

On Avestan *aiβiθiiō* (V18.17 & 25)

Alberto Cantera

Universidad de Salamanca
Departamento de Filología Clásica e Indoeuropeo
acantera@usal.es



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Abstract

Av. *aiβiθiiō* is attested only in V18.17 and in its repetition in V18.25. In this paper I give an alternative explanation to the derivation from the root-noun *°sī-* (Ved. *°sī-*) “lying”. I propose a derivation from the root-noun *°dī-* (Ved. *°dhī-*) “thinking, perceiving” and I try to explain the presence of *θ* instead of *δ* through the contact with a laryngeal, as M. Kümmel has recently tried for other “irregular” Avestan forms.

Keywords: Avestan; Zoroastrianism; *Vīdēvdād*; laryngeals.

Resumen. Sobre el avéstico *aiβiθiiō* (V18.17 & 25)

El av. *aiβiθiiō* solo está atestiguado en V18.17 y en su repetición en V18.25. En este artículo doy una explicación alternativa a la derivación del nombre-raíz *°sī-* (véd. *°sī-*) «yacer». Propongo una derivación del nombre-raíz *°dī-* (véd. *°dhī-*) «pensar, percibir» y trato de explicar la presencia de *θ* en vez de *δ* mediante el contacto con una laríngeal, como M. Kümmel ha intentado recientemente para otras formas avésticas «irregulares».

Palabras clave: avéstico; zoroastrismo; *Vīdēvdād*; laríngeales.

The main subject of V18 is the priestly function, especially during the night and at dawn. The central figures are the god Sraōšā and his assistant or *alter ego*, the cock, which is charged with waking up the men to perform the religious duties that ensure the new rising of the sun. The counterpart of the cock is Būšiiastā “Procrastination”. The dispute between both is repeated twice: V18.15-17 & V18.23-25. The purpose of this repetition is not clear, but it seems that V18.18-25 is simply an extended version of V18.15-17. In V18.16 viz. 24, the cock exhorts the human beings to wake up, stand up, praise Order and reject the demons (*daēnuua*). Subsequently (V18.16 viz. 24), Būšiiastā invites them to continue sleeping. She addresses each individual man in the singular: “Sleep long, o man, it is not time for you” (V8.16 *xʷafsa darəγō mašiiāka nōiṭ tē sacaite*). The next paragraph (V18.17 & 25) is problematic. A central word that is repeated twice, *aiβiθiiō*, is attested only in this passage, and the sense of the whole paragraph depends on its interpretation. Furthermore, depending

on the meaning attached to this word, the sentence must be attributed to Būšiiąstā or to the cock. The text flow seems, however, to indicate clearly that these words are uttered by the former, so the interpretations that attribute these words to Būšiiąstā are clearly to be preferred.

The text reads as follows (V18.17 & 25):

*mā 9raiiąm vahiąstanąm aiβi9iiō buiiata humataheca manąñhō hūxtaheca vacąñhō
huuarąštaheca śiiąo9nahe 9raiiąm aciąstanąm aiβi9iiō buiiata duąmataheca manąñhō
dužūxtaheca vacąñhō dužuuarąštaheca śiiąo9nahe*

GELDNER (1885: 230) understood *aiβi9iiō* to be the n.pl. of a stem *aiβi9i-* that he believes represents *aiβi-sī*, with *°sī-* being the root-noun equivalent of Ved. *°sī* “who lies”, and translates it as “who sleeps over” (“verschlafend”). It would be a further example¹ of the rare treatment of IE **k* as Av. *θ*, instead of the expected Av. *s*. He attributes the speech to the cock, and translates it as “verschlafet nicht die drei besten dinge, gutdenken, gutreden, und guthandlen; verschlafet aber die drei schlimmsten dinge, schlechtdenken u. s. f.”².

