

<sup>83</sup> LOYSE hšyn omitted in K20, 44, l. 6.

<sup>84</sup> K20, 44, l. 8; omitted in TD1 and TD2.

<sup>85</sup> TD2; TD1, 126, 7, omits.

<sup>86</sup> K20, 44, l. 8: *kwp'n-g's*; Pāz. vers. *pa kuḥān-gāh* (Antiâ, 1909: 3).

W PWN ZK 6 cšm [syc<sup>87</sup>] syc'wmndyh Y SLYtl tlwynyt'.<sup>88</sup> [12] W ZK 9 gwnd 3 PWN LOYŠE<sup>89</sup> W 3 PWN kw<sup>90</sup> W 3 PWN 'ndlwn<sup>91</sup> Y nymk Y p'hlwk W KRA gwnd cnd ktk'-ms'd APŠ 'ndcnd kw<sup>92</sup> Y Xunuū<sup>92</sup> [13] W ZK Y 3 LGLE KRA 'ywk' AMT' HNHTWNt' YKOYMWNYt' 'nd<sup>93</sup> zmyk d'lyt<sup>94</sup> cnd 1000 myš AMT' PWN hm-YTYBWNšnyh<sup>95</sup> glt' plwt' YTYBWNyt'.<sup>96</sup> hwltk' Y LGLE 'ndcnd 1000 GBRA LWTE 'sp<sup>97</sup> \*W 1000 wltyn<sup>98</sup> ptš BYN wtylyt'.<sup>99</sup> [14] W<sup>100</sup> ZK 2<sup>101</sup> gwš m'zndl'n' MTA'n<sup>102</sup> BRA wltynyt'. [15] ZK 'ywk' slwb' ZHBAYn' hwm'n'k' swl'k'wmnd; APŠ<sup>103</sup> 1000 slwb' 'p'ryk<sup>104</sup> 'cš lwst' YKOYMWNYt'. AYT' GMRA-zh' W AYT' 'sp-zh'<sup>105</sup> W AYT' TWRA-zh'<sup>106</sup> W AYT' HMRA-zh' msc W ksc. PWN ZK slwb' hlwsp' ZK Y kwhššn'<sup>107</sup>wmnd<sup>107</sup> hlpstl'n<sup>108</sup> SLYtl syc BRA znyt' <W> BRA TBLWNYt'.<sup>109</sup> [16] AMT ZK [AMT]<sup>110</sup> HMRA BYN zlyh Y glt' BRA YATWNYt' gwš BRA h'myt' <sup>111</sup> hm'k' MYA Y zlyh Y pl'hw'krt' PWN cndšn' BRA<sup>112</sup> cndyt'<sup>113</sup> BRA špyt'<sup>114</sup> kwst' W n'pk'.<sup>115</sup> [17] AMT<sup>116</sup> KALA OBYDWNyt' hm'k' d'm Y MYAK<sup>117</sup> Y m'tk'<sup>118</sup> Y 'whrmzdk' pws<sup>119</sup> YHWWNd W hm'k' hlpstl Y MYAK<sup>120</sup> Y 'pws<sup>121</sup> AMT ZK KALA<sup>122</sup> OŠMENd \*ly<s>tk' BRA LMYTWNd.<sup>123</sup> [18] AMT BYN zlyh mycyt' hm'k' MYA Y<sup>124</sup> zlyh Y ywšd'sl BRA YHWWNYt' MNW PWN 7<sup>125</sup> kyšwl zmyk'. PWN<sup>126</sup> ZK cym hm'k' HMRA AMT<sup>127</sup> MYA HZYTWNd BYN MYA<sup>128</sup> mycynd. [19] cygwn' YMRRWNYt' AYK HT<sup>129</sup> HMRA Y 3 LGLE ywšd'slyh<sup>130</sup> OL MYA LA YHBWNt'

<sup>87</sup> syc is omitted in K20, 44, l. 9, while syc'wmndyh is correctly written; TD1, 126, l. 8: sycšnw'wmndy; TD2 151, 12: sycšn'wmndy. In K20, again, Y SLYtl omitted. Páz. vers. *cašm spahemañt' aš*

<sup>88</sup> K20, 44, l. 9 adds MHYT; but see Justi, 1868: 45 (text): MHYTWNyt' (i.e. *zanēd* "he strikes") according to ms P (see again, Justi, 1869: 102 in the critical appendix, and 231b in the glossary). TD1, 126, 9 adds wzwyt (?). Páz. vers. *tarvīnāt* (Antiā, 1909: 3).

<sup>89</sup> K20, 44, l. 10 sl.

<sup>90</sup> PWN kw<sup>90</sup> omitted in K20, 44, l. 10, but attested (as PWN kw<sup>90</sup>n) in the mss. tradition of the *Ind.Bd.* (see Justi, 1868: 45 [text] and 102 in the critical appendix).

<sup>91</sup> The mss. transmission of this passage is disturbed; TD1, 126, l. 10, has: W 3 'ndlw'd; TD2, 151, l. 14: 3 PWN [blank space] 'ndlwn'd; I assume that *andarwāy* "air" is a mistake for *andarōn* "inside, within"; K20, 44, l. 10: correctly 'nd'lwn. Páz. vers. *pa andarūni*.

<sup>92</sup> In Pázand in TD1 and TD2; in K20, 44, l. 12: hwnwd; Páz. vers. *hunuuañ* (Antiā, 1909: 3).

