



The *Dasātīr* and the “Āzar Kaivān school” in Historical Context: Origin and Later Development

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ABSTRACT The present paper aims to offer a new understanding of the so-called “Zoroastrian Illuminative philosophers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,” namely the Āzar Kaivān school. In the twentieth century, this school was understood to be a Zoroastrian phenomenon originating from Āzar Kaivān (1533–1618), who is believed to have been born at Estakhr (Iran) and later to have immigrated to Patna (India). One way to sketch their texts is to notice their contents as the Zoroastrian Illuminative school, as H. Corbin did. But it may be more likely that the first principle for this school is a matter of ancient Persian culture, especially the Āsmānī language. Until recently, we knew little for certain about the origin of this Āsmānī vocabulary, except the inference that it might be the product of Āzar Kaivān himself. But Sadeghi (2020) shows that the earliest mention of what would become the Āsmānī vocabulary can be confirmed in the Persian dictionary *Farhang-e Mo’aiyid al-Fożalā’*, compiled in India in 1519. The origin of the essential points of the Āzar Kaivān school is not Āzar Kaivān himself, but there were probably some pioneers in the Delhi Sultanate in India before him. Adding to this, a closer look at their writings shows that this school is not a monolith, but a complex of various preceding elements. The Illuminative Philosophy is just one of them. As such, it becomes possible to arrive at the conclusion that the Āzar Kaivān school is not Āzar Kaivān’s school. He simply put together the various elements that preceded him.

KEYWORDS Āzar Kaivān, *Dasātīr*, *Farhang-e Mo’aiyid al-Fożalā’*, Ḥorūfism, Zoroastrianism

Introduction

Recent Studies

In this brief article, I seek first to provide a basic outline of the developmental stages of the so-called “school” of Āzar Kaivān (1533–1618), and second to contextualize its history in relation to the religious and political situations in medieval Iran and India. Most discourse on the Āzar Kaivān school has examined it in relation to modern Zoroastrianism and Ešrāqī philosophy. [1]

Although we are greatly indebted to J. J. Modi (1930) and Henry Corbin (1989)¹ for their prior interpretations, it is time to take the next step and develop a new perspective on the Āzar Kaivān school in the light of an updated understanding of its contexts. This reinterpretation is necessary because our knowledge of the background factors involved in the emergence of the Āzar Kaivān school has changed considerably since the twentieth century.

Corbin's overwhelming influence as the scholar who introduced the Āzar Kaivān school to the field of Islamic studies may be one reason why, until recently, this school was analyzed only as a Zoroastrian offshoot of the Ešrāqī philosophy, which was founded by Šehāb al-Dīn Sohravardī (d. 1191).² Thus, to most students of early modern Islamic thought, the Āzar Kaivān school is noteworthy only as a tangential aspect of later Ešrāqī philosophy. [2]

In their recent analyses of the Āzar Kaivān school, Babayan (2002) and Sheffield (2014) [3] mentioned the Noqtavī order (founded by Mahmūd Pašihānī, d. 1427) as a main factor contributing to the development of the Āzar Kaivān school, noting that the Noqtavī messianic movement remained influential in Iranian society at least until 1592/3 (the millennium of the *hejra*). As both scholars observed, the two schools have several elements in common, yet the Noqtavī order preceded the Āzar Kaivān school by more than a century. Therefore, the possibility that the Noqtavī order exerted an important influence on the formation of the Āzar Kaivān school cannot be ruled out, although, after its initial success, the Noqtavī order's Iranian nativist tendencies brought trouble in later Aq Qoyunlu and early Safavid Iran. To summarize the above, current scholarship generally regards Zoroastrianism, the Noqtavī order, and the Ešrāqī philosophy as the three main factors influencing the formation of the Āzar Kaivān school.

Sources

As primary sources for the Āzar Kaivān school, we are fortunate to have eight extant New Persian books, written by the members of the so-called Āzar Kaivān school (see table 1), as well as the names of another 44 New Persian books that are as yet undiscovered (see tables 2 and 3) (Goštāsb [1397] 2018). [4]

Table 1 The Eight Extant Books of the Āzar Kaivān School.

Title	Author	Publication
<i>Dasātīr</i>	Pseudonymously attributed to the seventh-century prophet Sāsān the Fifth. The presumed author is Āzar Kaivān (d. 1618).	Mollā Firūz (1818), Bombay
<i>Ġām-e Kai Ḥosro</i>	Poems by Āzar Kaivān with a commentary by Mūbed Ḥodāġūy (d. 1630).	Mīr Ašraf ‘Alī (1848), Bombay
<i>Šārestān-e Čahār Čaman</i>	Farzāna Bahrām ebn Farhād Esfandeyār Pārsī (d. 1624).	Bahrām Bīžan et al. (1862), Bombay

1 For other overviews of the Āzar Kaivān school, see Mo'in ([1335] 1957); Moğtabā'i (1989); Pürdāvūd (1947); Rezania (2014).

2 For example, Tavakoli-Targhi (2001) designates them as "neo-Mazdaean renaissance."

Title	Author	Publication
<i>Hish-tāb</i>	Pseudonymously attributed to Ḥakīm Pištāb, a disciple of Sāsān the Fifth. The real author is Mūbed Hūš (d.?).	Mirzā Bahrām Rostam Naṣrābādī (1878), Bombay
<i>Zardošt Afšār</i>	Pseudonymously attributed to Ḥakīm Ḥoṣḡūy, a disciple of Sāsān the Fifth. The real author is Mūbed Sorūš ebn Kaivān (d. after 1627).	Same as above
<i>Zāyanda Rūd</i>	Pseudonymously attributed to Ḥakīm Zende Āzarm, a disciple of Sāsān the Fifth. The real author is Mūbed Ḥūšī (d.?).	Same as above
<i>Zūra-ye Bāstānī</i>	Pseudonymously attributed to Āzar Pažūh Esfahānī. The real author is unknown.	Same as above
<i>Dabestān-e mazāheb</i> ³	Zo l-faqār al-Ḥusaynī al-Ardistānī, with the pen name Mūbed (d. 1670)	Rezāzāda Malek (1983), Tehran

Table 2 The 24 (presumed lost) titles in Šārestān-e Čahār Čaman.

No	Preserved	Title	Author
1-1	×	<i>Ā'ina-ye Eskandar</i>	Āzar Kaivān
1-2	×	<i>Taḥt-e ṭāqdīs</i>	Āzar Kaivān
1-3	×	<i>Partov-e farhang</i>	Āzar Kaivān
1-4	×	<i>Nahād-e Mūbedī</i>	–
1-5	×	<i>Farhād-kard</i>	–
1-6	×	<i>Awrand-nāma-ye Pišdādī</i>	–
1-7	×	<i>Tahmūras-nāma</i>	–
1-8	×	<i>Nāma-ye ā'in-e dād</i>	–
1-9	×	<i>Ĝāvedān herad</i>	–
1-10	×	<i>Nasab-nāma-ye šāhān</i>	–
1-11	?	<i>Nāma-ye Šīdestān</i>	Āzar Pažūh
1-12	×	<i>Šokūh-fazā</i>	–
1-13	×	<i>Farhād-nāma/Nāma-ye Farhād</i>	–
1-14	×	<i>Ā'ina-ye ā'in</i>	Ĝāmāsp-e Ḥakīm
1-15	×	<i>Farāzdegān</i>	Āzād Sarv
1-16	×	<i>Naṣā'ih al-mulūk</i>	Āzar Mehr
1-17	×	<i>Dārāb-nāma</i>	–

3 A new manuscript of *Dabestān-e mazāheb* with the date of 1650 has been discovered, and its facsimile edition was published in 2015. See *Dabestān-e mazāheb* (*Dabestān-e mazāheb: Čāp-e 'aksī-ye noṣḥa-ye ḥaṭṭī-ye sāl-e 1060/1650*. [1393] 2015).

