The topic of the present paper concerns the nature and the features of the deity Apām Nāpāt as observed both in Avestan and in Vedic traditions.

All of the research, that has been offered in order to outline the religious and mythological role of Apām Nāpāt and that has given place to a lot of discussion among scholars, lacks a monographic study up to now. Nevertheless, the complexity of the debate, the variety and the discordance among the solutions proposed by scholars seems to require it.¹

I devoted myself to the study of the enigmatic role of Apām Nāpāt in the religious worlds of the Ṛgveda and of the Young Avestan texts in occasion of my graduation thesis. It is obvious that this study is far from being the exhaustive answer we are still waiting for. It is an attempt to focus the main problems concerning the nature of Apām Nāpāt and it intends to make the basic tools available for further research. All the passages where Apām Nāpāt is mentioned has been gathered and analyzed from a linguistic and philological point of view. They have been then discussed in order to outline some possible interpretations about the role and the importance of Apām Nāpāt in the mythology of the Avesta and of the Ṛgveda.

In the present paper, I shall attract your attention only to some of the main subjects which, as far as I can see, are strictly related to Apām Nāpāt, with a special regard to the Avestan evidence and just a mention when necessary, about the Vedic field.

The identity of name, which means "Child of the Waters,"² and the general likeness of traits of the god in both traditions, which can be suddenly noticed at a first glance, no doubt testify that Apām


² The name of Apām Nāpāt does not constitute a word under the linguistic point of view: the god's name shows a genitive plural of the Indo-Iranian stem *ap-* "water" (going back to Indo-European *āp-, see J. Pokorny, Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch, Bern-Munchen 1959, 1969, p. 51) and the substantives nāpāt- and nāpāt-, coming from the Indo-Iranian form with alternating stem *nāpāt-/ nāpt- sometimes translated as "grandson" but more likely meaning properly "child," descendants, "offspring" (see C. Bartholomae, AWI, col. 1939). The restored Indo-European stem is *nēpt-/ nēpt- (Latīn nēptōs Greek νεπτός, nēptos = Av. napatia- < IE *nept-tvo-; Ancient English nefa, see J. Pokorny, IEW, p. 764; M. Mayrhofer, Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen, Heidelberg 1956-1980, II, p. 132 ff.) From this latter, viz. nēpt-, comes nāptānus, through *nēpt-o-no-, and Old Irish nechtan.
Napāt belongs to the common religious heritage of the archaic cultures of Iran and India. A mainly comparative perspective of study is therefore fully legitimate and decidedly advisable, even though some difficulties present themselves at the very beginning. Before reaching the core of the subject, I would like to make a few preliminary and necessary remarks.

The study of Apām Napāt, if considered under a comparative point of view, is involved, in fact, in the general problems concerning the possibilities and the limits of the comparative analysis itself, at least in the field of Indo-Iranian studies. If the idea of a cultural Indo-Iranian unity is generally assumed and firmly established, on the other hand, it is often followed by attempts to reconstruct in detail the common ancient pantheon, or parts of it. These attempts encounter many obstacles. The most difficult one concerns the lack of proof of the results of a pre-historical comparative inquiry. Whenever we want to restore the original features of a deity or the original religious concepts belonging to the unitarian archaic Indo-Iranian people, we can only propose hypotheses which are in no way verifiable, because no written evidence is available up to this time.

Entering deeply into the field of pre-history is undeniably a very delicate undertaking. It seems to be even more problematic if we carefully consider that this undertaking often appears as a solution for facing the difficulties encountered in the attempt to interpret the religious systems strictly as they present themselves in the texts. The deities, as they appear in the Avesta and in the Rgveda, are complex and articulate entities that give many dilemmas to those who try, after such a long period of time, to explain their features and importance in the lives of the men of ancient Iran and India. Their roles and the relationships between them, as well as the meaning they express for the ancient way of thinking, are so intricate in the original texts, as to give rise to a natural need for simplification by the researchers who interpret them. I am referring to a trait that often distinguishes the attempts to specify the original physiognomy of the gods. both in the field of comparative studies and in that of one and the same culture. This trait consists of depriving the divinities under discussion of some features thought to be secondary, in order to declare the pre-eminence of others thought to display the real and genuine nature of the gods. The complex data furnished by the texts do not allow such a simplification, which can hardly be seen as a living form: the supposed essential features of the divinities are never directly recognizable in their pure form in the stage of religious thought referred to by the sources, but are rather inextricably mingled with the supposed secondary traits. These facts usually compel us to assign the genuine nature of the gods to the period of the origins and therefore to talk about a primitive nature.

The historical perspective, as far as religious Indo-Iranian prehistory is concerned, appears to be decidedly unstable because of two types of problems: the first one is related to the lack of direct, viz. written, evidence. This kind of hindrance reveals how risky is any attempt in using reconstructions in order to understand the attested religious stages; the second concerns the need for clearness, by the interpreter, which often leads to curtail the profile of the gods of various features in order to introduce the concept of original, genuine nature. In my opinion, this practice can not become a proper and useful method of research, because it would be of little help in understanding the role of the gods as it can be actually found in the reference material.