<sup>93</sup> K20, 44, 13: PWN.

<sup>94</sup> K20, 44, 13: omits.

<sup>95</sup> K20, 44, 14: YTYBWNd.

<sup>96</sup> K20, 44, 14: ŠDRWNd.

<sup>97</sup> K20, 44, 15: SWSYA.

<sup>98</sup> K20, 44, 15: in Pázand *vəldu*; TD1, 126, l. 14: wltyn; Páz. vers. *gərdu* (Antiā, 1909: 3).

<sup>99</sup> K20, 44, 16: wtylynd; Páz. vers. *gurdant* (Antiā, 1909: 3).

<sup>100</sup> K20, 44, 16: PWN.

<sup>101</sup> K20, 44, l. 16 has 3 (ms P has 2; see Justi, *ibid.*); 2 in TD1 and TD2; Páz. vers. *dō gōš* (Antiā, 1909: 3).

<sup>102</sup> K20, 44, 16: MNW ZK BRA w[t]ltynt [kē ān be *wardēnēd* "which they will encompass"]; see Justi, 1868: 102.

<sup>103</sup> K20 44, l. 17: MNš.

<sup>104</sup> K20, 44, 16: ptš; 'cš omitted.

<sup>105</sup> K20, 44, 15: zh'k.

<sup>106</sup> K20, 44, 19: zh'k.

<sup>107</sup> In *Ind.Bd.* 'wmnd is omitted (only kwhššnyh) and hlpstl'n (*xrafstarān*) inserted; see K20, 45, l. 1 (see Justi, 1868: 45 and 102). Páz. vers. has: *knaššš* (sic for

*kōxšišn<sup>o</sup>*) *xrafstr batr sēž ba zanēt ba talvñāt* (Antiā, 1909: 3).

<sup>108</sup> TD1, 127, l. 2 and TD2, 152, l. 8 omit; attested only in the *Ind.Bd.*; see the preceding note.

<sup>109</sup> TD1, 127, 3 has TLWNYt.

<sup>110</sup> Repeated in TD2 but not in K20, 45, l. 2.

<sup>111</sup> K20, 45, l. 3: 's'myt [Justi, 1868: 63; 45; see also West, 1880: 69]. The Páz. version has *asnmāt* (Antiā, 1909: 3)

<sup>112</sup> Repeated in K20, 45, 4; vacat in TD1, 127, l. 4; TD2, 152, l. 10.

<sup>113</sup> K20, 45, l. 4: cndynyt. Páz. vers. *cindī* (Antiā, 1909: 3).

<sup>114</sup> špyt in TD1, 127, l. 5; TD2, 152, l. 11 has špyt'; K20, 45, l. 4: šywnyt (see also West, 1890: 69); Páz. vers. *ba šīnāt* (Antiā, 1909: 3).

<sup>115</sup> K20, 45, l. 4: dw'nd.

<sup>116</sup> Twice repeated in TD1, 127, l. 5; omitted in TD2, 152, l. 11.

<sup>117</sup> K20, 45, l. 5: 'pyk.

<sup>118</sup> K20, 45, 4: NKB.

<sup>119</sup> Thus in TD1, 127, l. 6; TD2, 152, l. 11: 'ps; K20 45, l. 5: d'm'n 'pwst'n' BRA YHWWNd; Páz. vers. *dāmañ ābāstan ba bañt* (Antiā, 1909: 3).

<sup>120</sup> K20, 45, l. 6: 'pyk

<sup>121</sup> Thus TD1, 127, l. 7; TD2, 152, l. 13; K20, 45, l. 6.

<sup>122</sup> K20, 45, l. 6: w'ng.

<sup>123</sup> Thus K20, 45, l. 7; TD1, 127, l. 8: YHWWNd; TD2, 125, l. 13: YHWWNd.

<sup>124</sup> MYA Y repeated in TD1, 127, ll. 8-9.

<sup>125</sup> K20, 45, l. 8: hpt.; Páz. vers. *pa haft* (Antiā, 1909: 4).

<sup>126</sup> K20, 45, l. 8 inserts here ME.

<sup>127</sup> K20, 45, l. 9: AMT HMRA hm'k' PWN MYA (the order of the first three words is reversed, while PWN does not occur in TD1 and TD2); Páz. vers. *kā hamā xarā pa āv* (Antiā, 1909: 4).

<sup>128</sup> Thus K20, 45, l. 10; TD1, 127, l. 11 and TD2, 153, l. 1 omit; see the preceding passage: BYN zlyh mycyt'. Páz. vers. *andar āv māzant* (Antiā, 1909: 4).

<sup>129</sup> Vacat in K20, 45, l. 10.

<sup>130</sup> K20, 45, l. 11 omits it and inserts BRA.