No	Preserved	Title	Author
1-18	×	<i>Dāneš-afzā-ye Nūširavān</i>	Būzarj-mehr
1-19	×	<i>Ḥarrād-nāma</i>	–
1-20	×	<i>Dāneš-furūz</i>	–
1-21	?	<i>Golestān-e dāneš</i>	Āzar Pažūh ebn Āzar Ā'in
1-22	×	<i>Golestān-e bīneš</i>	Ḥarrād ebn Ā'in-e Gošasp
1-23	×	<i>Rahbarestān</i>	Ḥarrād Borzīn
1-24	×	<i>Ġāmāspī</i>	–

Table 3 The 20 (presumed lost) titles in Dabestān-e mazāheb.

No	Preserved	Title	Author
2-1	o	<i>Dasātīr</i>	–
2-2	×	<i>Dārā-ye Eskandar</i>	Dāvar Hūryār
2-3	?	<i>Ġašn-e Sada</i>	Mūbed Hūšyār
2-4	?	<i>Sorūd-e mastān</i>	Mūbed Hūšyār
2-5	o	<i>Ġām-e Kai Ḥosro</i>	Mūbed Ḥodāġuy
2-6	o	<i>Šārestān-e Čahār Čaman</i>	Farzāna Bahrām
2-7	o	<i>Zardošt Afshār</i>	Mūbed Sorūš
2-8	×	<i>Nūšdār</i>	–
2-9	×	<i>Serkangabīn</i>	Mūbed Sorūš
2-10	?	<i>Bazmgāh</i>	Farzāna Ḥūšī
2-11	×	<i>Aržang-e Mānī</i>	Farzāna Bahrām-e Kūček
2-12	×	<i>Tadbīre-ye Mūbedī</i>	Mūbed Parastār
2-13	×	<i>Ramzestān</i>	–
2-14	×	<i>Bāstān-nāma</i>	–
2-15	×	<i>Rāz-ābād</i>	Šams ad-Dīn Šīdāb
2-16	×	<i>Peymān-e farhang</i>	–
2-17	×	<i>Andarz-e Ġāmšīd be Ātabīn</i>	Dastūr Ġāmāspī
2-18	×	<i>Samrād-nāma-ye Kām-kār</i>	Samrādeyān
2-19	×	<i>Āmīgestān va Aḥtarestān</i>	Sepāseyān
2-20	×	<i>Persian Translations of Arabic Books of Sohravardī</i>	Bahrām ebn Faršād (= Farzāna Bahrām-e Kūček)

The Purpose

Before embarking on an analysis of the Āzar Kaivān school, it is necessary to address some problems that are inherent to this article. Debate regarding the historical context of the Āzar Kaivān school has lasted for nearly two centuries, since the first publication of the *Dasātīr* in 1818. Even the term “Āzar Kaivān school” is defined in a variety of inconsistent ways. Given that, among the eight extant books listed in table 1 above, the *Dasātīr* has typically been regarded as the “sacred book” reflecting Āzar Kaivān’s inspiration, one might expect that the beliefs and philosophy of the “Āzar Kaivān school” would be neatly summarized in the *Dasātīr*. [5]

The truth of this statement, however, is far from certain, and it can be dangerous to rely on this presumption. Calling the *Dasātīr* a sacred book implies that it was used as the *Qur'an* is used today; in practice, however, I have found no direct quotations from the *Dasātīr* in any of the other seven books, neither in its “language of Heaven (Āsmānī)” nor its New Persian translation and commentary. Thus, it seems inappropriate to apply the term “sacred book” to the *Dasātīr* without careful discussion (a sacred book may have a debatable meaning but is typically interpreted as being comparable to the *Qur'an* in its function in the religious community). In fact, although we cannot rule out the possibility that the *Dasātīr* represents some aspect of the Āzar Kaivān school, and although it appears to be the most important source of mystical thought for Āzar Kaivān’s disciples, it does not serve as the fundamental “sacred book” or the unquestioned authority of the school. [6]

What is needed is not a more concentrated analysis of the contents of the *Dasātīr*, but rather studies devoted to the sources that influenced the *Dasātīr* as well as examinations of the other seven texts, which have not been subjected to a critical survey to date. Furthermore, it remains to be shown precisely what the “Āzar Kaivān school” is, where the *Dasātīr* comes from, which authors (or texts) represent which strains of thought within the school, how the other seven texts originated from the *Dasātīr*, and indeed in what sense they are “Āzar Kaivānic.” In short, one should keep in mind that, as the concept of the “Āzar Kaivān school” is dynamically variable, it will only be possible to contextualize this concept by comparing each text with Āzar Kaivān’s predecessors, contemporaries, and successors. The present article undertakes comparing the *Dasātīr* with texts from the following categories: [7]

- As examples of Āzar Kaivān’s predecessors: *Farhang-e Mo’aiyid al-Fozalā’* (Persianate Indian lexicography), *Maḥram-nāma* (Ḥorūfism), and *Zarātušt-nāma* etc. (Zoroastrianism). [8]
- As an example of Āzar Kaivān’s contemporaries: *Ġām-e Kai Ḥosro*. [9]
- As examples of Āzar Kaivān’s successors: *Ḥ’iš-tāb* and *Zūra-ye Bāstānī*. [10]

The problem then is to establish the means and continuity of the tradition of the Āzar Kaivān school. Nothing can be transmitted through time unless something is available in earlier texts, yet everything that is transmitted is unavoidably changed through the transmission process. It is fundamental, therefore, to trace *Dasātīr*’s history and its reception both retrospectively and prospectively, insofar as we can discern them. [11]

The *Dasātīr*

The Āzar Kaivān school’s eight extant texts are similar in outlook, all displaying a pseudo-ancient Iranian style that intentionally imitates Zoroastrian sacred books, yet none of them quotes a single word of Avestan (Sheffield 2014). Take, for example, the case of the *Dasātīr*. The fact that its main text is written in the enigmatic (or celestial) invented language known as Āsmānī (= Avestan, in the case of Zoroastrianism), with a more understandable ‘translation’ and commentary written in New Persian (= *Zand*, written in Pahlavi, in the case of Zoroastrianism), shows that the author(s) of *Dasātīr* had profound knowledge of the structure of the Zoroastrian sacred book and adopted its style in his own writings. Adding to this, Rezaia (in this issue) points out that the text contains some Pahlavi words such as *zorvān* and the rendering *damān* (a misreading of Pahlavi *zamān*) in place of the NP *zamān*. The author(s) of the *Dasātīr* seems to know Middle Persian to some extent. Therefore, regardless of whether [12]

the school can be considered Zoroastrian or not, the literary similarity between the *Dasātīr* and Zoroastrian sacred books demonstrates the author's intimate familiarity with Zoroastrian literature. Needless to say, this fact does not mean that Āzar Kaivān was inevitably a Zoroastrian.

Although the *Dasātīr*, like Zoroastrianism, reflects an alignment toward ancient Iranian culture (avoiding any use of Arabic words and implying anti-Islamic emotion), it also, surprisingly, devotes considerable attention to the ideas of transmigration of the soul (Goštāsb, forthcoming) and worship of the planets,⁴ both of which are relatively uncharacteristic of Zoroastrianism. Moreover, a perusal of the *Dasātīr* reveals that the concept of a cyclical sense of time and the idea that the planets, primarily the moon, control the world are key aspects of *Dasātīr*'s original religious ideas, and are more characteristic of *Dasātīr*'s philosophy than the book's superficial resemblance to Zoroastrian writings and its nominal use of Ešrāqī terminology⁵ (Goštāsb [1395] 2016). For our present purposes, however, we do not need to go any further in analyzing the contents of *Dasātīr*; this brief outline of its character is sufficient.

