

INTRODUCTION

The Avesta, the sacred texts of Zoroastrianism, the predominant religion of pre-Islamic Iran, are preserved solely through manuscripts. Although the Avestan language has roots extending back to the Proto-Iranian and even Indo-Iranian periods in the third and second millennia BCE, the written tradition only commenced in the late Sasanian period, around 600 CE, with the development of the Avestan script. The most ancient Avestan manuscripts trace back to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, while the majority of the currently known Avestan manuscripts originated much later, primarily between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.

Recent studies have shown that the texts that have come down to us are not exact copies of Sasanian or later originals. However, the manuscripts contain the Avestan texts and instructions for the actions to be performed during the rituals; thus, they reflect the variants of the various liturgies as they were celebrated at the time of the production of the manuscripts.

The Avestan manuscripts found their way to Europe at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and were mainly brought to the United Kingdom from India by British travellers or employees of the East India Company. The earliest collection of Avestan manuscripts in the West is Hyde's collection, which is currently divided amongst the Bodleian Library, the Oxford University libraries and the British Library in London (Sims-Williams 2012: 177).

Thomas Hyde (1636–1703) was a Professor of Arabic at the University of Oxford in 1691 and Regius Professor of Hebrew in 1697. Hyde never travelled to India himself; however, he established a network of travellers and East India Company officials that he requested to purchase books and manuscripts on his behalf (Sims-Williams 2012: 174).

Another important collection of Avestan manuscripts was acquired by Abraham Hya-cinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805) (Duchesne-Guillemain 1985), who brought some of them from India to Paris. This collection is held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris.

Samuel Guise's (1751–1811) collection is another well-known collection of Avestan manuscripts in the British Library. His work in Surat inevitably brought him into close contact with the Parsi community, and he purchased the collection of Dastur Darab, Anquetil-Duperron's teacher, at some point between 1758 and 1760 (Sims-Williams 2009: 199).

In addition to the above-mentioned manuscripts from India, numerous important Avestan manuscripts were also found in Iran. The earliest discoveries of Avestan manuscripts in Iran were made by Avestan scholars conducting exploratory expeditions in Iran during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Niels Ludvig Westergaard (1815–1878), the Danish orientalist scholar, made a three-year trip to India and Persia from May 1841 to May 1844. These trips brought him into contact with the Zoroastrian communities. In 1843, he purchased eight Zoroastrian manuscripts in Iran, amongst which were *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad*¹ and *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (K35); they are now part of the famous *Codices Hafnienses*, and are kept at the Royal Library in Copenhagen (Schmitt 2015).²

¹ This text was published by Andreas (1882).

² The Avestan manuscripts purchased by Westergaard in India and Iran during 1841–1844 are numbered K35–K43 in the collection of the Royal Library in Copenhagen. Several manuscripts in this collection were published as facsimiles by A. Christensen & K. Barr (1931–1944), *Codices Avestici et Pahlavici Bibliothecae Universitatis Hafniensis*, 12 volumes, Copenhagen. These manuscripts were catalogued by N. L. Westergaard, J. Olshausen, and A. Mehren (1846–1857), *Codices Orientales Bibliothecae Regiae Havniensis, iussu et auspiciis Regis*

Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926) visited Iran in 1887–1888, and travelled to Yazd and Kerman, where he became acquainted with the Zoroastrian community. In his book ‘A Year amongst the Persians’, he mentions that most of the manuscripts (particularly the older and more valuable ones) had been sent to the Parsis of Bombay in order to be preserved (Browne 1893: 429). However, in one of the Fire Temples in Yazd, Dastūr Tīrandāz, the high priest of Yazd, presented Browne with two manuscripts, which he was allowed to borrow for the duration of his stay there, enabling him to examine them in depth. He provides a description of a Videvdād Sāde,³ which includes details of the main text, the colophons and the Sālmargs (see Browne 1893: 392–393).

We know that this manuscript, which was kept at the Fire Temple during Browne’s visit and later at the house of Dastūr Azargošasb, was stolen and sold in 2004 on the Bāzār-e Qadīm (Old Market) in Yazd. The manuscript was purchased by Vahid Zolfaghari, a collector, and is currently in his private collection in Yazd.⁴

Browne saw two more manuscripts that had been preserved at the Fire Temple in Kerman: One of these manuscripts was a Videvdād Sāde copied by Marzbān Wāhrom and was dated 1044 AY (1675 AD), and the other was a Xorde Avesta, which had been written by Dastur Esfandyār Nušrīwān Esfandyār Ardešīr Ādur Sīstānīg in 1811 (Browne 1893: 441–442). These manuscripts are no longer kept at the Fire Temple of Kerman, and their current location is unfortunately unknown.