HWEt', hlwsp' 'p'n<sup>131</sup> BRA<sup>132</sup> 'psyhyt<sup>133</sup> HWEt'<sup>134</sup> 'hwkynšnyh Y<sup>135</sup> gn'k mynw<sub>k</sub> QDM OL MYA YBLWNt' YKOYMWNyt' PWN mlgyh<sup>136</sup> Y d'm<sup>137</sup> Y 'whrmzd. [20] tyštl MYA MN zlyh Y PWN hdyb'lyh <Y> HMRA Y 3 LGLE<sup>138</sup> I'd 'pyltl YNSBWNyt' [W] 'mbl'c<sup>139</sup> pyt'k' AYK slgyn<sup>140</sup> Y HMRA Y 3 LGLE<sup>141</sup> [AYT]<sup>142</sup> ME HT<sup>143</sup> KBDc<sup>144</sup> mynw<sub>k</sub>-hwłšn' AYT' AHLc ZK nm <W> plw'<sup>145</sup> Y MYA<sup>146</sup> PWN swl'kyh'<sup>147</sup> OL tn<sup>148</sup> OZLWNyt' <W> PWN gwmyc <W> slgyn' LAWHL LMYTWNyt'.

[10] *xar ī sē pāy rāy gōwēd kū mayān ī zrēh ī frāxwkard ēstēd u-š pāy sē ud čašm šaš ud gund nō ud gōš dō ud srū ēk, sar xašēn, tan spēd mēnōg-xwarišn, ahlaw.* [11] *u-š ān šaš čašm, dō pad čašm-gāh ud dō pad balist ī sar ud dō pad kōf-gāh ud pad ān šaš čašm [sēj] sējōmandih ī wattar tarwēnēd* [12] *ud ān nō gund, sē pad sar ud sē pad kōf ud sē pad andarōn ī nēmag ī pahlūg ud har(w) gund čand kadag-masāy u-š andčand kōf ī Xunuūqad* [13] *ud ān ī sē pāy har(w) ēk ka nihād ēstēd and zamīg dārēd čand hazār mēš ka pad ham-nišīnišnih gird frōd nišīnēd. xwardag ī pāy andčand hazār mard abāg asp \*ud hazār wardyūn padīš andar widerēd* [14] *ud ān dō gōš māzandarān dehān be wardēnēd.* [15] *ān ēk srū zarrēn homānāg sūrāgōmand; u-š hazār srū abārīg az-iš rust ēstēd. hast uštar-zahā ud hast asp-zahā ud hast gāw-zahā ud hast xar-zahā meh-iz ud keh-iz. pad ān srū harwisp ān ī kōxšīšnōmand xrafstarān wattar sēj be zanēd <ud> be škenēd* [16] *ka ān [ka] xar andar zrēh gird be āyēd gōš be xamēd<sup>149</sup> hamāg āb ī zrēh ī frāxwkard pad čandišn be čandēd, be šēbēd kust ud nāfag.* [17] *ka wāng kunēd hamāg dām ī ābīg <ī> mādag ī ohrmazdīg ābus bawēd ud hamāg xrafstar ī ābīg ī ābus, ka ān wāng āšnawēnd, \*ri<s>tag be abganēnd.* [18] *ka andar zrēh mēzēd hamāg āb ī zrēh yōjdahr be bawēd kē pad haft kišwar zamīg. pad ān čim hamāg xar ka āb wēnēd andar āb mēzēnd.* [19] *čiyōn gōwēd kū agar xar ī sē pāy yōjdahrīh ō āb nē dād hād, harwisp ābān be abesihēd hād āhōgēnišnih ī gannāg mēnōg abar ō āb burd ēstēd pad margih ī dām ī ohrmazd.* [20] *tištar āb az zrēh pad ayārīh <ī> xar ī sē pāy rāy abērtar stānēd<sup>150</sup> [ud] ambar-iz paydāg kū sargēnāg ī xar <ī> sē pāy. čē agar was-iz mēnōg-xwarišn hast pas-iz ān nam <ud> parwāl ī āb pad sūrāgihā ō tan šawēd <ud> pad gōmēz <ud> sargēn abāz abganēd.*

[10] As regards the Three-legged Ass, (He)<sup>151</sup> says: “It stands in the middle of the Sea Frāxwkard and has three feet, six eyes, nine testicles,<sup>152</sup> two ears, one horn, a dark-blue head,

<sup>131</sup> K20, 45, l. 12: MYA.

<sup>132</sup> K20, 45, l. 12: PWN zlyh.

<sup>133</sup> TD1, 127, l. 13; TD2, 153, l. 3: 'psyyt; K20, 45, l. 12: 'psht.

<sup>134</sup> K20, 45, l. 12: HWE'T (corrected HWEyt); then MN is inserted.

<sup>135</sup> K20, 45, ll. 12-13: ZY-š z'hl.

<sup>136</sup> K20, 45, 14: mlg. Pāz. vers. *magi* (Antiā, 1909: 4).

<sup>137</sup> K20, 45, l. 14: d'm'n. Pāz. vers. *dāmāni* (Antiā, 1909: 4).

<sup>138</sup> Thus TD1, 127, l. 15 AND K20, 45, l. 15; TD2, 153, l. 5: p'y.

<sup>139</sup> TD1, 127, l. 16: 'mbr'yc.

<sup>140</sup> Thud TD2, 153, 6; TD1, 127, 16: slgyn'.

<sup>141</sup> Thus TD1, 127, l. 17; K20, 45, l. 15: LGLE AYT; TD2, 153, l. 7: pdy.

<sup>142</sup> TD2, 153, l. 7 omits it.

<sup>143</sup> K20, 45, l. 16: HT ME (the order is reversed); in addition AYT is added (in l. 17).

<sup>144</sup> K20, 45, 17: KBD.

<sup>145</sup> K20, 45, 17: plw'lyh.

<sup>146</sup> K20, 45, 18: 'pyk.