[13]

Comparison of *Dasātīr* with Āzar Kaivān's predecessors

Farhang-e Mo'aiyad al-Fozalā'

In 2020, new discoveries in Iranian scholarship enabled us to place the unique vocabulary of *Dasātīr* (i.e., the Āsmānī invented language), the myth of Prophet Meh Ābād, and the name of the Ābādīān dynasty in their proper position in Iranian studies: They are now understood not to be original products of Āzar Kaivān but the product of its historical predecessors, dating from before 1519 or even earlier (prior to the birth of Āzar Kaivān in 1533). Thus, a new framework for the Āzar Kaivān school has emerged. 'Alī Ašraf Šādeqī (Šādeghī 2020) has effectively dispelled the theory that Āzar Kaivān was the original pioneer for the new vocabulary and new Iranian Prophets by proving that both concepts were already mentioned in the Persian-Persian dictionary *Farhang-e Mo'aiyid al-Fozalā'*, compiled by Maulānā Moḥammad Lād Dehlavī in India in 1519. As an example, Šādeqī has neatly quoted the definitive sentence below (Šādeghī 2020, 97):

[14]

[15]

آبادیان امتان مه‌آباد را کویند و او اولین پیغمبری است که به عجم معبوث شده

The Ābādīān are the followers of Great Ābād, he is the first prophet sent for the Persians.

[16]

Further research in *Farhang-e Mo'aiyid al-Fozalā'* may enable scholars to shed more light on the source of *Dasātīr* and its background, but we know little for certain about this dictionary or about its compiler except that he came from Delhi. One can see from this fact, however, that at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the type of vocabulary and the pseudo-Persian Prophets seen in the *Dasātīr* were already popular in Lodi-dynasty India (1451–1526) to the

[17]

4 One can compare this religious thought with the ideas in *Kāmarūpañcāsikā*, quoted in Šams al-Dīn Moḥammad ebn Maḥmūd Āmolī's (d. 1353) *Nafā'is al-funūn wa-'arā'is al-'uyūn*.

5 In the later Ešrāqī philosophers, including al-Shahrazūrī, the idea of tanāsokh and the cycles of time are emphasized. This point could not be considered in this paper.

extent that these words and concepts were recorded in an authentic Persian-Persian dictionary without any doubt as to whether they were genuine⁶.

This discovery raises the additional question of whether Āzar Kaivān emigrated from Iran to India or whether he was a native Indian who pretended to have been born in Estāhr as a means of establishing his authority regarding ancient Iranian teachings. As an extreme possibility, one could even propose that the *Dasātīr* was written not by Āzar Kaivān himself but rather by another writer in pre-Safavid Iran or pre-Mughal India. We cannot know whether these possibilities and assumptions are correct or not, but, as we will see in the next section, we cannot proceed with our study of Āzar Kaivān without full awareness of the distinction between the *Dasātīr* and Āzar Kaivān himself. [18]

Farhang-e Mo'aiyad al-Fożalā' contains another argument in favor of a Zoroastrian-focused approach, which is worth citing here to make a point. It was conventionally believed that the Zoroastrian Pahlavi arameograms were first mentioned in the Persian-Persian dictionary *Borhān-e qāte'* (compiled in 1652 in Hyderabad Deccan), but Şādeqī's recent article makes it clear that *Farhang-e Mo'aiyad al-Fożalā'*, not *Borhān-e qāte'*, is the oldest surviving Persian dictionary that contains a reference to such terms. In other words, Zoroastrian Pahlavi might have been known outside the Zoroastrian communities in northern India before 1519; in fact, its details might have been accepted as common knowledge among Persian intellectuals in pre-Mughal India. [19]

It is also clear that it was not the Mughal Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605) who first took the initiative to promote ancient Iranian culture in medieval India; rather, the linguistic characteristics of Zoroastrian writing were already well-known prior to Mughal India among the Persian-speaking Muslim intellectuals who were then scattered in northern India as a ruling élite. This is a likely background for the birth of the antiquated New Persian (so-called Āsmānī) language and the information about the Iranian Prophets expressed in the *Dasātīr*. [20]

Relationship with Ḥorufism

According to the prophecy of Meh Ābād in the first chapter of *Dasātīr*, the present Grand Period will pass, but everything will eventually return to the same form in the next Grand Period, as expressed below: [21]

Nāma-ye Meh Ābād 115: [22]

[23] میکوید که در آغاز مهین چرخ پیوستن اخیح سرکند و پیکرها پد آرد که در نکار و کار و کردار و گفتار
مانند پیکر و دانش و کنش رفته مهین چرخ باشد نه انکه پیکرها پدید آید

He [Prophet Meh Ābād] says that, in the beginning of the Grand Period, combination of the elements will commence, and will produce figures that, in appearance, and in act, deeds and speech are similar to the figures, knowledge and deeds of the past Grand Period: not that the very same figures will be produced.⁷ [24]

Nāma-ye Meh Ābād 117: [25]

[26] باید دانست که در انجام مهین چرخ جز دو تن که مرد و زن باشند باز نمانند و همه مردمان فرو روند

6 Sheffield points out the possibility that the language of Heaven is an imitation of Mohyī al-Dīn Golšānī's (1528-1604) Bāleybelen language in the *Kitāb Aṣl al-maqāsid wa-faṣl al-marāsid* (Sheffield 2014). However, *Farhang-e Mo'aiyad al-Fożalā'* was compiled before that work.

7 Translations by the author unless noted otherwise.

پس آغاز مردم از زن و مرد باز مانده شود و در مهین چرخ نو از نژاد ایشان پر شوند لادبرین به آباد پرمود
که آغاز مردمان از تو شود و همه از نژاد تو آیند و تو پدر همه باشی.

It is to be observed that at the end of a Grand Period, only two persons will be left, one man and one woman: all the rest of mankind will perish: And hence mankind will derive their origin from the woman and man who will have survived, and will propagate from whose origin in the new Grand Period. Hence, Lādbarin [= God] says to Ābād, the origin of mankind is from thee, and all proceed from thy root, and thou art the father of them all (Mollā Firūz ebn-e Kāvūs 1888, 16). [27]

This is a striking statement. The text of *Dasātīr* does not give us any more details about the apparent fine line between the figures, knowledge and deeds of the next Grand Period being “similar to [those] of the past Grand Revolution” and their being “not [...] the very same figures.” Yet this story is notably incompatible with the teachings on transmigration that are seen in Hinduism (not reincarnation in Buddhism, which does not presuppose the existence of a soul), contrary to the expectations of certain scholars who had presumed that the *Dasātīr* was written in an Indian context. [28]

If, however, we compare this story with Ḥorūfist writings such as the *Maḥram-nāma*,⁸ written by Saiyed Eshāq Astarābādī (d. after 1428), a personal pupil of Fażlollāh Astarābādī (d. 1394), the historical context appears clearer. *Maḥram-nāma*’s story begins with the Grand Cycle of the world (*daur-e kollī*) of the eighth heaven, whose dominion on the earth lasts for 1360 years (= *zamān-e Š-S-Gh*) (Huart 1909, 14). The text says that when this Grand Cycle is completed, the next Grand Cycle will begin sequentially, and the same things, persons, and events (*muḥaddas*) will be repeated in each cycle, to the extent that there is no discrepancy among the identical products in the different cycles. This consistency in the identification, however, is on the level of essence (*māhiya*), not on the level of mode (*kaifiya*) or characteristic (*ḥāṣṣiya*) (Huart 1909, 13–14). [29]

In this account, every prophet is identical to his duplicates in the other cycles, on the level of both form (*sūra*) and meaning (*ma‘nā*). The first prophet, Ādam, will become the Perfect Man (*ensān-e kāmel*) at the great resurrection (*qeyāmat-e kobrā*), because he is the final end of the world (*‘ellat-e gā’ī*); then, after his return to the next cycle, he will be the next Ādam again, wholly identical to the previous one. *Maḥram-nāma* explains this theory using the analogy of a circle (Huart 1909, 19). The starting point is the first prophet Ādam, the orbit represents the time course, and everything returns to the first point at the time of resurrection as in Figure 1. [30]