Another Avestan scholar, Abraham Valentine Williams Jackson (1862–1937), travelled to Iran in 1906, 1907 and 1910. He returned to Iran in 1918–1919 as a member of the American-Persian Relief Commission at the time of World War I, and eventually travelled around the world. In 1926, he made his final journey to Iran and India (Malandra 2007). In his book ‘Persia Past and Present: a Book of Travel and Research’, he recorded some of his attempts to find Avestan manuscripts. Here, he mentions that the Zoroastrians of Shiraz aren’t in possession of any Avestan manuscripts, but have encouraged him to ask the Zoroastrians of Yazd about the location of some copies (Jackson 1906: 337). In Yazd, the Zoroastrians showed him some fragments and two Avestan manuscripts; one of them was a fine copy of a Videvdād Sāde written by Vāhrōm Marzbān Frēdōn in 977–978 AY/ 1608–1609 AD (see Appendix 4010), which Browne had also seen in 1893, while the other was a text of the Yasnā ceremony. Jackson also provides a good transcript of a Wištāsp Yašt. He emphasised that these were the only manuscripts that could be found, and that the best-informed members of the assembly stated that all their more important manuscripts had been sent to India for safe-keeping or for use, and feared that the chances of obtaining hitherto unknown copies were decreasing as the years passed (Jackson 1906: 358). Based on Jackson’s statement, a number of the manuscripts he had seen in Yazd, which were in Bombay at that time, had already been used by Geldner in the preparation of his edition of the Avesta (Jackson 1906: 358).

It is not yet known whether the Zoroastrians were unaware of the existence of more manuscripts in the community at that time, or if they were aware of other manuscripts but

Danae Christiani Octavi enumerati et descripti. Pars I, Copenhagen: http://www.kb.dk/export/sites/kb_dk/da/nb/samling/os/osdownloads/Samtlige_codices_orientales_1.pdf. Some of these manuscripts have been digitised and are available at: <http://www.kb.dk/manus/ortsam/2009/okt/orientalia/subject637/en/>

3 See V 4010 in Appendix.

4 This manuscript was published recently; see: Cantera, Alberto/ Ferrer-Losilla, Joan Josep/ Zolfaghari, Dorost (2019): *The Liturgical Videvdād manuscript 4010 (Ave 977–978)*. Sociedad de Estudios Iranios y Turanios: Girona.

did not intend to show them to foreign researchers. As mentioned by Browne and Jackson (Browne 1893: 429; Jackson 1906: 358), the Zoroastrians regularly stated that the most valuable manuscripts had been sent to India to be preserved. This led to the assumption among European scholars that no other Avestan manuscripts remained in Iran.

The developments of various theories regarding the transmission of Avestan manuscripts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and previously unknown Zoroastrian manuscripts that came to light in Iran from around 2000 completely revolutionised Avestan studies.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the three main editions of the Avesta were those compiled by Westergaard (1852), Spiegel (1853–1858) and K. F. Geldner (1886–1896), of which Geldner's edition has been considered the canonical text to date.

These editions represent mainly Indian manuscripts rather than Iranian ones, even though the Iranian manuscripts are often more conservative and contain a considerably greater number of important phonological characteristics. The reason for the underrepresentation of the Iranian manuscripts is that many of these manuscripts had not been found or were not available to scholars at the time at which the text editions were prepared. We know that Geldner had access to 13 Iranian manuscripts, some of them were originally composed in Iran in order to be sent to India (e.g. Mf2 [4020] or G18 [5000]), and copies of them were produced in India. Six of these manuscripts contain ceremonies of the long liturgy: Videvdād Sāde Mf2 (1618/1638) and Jp1 (1638/1658); Yasna Sāde: Mf1 (1741); Yasna Pahlavi Pt4 (1774) and Mf4 (younger), which are indeed Indian copies; Vīštasp Yašt Sāde K4 (1723) and Xwardarg Abestāg: F2, K36, 37, 38, Mf3 (1700), Pd and W1 (Cantera 2012c: 441).

