

Death as Defilement in Zoroastrianism

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Pointing on similarity and familiarity of ancient Iranian and Indian traditions, often a "set" of common or very close concepts, mythological subjects, deity names, rituals known basically by textual sources -- Vedic and Avestan collections -- is proposed. A usual example of such a comparison is a parallel drawn between the heroes of twin myths, Indian Yama, son of Vivasvat and Iranian Yima, son of Vīvahvant. Although there's undoubtedly same primary meaning of Yama and Yima names, to whom a series of other Indo-European characters is close, Iranian tradition moves away "brightened Yima" from the world of death, at least, in version surviving in the Avestan "Codex of ritual purity", in the Videvdat ("a law against demons"), which became one of the foundations of the following Zoroastrian religious literature.

Thus RV calls Yama "the lord of the blessed dead" (RV X. 14.3-7; 16.4) and "the first mortal", who showed the path of death to others (RV X. 14.2), whose abode is higher heaven (RV X. 14.8), divah avarodharam (RV IX. 113.8) -- according to R. Dandekar "closed place of sky" (Dandekar 2002, 86), Bloomfield's "heaven's firm abode" (Religion of the Veda, 144). Yima's abode, the concentric fortification Vara- built by him, is an entirely close building, equipped with sole lighting "window"-door, "selfilluminating from inside". The Sraoša's (Avestan deity of obedience) "palace of thousand columns located on the highest peak of haraitī was probably a pattern of such a description. It is told that this palace is

Yasna 57.21 selfilluminated from inside, covered by stars from outside.

It is notable that there is an allusion of this construction in one of the latest Avestan texts -- Vd 14.14, which also indirectly connects it to abode of the righteous in heaven mentioned in the Avestan Yašts. Vd 14.14 tells about the building (for atonement for the greatest sin -- the killing of an otter, a sacred animal which gives fertility) an unusual "house with cattle-shed" and "marvellously made beds", which origin goes back to the description of the heaven's abode of Aši and Arədvī Sūra Anāhita. Usage of terms, words and word-combinations from other Avestan texts is typical for Videvdat, which was mainly written in the already dead Avestan language.

Thus we can outline the connection between so earthly Yima's construction and heavenly gods' abode and compare them with the heaven abode of Yama, despite that in the Avestan text itself it is told about the construction not of the place of posthumous blessed righteous' stay, but, on the contrary, of the cover saving them alive from "cold wind and the hot one, pain and death". In the latter I see specially exaggerated urge towards denial of the physical death as suffering and body destruction.

Middle Persian texts treat the image of Yima in the same sense, not allowing the connection of king Yima to death. Menog i xrad XXVII 27-31 narrates about the construction of a refuge Yimkard ("made by Yima") by Yima, where the chosen good creatures escape from Markūšan

heavy shower (av. mahrkūša-, "destroyer", AiWb. 1147), which probably appeared in the Pehlevi text by consonance with Jewish malkōš "heavy rain", -- West, 1871,134). If we accept West's proposal, we'll have a combination of Iranian and NE myth when "frost and cold" turn into heavy rain, and the situation becomes more and more similar to the flood story. At the same time, could we suppose that the Avestan variant of myth is also a consequence of NE tradition invasion, and its Middle Persian reading just turns us to sources of these images again?

Ancient Indian variants of the flood myth are connected with Manu, brother of Yama, just as latter being son of Vīvasvat (Shatapatha-brahmana I 8,1), with Višnu (Mahabharata III 186-187, 194) and Krišna.

Returning to Avestan story about Yima, we need to note the strongest connection between Yima and Višnu: famous three steps of Višnu, with which he measures earth, and which embrace three worlds, correspond to Yima's earth enlargement in three steps with two wonderful tools. E. Pirart paid attention that the Avestan words used in the description of Yima's Vara, which also consists of three parts, demonstrate a sequence of "floors" (the higher, the middle, the lower (Georges Dumezil face aux demons iraniens, 165). The same is in Vd 14.14 and we can suppose that this is another connection with the three steps of Višnu. There is also an essentially Avestan character, already mentioned owner of a heavenly palace, Sraoša. Frādat.gaēdōm -- "Enlarging earthly world" serves as his epithet. Perhaps, following Sraoša (Yasna 57.29), Videvdat's Yima became the owner of two tools and also two kingdoms or rules (Sraoša defends people in two worlds -- material and mental, Yasna 57.25). The fact that Sraoša is named the first of Ahura Mazda's creatures, who respected him and other deities as a priest, with barsman in hands, also connects Sraoša's image with Yima's Videvdat story -- this is the role of priest proposed to Yima by Ahura Mazda which Yima rejected.