It should be remembered here that the concept of the Grand Cycle (*daur-e kollī*) in the *Maḥram-nāma* is meant to indicate similarity to the concept of the Grand Period (*mehin čarḥ*) in the *Dasātīr*. This becomes clear when we compare “*negār va kār va kerdār va goftār*” in the *Dasātīr* with “the mode and characteristic” in the *Maḥram-nāma*. As it is related, moreover, the first prophet, Ādam (Ābād), returns at the end of time as the next founder of the next cycle of the world, as expressed in the passage from the *Dasātīr* that reads, “Ābād, the origin of mankind is from thee, and all proceed from thy root, and thou art the father of them all.” These facts shed light on the historical context behind the *Dasātīr*, as this element has been combined with the concept of the “language of Heaven” to construct the *Dasātīr* as a new sacred text influenced by the Ḥorūfis. [31]

It may be worth pointing out the problem of Mahdī here. In Iranian thought between the [32]

8 About this text, see Huart (1909).

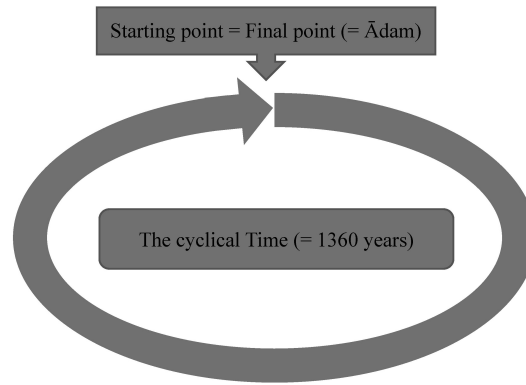


Figure 1

thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the concept of Mahdī was particularly widespread. In the Āzar Kaivān literature, however, we find no mention of Mahdī (in the context of Islam) or of Sōšāns (in the context of Zoroastrianism) appearing at the end of time. One way to understand this structure of thought is by considering that, if the *Dasātīr* was dependent on Iranian thought from before 1519, it was likely linked to one of the branches of Ḥorūfism, in which one could well imagine a cyclical world without the need for a savior.

Relationship with Zoroastrianism

According to the Iranian historians of the twentieth century, Zoroastrianism undoubtedly exerted the most significant influence on the Āzar Kaivān school in spite of certain inconsistencies between the Āzar Kaivān school and Zoroastrianism that cannot be overlooked. Yet of all the traditional New Persian Zoroastrian texts, the literature produced by the Āzar Kaivān school quotes only four books: *Zarātošt-nāma*, *Čangragāčā-nāma*, *Ardā-vīrāf-nāma*, and *Šad dar-e nasr*, all of which were already well-known to Persian-speaking Muslim intellectuals by the seventeenth century (table 4) (Sheffield 2014). Thus, there is no direct evidence to prove that the Āzar Kaivān school was an heir to traditional Zoroastrianism. [33]

Another fact reinforces our skepticism here: the *Dasātīr* recommends burial of the dead in water (Mollā Fīrūz ebn-e Kāvūs 1818, 34), whereas Zoroastrians never practiced this type of burial. Later generations' understanding of the Āzar Kaivān school's place in intellectual history is also relevant: the Āzar Kaivān school's literature was understood and copied by Muslim copyists only in the context of Islamic mysticism. No Zoroastrian priest is known to have copied these books until the *Dasātīr* suddenly became famous—and later notorious—in the early nineteenth century. [34]

Table 4 Quotations from traditional Zoroastrian New Persian Literature in books of the Āzar Kaivān School.

Title	Quoted Zoroastrian Persian Book	Part
<i>Dasātīr</i>	<i>Zarātošt-nāma</i>	Ch. 13
<i>Šārestān-e čahār čaman</i>	<i>Ardā-vīrāf-nāma</i>	First Čaman
<i>Dabestān-e mazāheb</i>	<i>Šad dar-e nasr</i> (full version)	vol. 1, chap. 14

Although the ideas expressed in *Dasātīr* might have been influenced by some elements of Zoroastrianism that were current in fifteenth-century Iran or India, it is important to bear in mind that, at this stage, the possibility of a direct relationship between the Āzar Kaivān school and Zoroastrianism is more remote than previously assumed. [35]

or India, before Āzar Kaivān's time, by anonymous Persian-speaking intellectual(s). This supposed text represents the origin of the Āzar Kaivān school, but it might not be an original work by Āzar Kaivān.

- Quotations from Zoroastrian literature in the texts of the Āzar Kaivān school are limited to those within the scope of the New Persian Zoroastrian literature that was already well-known among Persian-speaking Muslims. We cannot confirm any direct relationship between the Āzar Kaivān school and Zoroastrianism, although we cannot rule out the possibility. [39]

Comparison of the *Dasātīr* with Āzar Kaivān's Contemporaries

Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro

Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro is a work certainly written by Āzar Kaivān and accompanied by a commentary by his disciple Mūbed Ḥodāġūy. It differs greatly from the *Dasātīr* in both style and content. It avoids enigmatic language and follows a standard style of New Persian poetry that was consistently used by Persian Sufis when expressing their mystical experiences through metaphors. This document provides us with two new pieces of relevant information. First, according to Mūbed Ḥodāġūy's commentary, Āzar Kaivān considered himself a profound mystic with deep comprehension of the four mystical worlds: the world of dreams (*ru'yā*), the world of occultation (*ġaibat*), the world of awakening (*ṣaḥv*), and the world of withdrawal (*ḥal'*) (see table 5).⁹ Second, *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro* expresses a universalist philosophy and advocates for the oneness of all religions, in sharp contrast to the fierce yearning for ancient Iran that is expressed in the *Dasātīr*. [40]

Table 5 Āzar Kaivān's mystical four steps in *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro*.

1st Step	Dreams	The world of light, training in abstinence
2nd Step	Occultation	Going to the world of emanations
3rd Step	Awakening	Being elevated to the higher worlds
4th Step	Withdrawal	Departing from the elements of flesh and then returning to the flesh again

This of course raises an important question: if Āzar Kaivān is the real author of both *Dasātīr* and *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro*, why do the two documents express such contradictory sentiments? Were there two persons with the same name writing at the same time? It is hypothetically possible that Āzar Kaivān had a dual personality, although this is not likely, given that Āzar Kaivān was an able leader of his intellectual school, respected by his disciples up to his death and beyond. In any case, this discrepancy poses a considerable problem that must be confronted when dealing with these two texts attributed to Āzar Kaivān. Perhaps his other three texts, *Ā'ina-ye Eskandar*, *Taht-e ṭāqdis*, and *Partov-e farhang* (see table 2), will allow us to see changes over time in the course of his spiritual development. [41]

9 I believe that this text (or poem) is independent of the Zoroastrian Pahlavi work *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*. Most likely, *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro* belongs not to traditional Zoroastrian literature but rather to the genre of Islamic mystical literature.

Table 6 Comparison of the *Dasātīr* and *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro*.