For facing the inquiry on Apām Napāt, I suggest not to neglect the previous remarks which concern the problem of how the notion of cultural unity is to be considered and the possible usefulness of comparisons. I will avoid going back to prehistory in order not to risk recreating a
primitive *Apām Napāt. The latter would necessarily be a conjecture devoid of benefit for the understanding of the real and actual value of two different gods, viz. Zoroastrian Apām Napāt and Vedic Apān Napaṭ, in two, by now, different cultures. The method of comparative approach is here rather meant to be a tool for inquiring whether traces of the same spheres of meaning and clues of a similar mentality can be found, in ancient Iran and ancient India, regarding the spheres of experience which involve Apām Napāt. Such a definition of the question no doubt comes from the idea, especially established thanks to the linguistic inquiry, of a common past. The results, if they are positive (and they actually are), would confirm, once again, this well known notion. Nevertheless, the Indo-Iranian prehistory, especially in the fields of religion and mythology, is a general reference we can hardly determine in detail lay means of statements concerning specific subjects. On the contrary, it is rather possible, in my opinion, to illustrate in detail the affinities and resemblances that link two historical cultures, finding traces of a past unity, but chiefly indicating the affinities still existing at the time of the sources.

Apām Napāt appears some thirty times in the Avesta, exclusively in the sections written in Younger Avestan. The characteristic attributes which accompany him in an almost fixed formula are borzazat-, kshaṛīīa-, kṣaeta-, auruaṣapa-. Apām Napāt shares the attribute auruaṣapa- only with the Sun (huaros), whereas the great title of ahūre- so often possessed by him is shared only by Mihrā and Ahura Mazdā.

In this short paper I would like to focus my attention on Yašt 19.51, which I believe is the most important passage regarding Apām Napāt, at least as a starting point for understanding the role of this god in the Zoroastrian pantheon. In this case, in fact, a feature of Apām Napāt is highlighted explicitly, which is, as far as I can see, extremely important and fundamental in the nature of this god, viz. the guardianship over xarunah-. The passage reads as follows: Yašt 19.51:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{āēēt} \ x\text{arōnō} \ f\text{rapinuiata} \\
a\text{dim} \ h\text{thra} \ h\text{angurumuiiai}\th \\
\text{arpm} \ n\text{apā} \ a\text{uurum\text{as}pō} \\
t\text{ata} \ i\text{ziāiti} \\
\text{arpm} \ n\text{apā} \ a\text{uurum\text{as}pō} \\
\text{ēēt} \ x\text{arōnō} \ h\text{angraf\text{ā}nē} \\
\text{ya} \ a\text{xarōt\text{ā}m} \\
b\text{unm} \ z\text{rauṇūhō} \ g\text{ufrahe} \\
b\text{ume} \ j\text{aframm} \ v\text{airiāн̣ēm}
\end{align*}
\]

A possible translation is: "This xarunah- went to swell into Sea Vourukaš. There, Apām Napāt endowed with swift horses noticed it suddenly and Apām Napāt endowed with swift horses longs for it. This xarunah- that is hidden (occulted) I want to grasp (and take) to the bottom of the deep sea, on the bottom of the deep recesses."7

Thanks to this passage we immediately learn how essential it is, for our purposes regarding Apām Napāt, the meaning and the religious importance of xarunah-. The nature of the concept of xarō

---

1 The passages are: Yašt 2.4; Yašt 5.72; Yašt 8.4, 34; Yašt 13.95; Yašt 19.51-52; Yasna 1.5, 2.5, 3.7, 4.10, 6.4, 7.7, 70.6, 71.23; Visperad 7.5; Gāh 1.9, 2.10, 3.2, 3.8, 3.9-10, 3.11, 4.11, 5.8; Sīh Rozag 1.7, 1.30, 2.7, 2.30.
2 Against the idea that hangurumuiiai could mean "he grasped / he seized" (see, for instance, A. Hintze, Der Zamyād Yašt, p. 269: "egrifft") see H. Humbach / P.R. Ichaporia, Zamyād Yašt, Wiesbaden 1998, pp. 44, 131, where ha ngurumuiiai is translated as "(Apām Napāt…) reached for (it)". The verb grab- also means "to seize with one's mind, to comprehend, to perceives," as Prof. Humbach kindly reminded me (see J. Kellens I E. Pirart, Les textes vieill-avestiques I, Wiesbaden 1988, p. 239, with regard to the Old Avestan use of grab-, with double accusative, with the meaning of "saisir, percevoir que acc. est acc.").
3 Since the ending of bunam could be influenced by the preceding axtarōm, Almut Hintze, op. cit. p. 270, emended it with *bume (see also H. Humbach / P.R. Ichaporia, op.cit., pp. 44, 131; the same correction already in C.Bartholomae, Arische Forschungen I, Halle 1882, p. 124, and K.F. Geldner, Drei Yast aus dem Zendavesta, Stuttgart 1884, p. 39). This solution restores the possible anaphora in lines 9 and 10 and makes the passage no doubt more intelligible and clear. Nevertheless, the manuscript tradition, which shows exclusively bunam, recommends prudence and suggests the possibility of seeing actually a variatio in the text (C. Bartholomae and K.F. Geldner themselves renounced the emendation in AIW col. 968, and in the edition of the Avesta). Adopting the unanimous textual transmission, it is a matter of explaining the function possessed by the accusative bunam. According to my opinion, an idea of motion connoting hangrafāne to be possible: the translation given above follows this suggestion, but could be also replaced by another translation such as "I want to grasp this xarunah- …, (going) to the bottom of the deep sea."
nah- is one of the most problematic subjects in Zoroastrian studies, from a linguistic point of view as well as in the field of the history of religions. It is well known how intricate the inquiry of the etymology of x'arna(h)- is, a problem which still involves the contribution of scholars (recently a new hypothesis has been put forward by A. Lubotsky). It is not possible in this short paper to deal exhaustively with this complex and large subject. In spite of the plurality: and the discordance of opinions, it is generally accepted that the concept of X'arna(h)-, one of the main issues in the vision of the world contained in the Younger Avesta, is closely related to the ideas of glory and splendor. I will confine myself to mentioning only some of its features, because of their considerable importance for our subject.