<sup>147</sup> PWN swl'kyh' omitted in K20, 45: 18; in its place lk'n occurs.

<sup>148</sup> TD2, 153, l. 8, TD1, 128, l. 2 and K20, 45, l. 18.

<sup>149</sup> See NP *khamīdan* “to bend” (see Steingass, 1892:

475b).

<sup>150</sup> See *Dādestān ī dēnīg*, 92: (...) *ud tištar pad āb paymānīgih stānēd* (...) “and Tištar with measure seizes the water”; Gignoux, 1988: 389, 392.

<sup>151</sup> See Henning, 1942: 231, n. 8.

<sup>152</sup> Pahl. *gund* can only mean “testicles” here (see MacKenzie, 1971: 38; NP *gund*, Steingass, 1892: 1099a; Rubinčik, 1970, II: 405a), and the translation “mouth” proposed by Justi (1868: 25: “9 Mäulern,” but cf. also p. 226b) and Anklesaria (1956: 195: “nine mouths”) is no longer tenable (“mouth” is in fact *dahān* [written PWME] or *zafar* (daēvic) [zpl]; see MacKenzie, 1971: 23, 97); West (1880: 68), notwithstanding his “traditional” translation (“mouths nine”), notes that “in the Mss. it is marked as if it were pronounced *gūnd*, which means ‘a testicle’” (1880: 68-69, n. 5). It has to be noted that actually the Pāzand version has *dahān nuh* “nine mouths” (Antiā, 1909: 2). There is no real problem here: we simply have to understand “nine testicles” or “nine pairs of testicles” as in the parallel passage attested in *MJF*. III, 64, where the demon Axt poses the following enigma to Jōšt ī Friyān:

*wist ud nohom frašn ēn pursid kū čē ān ī pāy dah ud sar sē ud čašm šaš ud gōš šaš ud dumb dō ud gund sē ud dast dō ud wēnīg sē ud srū čahār ud pušt sē ud hamāg gēhān zīwišn ud dārišn az ōy?*

white body, and spiritual food, (and he is) holy.<sup>153</sup> [11] And of those its six eyes, two are in the eye-sockets,<sup>154</sup> 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'anvant (Xunuuad in Pāzand). [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 pastern 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 Māzandarān. [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 *xrafstars*. [16] When that Ass takes a round in the sea (and) bends its ears, all the waters of the Sea Frāxwkard furiously tremble, (and) (its) sides and centre are in turmoil.<sup>155</sup> [17] When it brays, all the Ohrmazdean female water-creatures become pregnant, and all the pregnant *xrafstars* 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<sup>156</sup> the Three-legged Ass would not have purified the water, all the waters would have perished because of the contamination which the Evil Spirit (*Gannāg Mēnōg*) 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."<sup>157</sup>

Then we quote the brief reference given 26-27 (Sanjana, 1895: 86; Anklesaria, to the Three-legged Ass in the Pahlavi and 1913: 165-66; cf. West, 1893: 111; Bausani, Pāzand versions of the *Mēnōg ī Xrad*, LXII, 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 lymnyh] w'lyt' AMT OL HMRA Y 3 p'd YHMTWNyt' h'mwdyn' PWN wynšn DKYA W ywšd'sl OBYDWNyt'

(Pahl. text; transcription): [26] *xar ī sē pāy mayān <ī> zrēh ī warkaš nišīnēd*. [27] *hāmōyēn āb ī ō nasā ud daštān ud abārīg hixr [ud rēmanīh]<sup>158</sup> wārēd ka ō xar ī sē pāy rasēd hāmōyēn pad wēnišn pāk ud yōjdahr kunēd*.

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 ī Fryān only with the help of Nēryōsang, sent by Ohrmazd; see III, 72: *pas ohrmazd ī xwadāy nēryōsang yazad pad paygām ō jōšt ī friyān frēstīd [ud] u-š guft kū frašn passox dah \*kū ēn gāw-juxt ast ī abāg mard kē kār ud warz kunēd*. Afterwards, Ohrmazd the lord sent Nēryōsang the angel, with a message to Jōšt ī Fryān, 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*.

<sup>153</sup> See *Y.* 42, 4: *xarəmcā yim ašauuanəm yazamaidē*.

<sup>154</sup> Lit. "in the position of the eyes."

<sup>155</sup> See *Yr.* 8, 31; Panaino, 1990a: 55.

<sup>156</sup> See also the hypothetical period (irrealis) contained in *Yr.* 8, 52-53.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Anklesaria, 1956: 195, 197.

<sup>158</sup> Anklesaria, 1913: 166; Sanjana, 1895: 86, omits.

(Pāz. text): [26] *xar i sē-pāe miiaṅ zrēh i varkaš āstāδ*. [27] *hamōiṅ āβ i ō ḡasāe u daštān u aβarā hihir [u rīmanī] vārāδ ka ō xar i sē-pāe rasāδ hamōiṅ pa vīnišṅ pāk u yaozdāθar kunāδ*.

[26] The Three-legged Ass sits in the middle of the Sea Walkaš. [27] (It) completely polishes and purifies with (its) watchfulness (*pad wēnišn*) all the water which rains on the dead matter (*nasā*), on the menstruation (*daštān*) and on the other excrement (*hixr*) (– and on the filth –), when it arrives to the Three-legged Ass.