	<i>Dasātīr</i>	<i>Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro</i>
Literary Form	Prophecies of (pseudo-) ancient Iranian Prophets	Poems about the heavenly journey of a mystic
Descriptive Style	Pseudo-historical biography	Scenery perceived in the mind
Language	the language of Heaven with New Persian translation avoiding Arabic lexemes	normal New Persian (including Arabic loanwords)
Nativism/ Universalism	Iranian nativism	Oneness of all religions (universalism)

As we have already discussed in Chapter 2, however, recent studies have shown that at least the vocabulary of *Dasātīr* was in fact formed before 1519 and that Āzar Kaivān might have encountered the *Dasātīrī* vocabulary or the already-written text of the *Dasātīr* during his time in Iran or India (this point will be discussed later). One might imagine, moreover, that Āzar Kaivān would have received what is written in the *Dasātīr* (if there is any *Dasātīr*) at face value, then based his own unique school of thought on it, incorporating heavy influence from Persian Sufism as well. [42]

Because the *Dasātīr* was more influential than *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro* in the later years of the Āzar Kaivān school, a skeptic might suggest that the *Dasātīr* was written later than the *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro*, which would mean that the discrepancies between the documents are due to the passage of time and the evolution of Āzar Kaivān's thought. Based on this assumption, the *Dasātīr* would likely reflect the mature thought of Āzar Kaivān. [43]

However, there are some arguments against this position. First, the *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro* is unlikely to have been written after the *Dasātīr* because the former postulates the latter. For example, the *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro* states that, in the first step, Āzar Kaivān pursued “the way of Pahlavi” (*rāh-e Pahlavī*, 1-1-3), in which he kept away all passion (*hama ḥāheš*, 1-1-6) by following the teachings of his predecessors (*be āyīn-e piš*, 1-1-6).¹⁰ His pupil Mūbed Ḥodāgūy comments that “the way of Pahlavi” means “the way of the Ešrāqī school in Persia” (*tariq-e ḥokamā'-e ešrāqīya-ye Pārs*), but says nothing about what these “teachings of his predecessors” might contain, although this is a favorite phrase of Āzar Kaivān. This might indicate an Āzar Kaivān context for the Ešrāqī school and its “predecessors,” and suggests that, while the Āzar Kaivān school includes the Ešrāqī school, the Ešrāqī school may precede the Āzar Kaivān school. From this point of view, those “predecessors” may have been the predecessors not only of the Āzar Kaivān school but also of the Ešrāqī school, namely the ancient Iranian sages. This expression in the *Dasātīr* might therefore refer to the original prophets. [44]

In order to test more thoroughly the possibility that *Dasātīr* may have preceded *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro*, we must search for evidence among the ‘ancient’ vocabulary of *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro*. The following is a brief description of Āzar Kaivān's spiritual journey among the planets at the third step: he starts from the first sphere of moon (*falk-e avval va Qamar*, 3-5-4), then visits the second sphere of Mercury (*ġahān-e kabūd, falk-e dovom va ḥazrat-e 'Otāred*, 3-6-1), the third sphere of Venus (*ġahān-e sepīd, falak-e Zohra*, 3-7-1), the fourth sphere of Sun (*ġahān-e bozorg*, [45]

10 See Mīr Ašraf 'Alī (ed.) (1848, 3–4).

falak-e rābe^c, 3-8-1), the fifth sphere of Mars (*šahr-e dīgar...sorḥ*, *falak-e Merriḥ*, 3-9-1), the sixth sphere of Jupiter (*ḡahān-e kabūd*, *falak-e moštari*, 3-10-1), the seventh sphere of Saturn (*ḡahān-e siyāh*, *falak-e ḡazrat-e Zoḡal*, 3-11-1), and the eighth sphere of the stars (*ḡahān-e dīgar*, *falak-e nohom...kavākeb*, 3-12-1).¹¹ Each sphere is designed systematically with its own ectoplasm. It is this evidence to which I now turn: Note that the ectoplasm of the “blue Jupiter” is “*vaḡšūr*,” which is a typical *Dasātīrian* word for an ancient Iranian prophet. Not only that, but the ectoplasm of the seventh sphere (Saturn) is “*mašāyḡ va ašḡāb-e tašavvof*,” a typical Arabic term that refers to Sufi sages, while the name of the ectoplasm of the eighth heaven has no known meaning.

This structure indicates both Āzar Kaivān’s interest in *Dasātīr*’s artificial Iranian history and his understanding of the hierarchy of teachers, namely, his belief that the Sufis or the Ešrāqī school are more authoritative than the *Dasātīrī* ancient Iranian prophets. One could propose that the motive underlying his interest in *Dasātīr* was to call attention to Persian Sufism or Ešrāqī philosophy. Thus, he introduced the concepts in the *Dasātīr* to his school for a particular purpose, and only insofar as they were useful for his personal aims. [46]

Āzar Kaivān’s Encounter with the *Dasātīr*

After all this discussion about Āzar Kaivān’s contemporaries, it still remains to be shown when and where the *Dasātīr* text was formed, who had written it, and indeed when and how Āzar Kaivān encountered it. Although this issue cannot be settled at the present stage of study, there are a number of notable possibilities which might have a significant impact on both Zoroastrian and Āzar Kaivān studies. [47]

The following is my estimated, approximate chronology of the formation process of the *Dasātīr* text and the early Āzar Kaivān school. [48]

1. The *Dasātīrī* vocabulary was formed in dependence on the knowledge (or partly on the misunderstanding) of Zoroastrian Pahlavi literature before 1519, probably in northern India. [49]
2. A prototype of the *Dasātīr* text was written in dependence on the *Dasātīrī* vocabulary sometime after 1519, probably in northern India, by anonymous author(s). [50]
3. As mentioned above, we are not sure whether Āzar Kaivān really came from Iran or whether he was a native Indian who only pretended to be an Iranian to lend authority to his Persianate religious thought. [51]
4. If Āzar Kaivān was originally Iranian, theoretically it is possible that the factor enticing him to emigrate from Iran to northern India in the late sixteenth century was not the syncretic atmosphere of Mughal Empire but the fame of the *Dasātīr* itself. In this case, he formed his own Sufi order in Iran, then came to India for the *Dasātīr*. [52]
5. If Āzar Kaivān was a native Indian, one hypothesis regarding his background is that the real author of the *Dasātīr* text was his master, father, or a related person with a deep understanding of the Zoroastrian sacred book *Zand*. In this case, Āzar Kaivān would have been an orthodox successor of Indian interest in the ancient Iranian culture, one who happened to be attracted to Persian mysticism. If we take this reasoning further, [53]

11 See Mīr Ašraf ‘Alī (ed.) (1848, 34–40).

we can even postulate that the headquarters of this Persianate Indian tradition was at Patna, the city of Āzar Kaivān's death.

6. It is even possible that the last editor of the present *Dasātīr* text might have been Āzar Kaivān himself. But the difficulty with this explanation is that, within his only extant text *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro*, we do not find any reflection of Āzar Kaivān's knowledge of Zoroastrian *Zand* literature, which was indispensable for writing the *Dasātīr* text. [54]

Therefore, calling something “the Āzar Kaivān school” does more to obscure than to explain anything. It is inappropriate to apply this term with the meaning that Persianate intellectual activity was started by a person who called himself Āzar Kaivān. He is not a *pioneer*, but rather an *integrator* who combined an inherited linguistic interest in ancient Iran with his own religious mysticism. Only in this sense can his disciples be called the “Āzar Kaivān school.” [55]

Summary of Findings about Āzar Kaivān's Contemporaries

- A comparison of the contents of the *Dasātīr* and the *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro* seems to suggest that the two texts cannot have been written by the same author. [56]
- Āzar Kaivān certainly could have encountered the *Dasātīrī* vocabulary or even a prototype of the *Dasātīr* text during his time in Iran or in India. He could have copied the *Dasātīr* as written, then described his own mystical experiences achieved through the influence of the *Dasātīr* in his own work the *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro*. [57]
- From the perspective of the pupils of Āzar Kaivān who formed a school under their leader's name in early seventeenth-century India, both texts deserve to be revered as the school's documents of origin. Because of its style, however, the *Dasātīr* is more focused than the *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro*, which has led to the mistaken belief that the *Dasātīr* was also written by Āzar Kaivān, including its vocabulary. [58]

Comparison of the *Dasātīr* with Āzar Kaivān's Successors

Four Short Treatises

Among the Āzar Kaivān school's six other extant treatises (see table 1), we can exclude *Šārestān-e čahār čaman* and *Dabestān-e mazāheb* from our scope, as both are Iran-centric historiographies discussing historical events of the seventeenth century. The remaining four titles, *H'īš-tāb*, *Zardošt Afšār*, *Zāyanda Rūd*, and *Zūra-ye bāstānī*, are relatively short treatises supposedly written by Āzar Kaivān's disciples. [59]

If the *Dasātīr* and *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro* were written by Āzar Kaivān, these four short treatises show only that his pupils inherited and passed along their master's original ideas without making their own original contributions. If the *Dasātīr* and *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro* were written by different authors, on the other hand, the four short treatises still have a great deal of value for modern scholars researching the Āzar Kaivān school. These treatises show how the pupils, under the mistaken impression that both texts had been written by their master, struggled to make their two vastly different foundational texts coherent and to smooth over the discrepancies between them. [60]

If this assumption is correct, then the four short treatises are evidence not only of the [61]

attempt to harmonize several divergent ideas within the Āzar Kaivān school but also of the connections among the enigmatic activity in the Persian language, the Iranian prophets, and Ḥorūfism expressed in the *Dasātīr* and Persian Sufism and the Ešrāqī philosophy expressed in the *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro*.