Both Geldner and Westergaard believed that the Avestan texts had originally been composed at some time before the Achaemenid period, and would have been transmitted orally up to the time of the first Sasanian kings. They also believed that the original texts from the Sassanid period had been lost, and that only a few of the original manuscripts, which were later to be found in the regions of Yazd and Kerman, remained.

Geldner and Westergaard were of the opinion that all the surviving manuscripts had been based on one copy; thus, the aim of these scholars was to reconstruct the original text. To achieve this goal, they used similar methods to edit the Avesta texts, and the results of their work were also extremely similar.

The critiques of Geldner's canonical edition and the texts it contained began with the work of Hoffmann (1975, 1976, 1992) and reached their peak in the work of Cantera (1998). Humbach's (1973) theories regarding a further common hyparchetype for the ritual and exegetic manuscripts of the Videvdād, as well as Hoffmann and Narten's theory (1989) of hyparchetypes or 'Stammhandschriften', which were developed on the basis of Geldner's materials, were discussed at a later time and were proved to be false by Cantera (2012) and Tremblay (2012).

The most important arguments countering Hoffmann and Narten's theory and critiquing Geldner's edition were based on the results of and fresh information derived from a number of previously unknown Avestan manuscripts, which came to light in Iran one decade after the earliest discoveries of Hyde and Anquétil-Duperron.

A number of important articles published by Katayun Mazdapour (2003a, 2003b, 2006, 2008, 2008–2009, 2010, 2012) have drawn the attention of Avestan researchers to the fact that there

are still many undiscovered and unknown manuscripts in Iran, which have not been included in the editions of the Avesta. In her articles, Mazdapour listed and described many of these newly discovered manuscripts, most of which were found in the houses of priests' families or appeared for sale on the black market. In addition to introducing the manuscripts, she published the entire text of Videvdād 4000 (Mazdapour and Afshar 2013) and ms. 4161 (Cantera and Mazdapour 2015), a Xorde Avesta written by Mollā Behruz (Mazdapour 2006) and the Yasnā Visperad in the Soruṣṭīyān collection (Mazdapour 2011).

Other manuscripts were also located, purchased or digitised through the work of other Iranian scholars such as Iraj Afshar, Zhale Amouzgar, Maryam Ghanei and Bahman Moradiyan (2013), Fatemeh Jahanpour (2011, 2012, 2014) and Vahid Zolfaghari (for more details see Cantera et al. 2019).

The new discoveries of Avestan manuscripts and the concept of the Avestan Digital Archive (ADA) regarding the importance of a new edition of the Avesta convinced Alberto Cantera and his colleagues to pay attention to the location and digitisation of the Iranian manuscripts. A considerable number of manuscripts were discovered and digitised between 2012 and 2014 in collaboration with various scholars.

The adventure of discovering manuscripts in Iran

The narrative surrounding the discovery of manuscripts in Iran is marked by both adventure and atypical circumstances. Regrettably, a significant portion of these manuscripts has been pilfered from Zoroastrian homes and institutions, ultimately falling into the possession of thieves and traders. Many of the newly uncovered manuscripts have histories that diverge from conventional academic paths. From clandestine encounters with criminals and merchants in obscure locations to engaging with an exorcist, some of these manuscripts have undergone a remarkable journey before finally reaching the secure confines of libraries where they have been donated and preserved. I have been asked so often about how I first came to occupy myself with the discovery of Avestan manuscripts that I have decided to devote this part of the introduction to providing a very brief description of my activities in this field. As succinctly as possible, I aim to describe the history of the process whereby, not without difficulty and occasional discouragement, more than a hundred Zoroastrian manuscripts were successfully found and digitised. Numerous manuscripts have since been made available through the Avestan Digital Archive (ADA) and are now being utilized by scholars engaged in Avestan studies around the globe.

During the Corpus Avesticum Workshop (formerly ECoDA) from February 6th to 9th, 2012, hosted by the Institute for Empirical Linguistics at Goethe University of Frankfurt, I extended an invitation to Koroush Niknam, a Zoroastrian priest and scholar, to participate in the workshop at our institute. His wife, Parimarz Rawaniyan, is the daughter of the late Mūbed Ravāniyan, a renowned priest from Yazd, and the owner of manuscript 4040, an important manuscript in the study of Videvdād text transmission. This manuscript was discussed by Mazdapour (2010; Mazdapour 2008–2009: 4–5). I had the opportunity to view the manuscript at the ancestral home of Korush Niknam in the village of Qāsem Ābād near Yazd in 1995. Consequently, I requested that Korush Niknam bring the manuscript to Frankfurt during the workshop. He graciously complied and allowed us to digitise it. I subsequently indexed the manuscript, which was published in both ADA and Gholami (2014).