DARMESTER (1892: 2.245) does not offer any explanation of the term, but translates it as “to engage in” (“se livrer”), and puts these words into the mouth of Būšiiąstā: “à trois choses excellentes ne vous livrez point: à bonne pensée, bonne parole, bonne action. À trois choses très mauvaises livrez-vous tout entiers: à mauvaise pensée, mauvaise parole, mauvaise action.”

BARTHOLOMAE (1904: 91) on the one hand accepts the etymological analysis made by Geldner³, but on the other the semantic interpretation made by Darmesteter. He attributes the speech to Būšiiąstā⁴ and translates “nicht befasst euch mit den drei besten Dingen, (vielmehr) befasst euch mit...”. Bartholomae’s interpretation presents, however, several weak points:

1. The root **say-* means “to lay” and not “to engage in”. Bartholomae resorts to the supposed semantic parallel of German *obliegen*, and he could also have mentioned the English “to be incumbent on” to explain this semantic shift. Nevertheless, it does not seem very convincing, since it is not attested anywhere else in Indo-Iranian.
2. Furthermore, the combination of the verb *say* with the preverb *abhi* is not attested in Avestan. It is rare in Vedic (ŚB1.2.5.4, 3.1.4.1) and it always has the meaning to “lay on” (BÖHTLINGK–ROTH 1855: 7.221), never meaning “to engage in” or similar.

1. For other supposed examples, s. below.

2. Similarly in GELDNER (1903: 424). This interpretation was also proposed by JACKSON (1892: 1.29).

3. He attributes it to Jackson, although Jackson’s grammar appeared some years after Geldner’s proposal.

4. He does so in footnote 1. In his review of Bartholomae’s dictionary, SCHEFTLEWITZ 1905 accuses Bartholomae of attributing these words to the cock, like Geldner, although this makes absolutely no sense. Bartholomae rightly reacts to Scheftlewitz’s criticism in his answer to the latter’s review (BARTHOLOMAE 1905: 779).

3. Formally, two difficulties appear:

- a. The expected treatment of IE **k* in Avestan is *s* and not *θ*. JACKSON (1892: 1.29) records other instances⁵: *θamnaŋ^hhant-*, which he compares with Ved. *śam-* “to heal” (but cf. CHEUNG 2007: 390 f.); av. *aiβiθūrō* “very mighty”, which he connects to Av. *sūra-* “strong”, but it is more likely to be compared with Ved. *āvithura-* “unbreakable” (K. Hoffmann *apud* MAYRHOFER 1956: 3.208) and Av. *anaθaxtaŋm* “whose time of delivery has not come”, which he compares with *frasaxtahe* “whose time has come, dead”⁶. In fact, the most likely example of *θ* for IE **k* in Avestan is the verb *vināθaiia-* “to sin”. It is most likely explained as a Persism. The influence of the Persian pronunciation of this word is due to its technical usage and the key importance of the concept also in Western tradition (cf. MPers. *wināh* “sin”; CANTERA in press). In the case of *aiβiθiiō*, there is no clear reason to assume a Persism.
- b. The n.pl. Av. *aiβiθiiō* may belong only to a stem **aiβi-sī-* with final *ī*. This stem is, in fact, attested in Vedic as *°śī*. Nevertheless, the IE root is *aniṭ* (RIX 1998: 284) and even in Indo-Aryan we find forms that go back to an *aniṭ* root, like *á-ni-śita*. The *seṭ* character of the root e.g. *°śīma-*, *°śīvan-*, *°śī* (NARTEN 1964: 255 & n. 794; MAYRHOFER 1986a: 2.614) seems to be an Indo-Aryan innovation. The only evidence for the *seṭ* character of the root in Iranian would be **aiβi-sī*, if we accepted the explanation of *aiβiθiiō* as the n.pl. of this stem.