The direct identification between the *xara-* of *Yasna* 42 and the *xar i sē pāy*<sup>159</sup> is undisputed among Iranologists,<sup>160</sup> but its background deserves a more systematic analysis.<sup>161</sup> 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 *hamkarān* “assis-

tants” of Tištrya, the star Sirius, which is the Iranian protagonist of the myth of the liberation of the water.<sup>162</sup> 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. 15-136, ll. 1-7; not extant in **DH**; see Bailey, 1933, II: 68):

[5] AMT MN 'hwkynšnyh<sup>163</sup> Y ŠDYA'n' plyhbwyh' W 'pybwyh' wzynd W zyd'n' W 'hwkynšn' Y kltk' kltk'<sup>164</sup> w'l'n' w'lyt' tyšt MYA MN hm'k'<sup>165</sup> zlyh Y YNSBWNyt' BRA MN zlyh Y pl'xwkr't' wyš YNSBWNyt'. [6] cygwn' YMRRWNyt' AYK HMRA Y 3 p'd Y BYN zlyh Y pl'hwkr't' pr'c ywmbyny<sup>166</sup> hm'k' MYA Y zlyh PWN<sup>167</sup> šyp'n' šypyt', MYA BRA OL kwst'n Y zlyh LMYTWNyt'. tyšt PWN hdyb'lyh Y plw'hl Y 'hlwb'n' AHRNc W mynw'k'n' yzt'n' plwt' YATWNyt' (...).

[5] *ka az āhōgēnišnīh ī dēwān frehbūdhā ud abēbūdhā wizend ud zyān ud āhōgēnišn ī kardag ī kardag wārān wārēd tištar āb az hamāg zrēh stānēd be az zrēh ī frāxwkard wēš stānēd*. [6] *čiyōn gōwēd kū xar ī sē pāy ī andar zrēh ī frāxwkard frāz jumbēnēd, hamāg āb ī zrēh pad*

<sup>159</sup> See also *Ir.Bd.* XIII, 36 (**TD1**, ed. Tehran, 82, 9-11; **TD2**, ed. Anklesaria, 1908: 99, 14 – 100, 1), where it is stated: *būd andar gāwān ān ī čiyōn gāw srisōg kē hadaii<š> xwānēnd; andar xarān xar ī sē pāy ud andar murwān-iz čamrōš*. “There was among the oxen that one, such as the ox Srisōg, which they call ‘Hadayaš’; amongst the asses the Three-legged Ass, amongst the birds too, the ‘Čamrōš’” (see Anklesaria, 1956: 127); *Ir.Bd.*, XVII, 8 (**TD1**, ed. Tehran, 99, 12; **TD2**, ed. Anklesaria, 1908: 120, 13-14): ... *xar ī spēd ī gurbag-pāy warān rad* “the white ass with the paws of cats is the chief of the asses” (see Anklesaria, 1956: 155).

<sup>160</sup> See Windischmann, 1863: 91; W. Geiger, 1882: 361-62; Darmesteter, 1892: 276, n. 7; Jackson, 1928: 64; Nyberg, 1938: 285; Voigt, 1937: 30; Panaino, 1990b: 6.

<sup>161</sup> 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 *kurušag* (Pāz. *kurišk*, *korišk*; see Nyberg, 1974: 121). According to the *Bundahišn* [*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 *Bundahišn* and in the *Wizīdagīhā ī Zadspram* (IX, 19-20) as the steed of Manuščīhr (see West, 1880: 181-82; Anklesaria, 1965: LXXIX); see also *Wizīdagīhā ī Zadspram*, ch. III, 61

(Gignoux - Tafazzoli, 1993: 52-53). It is clear that this animal is the moufflon, as explained by Mirza, 1974.

<sup>162</sup> 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° la pluie est l'urine d'un animal céleste; 2° l'urine d'un animal céleste tue le démon. L'existence de la première conception est bien connue; elle est indo-européenne et il en est resté des traces en France même dans la mythologie populaire; pour son existence dans les mythologies d'Asie, nous renvoyons à un hymne védique d'un réalisme outrageux, le troisième de l'A-tharva. La Perse enfin possède et cette conception et la seconde qui en dérive tout naturellement, et elle nous les présente réunies, c'est-à-dire formant le mythe même que l'induction nous fait lire sous la liturgie, avec cette seule différence qu'il le met sous le nom d'un animal autre que le taureau, sous le nom d'un autre être merveilleux: l'Âne à trois pieds.

See also Przyłuski, 1928.

<sup>163</sup> **TD2**, 135, l. 15; **TD1**, 112, l. 11: 'hwkynšn'.

<sup>164</sup> kltk' (twice in **TD2**, 136, l. 1); only once in **TD1**, 112, l. 11.

<sup>165</sup> **TD1**, 112, 11; **TD2**, 136, 2, omits.

<sup>166</sup> **TD2**, 136, l. 4; **TD1**, 112, 13: ywmbyt.

<sup>167</sup> **TD1**, 112, l. 14: PWN; **TD2**, 136, l. 4: BRA.