In March of 2012, Alberto Cantera undertook his first field work trip to Iran, together with Moḥammad Kangarani, to search for Avestan manuscripts. During this trip, ms. 87, a Yasna manuscript held in the Kazemeini Museum, was digitised, as well as the currently available manuscripts in the Zolfaghari collection (for more details, see Cantera et al. 2020: 5).

In June of 2012, I undertook a trip to Yazd with Alberto Cantera and Juanjo Ferrer, where we visited the library of the Mārḱār Orphanage (Parvarešgāh-e Mārḱār in Persian); this orphanage was founded for Zoroastrian boys by Peshotanji Dossabhai Markar in 1923 but is no longer in operation, and the building has been restored and is now used as the Museum of Zoroastrian History and Culture. The orphanage has a library in which two Videvdād manuscripts (ms. 4025 and ms. 4158) are stored. During our first trip to Yazd, we were able to look at these manuscripts but, when we returned with our equipment to digitise them, the director of the library refused to give us permission to do so. We returned to Tehran and, following a meeting with Dr Esfandyār Ekhtiyari, member of parliament for the Zoroastrian community, we were finally granted permission. Hence, on our second visit to Yazd, we were able to digitise the manuscripts with the support of Mūbed Pedram Soroushpour.

In Yazd, we also visited the Vaziri Library and saw two manuscripts, ms. 300 and ms. 2007. The library did not grant us permission to digitise the manuscripts but, during my subsequent trip to Yazd in March of 2014, I was able to order and purchase photographs of these manuscripts with the support of Mūbedyār Kamran Loriyan.

Vahid Zolfaghari drew our attention to the Sedāghat House in the Priests Quarter in Yazd. On the top floor of the Sedāghat House, there was a room in which a valuable collection of Avestan manuscripts had previously been kept. This collection likely belonged to the family of Mūbed Azargošasb and included the old collection of Šahryār Rašid, the younger brother of Dastur Namdar. V 4010, which had been stolen and sold in the bazaar in Yazd and was later purchased by Zolfaghari for his private collection, had been part of this collection. Manuscript 83, a Yasna without a colophon, was also found in this house.

Also in Yazd, we were shown two additional manuscripts. The first was the Wištāsp Yašt 5102 from a private, unknown collection. The manuscript originated in Yazd but was offered to Alberto Cantera by a dealer from Mashhad. The manuscript was not purchased; however, it was digitised after the payment of a sum of money.

Another important and extensive collection that we digitised during this trip was the collection of Avestan manuscripts at the Zoroastrian Museum and Fire Temple in Kerman, which was shown to Alberto Cantera and Moḥammad Kangarani by Houman Fravahri in March of 2012 for the first time. The manuscripts were digitised by Cantera, Ferrer and myself with the support of Pedram Soroushpour and the director of the Zoroastrian Museum and Anjoman-e Zartoštīyān-e Kerman [Zoroastrian Assembly of Kerman]: These works were mss. 15, 82, 2040, 2104, 4130 and 6187, and five further Xorde Avesta without colophons. In Kerman, we also digitised the illuminated Visperad 2038 from the Dinyār Oshidari house. The manuscript was kindly brought to the Hotel Akhavan, our location in Kerman, in order for it to be digitised. We also visited the private collection of Manučīhr Rostami, the son of Dastur Rashid Rostami.

In June 2012, we visited Manučīhr Rostami at his residence in Kerman, where he graciously showed us his manuscripts and allowed us to borrow them for a few days to digitise. Following his passing, his collection went missing for some time. However, I recently received the welcome news that the collection has been donated to the Museum and Fire Temple of Kerman, where it is now housed. The collection consists of three manuscripts: two

Videvdāds, 4055 and 4114, and one Xorde Avesta. Together with his father's manuscripts, these form a comprehensive collection at the Museum and Fire Temple of Kerman.