It is interesting that Yima and Višnu connection appears or passes on to the story of the construction of Vara, because we see here a mention of feet, so important in Višnu's image. (in fact hands are mentioned too, because, evidently, myth's narrator would feel bewilderment otherwise):

Vd. 2.31. Then Yima said within himself: 'How shall I manage to make that Vara which Ahura Mazda has commanded me to make?' And Ahura Mazda said unto Yima: 'O fair Yima, son of Vivanghat! Crush the earth with a stamp of thy *heel*, and then knead it with thy hands, as the potter does when kneading the potter's clay.'

(tr. by James Darmesteter)

It's evident that this plain construction technique, was mentioned here solely because "crushing with a stamp of thy heel" had mythological basis. Thus we can suppose that it's Yima who represents the deity in Iranian tradition (or appears as its pale shadow), which was named Višnu in India. Furthermore, in Yima's story told in the second fragard of the Avestan Videvdat, we even can see detailed two parts telling of RV passage dedicated to Višnu, for the sake of defence (rescue from gods' anger? asurs'?), happiness and prosperity of men, measuring the world in three steps:

RV VI.49 He who for man's behoof in his affliction thrice measured out the earthly regions,
Višnu

When one so great as thou affordeth shelter, may we with wealth and with ourselves be happy.

(Tr. by Griffith, 1896)

There is also another line, showing, on the one hand, a connection, and on the other hand, -- discrepancy of Iranian and Indian images and characters. The role of the first mortal is occupied in Iranian mythology not by Yima, but by Gayōmard (av. *gaya-* *martan-* "mortal life"), "from whom", according to Yašt 13.87 Ahura Mazda produced family of Aryan countries. Some details appear in Middle Persian literature about creation of Gayōmard as the first man by Ormazd (Ahura Mazda) and about his death, which is determined in advance by Ormazd and will happen from the antagonist of Ormazd, Ahriman. This first death was so a basis for increase and multiplication of life and, according to logic of Zoroastrian theologians, was quite defensible. This idea of death's excuse as of an impulse of life's increase is not expressed in the Avestan text (Yašt 13.87) at all and the very death is not mentioned there.

Epithets of Gayōmard in the Bundahišn (53) are "light" and "white", likewise epithets of Yima are "beautiful" and "brighten". Perhaps this could show a connection of both characters with sun-cults without speaking about the fact, that the father of Yima is Vīvahvant. It's known a little about him from the Zoroastrian texts, but he is a sun-god in Indian tradition. Indian Vīvasvat (sansk. "brighten") personifying light in heaven and on earth is also a father of people. At the same time he is the father of Yama; and a parallel to Vīvasvat image, Martanda, (sansk. "from the dead egg") refers us to the name of the first man of Iranians, to Gayōmard, "mortal life". So, Yima is connected with sun because he is its son, but features of a sun-god has also Avestan Sraoša, who begins his daily (?) way in the East, where India is located, and finishes it in the West (Yasna 57.29). Apparently this is a reason why Vara of Yima and palace of Sraoša are "selfilluminating from inside", -- the latter is sun himself and the former partly inherits features of Sraoša, partly is in the genealogical connection with sun.

In its turn, returning to the common in images of Iranian Sraoša and Yima and Indian Višnu, it is necessary to mention, that the latter also has bright features of a sun-god, which was stressed many times. In addition to this, embracing three worlds with his three steps, the last his step Višnu makes to the highest sphere of heaven, where the abode of Agni-sun is (RV I.72/2-4), where the gods enjoy (RV III.29.7), where the abode of righteous is (RV I.154.5-6). This, without doubt, returns us to the heavenly abode of Vedic Yama and to the connection between Vara of Yima and palaces of Sraoša and gods of Yašts.

Summarising preceding I would like to pay attention at some aspects. First, in view of all diffusion of mythological images and subjects, telling about the first mortal and therefore about the appearance of death, the Iranian tradition, unlike the Indian one, gives to Yima the features of Sraoša and Višnu and diverts death from him (and also, unlike the Middle Persian texts, from Gayōmard). Second, in subjects, connected with these two Avestan characters, Yima and Gayōmard, there are no excuse for death (again unlike the Middle Persian texts).