*šēbān šēbēd, āb be ō kustān ī zrēh abganēd. tištar pad ayārīh ī frawahr ī ahlawān anī-z ud mēnōgān yazadān frōd āyēd (...).*

[5] 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 Frāxwkard Sea. [6] As (He) says: “The Three-legged Ass, which causes to move (the waters) in the Frāxwkard 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 atmospheric phenomena, is attested in the *Pahlavi 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] *ꞤNE wyl Y MN 'bl 'wptyt' ME.*

[35a6] *'whrmzd gwpt' AYK ꞤNE sk' AYT' AMT 'bl MYA YNSBWNx PWN nylwk' Y w't' W ywmbšn' Y ZK HMRA Y 3 LGLE Y BYN mdy'n Y zlyh ystyt' <OL> 'ndlw'd BRA OZLWNyt' W dlwšt' t'pyt' W glm OBYDWNyt' AMT 'wptyt' OL ANŠWTA'n W gwsṗnd'n BRA YKTLWNyt' W 'hlmn' sthmktl YHWWNyt'.*

[35a5] *ēn wīr ī az abrōftēd čē*

[35a6] *ohrmazd guft kū ēn sag ast ka abr āb stānēd pad nērōg ī wād ud ĵumbišn ī ān xar ī sē pāy ī andar mayān ī zrēh čstēd <ō> andarwāy be šawēd ud društ tābēd ud garm kunēd ka ōftēd ō mardōmān ud gōspandān be ōzanēd ud ahreman stahmagtar bawēd.*

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

[35a6] Ohrmazd 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,<sup>168</sup> nor to

<sup>168</sup> See Panaino, 1990b: 8-9; *Y.* 42, 4 (*xarəmcā yim ašauuanəm yazamaidē yō hištaitē maidim zraīiaṅhō vourukašahe*) can be directly compared with *Yt.* 8, 32 (*us paiti aḍāy hištaiti spītama zaraθuštra tištriō raēuuā x'arənaṅ'hā zraīiaṅhāt haca vourukašāt*). In *Y.* 42, 4, *Ir.Bd.*, XIV, *Ind.Bd.* XIX, and *MX.* LXII, 26, the *xar* is in the Walkaš, in *Yt.* 8, 32 Tištrya rises from the Vourukaša. 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 bulls, 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.* LXII, 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 Dužyairyā (“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-lien*, the Yüeh-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.<sup>169</sup> It is more important to recall that some aspects of the Three-legged Ass<sup>170</sup> 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 *kṣetriyá*:<sup>171</sup>

<i>hariṇasya raghuṣyado 'dhi śīrṣaṇi bheṣajam</i>	/
<i>sa kṣetriyaṃ viṣāṇayā viṣūcīnam anīnaśat</i>	/ 1
<i>anu tvā hariṇo vṛṣā padbhiś caturbhir akramīt</i>	/
<i>viṣāne vi śya guṣpitaṃ yad asya kṣetriyaṃ hṛdi</i>	/ 2
<i>ado yad avarocate catuṣpakṣam iva cchadiḥ</i>	/
<i>tenā te sarvaṃ kṣetriyaṃ aṅgebhyo nāśayāmasi</i>	/ 3
<i>amū ye divi subhage vicṛtau nāma tārake</i>	/
<i>vi kṣetriyasya muñcatām adhamaṃ pāsam uttamam</i>	/ 4
<i>āpa id vā u bheṣajīr āpo amīvacātānīḥ</i>	/
<i>āpo viśvasya bheṣajīs tās tvā muñcantu kṣetriyāt</i>	/ 5
<i>yad āsuteḥ kriyamāṇāyāḥ kṣetriyaṃ tvā vyānaśe</i>	/
<i>vedāhaṃ tasya bheṣajam kṣetriyaṃ nāśayāmi tvat</i>	/ 6
<i>apavāse nakṣatrāṇām apavāsa uśasām uta</i>	/
<i>apāsmat sarvaṃ durbhūtam apa kṣetriyaṃ ucchatu</i>	/ 7

On the head of the swift-running gazelle (*hariṇá*) is a remedy;  
 he by his horn hath made the *kṣetriyá* disappear, dispersing.  
 After thee hath the bull-gazelle stridden with his four feet;  
 O horn, do thou unfasten (*vi-sā*) the *kṣetriyá* that is compacted (?) in his hearth.  
 What shines down yonder, like a four-sided roof (*chadís*),  
 therewith we make all the *kṣetriyá* disappear from thy limbs.  
 The two blessed stars named Unfasteners (*vicṛt*), that are yonder in the sky –  
 let them unfasten of the *kṣetriyá* the lowest, the highest fetter.  
 The waters verily [are] remedial, the waters disease-expelling, the water remedial of every-  
 thing; let them release thee from *kṣetriyá*.  
 If from the drink (? *āsutí*) that was being made the *kṣetriyá* hath come upon (*vi-aś*) thee,  
 I know the remedy of it; I make the *kṣetriyá* 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 *kṣetriyá*.

[translation according to Whitney-Lanman, 1905: 94-95; see also Papesso, 1933: 75-76; Chand, 1982: 68-69; Panaino, 1990b: 12-13; Orlandi - Sani, 1992: 260-61; Papesso-(Rossi), 1994: 81].

This topic is also attested in other countries, as in China,<sup>172</sup> in the Islamic tradition<sup>173</sup> and in the Western world.<sup>174</sup>

But a very striking element which relates the Iranian cycle of the Three-legged Ass<sup>175</sup> to the theme of the seduction (of Mesopota-

<sup>169</sup> See Panaino, 1990a; 1995a.

<sup>170</sup> The anti-daëvic features of the Three-legged Ass should have surely influenced the later attribution to a Sasanian three-legged instrument of torture the name of “donkey.” See Boyce, 1968: 48 and n. 5.