During the trip in June of 2012, Afshin Sorhrabi, a member of the Zoroastrian community in Yazd, donated 4090 to Alberto Cantera who, in consultation with Katayun Mazdapour, then donated it to the Yegānegi Library in Tehran. The Yegānegi Library is the home of another manuscript, a Xorde Avesta written by Rostam Goštāsb in 1072 AY/1703 AD (Mazdapour 2010: 5).

Another manuscript, an Indian Videvdād, ms. 4520, in the Fire Temple (Adrīyān) was shown to us by Mūbed Firūzgarī; it was written in 1197 AY/1828 AD by Mūbed lū lā dā rū, the son of Mūbed Mūnočir, the son of Maṇik, who was the son of Nuraoz Lakbi Baṇḍārā.

We spent our last hours of this trip at the home of Mūbed Korush Niknam, where we enjoyed his and his kind family's generous hospitality. As mentioned, he had previously brought ms. 4040 to Frankfurt to be digitised. At his house in Tehran, he assisted us to digitise other manuscripts in his collection, including a Yasna, ms. 84, and a Xorde Avesta. The latter was relatively small in size (approximately 16 x 10 centimetres) and contained 144 folios. The manuscript did not contain colophons, and the Nerangs and prayers were in Persian.

In October 2012, while I was conducting fieldwork to document Zoroastrian Dari, the language of Zoroastrians in Kerman, I was informed about an illuminated Videvdād. This manuscript was penned by Mehrabān Nūšīrwān Bahrāmšā, the distinguished scribe behind the renowned manuscript 4060 (RSPA230), which is housed in the British Library. The current owner approached Alberto Cantera with a proposal to sell this significant artifact. Consequently, I was asked to journey to Yazd to evaluate the feasibility of acquiring the manuscript.

Under the cover of night, I left Kerman for Yazd, with the intention of meeting the manuscript's seller in a public setting the following morning. However, in a sudden turn of events, the seller changed the meeting spot to a location outside Yazd at the last moment. He was resolute in his condition that he would only display the manuscript if I agreed to this new meeting point. Despite my significant concerns about potential unpredictable circumstances and the anonymity of the sellers, I decided to proceed to the proposed location.

Upon arrival, I was introduced to manuscript 4045 by two young men in a semi-constructed building situated in a secluded area. One of them professed that the manuscript had been given to him by his uncle as a gift. The asking price was exorbitantly high. However, after a series of initial failures, setbacks, and three days of rigorous negotiations, I eventually secured the manuscript, courtesy of the financial support from the ADA.

The manuscript is now on a permanent loan at the Central Library of Tehran University. The captivating account of this discovery and acquisition of the manuscript was subsequently published in Gholami (2012). According to a note attached to the manuscript, bearing the name of Mūbed Rostam Kiyumars—a descendant of the Jahanbaxshi family—it appears that they were the original owners of the manuscript. Nevertheless, the details of how this manuscript found its way into the seller's possession remain obscure.

In March of 2014, Vahid Zolfaghari's entire collection was digitised. At that time, his collection comprised manuscripts 86, 2101, 2102, 4010 and 4065, along with a Xorde Avesta and Vāj-yašt-e Gahanbar.

During our trip, Alberto Cantera and I were invited to the home of an exorcist in Yazd, who claimed to possess a manuscript. Rather than showing it to us, he assumed the role of a doctor and insisted I take a peculiar potion for my headache. Reluctantly, I complied in hopes of leaving the house as quickly as possible. We stayed in Yazd for two days, waiting for him

to reveal the manuscript. Finally, just three hours before our flight from Yazd to Tehran, he allowed me a brief glance at the damaged Xorde Avesta in Avestan alphabet (Din Dabire), likely dating from the Qajar period, without a colophon. I managed to take only four photos of the manuscript during our car ride to the airport. Unfortunately, no other images from this manuscript are available.

Another intriguing episode during our trip involved a dealer who contacted us about a stolen manuscript that could be viewed at a house in Maryam Ābād, a village near Yazd. We were instructed to wait in our car to be contacted. Eventually, two men on motorcycles arrived and escorted us to an odd house in the village, where a man presented a Videvdād. He forbade us from taking photos and allowed only a brief examination of the manuscript. In my notebook, I recorded that this manuscript, ms. 4125, was written by Bahrām Nāmdār Bahrām Mehr in 1257 AY. Sadly, no pictures of this manuscript are accessible.