Approximately the same thing is applicable to the motif of the death-noose: whereas in the Vedas the noose figures as an attribute of Varuna, as well as of the king of the dead Yama (being both of them positive images), - the same tool in the Avesta belongs to one of the demons of death (Av. *astō.vīdōtu-*), depicted, as well as all the other demonic beings, very unfavourably, as belonging to the realm of Darkness. An interesting functional shift occurs as regards the couple of the chthonic dogs. According to the Rg-Veda, they belong to Yama and look for those, who are destined to death. The dogs are closely connected with the death in the Zoroastrian tradition as well. However, this relationship is represented here in a different, if not

the opposite way. The dogs, which are referred to in the Avestan Videvdad (they are not mentioned anywhere else in the Avesta) as the second good creatures after the human beings, accompany the deity of Faith and the inner faith of a person (understood as one of the constituents of soul, a sort of inner double) already after one's death. This means that the encounter of the mythic dogs with a human does not take place when he or she is desecrated by dying and death, but when his / her soul has already been separated from the body. In contrast with the Vedic dogs, the Avestan ones do not attract the death, but, on the contrary, charm it away from a corpse with their sight, a capacity which accounts for the role the dogs play in the Zoroastrian funeral ceremony. The force of sanctity ascribed to the dogs by the Zoroastrians is so great, that they are entitled to substitute for a second person in the funeral rite, a single-handed fulfilment of which is believed to be a gravest sin. Obviously, all these details testify to the same connexion of the dogs with Death, which is well known all over the Indo-European world and even wider, but the Avestan texts represent this relationship in a very special perspective

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It is well known that the specific attitude to the death, dying, ageing, any corporal defect is very characteristic of Zoroastrianism. It is beyond all doubt, that this attitude, subjected to the thoroughgoing (at least, in the priests' mind) division of the whole creation into the good and evil, could not leave the treatment of the mythic themes unaffected. According to this scheme, the life of the creatures of Ahura Mazda and the Holy Spirit belongs to the first side, and their death, accordingly, to the second. Besides, in addition to the natural development of the mythic themes under the influence of the idea of the main line dividing the Universe, direct editing by the priests cannot be excluded, which should have reached the full extent of its power during the period of the codification of the Avesta. It must be taken into account, that the main internal tension of Zoroastrianism, which differentiates the "Zoroastrian orthodoxy", ascribing primordial superiority to the Good Energies, from the "Zervinite heresy", proceeding from the ontological equality of right and wrong, could also give rise to different attitudes towards death. Whereas an orthodox saw in the death a will of Ahura Mazda, a Zervanite should have ascribed it to the realm of pure evil. A testimony to the fact that this problem was a matter of controversy among the priests, can be found, for instance, in the Avestan Videvdad

Vd 5.8. O Maker of the material world, thou Holy One! Does water kill? Ahura Mazda answered: "Water kills no man: Asto.vīdotu binds him, and, thus bound, Vayu carries him off; and the flood takes him up, the flood takes him down, the flood throws him ashore; then birds feed upon him. When he goes away, it is by the will of Fate he goes.

Vd.5.9. ...Fire kills no man: Asto.vīdotu binds him, and, thus bound, Vayu carries him off; and the fire burns up flesh and vital force (uššana-).

It is evident here, how the priests solve the problem of a death caused by "pure" sacred elements, water and fire. It is noteworthy, that in contrast with the subsequent Zoroastrian books written in Middle Persian, the compilers of the Videvdad do not refer yet to the will of Ahura Mazda as to the principal cause of human death. In the Avestan text we have *baxta-*, "fate, destiny", which, as we have seen, operates human's life and brings him to death, that is immediately to the demons of death. The question arises, whether this notion is to be interpreted in this context as a deity or a constituent of human being.

Av. vaiiu- means “air, wind” and “(Good) deity of air and space”; in the Avesta the relation of the two Vayu to good and evil is not specified. Asto.vīdotu and (“Bad”) Vayu are only two of the host of demons, who act under authority of the Evil Spirit and represent the forces of the evil, darkness, pollution and death - for Zoroastrian thought all these notions are equivalent. In the Avesta their realm is defined as drug-, “Lie”, that is, everything opposite to the universal law and “Truth” aša-. The most prominent role in the Videvdad, being the part of the Avesta focusing on the battle against the demons, is played by the motif of driving out the she-Demon of Death, who represents cadaveric pollution, and moreover, the corpse itself and is called Druxš-ya-Nasu, Av. “the Lie which is the Corpse”. Numerous sections (fragards) of the Videvdad deal with the cases of her assaults on the bodies of the dead and live, as well as to the rites driving her out. This fact leaves no room to the doubt in her importance and danger in the eyes of Zoroastrians, probably because she personified the “transmissibility” or “infectioness” of death. For a Zoroastrian, to be in “infected” by death did not mean to go from hence into the other world or into the “abode of righteous”, but to become a receptacle of evil; it is due to this belief that the Zoroastrians had such a horror of a contact with a dead substance.