Due to these difficulties, the search for alternative explanations of *aiβiθiiō* seems justified. Thus, KELLENS (1974b: 50 n.1) records an alternative oral proposition by Hoffmann. Accordingly, *aiβiθiiō* would be the n.sg. of a derivation from the preverb *aiβi* with the suffix *°θiia-*, with the meaning “willing to, ready to, prepared for” (“dispose à”), comparable with Ved. *nītya-* “inner, secret”. This proposal was, in fact, already advanced by HÜBSCHMANN (1875: 308): *aibi-tya-* “inclined, directed” (“geneigt, gerichtet”). Bartholomae rejected Hübschmann’s analysis because it does not fit the syntax. In fact, *aiβiθiiō* is a predicative, and the verb is in the second person plural (*buiiata*). Therefore, it must be analysed as a n.pl., and such an analysis is impossible for the stem *aiβiθiia-*.

It is therefore preferable to look for another root-noun ending in *-ī*. Unfortunately, neither Avestan nor Vedic has a root name ending in *°θī* viz. *°thī*. A verbal root *liṛ*. **ṭ^haiH* is also unknown. A likely alternative is a root-noun in *°δī-* (< **ḍ^hiH-*), since, as we shall see, the alternance between *θ* and *δ* is much better attested (and justified) than between *θ* and *s*. This is another possible analysis that I consider at least worth mentioning. Av. *aiβiθiiō* could be the n.pl. of a stem *aiβi-δī-* with the occasional change between *δ* and *θ*. This root-noun is well attested in Vedic *dhī-* “vision, perception, thought”, cf. e.g. *ā-dhī-* “desire, aspiration, sorrow”.

5. WIKANDER (1941: 197) even tries to identify a dialect for the tribe Friiāna, in which the treatment with *θ* was regular, but cf. DUCHESNE-GUILLEMIN (1962: 37, quoted by KELLENS 1974: 51 n. 2).
6. I have not been able to find the attestation.

We find the same root-noun in Avestan, in the compound *bərəzaidī-* “with a lofty vision” (KELLENS 1974: 92 ff.). The combination of the verb *dhayⁱ* with the preverb *abhi* is well attested in Vedic, with the meaning “to ponder, to reflect on”⁷:

RV3.38.1

abhi táṣṭeva dīdhayā manīṣām
“like a craftsman I ponder my inspiration”

RV 4.33.9a-b

āpo hy eṣām ājuṣanta devā abhi krátvā mánasā dīdhyanāh
“because the gods were pleased at their work, reflecting on it according to their purpose and with their thought”

RV10.32.4a-b

tád it sadhástham abhi cáru dīdhaya gávo yac chásan vahatūṃ ná dhenávaḥ
“just this dear seat do I ponder, to which the milk-cows will direct (their journey) like a bridal procession”

This or a similar meaning would fit well in the context of V18.17 & 25. Bušīąstā is speaking:

“You should not ponder⁸ the three best things: good thought, good word and good action. You should ponder (rather) the three worst things: bad thought, bad word and bad action”.

The need remains, however, to explain why we find *aiβiθiiō* and not **aiβiđiiō*. In Avestan (and other Iranian languages), we find a sporadic devoicing of voiced fricatives *β, δ, ɾ* that appear as *f, θ, x* (HOFFMANN–FORSSMAN 1996: 97 f.; TREMBLAY 2005: 675 ff.). The clearest examples are the numerous forms of the verb *dadā-* “to give, to put” with *θ* (s. the catalogue of forms with *δ* and *θ* in KELLENS 1984: 186 ff. & 189 f.), like *daiθē* (Y11.17), subj. *daθāni, daθō, daθaṭ*, opt. *daiθīta, daiθiiā, daiθiiāṛəš*, part. *daθat-, daθuš-* and the thematised forms (*daθa-*); cf. also Av. *uruθaṭ, uruθən* but Ved. *rudánti* and Av. *vaēθa, vīθuš* from *vaēδ-, vīδ-*. We also find examples of *f* for *β*, like Av. *ufīia-*, MP *wf-*, Sogd. *wʃ-* from **uab^h* “to weave”; Av. *vaṫuš* “sentence” for Ved. *vápuṣ-*; Av. *jaṫra-* “deep” next to *jaiβi^o*, cf. Ved. *gabhīrā-*; *nāṫa-* “navel, family”, MP *nāṫag*, etc., but Av. *nabānazdišta-* “relative”, cf. Ved. *nābhi-*, *nābhānediṣṭa-*⁹.

