

## LESSON 1

### PHONOLOGY OF OLD AVESTAN.

Old Avestan probably had the following vowel and consonant phonemes:

Vowel phonemes:

	Front	Central	Back, rounded	Nasal
High	i, ī		u, ū	(i) <ii̯a, ī>, (u) <uu̯a>
Mid	e <e, ē>	ə <ə, ē>	o <o, ō>	(ē̯a) <ē̯>
Low	a, ā		ā	a, ā <a>
Vocalic r		ʀr̥ <ər̥>		(ʀr̥) <ər̥>

Notes.

The nasalized *i* and *u* are written *ii̯a* and *uu̯a* before *m*; nasalized *i* is written (becomes?) *ī* before sibilant (*z*, *š*).

The nasalized *ē* is written *ē̯a* in *mē̯a*.

The phonemic status of the “Mid” row is uncertain (see Beekes’s discussion).

The opposition between the short and long vowel phonemes is neutralized in final position in favor of the long vowels. Before clitics the original quantity is maintained, ex.: *xʷitica̯ ðnəiti̯, buuain̥ti̯ ~ buuan̥tica̯*.

The principles of the distribution of final *-ō* ~ *-ē* are not clear, except that *-ō* is by far the most common and that *-ē* is used in monosyllables: *ahurō ~ kē, yē*.

The phonetic nature of the “vocalic *r*” is not known. In the later Iran. languages the *r* always survives, preceded by a vowel which usually varies according to the phonetic contexts (usually *ir*, *ur*). The “supporting” vowels of the vocalic *r* are frequently modified by the phonetic context to *ōra*, *irai*, etc.

Epenthesis is more common in OAv. than in YAv.

Diphthongs:

ai <aē>	~ (oi) <ōi>	~ (əi) <əi, əui>	āi
au <ao>	~ (ou)	~ (əu) <əu>	āu

Notes.

The long vowels and diphthongs may be disyllabic: *ā*, *ā̯* <*aʷa*>; *ā̯* <*aʷō*>; *aē*, *ōi* <*aʷi*>; *āi* <*aʷai*>, gen. plur. *-qm* = *-aʷām*.

In final position the diphthong *ōi* alternates with *iē*.

The diphthong *ōi* is much more common in OAv. than in YAv. Note especially that OAv. normally has *ōii* (= *ōi̯i*) corresponding to YAv. *aii* (= *ai̯i*), e.g., *isōi̯iā ~ YAv. \*isaiiā*, *xʷāθrōi̯iā ~ YAv. xʷāθraiia*.

The diphthong *əi* is found in *vātəi̯iāmahī*, beside *vātōi̯iōtū*. It is written *əui* in forms of *kaēš/caēš*: *cəuii̯šī*, *cəuii̯štā* (vars. *ciuii̯š*).

In final position the diphthong *aō* is occasionally (still?) found in the mss.; mostly it has been replaced(?) by *āu*, *ā̯*, or *ā*.

Consonant phonemes:

	Stops		Fricatives	Continuant	Nasals	Sibilants	
Labials	p	b (β)	f	ʋ <uu> (v, β)	m		
Dentals	t	d	θ (ð)		n	s	z
Alveolar				r (hr)		š	
Alveo-palatals	č	ǰ				š	ž
Palatals				ǰ <ii> (y)		š	
Velars	k	g	x		ŋ		
Palato-velars			(x)		(ŋ)		
Labio-velars			(xʷ)		(ŋʷ)		
Glottals	(ʔ)			h			

**Allophones:**

β = /b/ before ž (βž)

β = /u/ after θ (θβ)

δ = /θ/ after x (xδ, xəδ) and after f (fδ, fəδ)

γ = /g/ before ž (γž).

t̥ = /t/ finally after vowel, r, and g (-Vt̥, -rə̃t̥, -gə̃t̥) and initially before k (tk-).

v = /u/ initially (v-)

y = /i/ initially (y-)

ŋ̊ = /ŋi/ (ŋ palatalized by i)

ŋ̊<sup>v</sup> = /ŋu/ (ŋ labialized by u)

š = /h̥i/ in complementary distribution with hii according to undiscovered principles

x<sup>v</sup> = /h̥u/ in unclear distribution (huuarə̃ ~ x<sup>v</sup>ə̃ng, both disyllabic)

hr = /r/ in complementary distribution (kəhrpə̃m)

**Note:**

Intervocalic *b*, *d*, *g* remain in OAv., as opposed to YAv., where they normally became β, δ, γ.

The exact distribution of ŋ̊ and ŋ̊<sup>v</sup> in the manuscripts has not yet been investigated.

Initial *ur*- and *ru* both became Av. *uruu*-.

Before consonants *u* combined with preceding *a* to form the diphthong *ao* (e.g. *vaorāza* < \**ua-urāza*).

**ORTHOGRAPHY. 1.**

Most of the orthographic features of Young Avestan are found also in Old Avestan.

**Disjointed spelling.**

Examples of disjointed spelling (spelling of one word as two words) is more common in OAv. than in YAv. In addition to the separation of endings (*gə̃uš.āiš*, *drə̃guuō.də̃bīš*, *gūšō.dūm*, *vərə̃ziiō.tū*), we also find spellings such as *aēšəm.mahiiā* for \**aēšə̃mahiiā*, *təm.catū* for \**tə̃ncatū*(?).

**Anaptyxis.**

In Old Avestan, anaptyxis (*a*, *ə*) is found in more situations than in Young Avestan. It is found

1. between occlusives: *patarə̃m* (v.l. *ptarə̃m*), Skt. *pitaram*; *də̃bə̃nao*-, Skt. *dabhno*-; *daibitā*, Skt. *dvitā*; *cagədō*; *dugə̃drqm*, Skt. *duhitarām*; *āskə̃iti*- (< \**āskti*-).
2. in groups with two spirants + *r*: *vaxə̃dra*- < √*vak*; *rafə̃dra*- < √*rap*.
3. after *r*, both before other consonants (including *š*) and in final position:
  - *marə̃tā*, Skt. *mārta*; *varatā*, Skt. *varta*; *arə̃θa*-, Skt. *ārtha*-;
  - *kə̃rə̃ta*-, Skt. *kṛta*-; *kə̃rə̃šuuā*, Skt. *kṛṣva*, *ərə̃š*, YAv. *arš* < \**r̥j-š*; *cikō̃itərə̃š*, cf. Skt. *cikituḥ*;
  - *θə̃bō̃rə̃štā* < \**θu̥r̥šta*; *mō̃rə̃nda*- < \**m̥nda*-;
  - *uzirə̃idiiāi* < \**rdiiāi*;
  - *vadarə̃*, Skt. *vadhar*; *huuarə̃*, Skt. *svār*; *aṇtarə̃*, Skt. *antar*.
4. between *n* and *r* (few examples): *jə̃narqm* < \**jan-rām*.
5. between sibilant or *f* and *r*: *sə̃raoša*-, YAv. *sraoša*-; *zarə̃zdāiti*-, cf. Skt. *śraddhā*-(?); *fə̃raša*- YAv. *fraša*-; *fsə̃ratū*-;
6. between stops/fricative/sibilants and nasal:
  - *də̃māna*-, YAv. *nmāna*-; *gə̃nā*-, Skt. *gnā*-;
  - *rafə̃nah*-, YAv. *rafnah*-; *raē̃xə̃nah*-;
  - *vasə̃mī*, Skt. *vaśmī*; *uruuā̃zə̃man*-.