Manuscript 4155, penned by Bahrām Hormazdyār Jamšid Xodābaxš in 1272 AY/1903 AD, was owned by Rostam Kavusiyan Zadeh, a resident of Yazd. In March 2014, he granted us permission to digitise the manuscript.

During this trip, Maryam Ghanei informed us about a Videvdād, ms. 4085, authored by Tirān Rostam Jāmāsb in 1794, which belonged to the Behmardi family. However, we were unable to locate Mr Behmardi or digitise his manuscript; I only possess images of its colophon, produced by Maryam Ghanei in collaboration with Bahman Moradiyan.

We also had the opportunity to visit the National Library of Iran (Ketābxāne-ye Mellī in Persian). Linda Goodarzi kindly provided images of manuscripts 682, 683, 2030, 4115, 4080, 4150, 4160, Khorda Avesta (Sig. 5_19218), Khorda Avesta (Sig. 5_24454), miscellaneous codex (Sig. 5_17541), Yasna (Sig. 5_39196), and Yasna (Sig. 5_39195).

We visited the Central Library of Tehran University, which houses manuscripts 2005, 4000, 4045, 4161, and 4411. Rostam Xodabaxši donated Visperad 2005 (Sig. 9345M) to the library on February 21, 1976.

The renowned manuscript 4000, the oldest known Iranian manuscript written by Frēdōn Marzbān Frēdōn in 976 AY/1607 AD in Šarīf Ābād in Yazd, has been registered on UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme list under Nr. 1016. Dr Sohrab Xodabaxši, a descendant of a priestly family in Yazd, previously owned this manuscript before selling it to the Tehran University library.

As previously mentioned, I purchased manuscript 4045 in 2012 with the financial support of the ADA, and Alberto Cantera placed it on permanent loan at the Central Library of Tehran University.

Manuscript 4161 belonged to the priestly Jahanbaxši family. Katayoun Mazdapour informed me of a new Avestan manuscript during the winter of 2012 when the manuscript's owners wanted to sell it due to urgent financial issues. The ADA eventually purchased the manuscript, which is now on permanent loan at the Central Library of Tehran University. In Tehran, I visited the Library, Museum, and Document Center of the Iran Parliament (Ketābxāne, Mūze va Markaz-e Asnād-e Maḡles-e Šorā-ye Eslāmī in Persian), which houses valuable Zoroastrian manuscripts. I ordered and received images of manuscripts 20, 60, ML15292 (ADA number unknown to me), 4050, 4100, 4425, and 4510.

ML15292 was penned by Dastūr Xodābaxš Forūd before 1211 AY/1842 AD. Initially donated to the Iranian parliament's library, the donation was later revoked on October 7, 2002.

Another library that I visited during my stay in Iran was the Malek Library, in which only one manuscript, 4280, is preserved. This manuscript is an Indian Videvdād that was written

by Dārāb Rōstām Xoršēd in Navsārī in 1102 AY/1733 AD. In the nineteenth century, Samuel Guise, an English surgeon and collector, took this manuscript from India to London; the manuscript was sold in 1812, and was in the possession of various collectors until 1998 when Malek's National Library purchased it.

Katayoun Mazdapour introduced to us two Avestan manuscripts that had belonged to Jamshid Soroush Soroushian, a Zoroastrian author and scholar from Kerman. After his death, his relatives found ms. 2035 and a Xorde Avesta in his home library in Tehran. According to a note on the first page of ms. 2035, it was purchased by Arbāb Jamšīd Soruš Sorušīyān in Kerman in 1341 AY/1972 AD. The manuscript has no colophon. The Xorde Avesta was written by Mollā Behruz Eskandar in Kerman in 1226 AY/1857 AD, and the entire manuscript has been published by Mazdapour (2006).

Sāzmān-e Javānān-e Zartoštī-ye Tehran (The organization of young Zoroastrians of Tehran), which is also known as Sāzmān-e Fravahr, bought two Avestan manuscripts close to the time at which I was in Tehran: ms. 2060 (Sig. 29X18), a Visperad, and a Wištāsp Yašt Sāde, ms. 5107.

To this list we need to add two Indian Videvdāds in the Mar'aši Najafi Library in Qom, namely mss. 4456 and 4485.

Through the efforts of Fatemeh Jahanpour, three important Videvdāds were discovered in Mashhad: ms. 4030 (Sig. 26288) at Astan-e Qods Library and mss. 4063 and 5040 in the private Hosseini Collection. The origin of ms. 4030 is unclear; we only know that the manuscript was donated by the Bonyād-e Šahid [Martyr Foundation] to the Astan-e Qods Library, together with other manuscripts and documents. Jahanpour (2011, 2012) has published and described this manuscript.