<sup>171</sup> Monier-Williams, 1899: 332c; see Scheftelowitz,

1912: 464, 480.

<sup>172</sup> Restelli, 1992: 130-41 (with literature).

<sup>173</sup> See Ettinghausen, 1950; Restelli, 1992: 57-69.

<sup>174</sup> See Shepard, 1930: passim = 1984; Einhorn, 1976; Della Casa, 1986 (= 1998); Restelli, 1992.

<sup>175</sup> See Einhorn, 1976: 241-44.

mian and Indian derivation) is attested in a 14th century Greek ms. of the *Physiologus* (Codex B), which contains the following statement:<sup>176</sup>

#### Περὶ τοῦ μονοκέρου

Ἔστι ζῷον μονόκερος οὕτω καλούμενος· ἐν δὲ τοῖς τόποις ἐκείνοις ἐνὶ λίμνῃ μεγάλῃ, καὶ συνάγονται τὰ θηρία ὥστε πιεῖν· πρὶν ἢ δὲ τὰ θηρία συναχθῶσι, πορεύεται ὁ ὄφις καὶ ρίπτει τὸν ἰδὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι. τὰ γοῦν θηρία, αἰσθανόμενα τοῦ φαρμάκου, οὐ τολμῶσι πιεῖν, ἀναμένοντες δὲ τὸν μονόκερον, ἔρχεται, καὶ εὐθέως εἰσερχόμενος ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ καὶ σταυρὸν ἐκτυπῶσας τῷ κέρατι αὐτοῦ, ἀφανίζει τοῦ φαρμάκου τὴν δύναμιν, καὶ πῶν ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος, πίνουσι καὶ τὰ θηρία πάντα ἐκεῖνα.

Δευτέρα φύσις αὐτοῦ. τοῦτο τὸ ζῷον, τὸν μονόκερον λέγω, ἀγαπᾷ σφόδρα τὴν χαρὰν· τί δὲ ποιοῦσιν οἱ τοῦτο θηρώντες; λαμβάνοντες μεθ' ἑαυτῶν τύμπανα, σάλπιγγας, κινύρας καὶ ὅσα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐπινενόηται, ὑπάγουσιν ἐν τῷ τόπῳ ἔνθα ἐνὶ τῷ ζῷον καὶ συνιστῶσι χορὸν, κρούοντες τὰς σάλπιγγας καὶ εἴ τι ἔχουσιν ἕτερον, βοῶντες μεγάλως ἐν τῷ χορῷ· μίαν δὲ γυναῖκα καθήσαντες ἐν ἑτέρῳ τόπῳ ἐν τινὶ δένδρῳ πλησίον αὐτῶν, κοσμοῦσι ταύτην καὶ διδοῦσιν αὐτῇ ἄλλουσαν δεδεμένην ἐν τῷ δένδρῳ. ὁ δὲ μονόκερος, ἀκούων τὰς μεγάλας βοὰς τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῶν σαλπύγγων, ἔρχεται πλησίον τοῦ χοροῦ καὶ θεωρεῖ καὶ ἀκούει ὅσα περ αὐτοὶ δρῶσι, καὶ οὐ τολμᾷ ἐγγίσει αὐτούς· θεωρῶν δὲ μόνην τὴν γυναῖκα καθεύδοντα,<sup>177</sup> ὑπάγει ἀλ<λ>όμενος ἐπ' αὐτήν, καὶ τοῖς γόνασιν αὐτῆς προστριβόμενος, καὶ ὁμαλίζων αὐτὸν ἢ γυνή, ἀφυπτεῖ· εἶτα δεσμεύει αὐτὸν τῇ ἀλύσει, καὶ οὕτως ἀφήσιν αὐτὸν καὶ ὑπάγει. ὁ δὲ μονόκερος ἐξυπνῶν καὶ μὴ δυνάμενος πορευθῆναι, ἅτε τῇ ἀλύσει κεκρατημένος ὢν, δαρεῖς πολλά, ἀφήσιν τὸ κέρασ αὐτοῦ καὶ ὑπάγει, καὶ τότε λαμβάνουσιν αὐτὸ οἱ θηρεύοντες, ἔστι δὲ εἰς τὸ φάρμακον 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:<sup>178</sup> 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 sleeping, 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

<sup>176</sup> Text according to Sbordone, 1936a: 321. See Ettinghausen, 1950: 150, n. 20; Einhorn, 1976: 55; for the Oriental versions see also Peters, 1898: 34-35.

<sup>177</sup> Sic in the mss.: about the use of the masculine par-

ticiple instead of the feminine see Langholf, 1977.

<sup>178</sup> About the philological background and the textual relations of this second part of the chapter see the discussion offered by Sbordone, 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<sup>179</sup> that still at his time some poisonous animals (*animalia venenosa*) come at twilight to infect the waters of the Sea and that the good animals (*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 [*De mane vero post ortum solis venit vnicornus ponens cornu suum ad predictum fluium 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,<sup>180</sup> and the dualistic opposition between *animalia bona* and *venenosa* seems to reflect a Zoroastrian pattern, which fittingly coincides with that of the description of the Three-legged Ass of the *Bundahišn*, but also with that attested in Codex B of the *Physiologus*.<sup>181</sup> In addition we may recall the presence also in the *Kyranides* of the pattern of the beverage obtained from the testicles of the rhinoceros and of its horn as an instrument for chasing away the demons.