At the symposium in memory of M. Mayrhofer (Vienna, 10 May 2012), M. Kümmel (2012a) proposed that this devoicing appears in contact with a subsequent laryngeal before vowel in Iranian¹⁰. Most forms of the verb *dadā-* are thus

7. The translations are from JAMISON–BRERETON (2014).

8. Literally: “be ponderer of”

9. About this complex s. KÜMMELE (2012b).

10. However, it does not affect Old Avestan.

regular: *daiθē* < **d^héd^hh₁h₂ai*, the subjunctive forms like *daθō* < **d^hed^hh₁es*, the participles like *daθat-* < **d^hed^hh₁nt-*, *daθuš-* < **d^hed^hh₁-us-* and the thematised forms *daθa-* < **d^hed^hh₁-e*. The Avestan forms of *rud* “to cry” could derive from the *seṭ* variant of the root, cf. Ved. *roḍiṣi*, *arodūt* (MAYRHOFER 1986a: 2.465). Av. *vaēθa* would be regular as 1st p.sg. from **uo₁idh₂a* and *vīθuš* were then analogical. Avestan *nāfa-/nabā^o* and Vedic *nābhi-* has been explained by M. Kümmel at the symposium in memory of J. Schindler (Vienna, 13 September 2012) as going back to a laryngeal stem **h₃nob^hh₂-/h₃nob^heh₂* (Germ. **nabō*, Lett. *naba*) ~ *h₃neb^hah₂* (Av. *nabā^o*, Arm. *aniw* “wheel” < **h₃nēb^hh₂o*). For the root **ueb^h*, the possibility of a *seṭ* root has been proposed (Pirart apud KELLENSE–PIRART 1988: 83 et n.1; RASMUSSEN 1989: 279, 312; OLSEN 1993: 370). This is how M. Kümmel explains the adjective YAv. *mas-* and Old Persian *maθ-* “big” (and its derivations YAv. *masiiah-* and Old Persian *maθišta-* and YAv. *masah-*) next to Old Avestan *maz-*, *maziiah*, *mazišta-* and *mazah-* (the latter also attested in YAv). Instead of the traditional derivation of the forms with *s* from the IE root **mah₂k-* (e.g. Greek μακρός, Latin *macer* etc.), M. Kümmel explains *s* as a devoicing from *z* in contact with the laryngeal of the adjective IE **még(e)h₂-* “big” (Greek μέγα, Ved. *māhi-/mahā-*, etc.). Avestan and Old Persian *mas-* were original only in this adjective, and forms like *masiiah-* or *masah-* were just secondary. The variant *mas^o* of the adjective would be original in the weak cases such as g.sg. *masō* < **még^heh₂es*, instr.sg. *masa* < **még^heh₂h₁*. Other stems should be free from devoicing like YAv. *mazah-* (< **mégēs-*, but cf. also YAv. *masah*, secondary) and YAv. *mazānt-* (Ved. *mahānt-*, IE **me^geh₂-ent-*).