Ms. 4063 is an Iranian Videvdād Sāde by the Marzbān family; it was written by Šahmardān Wāhrom Marzbān in 1025 AY/1656 AD, and was presented by Jahanpour (2014) in her article. Ms. 5040 is an Iranian Wištāsp Yašt Sāde that was written by Behzād Ormazdyār in 1159 AY/1790 AD.

In October of 2016, Vahid Zolfaghari purchased two new Videvdāds for his collection at the Old Market of Yazd. Both manuscripts were severely damaged; the first manuscript had been partly dismantled and considerably damaged by moisture and other harmful elements, with the result that many pages are now only partly legible. I gave this manuscript to the library of the Bahonar University of Kerman, Department of Manuscripts, to be restored. Although it does not contain a colophon, the Sālmargs dated 1015 AY/1646 AD and 1019 AY/1650 AD in the manuscript attest to its Safavidorigin.

The second Videvdād purchased by Zolfaghari was a Qajar manuscript also devoid of a colophon. It, too, was sent to the Department of Manuscripts at the library at the Bahonar University of Kerman to be restored. This manuscript has now been restored and digitised, and the original has been returned to Vahid Zolfaghari.

The period between 2010 and 2015 can be considered a golden age of manuscript discovery in Iran. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of Katayoun Mazdapour, a researcher of the Avestan language and Zoroastrian culture, and her students, many manuscripts were located in various Iranian libraries, documented, and photographed. Additionally, Iranian scholars and the ADA Team worked diligently to purchase manuscripts from the black market and ensure their safe placement in libraries.

Unfortunately, manuscript sourcing in Iran declined after 2015. The belief that valuable manuscripts could no longer be found led to a sharp decrease in the search for new ones, both in Iran and Europe.

Despite this decline, I continued to search for manuscripts for several reasons. Firstly, many Zoroastrian manuscripts originated from priestly houses, and it was common for members of the Zoroastrian community to mention the presence of manuscripts in particular priests' homes. Colophons in Avestan manuscripts reveal that priests were the main patrons of many manuscripts and those who used them in ceremonies. Consequently, it seemed logical to assume that priests would still be the primary owners of these manuscripts in contemporary Iran, and that there might still be undiscovered and unknown manuscripts in the homes of priests' families.

The second reason for continuing the search was the likelihood of manuscripts being held in Zoroastrian institutions. To safeguard and preserve their collections, some private owners may have chosen to donate them to Zoroastrian institutions such as libraries or, more commonly, Fire Temples. For example, Mūbed Rašid Rostami donated a collection of manuscripts to the Fire Temple in Kerman. As a result, I hypothesized that other Zoroastrian institutions might also house undiscovered manuscript collections.

At the invitation of Houman Fravahri, I first met Mūbed Mehrabān Pouladi, the current chairman of the Council of Iranian Zoroastrian priests (Anjoman-e Mūbedān-e Irān in Persian) in Tehran in 2015. He kindly invited me to his ancestral priestly home in the Priests' Quarter (Maḥalle-ye Dastūrān in Persian) in Yazd. In February 2016, we travelled together to Yazd and visited this extraordinary house, where he allowed me to examine six Avestan manuscripts from his grandfather's collection. By chance, we discovered two additional manuscripts, mss. 4062 and 4162, wrapped in a white cloth in a suitcase in the backyard cellar, and thousands of historical documents in two large old chests in a hidden room within the house. I introduced this collection for the first time during the third meeting of the European research network, *Corpus Avesticum*, entitled "Phonetics and Phonology in Avestan and Beyond", held in Paris from April 25th to 26th, 2016. An application was submitted to the Endangered Archives Programme to preserve this valuable collection and to secure its original material by finding a suitable local home, ensuring both its long-term preservation and wider access. This application (reference no. EAP1014) was granted, and the collection was digitised. Three years later, an article dedicated to the introduction of this collection and its colophons and marginal notes was published by Gholami and Pouladi (2019).