Druxš-ya-Nasu, arriving from the north in the shape of a disgusting fly, attacks the human body, once the soul has left it under the pressure of the other demons.

The Zoroastrian terminology taken in general, as represented by the Avestan Videvdad, does not constitute a consistent, well-elaborated system. This is clear, in particular, from the discrepancies in the texts concerning funeral rites. In contrast, the terms and epithets applied to the Druxš-ya-Nasu are defined quite sharply. Putting them into practice is determined by complicated gradation of the sacred and impure, a concept to be briefly set forth as follows: the more sacred a being is, the more pollution its corpse disseminates the more contagious it is. The cadavers of the nasty, demonic beings are therefore, pure, because the noxious creatures defile everything while being alive (Vd 5.27-38). For the activity of Druxš-ya-Nasu the following terms are elaborated:

she “pounce upon”, “swoops down” (frāduuasaiti) on a good creature and, depending on the grade of its holiness, “overtakes” (frāšnaoiti) a group of surrounding creatures, “infecting” (paiti.raēθβaeiti) some of them. As regards to the corpses of those beings, whose status of holiness is insufficient to be “infected” by Druxš-ya-Nasu, the verb “admixes” (ham.raēθβaeiti) is used, - their corps does not “admix” with the good creatures (Vd 5.27-36).

Moreover, a man, carrying a dead body alone, entirely becomes a receptacle of Druxš-ya-Nasu, who “penetrates”, “admixes” (raēθβat) with the sinner through his natural orifices, among which nose, eyes, mouth, penis and anus are enumerated, affecting him to fingertips (Vd 3.14). Obviously, ears were not included in this list by mistake; together with them, we would have the well-known scheme of the 9 natural orifices, in which the number “9” is itself important.

Thus, the infective nature of this defilement is understandable. It is also quite clear that, elementary logical reasoning in this context does not permit deriving the diversity of the world from the corpse, which became a receptacle of the demon. Therefore, unlike Yama and Puruṣa, the Avestan Yima and Gayōmard, should not die in the course of the narrative of the increase of the world and mankind, as well as for the sake of justifying the death, all the more so that, as the history of Yima was included in the Videvdad.

A considerable part of the Videvdad deals with the procedures of purification from Druxš-ya-Nasu. All of them have similar structure and contain isolation of the purified in a

room of minimum dimensions alienated from the community; restriction of food, drinking, clothes and contacts with the outside world; ritual baths and other purificatory activities. The most severe procedure is appointed to the abovementioned sinner, who transported a corpse alone, because he is believed to have become a corpse himself, very dangerous and contagious. Nevertheless, one does not kill him immediately, but allows him to live to be old in a special isolated building (Vd 3. 15-20). The description of this place of confinement is repeated in its entirety in Vd 5.46-49, where the purification of a woman after miscarriage (her womb is called "tomb"), and expanded in Vd 16.2-12, where the name of this place is mentioned - *airime gātūm* "place of repose" (or "place of impurity"?). Here a woman in the state of impurity, may spend, depending on her condition, up to 9 nights, after which time 3 holes are to be dug: two for a bath in the bovine urine, and one for a bath with water. Similar place is mentioned again in connexion with the main Zoroastrian purificatory ceremony "9 nights" (9.33-36).