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

The cycle of *Ṛṣyaśṛṅga* with its variants cannot be separated from that of *Enkīdu*; the patterns of both cycles show too many par-

allels and no historical, geographic or cultural element prohibits such a connection, as already underlined by Della Casa.<sup>182</sup> 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 symbolical value in the sphere of sex and fertility. This different theme was in turn linked to the Indian saga of *Ṛṣyaśṛṅga* (whose arrival in the town brings rains) but it appears also in some descriptions of the wild unicorn according to Ctesias and Megasthenes, 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 *Atharvaveda* of the horn of the swift-running gazelle as a remedy against the *kṣetriyā*-disease seems to be an element which offers a – perhaps tenuous but very impressive – link between the cycle of *Enkīdu* / *Ṛṣyaśṛṅga* 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 *Enkīdu* or *Ṛṣyaśṛṅga*, but – and this fact seems to me to be very difficult to be denied – we are moving in a sort of kaleido-

<sup>179</sup> See *Itinerarium Joannis 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.

<sup>180</sup> See Scheftelowitz, 1912: 464.

<sup>181</sup> This confirms that the third version of the *Physiologus* contains a later tradition, which could have been influenced, through Arabic or Persian intermediation, by the Zoroastrian description of the unicorn ass.

<sup>182</sup> 1986: 17, 23-24 = 1998: 242, 246-47.

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<sup>183</sup> (but also in the later redaction of the *Physiologus*), 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 Enkīdu, 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 Enkīdu (Tablet VIII, 49-50), of Enkīdu's father (Tablet VIII, 4), of the Indian unicorn ass (Ctesias and Megasthenes), 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,<sup>184</sup> 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 Enkīdu's genealogy (as the identification of Enkīdu with an *akkannu* in Tablet VIII 49-50) must be reconsidered. On the other hand, the presence of an *ašauuan-* ("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 Vourukaša – 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

<sup>183</sup> 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:

Allora ci menò in uno cerchiovito, dov'erono da sessanta leocorni, legati con catene d'oro, perché sono molti feroci e molto bravi. E non si può appressare a loro 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 istà in uno paese molto disabitato; ed èvvi grandissimi boschi, ed èvi 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 àno beuto, gl'altri animali beono.

E sapiate che questo signore à certe donzelle vergine, e mettele intorno a questi laghi, e co' molti cavalli fa caciare questi alicorni; e come il leocorno sente al naso le dette donzelle, conviene che truoi le dette vergine; e, giunto a llei, le mette il capo in grenbo, e adormentasi. E queste donzelle sono amastrate dal loro signore, e con certe corde lo legono, e menollo dov'elle 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 unicorni ne fue presi ventiquattro in ispazio d'otto di.

<sup>184</sup> See Finet, 1989: 53-57.

than the attested three lines can show. On the other hand we have to note that an “ass” (*rāsabha*-, m.)<sup>185</sup> 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,<sup>186</sup> 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 Gilgāmeš 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’ (*kūdanu 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*<sup>187</sup> encountered by Ereškigal in the Descent of Ištar. More precisely Parpola writes:<sup>188</sup>

In the Descent of Ištar, the *assinnu* is sent to rescue the fallen goddess, who, thanks to his intervention, is reborn and gradually reascends to her celestial home. In the Gilgamesh Epic, Enkidu plays a similar role: he is the “helper/rescuer of a friend” (*mušēzib ibri*, 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:<sup>189</sup>

*ib-ri ku-da-nu ṭar-du ak-kan-nu šá KUR-i nimru šá EDIN*

<sup>d4</sup>EN.KI.DÙ *ib-ri ku-da-nu ṭar-du a-ka-nu šá KUR-i nim-ru 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 *akkannu* 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 cas-

trated 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-

<sup>185</sup> In the Ṛgveda *khara*-, m. is not attested; here we find *gardabhā*-, m. and *rāsabha*-, m. (Graßmann, 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. Dinshaw (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.

<sup>186</sup> See Parpola, 1997b: XCII-XCIII, n. 119, XCVI-XCVII, n. 139 and in particular n. 140; 1998, n. 14.

<sup>187</sup> Parpola, 1997b: XCII-XCIII, n. 119, XCVI-XCVII, n. 139 and n. 140; 1998, n. 14.

<sup>188</sup> Parpola, 1998: 318-319, n. 14.

<sup>189</sup> See Parpola, 1997a: 99; 103, 104, 105; cf. Pettinato, 1992: 191, 203, 207, 210-11.

ated from the later Iranian developments of the wild unicorn-ass and its sexual strength.<sup>190</sup> 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.<sup>191</sup>

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. Ṛṣyaśṛṅga 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 ex-

tremely clear witness of the *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 (Apoša, 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 *Gilgāmeš Epic* on the oldest Greek literature, in particular on the *Iliad*,<sup>192</sup> 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.

<sup>190</sup> Enkidu’s wild sexual force is clearly evoked in Tablet I, 160, where it 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.

<sup>191</sup> See Albright, 1920: 333.

<sup>192</sup> 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 Gilgāmeš*) and of C. Grottanelli (*Combabos, Absalom and the Epic of Gilgāmeš*) for new and stimulating reflections about the western ramification of the *Gilgāmeš Epic*. See also Momigliano, 1989: 24-26.

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