Although the format of each of these four treatises seems to be a faithful imitation of that of the *Dasātīr*, their contents require more subtle examination. If one compares the contents of the *Dasātīr* with those of the four short treatises, one finds that the short treatises lack the Iran-centrism and antiquated New Persian (so-called Āsmānī) vocabulary that characterize the *Dasātīr*, leaving a strong impression that these four treatises were written for a different purpose from that of the *Dasātīr*. I will say more about the characteristics of these four treatises in the following section, but a complete study of all four lies outside the scope of this article, and we must limit ourselves to exploring only *Ḥʿīš-tāb* and *Zūra-ye Bāstānī* in greater detail. [62]

From Āzar Kaivān to Kai Ḥosro Esfandīyār

After Āzar Kaivān's death in 1618, his son (we do not know whether he is a real son or a disciple trusted like a son) Kai Ḥosro Esfandīyār gradually took on a leadership role within the Āzar Kaivān school. Much must have happened internally and externally during this leadership change. One clue to the events of this time is the fact that three brief treatises (*Ḥʿīš-tāb*, *Zardošt Afšār* and *Zāyanda Rūd*) by Āzar Kaivān's disciples are all said to have been "translated from (pseudo-)ancient Persian by order of Kai Ḥosro Esfandīyār," and all of them are quoted in *Šārestān-e čahār čaman* by *Farzāna Bahrām ebn Farhād Šīrāzī* (d. 1624).¹² Therefore, we may conclude that those three articles were written between 1618 and 1624. Perhaps it was during this time that Kai Ḥosro Esfandīyār became recognized as the new leader of the Āzar Kaivān school. [63]

As for his religious ideas, it appears that Kai Ḥosro Esfandīyār deviated from Āzar Kaivān's ideas as expressed in the *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro* and, over time, gravitated more and more toward the thinking expressed by the *Dasātīrian* prophets and the ideas of the Ešrāqī philosophy.¹³ The Ešrāqī philosophy is only a nominal component of the *Dasātīr*, where the references to it functioned as an effective way to re-encode the contents of Āzar Kaivān's own mystical thought into literature for the next generation. [64]

It is worthwhile to examine the *Ḥʿīš-tāb* and the *Zūra-ye Bāstānī* in particular among the four short treatises, because, as I understand them, the *Zardošt Afšār* and the *Zāyanda Rūd* can be considered together with *Ḥʿīš-tāb*, as all three deal with the same topic and exhibit the same style, which suggests that they may have been written in the same intellectual atmosphere or even by the same author. The *Zūra-ye Bāstānī*, on the other hand, is written in a different style, which shows almost without doubt that this treatise represents an isolated phenomenon among the other extant Āzar Kaivān texts. [65]

Ḥʿīš-tāb

A major question in current research into the Āzar Kaivān school is to what degree the four short treatises were really influenced by the imaginary history of the *Dasātīr* or by Āzar Kaivān's personal mysticism. At the core of this issue is the essential question of whether all of them inherited traditions from both sources, or whether some of the four short treatises [66]

12 Tavakoli-Targhi (2001).

13 On the Ešrāqī philosophy in India, see Karīmī Zanḡānī Asl ([1387] 2008); Subūt ([1385] 2007).



Figure 2 Proposed chronological order in which the extant texts of the Āzar Kaivān School were written.

inherited from only one source. If all of them inherited the same elements from the *Dasātīr* and *Āzar Kaivān's* thought, this confirms the general belief that the *Āzar Kaivān* school remained a monolithic organization after the death of its integrator. If not, however, this opens up the possibility of diffusion within the school, which even initially did not have a well-organized system of thought.

The following is a text excerpt and its English translation from the first part of *Ḥ'vīš-tāb* [67] (1878, 2–3).

[68] چنین کوید ملازم ستاره سینه عقلا و خادم مخادیم یعنی فضلا و حکما موبد هوش که خلیفه شیخ الانبیا و امام رسل مظهر موعود کخیسرو اسفندیار ابن قائم مقام استاد پیمبران و جانشین پیشوای و خوشوران و خوشور باسحقاق و پیمبر باتفاق اهل انصاف آذرکیوان بدین بنده که از بدو امکان خانه زاد این طبقه عالیه است و نجات ابد هم از بندگی این درگاه میجوید فرمود که رساله حکیم بالغ خرد تمام هوش پیشتاب را که از راه یافتگان انجمن انجم فروغ شاکردان حضرت نبی کامل و رسول فاضل امام طریق یقین و راهبر راه دین ساسان پنجم بوده و در عهد خسرو عادل و شهریار باذن خسرو پرویز بفرمان قدر مقدار قضا اقتضای آنحضرت بفارسی قدیم بتالیف آن صحیفه والا پرداخته بزبان سروش و حضرت شاهنشاهی بخطاب شریف منیف کزین دانش سرافراز شده بلغه متعارف این عصر بعبارتی واضح ترجمه نمائی تا طلاب فواید را منفعت آن عام گردد و این فرمان والاشان سروشی نشانرا بکوش هوش شنیده اطاعت را خدمت بانجام رسانید و حسب الامر عالی که ترجمه امر اول تواند بود موسوم بخویشتاب گردانید و آن نام آتشکده بود که بی توجه فروزنده و هیمه دائم الاوقات آتش در آن اشتعال داشت و آنرا خودسوز نیز گفتندی. ستایش آن در نامه رسول دیوبند طهمورث آمده:

[69] نماز بر سَوَسُوَیَسْت تان را خوش خویشتاب

[70] یعنی قبله طاعات نوریست شما را خوب موسوم بخویشتاب کو خود تابد که آن بذات خود بی مدد افروزنده و هیمه منور است

[71] زی سُوئی شو کاهَرَمَن سُوزیست خودسوز

[72] به طرف نوری کرامی که او محرق شیطانست و بذات خود میضی بعد ازین تقریر ترجمه و تفسیر این کتاب آفتاب تابست

[73] اول: شت و خوشور و خوشوران برکزیده یزدان خدیو جهان راهنمای مردمان مه آباد فرماید هر هستیداری که هست یا هستی او متعلق است بدیکری تا اگر نبودن آن دیکر فرض کنند نیستی آن هستی لازم آید.