The same evolution appears in an initial position before a diphthong containing a laryngeal. The clearest example is the Iranian verb “to burn”, that is, *θau-*: Sogd. *θw-*, Khot. *thū-*, chwar. *θw-*, etc. (CHEUNG 2007: 67 f.) and perhaps the Old Persian form *aθavā* (A²Sa), supposedly the imperfect 3rd p.sg. of *θav-*¹¹. It corresponds to the Vedic verb *dav-*. The IE root is **deh₂u-* (Kümmel apud MAYRHOFER 1986a: 1.707 f.; RIX 1998: 104): Greek δέδηε < **dé-dah₂-e*, δῆϊος “burning” < **dah₂-jo-s*. However, it is not easy to imagine a context in which the laryngeal was in contact with the initial *d^o* and was frequent enough for a generalization of the *θ^o*. A similar problem appears in the case of Iranian **θaiuar-* “brother-in-law” (Kurdish *t^hi*, Yaghnobi *séwir*, Pašto *lewar*, etc.) < IE **dah₂iū(e)r* (Ved. *devár-*, Greek δαίρ).

Thus, it would be possible to explain *aiβiθiiō* as a compound with the root-noun *°δī* as second element, in which *δ* is devoiced to *θ* in contact with the laryngeal. The IE root is often reconstructed as **d^heiH*, but cognates from the Indo-Iranian branch are not certain. In fact, most attested formations in Indo-Iranian can be derived from such a root:

- Zero grade forms of the root usually attest *°ī* < **°iH* like *dhīra-* “wise” < **d^hiHró-*, *dhīti-* “thought” < **d^hiHti-*, Av. *paiti-dīta-* “seen”, OPers. *dīdiy* “let see”.
- Full grade forms seem to go back to *d^he/o₁h^o*: Av. *daēman-* < **d^heiHmon-* “eye” and *dōiθra-* “eye” < **d^heiH-tlo-*.

11. The interpretation of the Old Persian form is challenged by WERBA (2006: 265 ff.).

— The forms of Perfect Ved. *dīdhaya*, *dīdhima*, Av. *ādiḍaiia*, *paiti.diḍiāṭ*, *vid-iḍuuā* are best explained as **d^hi-dhojH-e*, *di-d^hiH-jeH₁-t*, *d^hid^hiH-uōs*, although *dīdhima* is then problematic.

Other reconstructions are possible nonetheless. The full grade forms could also be derived from *<*d^heHimon- *d^heH₁tlo-* and the zero grade forms could stem from the laryngeal metathesis CHUC > CUHC (WINTER 1965: 192; SCHINDLER 1969: 145 f.; MAYRHOFER 1986b: 175 n. 324 with bibliography; CONNOLLY 1989; BARBER 2013: 240). In such roots, the zero grade of the root showed metathesis like **ph₃itó- > *pih₃tó-* “drunk”, Ved. *pītá-*, cf. causative *pāyāya- < *poh₃éje-*, *pā-ti* “drinks” < **peh₃-ti*. The forms of the perfect could be explained as derived from a secondary root *d^haḥH*, or simply through other alternative explanations (LUBOTSKY 2011). In fact, although the root is often reconstructed as *d^heiH* (MAYRHOFER 1986a: 1.777; RIX 1998: 123), SCHINDLER (1972: 27) records some traces that point to a postulate *d^heHi¹²*:

1. As shown by EDGERTON (1943: 94 n.31), the weak cases of *dhī-* in Vedic are disyllables mostly after a heavy or initial syllable, but they rarely occur after a light syllable (only eight times). In three cases at least, the monosyllabic pronunciation is certain, e.g. the *gāyatrī* 9.15.1 *eṣa dh(i)yā yātiy ānvīyā*. The original form should therefore be reconstructed as **d^hHi-éh₁*, rather than **d^hi-Héh₁*.
 2. Yt10.13 *ādiḍāiti* is a reduplicated athematic present < **^od^hi-d^heHti¹³* with the typical variation of the stem in this kind of root (cf. Ved. *dhāyati* “suck” < **d^héj_heti*, but *dhātave* < **d^heh₁-teuoi*)
 3. Schindler explains the trisyllabic *daēnā-* “vision” as **daHinaH-*. The expected result is, indeed, *da'inā*, which is the form attested in Old Avestan (although transmitted as *daēnā-*), cf. n.sg. Ved. *rayiḥ* < **reh₁is*, acc.sg. *rayim*, Av. *raēm* < **reh₁im* (secondary for ***rām* < **rēm*, cf. Lat. *rēm*) or Greek ποιμήν “shepherd” < **peh₃i-mēn*). In fact, his explanation is to be preferred to the alternative one by NARTEN (1986: 263) as **d^haḥHana-* (from a root **d^haḥH-*). The group *-aiia-* is, indeed, preserved before a nasal in Avestan, but in a final position, as rightly argued by PIRART (2012: 132)¹⁴. The examples are numerous¹⁵: *°šaiiana-* “living in”, cf. Ved. *kṣayanā-*; *vaēḍaiianā-* “lookout” (Yt10.45 *vaēḍaiianāhu*), *nāuuaiianəm* (g.pl. of *nāuuaiia-*). Av. *°aiiana^o* is also preserved when going
12. That is, it would belong to the roots that are traditionally classified as roots in *ā(i)* (MAYRHOFER 1986b: 174 f.). LUBOTSKY (2011) accepts a similar reconstruction, although different in its details because of the different explanation he offers for the roots of this type. He furthermore posits a derivation from the root **d^heh₁* “to put”.
 13. The explanation by INSLER (1971: 583 f.) as a spelling for *ādiḍāiti* is completely *ad hoc*.
 14. However, I disagree with Pirart over his interpretation of the trisyllabism of *daēnā-* as secondary, and his resurrection of the old connection with Ved. *dhenā-*.
 15. I do not include the examples of *°aiianV^o* < *°aiiānV^o* like g.pl. *zaiianəm* “of the armed (men)” (< **jajaHan-ām*).

back to **aiṃna^o*: *zaiiana-* “winterly” (< **jhaiṃna-*) and¹⁶ instr.sg. *sraiiānaca*, cf. Ved. *sremán-*¹⁷. A possible exception is the instr.sg. *zaēna* “in winter” (V16.12 *yaṭ vā hama... yaṭ vā aēte zaēna...* “if in summer..., if in winter...”) < **^jaiānaH* < **^jaiṃnaH*, but alternative explanations are also possible. It could present a simplification of the group *mn*, as in *ašnō* g.sg. from *asman-* (< **^hačmnás*). Furthermore, the n.sg. *zaiia* (FrW 8.2) is simply the n.sg. of a secondary *n*-stem. The same could apply for the instr.sg. *zaēna* (*zai₂-n-ā*).

In the root-noun *d^heHi-*, once the old expected apophony **d^héHi-/ d^hHi-* has been levelled in favour of the zero grade, we expect an alternation of the position of the laryngeal depending on whether an ending starting with a vowel or consonant follows: n.sg. **d^hiH-s* (Ved. *dhīh*, Av. *°dīš*), instr.sg. **d^hiH-b^his* (Ved. *dhībīh*), but g.sg. **d^hHī-ás*, instr.sg. *d^hHīáH*. This is the best explanation for the occasional monosyllabic forms of the weak cases, as proposed by Schindler (see above). The expected form of the n.pl. would then be **d^hHī-es*. The regular outcome of this form in Avestan is the attested form *°θiiō* in V18.17 & 25 *aiβiθiiō*¹⁸ with the expected (according to M. Kümmel) devoicing of *δ* in contact with a laryngeal.

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16. Although in Vedic with simplification of the group, viz. g.sg. *mahnáh*.

17. Similar to Y37.2 *mazēnācā* < **maj(H)ṃnā^o*, cf. Ved. *mahimán-*.

18. The Vedic n.pl. *dhīyah* with the stress on the *i* must be, as in the case of the acc.sg., a substitution for the original form with the full grade ***dhāyah* (< **d^héHi-es*, cf. Ved. *rāyah*) viz. ***dhāyim* (< **d^héHī-m*, cf. Ved. *rāyim*).

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