Typologically, such a construction for isolation of those who are contaminated or fulfill purificatory ceremonies before an initiation or consecration is close to the Zoroastrian "temporary tombs" *kata-*, a sort of mortuaries. They were made by threes (for men, women and children) in wintertime, when it was difficult to observe the Zoroastrian funeral rites (Vd. 5.10-11). The small dimensions of the cells, as well as of the wards, were caused by the will to minimize the dissemination of defilement. Actually, the Zoroastrian custom of ritual burying nails and hair, which brought into existence special buildings, having no entrance, ascends to the same ideas. Zoroastrian wards for the ritually impure women had no normal entrance as well (it was considerably lower than the usual one). Obviously this is a trace of the well known ritual and mythological understanding of the unusual place of a dead person among alive people: dead cannot leave house from usual door, a hole in the wall or another kind of opening have to be made for this. It is interesting that by the same constructional scheme fire temples were built in Iran, in order to hidden them from the Muslims: according M. Boyce, a priest was forced to creep into the small camera without windows (it was located inside a dwelling house), where the sacred fire was being maintained. In the foothill of the Pamir almost up to date the practice of isolation of the *amort* was preserved, who were placed into small buildings, where they were agonizing alone, away from the village; according to some evidence, one used to bring to them food, other witnesses report that it was only checked from time to time, whether a dying person is dead or still alive. The idea of isolation of the purified in a small room, associated with a tomb and with mother's womb alike, is parallel to the Old Indian religious practice, where it undergoes profound ritual interpretation. The specific character of the Iranian attitude to the death is caused by the Panic fear before the defilement brought about by a corpse. The modern Persians and Tadjiks call the defilement through the death *siyāhī*, "blackness". It is believed that the "blackness", during three days after one's death imbuing the dead's house, is infective and dangerous for the neighbourhood. As for the Zoroastrians, it is well known that they regarded all symptoms of illness, ageing and corporal defects as results of activity of the Evil Spirit. Thus, the sacrifices offered up by ill or disabled were not accepted by gods. And just as the wicked did not ascend Noah's Ark so there was no room in Yima's *Vara* for the people with defects, that is, with the marks of the Evil Spirit.

Apart from the isolation chambers, which can reasonably be called "temporary tombs", the most important role in the driving out of *Druxš-ya-Nasu* is played by the place, in which the ritual baths "9 nights" are fulfilled. The using of number "9" here is absolutely clear ($9=3*3$), besides all in this case 9 also means correspondence between 9 holes of human body through which *Druxš-ya-Nasu* attacks a human being and 9 mythic Iranian rivers of universe by which this body have to be cleansed for the harmonious purity both of microcosm and macrocosm.

All varieties of these constructions by the Iranian Zoroastrians and Indian Parsees are considered in detail in the treatise by Choksy, I would like to emphasize only some significant points: the number of the holes in the most ancient Iranian ritual was 9 (3 groups by 3), the three sections of the road of the purified were paved with plastered soil, stones etc., different agents were used for the purification, first of all bovine urine, also different mixtures with ashes, the last thing water was used. The direction of movement during the purification was from north to south; the Parsees replaced it with the direction from west to east, a substitution caused by the difference between the localization of hell and paradise in Iranian and Indian traditions. A prominent part in the ritual was taken by dogs, which drove Druxš-ya-Nasu by means of their sight. According to the Videvdad, new holes for the baths were or could be dug every time in order to fulfill a new complex of the rites.

The translations of Avestan designations of the cardinal directions were suggested by Bartholomae. To him, the Old Iranian concept of the directions did not fit the Old Indian; the Zoroastrian paradise is associated with the south, the hell - with the north. Bartholomae's opinion was rejected by Lommel, who argued that the the Old Iranian concept of the directions principally coincided with the Indian. Nevertheless, there is an undoubted textual substantiation of Bartholomae's view, provided by the Hadoxt Nask, which was acknowledged by Lommel himself, who regarded it as an "innovation". Besides, Bartholomae's opinion goes well with actual ritual practices, preserved in Iran for centuries, placing the Zoroastrian hell to the north, and the paradise to the south. At any rate, this correspondence really took place, as testified by Middle Persian vocabulary. Correct interpretation of the designations of the cardinal directions is of great importance both for the line of march of Iranian tribes to their historical territory, and to the pattern of their religious rites. Taking for granted the attested correspondence between the north and hell, especially if it evolved out of accord with the common Indo-Iranian attribution of hell and paradise to certain directions, as Lommel believed, different hypotheses can be suggested in order to account for this phenomenon. From the northern side, according to the Videvdad, the she-demon Druxš-ya-Nasu arrives in the shape of fly. Such a representation of the demon is quite natural against the background of the total division of the creation with the adversarial position of its parts: all the insects, reptiles, varmints and other harmful animals, are believed by the Zoroastrians to be noxious creatures, xrafstra-, which are prescribed to be killed. The flies are mentioned between the xrafstra-, but their role is insignificant by comparison with Druxš-ya-Nasu. Again, in some Middle-East concepts the flies take rather prominent place. Apart from the well-known Hebrew notions of impurity of the flies and the exclusion of their penetration into the Temple, I mean the exegesis of the Old testament by St. Jerome, according to which Bā'al-Zebūb is explained as "lord of flies", a reading which was widely accepted in the Christian World. It is not excluded that this exegesis corresponds to some realities with which St. Jerome got acquainted during his journey to the East. As for Semitic tradition proper, it may be worth noting that the Ugaritic god b'l zbl builds his palace on the *Northern* Mountain (Šapanu).