The x'arna(h)- is explicitly equated to a fire in Yašt 10.127. This evidence, as it is often underlined, is in favor of the igneous nature of the x'arna(h)-. The passage reads as follows: nixša

---

* Avessian x'arna(h)- the etymology and concept, in Spache und Kultur der Indogermanen. Akten der X. Fachtagung der Indogermanischen Gesellschaft, Innsbruck 22-28. September 1996, herausgegeben von W. Meid, Innsbruck 1998, pp. 479-488. A. Lubotsky's hypothesis starts from the phonological problem that arises whenever we compare the Avestan word x'arna(h) with its cognates belonging to other old and middle Iranian languages. I will dwell briefly upon this point: initial hw- is shown only by the Avestan word and by the Pahlavi xwarra(h), which is generally considered as a loan-word from Avessan (see G. Gnoli, Über das iranische *hwarna(h)- lautliche, morphologische und etymologische Probleme. Zum Stand der Forschung, in Altoorientalische Forschungen 23, 1996, p. 175; H. Humbach / P.R. Ichaporia, op. Cit., p. 14). All the other forms show initial f-: Old Pers. *farna(h)-, Manichean Middle Pers. and Parthian pwrh / fwrh / farroh /, Buddhist Sogdian prnr, Manichean Sogdian prfrn, Christian Sogdian frn, khotanese pharara, Bactrian Ossetic form. Toctarian *far, *par. In facing these data, the traditional view considers the development hu> f as a specific trait of the language of the Medes, since this development does not suit the phonetic features of Old Persian: farnah- would be originally a Median form, adopted in Old Persian as a loanword and subsequently spread by the Achemeniads throughout their kingdom (see A. Meillet / É. Benveniste, Grammaire du vieux-perse, Paris 1931, pp. 7-9; K. Hoffmann, Altorientalisch in Handbuch der Orientalistik I 4.1, a cura di G. Gnoli e A.V. Rossi, Napoli 1979, p. 383; G. Gnoli, Politique religieuse et conception de la royauté sous les Acheménides, in Acta Iranica 2, Leiden 1974, p. 57; P.O. Skjærvø, Farnah- mot mède en vieux-perse? in Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique 78.1, Paris 1983, pp. 246-251). On the other hand, there are many doubts about the assumption that the word farnah- was so important in the royal ideology of the Achemenians as to be spread thanks to their conquests, since it is completely absent in the inscriptions of this dynasty (see J. Duchesne-Guillemin, La Royauté iranienne et le xarna(h)-, in Iranica, a cura di P. Lecoq, La langue des inscriptions achéménides, in Acta Iranica 2, Leiden 1974, pp. 170 ff.). These undeniable difficulties induced P.O. Skjærvø to propose another solution, according to which the development *hwarna(h)- farnah- would be the result of the dissimilation of hw…h into f…h. The Avestan word is essentially the same as the Iranian languages, would have changes initial hw- into x-, thus distinguishing it from the old hw, early enough as not to need the dissimilation (see P.O. Skjærvø, art. cit., pp. 255-257; G. Gnoli, *farnah- in Old Iranian persian farnah-, in Acta Iranica 20, Leiden-Brill 1990, p. 86; Id., art. cit., in AoF 23, 1974-1975). The only perplexity aroused by this hypothesis concerns the idea that the mentioned dissimilation could have occurred identically in such a great number of languages. By stressing the importance of this uncertain point in Skjærvø's theory, A. Lubotsky puts forward his new solution that directly involves the etymology and concept x'arna(h)-. The scholar maintains that the original Iranian form should not be looked for in Avestan xarna(h)- *hwnara(h)-, but rather in farnah-, which he regards as deriving from proto-Iranian *parana(h). He finds two main arguments in favor of this etymology: (1) observing that, even if in the Avestan language the compounds with second member beginning with x- usually present themselves in the form -f(=x)- after f, u, i, because of the Ruki rule, x- remains unchanged only in compounds with xarna(h)- (and in three compound verbs which are not to be neglected, see Lubotsky, art. cit., p. 481); x'- is in xarna(h)- therefore can hardly represent proto-Iranian *hw= Indo-European *sw=(2) finding out a possible Vedic parallel in pārtaus, full property, omni- possession, sovereignty, abundance*, that goes back to IE root *pelH, *to fill. The development maintained by A. Lubotsky would be therefore: IE pelH-nos- Indo-Iranian *parXSX.  