[Preface] It is said that the companion of the century, the wise one and the servant of scholars, Mūbed Hūš, who is deputy to the head of the prophets and Imam of the messengers, the chosen Kai Ḥosro Esfandiyyār, who is the son of the deputy of the master prophet and the justified successor of the leader of the prophet of prophets, *Āzar Kaivān*, ordered this servant [Mūbed Hūš], who has been a member of this exalted Sufi order, and who also seeks salvation from the service of the threshold [of the Sufi temple], to read the treatise of the Reasonable Wise One, the perfect Prophet and the Excellent Messenger, the Imam of the Path of Faith and the Leader of the Path of Religion, *Sāsān the Fifth* of the time of the just King and generous ruler *Ḥosro Parviz*, because of whose command this book was written in the ancient Persian, and became known as the high and noble script *Garzan-e Dāneš*, commanded me to translate [this book] into a clear formulation so that students can benefit from it. The translator [Mūbed Hūš] heard this lofty angelic command

[74]

through his mind, performed obedience, and according to the lofty command that translation may be the supreme duty, he [Kai Ḥosro Esfandeyār] called it [the translated book] *Ḥʿiṣ-tāb*. This is the name of a certain fire temple, in which the ever-burning firewood blazed. That (fire temple) was also called “Ḥod-sūz (self-burning).” In the book of the demon-binding prophet Tahmūraṣ it is mentioned that

The direction of prayer is good, in the direction of *Ḥʿiṣ-tāb*, the direction of prayer of worship is a light that is well-known to you as *Ḥʿiṣ-tāb*, which shines by itself, which by its own nature is flickering and burning wood without help. Turn to [the light] that Ahriman burns. It is self-burning; turn to a light that lights the devil and is radiant in its own nature. [75]

This quote is the end of the passage on the introduction translation and interpretation of this book; the next lines begin to convey the teachings as follows: [76]

Chapter 1: The prophet of prophets Meh Ābād [not Mahābād as is generally called, but Meh Ābād accurately] commanded that every being who is or whose being is dependent on another, (and) if the non-being of that other is conceivable, then whose non-being is necessary [...] ¹⁴ [77]

What can we take away from this introductory passage? First and foremost, it shows that Mūbed Hūš strictly maintained the line of succession from master to disciple, starting with Āzar Kaivān and passing through Kai Ḥosro Esfandiyār, especially with regard to their characteristic preference for the Ešrāqī terms. It is less certain when and how Mūbed Hūš introduced *Dasātīrian* ideas into *Ḥʿiṣ-tāb*, given that the fictitious Ābādian dynasty of prophets first appears in *Farhang-e Moʿaiyid al-Fożalāʿ*; more information about this dynasty was probably added in the *Dasātīr* after 1519, but it is completely absent from *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro*, which propagates Āzar Kaivānian philosophical ideas in the names of Āzar Kaivān and Kai Ḥosro Esfandiyār. This is the first evidence of an exchange, or fusion, of ideas between *Dasātīrian* prophets and Āzar Kaivānian mysticism. [78]

Second, the above passage shows that the philosophical ideas of the Ešrāqī school, the vocabulary of which is only nominally present in both the *Dasātīr* and *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro*, are well-organized among the works of the next generation of the Āzar Kaivān school. While both works seem to introduce vocabulary that emphasizes their ancient Iranian origin, *Ḥʿiṣ-tāb*'s catechism mainly reflects an Aristotelian context, which is more orthodox from the viewpoint of Islamic philosophy. In contrast, there is no trace of the concept of transmigration, as in the *Dasātīr*. [79]

To sum up, the special importance of *Ḥʿiṣ-tāb* is that this text is the first confluence point, or *majmaʿ al-bahrain*, at which the stream of *Dasātīrian* references to ancient prophets and the stream of *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro*'s Persian Sufism are merged in a document with a philosophical style. What is certain is that the Āzar Kaivān school viewed from posterity, especially from the viewpoint of Corbin, was formed at this stage, after the death of Āzar Kaivān. [80]

Zūra-ye Bāstānī

When Mānekjī Limjī Hātariyā first published Āzar Kaivān's disciples' treatises at Bombay in [81]

14 For a German translation of the first half of *Ḥʿiṣ-tāb*, see Tavana (2014).

1846, he included only three texts in his anthology: the *H'vīš-tāb*, the *Zardošt Afšār*, and the *Zenda Rūd* (= *Zāyanda Rūd*) (Hātariyā 1846). Thirty-two years later, Mirzā Bahrām Rostam Naṣrābādī published another anthology called the *Ā'in-e Hūšang*, in which the number of treatises was increased from three to four by the addition of *Zūra-ye Bāstānī* (Mirzā Bahrām Rostam Naṣrābādī 1878). As we can see from this series of publications, the precise identity of *Zūra-ye Bāstānī* would have been a matter of controversy for scholars studying Āzar Kaivān in earlier decades. Yet there has been no attempt to understand or interpret these four treatises by the later Āzar Kaivān school in early seventeenth-century India from a wide variety of approaches.

The following is a Roman transcription and English translation of the first part of *Zūra-ye Bāstānī*. Many questions about the nature of this text remain to be answered even within the context of the four short treatises, if we can even determine whether this text belongs to the Āzar Kaivān school or not. [82]

[83] زوره باستانی شت و خشوران و خشور سفیتمان زردشت

[84] چنین کوید آذرپژوه که من از اسپهانم و از نژاد کیومرث از ساسانیان از اردشیر نیکوکار و روزی مرا پادشاه دادگر پور قباد ساسانیان که او را انوشیروان کوید در پیش خود نشانند و فرمود که دانای ایران که بزرگ مهر است پیر شده است و آنچه میخواهم از او نمی آید و او از تو بهتر شاکردی نیست میخواهم که تو را کاری بفرمایم کفتم پادشاه تویی و ما بنده فرمان گفت ما را سخنی چند هست از سخنهای ابراهیم زردشت که پیغامبر ایران بوده است و دانستن آن نه آسان و بر همه دانشوران دشوار است که سخن های چندست سر بسته که بزبان پارسی پهلوی نوشته و نزد شاه هند فرستاده بوده است و نام آن زوره است و در اینچند روز پادشاه هند آنرا بمن رسانیده است و من خواهان آنم که آن سخنها را روشن کردانی تا همه بدانند و ترا مزدی و یادکار باشد کفتم آن زوره کدام است

[85] نامه را برداشت و بمن داد در او نگاه کردم شناختم که چه میگوید چیزی چند بر نوشته نزد خسرو بردم او را خوش آمد و بخشش فرمود و نامه دیگری آورد و بمن داد که این را دهقان خداپرست نزد من نوشته است اما سخن او دراز است آنرا کوتاه کردان و در سرانجام آنچه نوشته بنویس همچنان کردم تا خدا مرا مزد دهد ابراهیم در آغاز نوشته بود.

[86] که کیتی به بنیاد یکی و بنهاد دو من ایدون کمانم که چرخ و ستاره نمونه هامون و یردان و فرشتگان باشد [...] (Mirzā Bahrām Rostam Naṣrābādī 1878, 149–50)

Ancient Chapter of the holy ancient Iranian Prophet of Prophets Abraham Zoroaster: [87]

Āzar Pažūh says: “I am from Esfahan and a descendant of Kai Kaiumarṣ from the Sasanian dynasty from Ardašīr. One day the Great King Khosrow, the Immortal Soul, invited me in front of him and told me that the Iranian sage Bozorgmehr had become so old that I cannot expect much from him. You are the best of his disciples, thus I hope to assign you a task.” I answered that “you are the Great King and I am a slave.” His command was as follows: “we have several words of Abraham Zoroaster who was the Iranian Prophet. But that knowledge is not easy to access, and is difficult for all scholars, because it is written in Pahlavi-Persian. It was sent to the Indian King and its name is *Zūra*. Recently the Indian King sent it to me and I want to make its contents so clear that everyone can understand it. You will get a reward and a keepsake.” I answered, “which is that *Zūra*?” He had [88]

the book brought and gave it to me. I read it and understood what was written. I brought it to Khosrow and he was pleased and gave me a reward. He brought another book and gave it to me and said, “this is a book sent to me by an Iranian magnate, but it is too long. Make it short and write its quintessence.” Then I did so, and the King gave me a reward. Abraham [Zoroaster] wrote at the beginning that

The world is by one foundation and two principles (?). I believe that the sphere and star are specimens of Hamun (?) and God and angels. [89]

The translated passage above is only a short section of the treatise explaining the pseudo-historical context of the text as well as the first lines of the section explaining its religious thought, but I believe this sample is sufficient to allow us to draw some conclusions. Āzar Pažūh, the presumed author and the self-described best pupil of the Sasanian chancellor Bozorgmehr, as well as the presumed author of two other texts (see table 2), briefly describes the conversation between Khosrow I and himself during which the King of Kings gives him the task of translating Abraham Zoroaster’s book from “Pahlavi-Persian” into a language more commonly used at that time. Comparing this with the opening section of *H’iš-tāb*, it is quite curious that we cannot find the names of Sasan the Fifth, Āzar Kaivān, or even Kai Ḥosro Esfandiār, who make regular appearances in later Āzar Kaivān literature. [90]