At the time of discovery, the collection consisted of eight manuscripts, including mss. 29, 32, 35, 88, 4062, 4121, and 4162, and a Vāḥ Yašt Gahanbār. The Vāḥ Yašt Gahanbār was written by Goštāsp Mūbed Šahryār Nāmdār Zardošt Nōšīrvān in 1293 AY/1924 AD; for a description of other manuscripts, please refer to the appendix. The Pouladi Collection has expanded in recent years due to the purchase of new manuscripts offered by antique dealers and private owners, and currently consists of twenty-three Zoroastrian manuscripts, one of which is Videvdād 4056. A dealer in the Old Bazar in Yazd contacted Mehraban Pouladi and offered this manuscript for sale. It was purchased in 2017 and is currently in the Pouladi Collection. The generous support of the Parsis in London, particularly Zartosht Amrolia, enabled us to purchase and digitise additional manuscripts, and also to complete the construction of the museum. This museum, established by Mehraban Pouladi, is operated for the preservation and protection of manuscripts and historical documents.

In November 2016, ten months after discovering the Pouladi Collection, I asked Mehraban Pouladi to make a new attempt to investigate the possibility of the existence of manuscripts in the Yazd Ataš Varahrām Fire Temple. The Fire Temple had been visited several times by different people investigating the possible existence of Avestan manuscripts; however, they had been told that no manuscripts were kept there.

This time, through the support of Mehraban Pouladi, a number of manuscripts, including a miscellaneous codex and mss. 8, 90, 251, and 252, were found in the cellar in the backyard of the Fire Temple, along with other books that had been transferred there during the library's renovation. I introduced this collection in Gholami (2020).

Mehraban Pouladi played a pivotal role in all Avestan manuscript discoveries after 2016. He located the Videvdād 4075 by Mūbed Mehregani, whose son had loaned the book to him for digitisation. The manuscript, authored by Behzād Dastūr Ormazdyār, dates back to 1126 AY during Karim Khan Zand's reign. Additionally, we successfully located and purchased new manuscripts, including a Xorde Avesta belonging to the Ganji family, a Persian Xorde Avesta acquired from a dealer, and two Yasnā manuscripts from the Shahriyari family. The Xorde Avesta by Mūbed Ganji lacks a colophon; however, it features a marginal note that reads, "*mal-e Mūbed Bahrām Bemāvand, Rūz-e Vahman Amšāsfind, mäh-e Mehr mäh-e qadīm, saneye 1257.*" This translates to, "Created by Mūbed Bahrām Bemāvand, on the day of Vahman Amšāsfind, in the old month of Mehr, year 1257." I sent images of this manuscript to Bahram Boroumand, who proposed that the scribe of this manuscript was Šahrām, the brother of Dastūr Tīrān (Gholami 2023).

At the same time, I received information about two Yasnā manuscripts that belonged to the Šahrīyār family. After contacting the owner of the copies, I was informed that both copies had been sold to the National Library in 2017. A manuscript (Sig. 5-39196) was copied in 1245 Hejri by Dastūr Dīnyār Nušīrwān Bahrāmšāh, the scribe of Y29 in the Pouladi Collection. The manuscript was copied in Šarīf Abād in Yazd, and belonged to Xašāyār Šahrīyārī, an inhabitant of Kerman. The second Yasnā that belonged to this family, with Sig. 5-39195, was copied by the same scribe; however, it is not dated.

In September 2019, a private collection of both Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian manuscripts was found in a Zoroastrian house in the east of Tehran. In addition to manuscripts of poetry from the Qajar period, the collection included a manuscript of *Dabestān-e Mazāheb* and a Xorde Avesta in Persian script with red interlinear translations in the Persian language. The Xorde Avesta was written by Behrūz, the famous son of Eskandar Monaĵem-e Kermānī (for more information, see Behrūz Eskandar, Monaĵem-e Kermānī).

In January 2019, during my visit to the library of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature (Farhangestān-e Zabān-o Adab-e Fārsi in Persian) in Tehran, I found three Zoroastrian manuscripts and an Indian Avestan text entitled *Gāhanbāre* (Sig. 62751). This manuscript does not contain a colophon; thus, the scribe and the date of the copy are unclear. The second text was also an Indian Farvardīn Yašt (Sig. 44037), while the third manuscript was a Pahlavi manuscript (Sig. 43936) containing a collection of nineteen Pahlavi texts, mainly Andarzs. These manuscripts will be introduced in my forthcoming article, 'Three Zoroastrian manuscripts in the Library of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature in Tehran'.