Since the Ossetic is the only Iranian language that shows the regular shift from *p to f this latter phonological development ought to be regarded as belonging to xarna(h)- forms. However, *parana(h)- would have been adopted by all other Iranian languages. X'arna(h)- would be the result of the adaptation to the Avestan phonological system which does not allow initial f- before a vowel. The Vedic passages, adduced by A. Lubotsky as comparisons, are of great interest, especially those concerning the expression Myra x-nas which is directly comparable to the Avestan formula read xarna(h)- *Vrnash-7hara Nevertheless, the occurrence of the Avestan attribute p-rzna=haaaf- abundant (Yast 5.130; see A. Lubotsky, art. If, p. 487), which testify the existence of a substantive *pznas-, the perfect parallel of Vedic pānchas thus seems to me to be still problematic. If otherwise it is possible to think that the genuine Avestan word was substituted by the Scythian word or, at least at least overshadowed and confined by it into a marginal role, nevertheless some general questions of historical nature remain still unanswered: why the form *pare=would have been borrowed from a Scythian language? On the basis of which data are we allowed to think that the concept of f farms- was primarily drawn up in the bosom of the culture of the Scythians? What can make us believe that the concept of f- has spread among all Iranian populations under a decisive influence of the Scythian culture as to induce those populations to take directly from that culture the word that expresses it?
Another passage which is of fundamental importance for us points to the creative power of the x'arənah- and to its function in the cosmogony brought about by Ahura Mazda: *(uxəm yə kauwaēm x'arənp) yaŋ asti ahure magād / yath dāmēn āvatah ahūr magād / pourucə vohucə pourucə srīta ca / pourucə abdəca pourucə frašacə / pourucə bāvītacə.* The translation is as follows: "(The mighty x'arənah- of the Kavis) which belongs to Ahura Mazda in as much as Ahura Mazda has created the creatures (or so that A.M. can create), the good ones in great number, the beautiful ones in great number, the marvelous ones in great number, the bright ones in great number, the luminous ones in great number." 9

In Yašt 19.51 Apām Napāt takes possession of the x'arənah- that seeks shelter in the waters of sea Vourukasha, after having flown away from Yima and after Ātaṛṇ and Āži Dahāka have contended for it in vain. This episode concerns, most probably, the mythological theme and symbol of the fire in the waters, which is also well attested in Vedic sources, as we shall see later on.

The x'arənah- hidden in the waters is said to be axt'arəta-. The meaning of this attribute is obscure and embodies another well known dilemma in the field of Avestan studies. I will briefly dwell upon it in order to put forward some remarks and suggestions. The Pahlavi translation of a x'arəsta- is aāfrīpt which has been rendered as "unattainable, unseizable" (even though it is more likely to mean "unattained, not seized") as often as this meaning has been transposed to the matter has not been reached yet. On the one hand, stands the above mentioned etymology first proposed by H.W. Bailey10 from *xwar* to "take" were accepted, axt'arəta- should actually be translated as "not seized" or "unappropriated,"11 being undoubtedly a past participle. Axt'arəta- presents itself only in agreement with x'arənah- and only in the central section of the Zamyād Yašt (Yašt 19), where the x'arənah- actually escapes all those who try to grasp it, except Apām Napāt.

Another possibility, however, for understanding the meaning of axt'arəta- is to apply to the Indo-Iranian root *xvra- "to illuminate, to shine" and to translate axt'arəta- "not illuminated, occulted, subtracted from the light of the sun."12