In fact, all the information we possess of Old Iranian purifying rites, is drawn from the Avestan Videvdad. One can add to this some results of archaeological research, obtained in Pendjikent (V-VIII centuries AD), where an external court of a temple was excavated on a bank of a canal with a row of 9 holes disposed in the direction from west to east. The holes were dug in groups by three, a structure corresponding to the description of the Videvdad. The western group of the holes was filled with tender ground mixed with coals (Shkoda 1998). From my point of view, this fact testifies to the direction of movement from west to east, because the coals and ashes could serve as additional purifying agents to be used on the first stages of the baths. The

direction of the holes from west to east could be viewed as an argument in favour of Lommel's theory, but one should bear in mind that the Zoroastrian Sogd was subject to extremely strong Indian influence.

I suppose, that very elaborated Zoroastrian rituals connected with the driving away Druxš-ya-Nasu can have much more ancient roots. Margiana Archaeological expedition under the leadership of Victor Sarianidi in 2007-2008 excavated at Gonur, Turkmenistan (so-called BMAK, Bronze time) two rooms and a square at two different parts of the site (site N16 rooms 88 and 92, and also site N13) with specially prepared holes. These some gatherings of holes are not similar and rather demonstrate different types of ritual construction. The detailed publication of rooms 88 and 92 will be published soon in Russian, and I would like only to stress some aspects which could be in the connection of my theme on ritual ablutions and impurity, in which the most dangerous is the defilement of dead. As to typological close features of all holes, dimensions of which vary (e.g. from 30 cm to more than 1 m in diameter, from 5 to 40 cm in deep), -- almost all of them have walls from alabaster, some have laying out from pieces of ceramics and/or broken bricks and stones. The filling of holes, except usual sand, very often contain ashes, sometimes small parts of charcoal -- substances, which could be used as additional means of purification or as parts of sacrifices during purifications. The walls of holes sometimes bear traces of water or other liquids -- they have a form of a wave, which possibly demonstrate that they were not filled with water (the walls are too thin for this), but little amounts of water were used over holes, as e.g. in Zoroastrian rites of purity. Sometimes near these holes several bricks were put, and this is also close to the Zoroastrian system of ablutions, when priest or candidate himself could stay on the more pure places of the territory (e.g. stones) for ablutions.

Also I suppose, an important detail is the direction of the assumed rituals. Both rooms 16.88 and 92 and three holes at the square of site 13 are oriented NS (room 88 shows that more probably from N to S, because of place for entrance, e.g.). The most interesting is room 88, which has not only holes and bricks, but also a little double bath for feet only, one part of which has a round opening perhaps for running water. Near this bath a gathering of small ritual balls was placed. Room 92 which is located not far from room 88, is maybe a bathroom provided with an oven and a well for sewage. It is not clear, how many holes were made on the the square of site 13, because that part of square was destroyed; but it could be an interesting case of a row of three holes, well known in ancient Indian and Iranian practise.

We could find perhaps a parallel to the Gonur's holes in the site of Aji-kui, which is located several km from the first one. G. Rossi Osmida calls two rooms with a lot of holes at this site as a "sanctuary" (Aji-kui Oasis, 78). It is not inconceivable that at least one part of this holes was used for ritual ablutions; their large amount could be in the connection with the tradition to make for the new series of rituals new row of holes. So, at Gonur the new "circles" were made over the "old".

Of course, I cannot affirm that rituals of Gonur are the same as Zoroastrian ones, -- the interpretation of Gonur's constructions is a disputable question and the difference between Zoroastrian places for ablutions and rooms at Gonur is clear. It is possible only to suppose, that in the ancient city civilisation with the high culture of priesthood we can find any bases for future religion. This is more likely, that the same parallel occurs in India, and Vedic ablutions derived from pre-Vedic Indian ones.