Instead of these names, we find Zoroaster, identified with the Semitic Prophet Abraham, as the author of a sacred “Pahlavi-Persian” text named *Zūra*. This identification seems curious at first glance but was popular in the medieval Islamic world. The chief thing to notice here is that this identification is never seen elsewhere in Āzar Kaivān literature. One might therefore suppose that this text escaped the influence of *Dasātīrian* prophets, with its tendency to embrace more orthodox Islamicized Zoroastrianism. [91]

In the first part of Abraham Zoroaster’s document, the prophet describes his own worldview, which cannot by any means be interpreted as a branch of the Ešrāqī philosophy. Furthermore, there are considerable differences between Abraham Zoroaster’s thought and Āzar Kaivān’s mysticism in the theoretical domain which require some explanation. In this regard, one might imagine that the only similarity between the two is the frame-story format of the late Sasanian periods. Yet the emphasis on Zoroaster, even if he is “Abraham” Zoroaster, and the unique worldview of “one foundation and two principles (?)” leave some room for the possibility of influence from more orthodox Islamicized Zoroastrianism, which was unrelated to Āzar Kaivān. If this text can still be said to belong to the corpus of Āzar Kaivān literature, its development must have been significantly different from that of other works. [92]

In short, although there is vanishingly little evidence about the internal development of the later Āzar Kaivān school, we can see that *Zūra-ye Bāstānī* may be not a direct product of Āzar Kaivānīs, but rather a document influenced by the Āzar Kaivānian format reflecting a revival of some kind of Zoroastrian literary style in Mughal India. Only further study and the discovery of additional texts, whose titles are listed in tables 2 and 3, will enable scholars to clarify the situation. [93]

Summary of Findings about Āzar Kaivān’s Successors

- The late sixteenth or early seventeenth century was a turning point for the Āzar Kaivān school because of its members’ immigration from Safavid Iran to Mughal India (if it actually happened) and the transfer of leadership from Āzar Kaivān to Kai Ḥosro Esfandiār. [94]

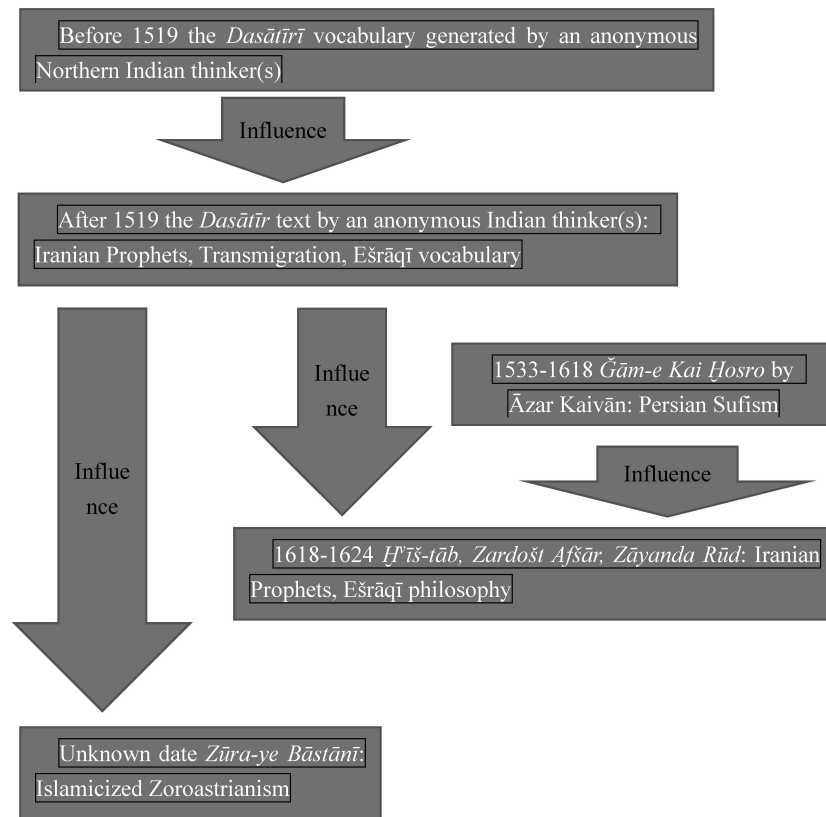


Figure 3 Diagram depicting the paths of influence among the six extant texts of the Āzar Kaivān School.

- In *Ĥʿiš-tāb* (and *Zardošt Afšār* and *Zāyanda Rūd* as well), the Ešrāqī philosophy appears to dominate, although the format used by the *Dasātīrian* prophets continues to prevail. But the *Dasātīrian* concepts of transmigration and Iran-centrism seem to have disappeared with time. [95]
- In *Zūra-ye Bāstānī*, the absence of references to the *Dasātīr* and *Ġām-e Kai Ĥosro* demonstrates the existence of divergent paths of religious development within the framework of the later Āzar Kaivān school. This text is concerned with Islamicized Zoroastrianism within the framework of the Āzar Kaivānian format. [96]

Conclusion

This brief survey has made the origin and the later development of the “Āzar Kaivān school” fairly clear. Before 1519, anonymous linguist(s) in pre-Mughal India—whether Muslim or Zoroastrian is unknown—took the initiative to create the *Dasātīrī* vocabulary, or a prototype of the *Dasātīr* text, based on their access to Zoroastrian sacred literature and a good deal of imaginative speculation about ancient Iranian history. [97]

Some years later, around the middle of the sixteenth century, Persian Sufis in Estahṛ or Persianate Sufis in India (probably at Patna) used the basic form of this *Dasātīr* as a framework into which they incorporated their own mysticism. Leaving out the religious teaching regard- [98]

ing transmigration and the Āsmānī language, they made much use of the names of imaginary ancient prophets and Ešrāqī terms and combined them with their mystical thought. The leader of this group was Āzar Kaivān, and his book *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro* became the authoritative text for this group, serving as a pseudo-scripture along with the *Dasātīr*. If he was originally from Estahṛ, this group emigrated from Safavid Iran to Mughal India in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. If he was originally from northern India, this group only pretended to emigrate from Iran for the sake of their reputation.

At some stage, perhaps after the death of Āzar Kaivān at Patna in 1618, a member of this group, probably inspired by Āzar Kaivān's successor Kai Ḥosro Esfandīyār, tried to develop a more systematic religious thought by producing the New Persian books the *Ḥ'īš-tāb*, the *Zardošt Afšār*, and the *Zāyanda Rūd* between 1618 and 1624. Those texts, however, did not exactly match either the *Dasātīr* or the *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro*. The main points of these three texts depend explicitly on Ešrāqī philosophy, with occasional mentions of the *Dasātīrian* Prophets. As a result of this drastic change, the group's religious thought became more well-organized.

An isolated phenomenon among the later Āzar Kaivānian texts is the *Zūra-ye Bāstānī*. It is unique in that it does not appear to contain any influence from the *Dasātīr* or *Ĝām-e Kai Ḥosro*; instead, it is filled with elements of Islamicized Zoroastrianism and its own unique vocabulary, as if the *Dasātīr*'s atavism. Nevertheless, this text is traditionally counted among the Āzar Kaivānian literature.

More briefly put, our analysis points to the conclusion that the so-called "Āzar Kaivān" school enjoyed a much wider historical range than previously expected. Its thought shifted and changed, but persisted in some form from fifteenth-century pre-Safavid Iran or pre-Mughal India to seventeenth-century Mughal India. In fact, it should not be designated as "Āzar Kaivānic," given that Āzar Kaivān appeared in the middle of its development only as an *integrator*, and its writings, rather than being composed exclusively by him, were assembled from at least three sources: 1. *Dasātīr*'s imaginary ancient Iranian literature, 2. Āzar Kaivān's mysticism and 3. Ešrāqī terms. Figure 3 summarizes this conclusion.

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