12 The inquiry on the etymology of axt'arəta- is closely related to that of x'arənah- since the expression axt'arəta-x'arənah- usually regarded as figura etimologica. Notwithstanding the large debate among scholars a final solution to the matter has not been reached yet. On the one hand, stands the above mentioned etymology first proposed by H.W. Bailey and nowadays widely shared (see N. Sims-Williams' Inaugural Lecture, London 1997, p. 24; H. Humbach / P.R. Ichaporia, op. cit., p. 16; J. Kellens, De la naissance des montagnes à la fin du temps: le Yašt 19, in Annaire du Collège de France 1997-1998, p. 742); on the other, an etymology that derives x'arənah- and ax'arəna- from the IE root *s mêl- "to burn without flame" is held in very high esteem as well (see A. Hintze, op. cit., pp. 31-32, 237-240, under the suggestion of K. Hoffmann, G. Gnoli, art. cit., in AoF 23, pp. 171, 178; A. Panaino, review of Hintze, Der Zamāyād Yašt, in Klayas 41 Wiesbaden 1997, pp. 66-67). This latter etymology links the meaning of x'arənah- and the meaning of axt'arəta- with the idea of light and fire as does also the traditional interpretation that, otherwise joins etymologically x'arənah- / axt'arəta- with huwar- "sun" (H. Lommel, Av. ax'arən-: Avestische Einzelstudien II, in Zeitschrift für Indologie und Iranistik 2, 1923, pp. 225-233; J. Duchesne-Guillemin, art. cit., in AION-L 5, P.25; J. Pokorny, IEW, P. 881). The derivation from IE *s mêl- starts from the exigence to differ from the traditional view: the latter has been rejected (J. Kellens / E. Pirart, Les textes viel-avestiques, Wiesbaden 1990, 1991, II p. 236, III p. 262; A. Hintze, op. cit., p.28) adducing arguments which, in my opinion, is still worth while to dwell upon. Since Avestan huwar- and Vedic svār- are dissyllabic and go back to IE *sêlwel- * sêlf(e)d (Gr. ἱλίον, ἱλίατος) from a previous *sêwil-los- (πέλειος Got. Sawel, sunno, Lat. sol < *sêH2ol-) with the heterolite suffix -wel-/-wen- (Old Av. gen. sin. x'êng) and since the Greek hapax xar'êmā (Yasna 51.18) is very likely to be monosyllabic (see also M.C. Monna The Gathas of Zarathushtra: A Reconstruction of the Text, Amsterdam 1978, p. 84), x'arənah has been thought not to belong to the same root as huwar-. As far as the syllabic quantity is concerned, passages like Yasna 50.2 and 53.4 are worth while considering. In these instances, in fact, the root of huwar- and x'arənåh is no doubt monosyllabic even if we
G. Gnoli thought the a'xvarətəm x'arənə to be the "splendor without light," namely the one that takes refuge in the aquatic darkness of sea (Vourokaša). He gave the convincing demonstration of how the Pahlavi agrift could have been coherent to the Avestan intention. Agrift is in fact used in Pahlavi literature for characterizing the mēnōg state of existence, in regards to its specific feature of intangibility, ideal and germinal state. In the same way, a'xvarəta- defines the x'arənah-dwelling in the waters as a virtual, potential force wrapped in the seminal symbolism of the waters. The x'arənah—nevertheless is a'xvarəta- even before sinking into the abyss. The expression a'xvarətəm x'arənə cannot therefore simply indicate the x'arənah- in the waters, but rather, it can be suggested, the x'arənah- which is no longer manifest.

Be it "unappropriated," "occulted" or "without light", the a'xvarətəm x'arənə could be considered, in my opinion, as the image of the burning creative energy which has entered into a state of concealing (hiding). It is a potential, virtual condition of the x'arənah- whose beginning is in the very moment when no one succeeds in holding it and whose culminating event and symbolic representation is embodied by the sinking into the waters, receptacle of all germs. On the basis of the textual evidence, especially the structure of Yašt 19, we can say, almost certainly, that kauआ m x'arənə and a'xvarətəm x'arənə are two distinct states of the same igneous phenomenon. In Yašt 19 the sections concerning the two conditions of the x'arənah- are openly divided: kauआita- and a'xvarəta are never used at the same time as attributes of x'arənah- so does Sih Rōzag 1.28 would expect it to be disyllabic (see J. Kellens I E. Pirart, op. cit. II pp. 92, 175, 184, 189; III pp. 242, 269; G. Gnoli art.cit., in AOF 23, pp. 176-177. It is possible therefore to suppose that x'arənə in Yasna 51.18 can easily be one of those instances where the root huuḥ x'ar is considered as monosyllabic. Even in the Rgveda we find an instance where svār-, which otherwise is always disyllabic, must be read as monosyllabic. I am referring to RV 2.35.6a (āśvasya ātta jānīmasyā ca svar, A. Macdonell, A Vedic Reader for Students, cit., p. 72).

How can we provide a fit explanation for these syllabic variations? The Indian alternation svār- / sūr- is not equal to the syllabic variation of huuḥ- in the quoted Avestan passages: the former is an aphonemic alternation between weak and heavy stems and has a morphological value that cannot be attributed to the latter. Otherwise, the cases of huuḥ- and x'arənə on the one hand and that of svār- in RV 2.35.6a on the other seem to be decidedly comparable. In both cases the monosyllabic root seems to be due to metrical exigences. The question suddenly arises whether the same metrical exigences account for the syllabic quantity of x'arənə in Yasna 51.18 or not. For being positive the answer would require instances where x'arənah- is surely endowed with a disyllabic root. Passages like Yašt 19.34f: auvānə xarənə fraētī, Yašt 19. 45a: vṛtəm a'xvarətəm x'arənə, Yašt 19. 56i-k: taŋ x'arənə apataca / taŋx'arənə apa hīdāt are generally considered constituted by seven syllables. If the attempt at restoring the line of eight syllables is a legitimate operation in respect of the prosody of the Yašt, we can suppose that in these instances x'arənah- actually presents three syllables, viz. a disyllabic root.

But, as statements about the Younger Avestan prosody are so often surrounded by uncertainty, another possibility is worth to be considered in order not to separate x'arənah- and huuḥ- under the etymological point of view. I am referring to the suggestion, already put forward by G. Ito ~ Gatha XII. Av. a'xvarətə- x'arənah-, in Orient 11, 1975, p. 39), that x'arənah- could be formed on the monosyllabic weak form of the root, corresponding to the Vedic stem sūr-. In this case the closest comparison with x'arənah- would be Indian sīrya- (the exact parallel would be sīnas-), instead of svārəna-.

If these considerations were actually fit for overcoming the separation of x'arənah- and huuḥ- because of syllabic quantity, further difficulties for their etymological unity would still be represented by the fact that x'arənah-shows the IE suffix -nes- / -nos-, which needs a verbal root (A. Meillet, Sur le suffixe indo-européen *-nes-, in Mémoires de la Société de Linguistique 15, Paris 1908-9, pp. 254-264). This verbal root has often been denied with regard to huuḥ- / svār- see Bailey H.W., op. cit., 2nd edition, Oxford 1971, p. XXIV; A. Hintze, op. cit., p. 28). Nevertheless, apart from Old Indian svar- "to shine, to illuminate" (found in svirati, Kaus. Up.; svārāyantam arcis à Atharvaveda 13.2.2; pratīsvaram, Nirukta 7.23), which could perfectly well be traced back to IE *seHsvar- (M. Mayrhofer, op. cit., Knapp. 563-567) rather than to *sweH "to burn," the most convincing confirmation of a verbal root for huuḥ- / svār- is, according to my opinion, still represented by Vedic śūtrā- and aśūtrā- (RV 10.82.4: aśūtrā śūtrā jājājāj 10.3.9: aśūtrām jājāj, see H. Lommel, art. cit., G. Ito, op. cit., p. 38-39). These two words should be regarded as past participles, coming from IE *(ŋ)-sHsvar- and formed in a similar way as sūrya- (< *sHvar-). The best Avestan parallel to Vedic aśūtrā-, according to this perspective, would be a'xvarəta-, as it has often been represented by the three mentioned etymological interpretations, that derive x'arənah- and a'xvarətəm x'arənə respectivly from *x'ar- "to take," *x'ar- "to burn without flames" and *x'ar- "to illuminate," stands A. Lhotsky's etymological inquiry (see note 8), which involves of course a'xvarəta-, thought to be a loan from Scythian a'farta- < Proto-Iranian *parata-, meaning "ungiven, undistributed" (see A. Lhotsky, art. cit., p. 480, note 3).
that clearly distinguishes kauaem and a'xaromat x'xaromā. 15 I would cautiously suggest the possibility of considering this to be a differentiation between a seminal-ideal state of the x'xaromah-(mēnōg) and a manifest, actual, concrete one (gētīg). This point should be undeniably examined more carefully and remains in this occasion only a suggestion.

At the moment it is suffice to say that the a'xaromat x'xaromā in Yaś 19.51 seems to correspond in all respects to the idea of a creative and powerful fire hidden in the waters.

We are often concerned with a similar fire also in the Rgveda. One of the main and well known features of Agni is that it is the germ of the waters, apām gārbha. He is born in the waters: tvām aḍbhāyas... jāyose "you (Agni) are born from the waters" (RV 2.1.1). This concept seems to be closely related to the idea of the sun hidden in the waters: samudrā ā gālhām ā sāryam RV 10.72.7). 16 Otherwise, the sun appears in the aquatic dwelling in the shape of a bird, which reminds us of the x'xaromah- flying away from Yima's head in the same shape: maragaha kahra vā raynahe (Yaś 19.35). The waters themselves are said to be svārvarthā "endowed with the sun.

The symbol of a hidden and germinal fire has clear creative and cosmotheological implications. RV 10.121.7 hints quite explicitly at this idea: āpo ha yād bhādrā viśvam āyān gārbham dādāhā janā yamīrīr aṁīnīm / tāto devānaṁ sāṁ avaratāssur ēkāh "When the Waters came bringing the world as a germ, then sprang the life of the gods. 17 Agni / Sūrya can therefore be called prataet- re tas, "primordial seed" (RV 8.6.30).

In the concept of Agni's birth possessed by the Vedic seers, Agni could take the shape of an embryo (gārbha-) nothing is natural but the fact that he could also appear as a child and therefore be equal to Apām Napāt, "the Child of the Waters". A passage of the Vājasaneyasamhitā (8.24) explicitly states this identification: aṁērh āṭikam apā āviveṣā aṁīm nāpām "Agni Napāt has entered the waters, the face of Agni". The features of Apām Napāt provided by the hymn 2.35, which is addressed to him, correspond in the most complete way to the idea of the fire generated and nourished by the waters: Apām Napāt is that fire itself. The waters surround the god who is shining and feed him. 19 Apām Napāt therefore increases in vigor. 20

As far as the Vedic evidence is concerned we can reliably state the coincidence between Agni's embryonic aspect and Apām Napāt. In my opinion, we cannot think of Apām Napāt as simple epiphany of Agni. These two gods do not seem to lose their own individuality. The great god Agni, who lives in every igneous manifestation, embodies at his birth, viz., in a particular feature of his nature, the fiery germ of life hidden in the waters, which is also identical to Apām Napāt. The two deities seem therefore to be expressions of the same reality, in a symbolic and conceptual fluidity that also involves the god Soma. Since we can't discuss this latter deity now, it is suffice to say, as it is known, that he is said to be apām gārbha- too.

The first paśa of the sixth stanza in an hymn addressed to Apām Napāt reads as follows: āsvasyaṭ ra jāṁiṁśyā ca svār, which can be translated, in spite of the morphological difficulties of the passage, as "in this place (viz., in the waters) is the birth of the horse and of this sun" (svār

15 Both G. Ito and A. Hintze, by means of different arguments, refuse the negative function of a- in a'xaromat and translate respectively with "shining" and "glänzend," in this way depriving the expression a'xaromat x'xaromā of the stylistic and symbolic power of the oxymoron (see A Panaino, art. cit., in Cratylos 41, p. 67). Especially, these two solutions cancel the particular nature of the a'xaromat x'xaromā and its distinction from the kauaem x'xaromā which, on the contrary, is clear in the sources (see H. Humbach / P.R. Ichaporia, op. cit., pp. 15-16).


18 See for instance the 4th stanza: tām... pārī yantu śāpā / sā sukṛībhī śīvkabāth revīd asme / dādāṁdālāmbu ghrā nirīṁ apām "The waters surround him; he prodigally shines among us without fuel and wrapped in butter, endowed with luminous and nimble (flames)."

19 RV 2.35.5: asmaṁ tisor avayathā nivīr / devāya devīr didhiṁsantas ānam / kṣīra ivopa ā prasārīr apās / sā pītā sam dhayati pūrvaśāmad / the three women, the goddesses, wish to provide him with food, so that he does not waver. He stretches out in the waters in the towards the abysses (and) sucks the milk of the primordial mothers.

20 RV 2.35.7: svadām pīṭāya subhā ānam atti / sō apām nāpād tājāyan apāv āntār vasudēyāya vadhatē vī bhalli, "He... swells his own vital force, he eats excellent food; Apām Napāt, increasing his strength in the waters, glitters in order to grant goods to the pious."
probably refers here to Apāṃ Naṗṭ himself). This evidence significantly points at the special link between Vedic Apāṃ Naṗṭ and the horse, which is firmly sustained even by the usual epithet āśu hēm-an- "of swift impulse" and by a passage like RV 1.186.5: nāpātam apāṃ junāma / manojāvo vīṣaṇo yāṁ vāhantī "we shall incite Apāṃ Naṗṭ whom stallions swift as thoughts lead."

As far as this point is concerned, it is worth noticing that āśu-ḥ₂-ḥ₁̣̄n- is a specific attribute of Avestan Apāṃ Naṗṭ, which he shares only with the Sun: see for instance Yašt 6.1: hūvarx̄ ̣̄ṣaēdīm amēṣm raēm / āuruạt̆̄s̄p̆m yazamaidē. This datum is very eloquent in confirming the remarkable bond that joins Apāṃ Naṗṭ with the igneous element, first of all with the x-armanah-/ there we shall incite Apāṃ Naṗṭ whom stallions swift as thoughts lead."

As far as this point is concerned, it is worth noticing that āśu-ḥ₂-ḥ₁̣̄n- is a specific attribute of Avestan Apāṃ Naṗṭ, which he shares only with the Sun: see for instance Yašt 6.1: hūvarx̣̄̄ṣaēdīm amēṣm raēm / āuruạt̆̄s̄p̆m yazamaidē. This datum is very eloquent in confirming the remarkable bond that joins Apāṃ Naṗṭ with the igneous element, first of all with the x-armanah-/ "parcell de soleil", as J. Duschesne-Guillemin called it. 

This fundamental link however is devoid of any implication of identity. Whereas Vedic Apāṃ Naṗṭ is at any probability the fire in the waters itself, in the Avestan world he appears essentially as the great custodian of it. 22

A fundamental mythological and religious motive testify how the Vedic and the Avestan symbolic complexes concerning the fire in the waters draw from similar and very close ideas, which are treated nevertheless in very different ways. In both cases however cosmogonical and spermatical implications are still clearly recognizable. They involve directly indeed even Apāṃ Naṗṭ.

The obligatory comparison is the one with the remarkable passage of Yašt 19.52:

| bōrzaŋt̆̄m ahuram xaēdīm  |
| xsaēdīm apqm napātm  |
| āuruạt̆̄s̄p̆m yazamaidē  |
| ārśānam yazamān-sun    |
| yē nārān tataša          |
| šr̆ụ̄, gaośōṃ mō astī yazimmō |

"The high lord, mighty, brilliant Apqm Naṗṭ endowed with swift horses we worship, the male who causes to prosper the one who invokes (him), (he) who created the men, (he) who shaped the men, 23 (he) who, the god dwelling under the water, listens at his best when invoked."

I think that the surprising faculty of being able to create men attributed to Apqm Naṗṭ is due primarily to his possession of the x-armanah- and to his full participation to the realm of the germinative waters. How can we conciliate it with the supremacy of Ahura Mazdā and is it really in contrast with this supremacy? In my opinion, we are rather dealing with a mere and specific reference to the creative power of the x-armanah- and to the aquatic world which can be thought as equal to the mēnōg bun ī gēṣṛ, viz., the mēnōg state of existence which is the foundation of the gēṣṛ existence. 24

The idea that Apqm Naṗṭ was once a mere attribute of the pre-historical great god *Vouruna (parallel to Vedic Varuṇa) was proposed, as it is well known, by Mary Boyce. 25 The power to create possessed by Apqm Naṗṭ would be, according to her, a relic of the ancient pre-eminent role of *Vouruna in the pre-Zoroastrian religion. Many arguments, however, are against this hypothesis. Apart from general considerations about pre-historical reconstructions mentioned above, the main obstacles this interpretation must meet with can be summarized as follows: (1) the Vedic evidence is not in favor of the identification between Apāṃ Naṗṭ and Varuṇa. There

---

22 This role is confirmed by the report of Great Bundahišn 26.91, where Burz (which is the Pahlavi nameof Apqm Naṗṭ derived from the attribute bōrzaŋt̆̄m- see A. Panaino, art. cit., in AOASH 48, pp. 118, 124-125) guards over x warrah.
are fifteen passages and two entire hymns concerning Ἄπαθος Ναπάτ in the Rgveda26 and only in one of those passages (viz. ṚV 10.8.5) Varuna and Ἄπαθος Ναπάτ could perhaps be identified; (2) the Avestan invocation mitra-ahura-borzantia (Yt. 10.113 /145; Ny. 1.7) which, according to Mary Boyce, would indicate Mitra and *Fourna Ahura Napat and which would correspond to the Vedic compound mitra-varunā, can not be translated as "Miθra and the High Lord", as M. Boyce does. Borzantia- is in fact a dual case and compels us to translate with Gershevitch "οἱ eξαλητοί Miθra and Ahura!"27 There is no reference in this passage therefore to a god who is alone called ahura borzant- and who would probably be Ἄπαθος Ναπάτ.28

The possession of the xərənəh- appears to be the main feature of Ἄπαθος Ναπάτ in conformity with the Indo-Iranian symbol of the fire in the waters. I think it to be responsible even for the relationship between Ἄπαθος Ναπάτ and Miθra. Yašt 13.95:

iđa apqm miθrō yō vouru. gauiaioitīš
fraštī viśpā fratmatatīd daxiunāqm
yaozaintīsca rāmaitīš
iđa apqm nāpā sārō
fraštī viśpā fratmatatīd daxiunāqm
yaozaintīsca nilašāle ...

"Henceforth, Miθra of wide pastures will strengthen all the authorities of the lands and will pacify (the lands) in turmoil, henceforth, the mighty Ἄπαθος Ναπάτ will strengthen all the authorities of the lands and will quell (the lands) in turmoil ..."

Miθra is said to possess the xərənəh- to an exceptional and unequalled extent: Yašt 19.35: mitrā m vispaŋqm daxiunqm daẖhpaiḵīṃ yazamaide yim fraḏaḏāh ahurō mazād xərənəh'has tom maniẖauaŋq yazataŋq, "We worship Miθra lord of all the lands, that Ahura Mazdā has made the most endowed with xərənəh- among the spiritual yazatas." The political perspective regarding the safeguard of power and authority in Yašt 13.95 is likely to be connected with the role of xərənəh- in the idea of the sacred sovereignty. The xərənəh-, which is strictly related to the legitimate supreme authority and with the charismatic power, makes his guardian, viz., Ἄπαθος Ναπάτ, participate to Miθra's activity while securing social ties and political supremacy.

The same determine element is to be found with regards to the link between Ἄπαθος Ναπάτ and Ard uui Surā Anāhišt. Yašt 5.72:

罍m yazatn ašaunazdā pūtērō poutrāxsīṭōśi ašaunazdasca ṛītasca sāiūζdroīś pūtērō u pā borzantm ahurām ḥ staunch ṣaṇāt apqm nāpātām auiuas, apsm satm aspaŋqm ā rīqm hauaŋq gauqm bauxuṣa anuamalāŋq.

"Ašaunazdah, son of Pourotōxsītī, Ašaunazdah and ṥrita, sons of Sāiūζdri, sacrificed for her (Arduī Sūrā Anāhišt) a hundred male horses, a thousand bulls, ten thousand rams, at the place of the high lord, the powerful, shining Ἄπαθος Ναπάτ who is endowed with swift horses."

26 Passages concerning Ἄπαθος Ναπάτ in the Rgveda are as follows: ṚV 1.22.6; 1.122.4; 1.143.1; 1.186.5; 2.31.6; 3.9.1-2; 5.41.10; 6.13.3; 6.50.13; 7.34.15; 7.35.13; 7.47.2; 10.8.5; 10.92.13; 10.149.2. Hymns 2.35; 10.30.


28 In fact ahura- borzant- could refer either to Ahura Mazdā or to Ἄπαθος Ναπάτ. M. Boyce argues in favor of the latter, observing that Ahura Mazdā is never invoked by the mere title of ahura- and maintaining that, on the contrary, Ἄπαθος Ναπάτ is. This statement is contradicted by the fact that neither Ἄπαθος Ναπάτ is called ahura- without his name being clearly expressed: the formulas are in fact all of the kind of Yasna 2.5: borzantm ahurām … apqm nāpātām. The hypothesis that apqm nāpāt was originally an epithet does not allow this same consideration with reference to texts at our disposal, where Ἄπαθος Ναπάτ appears no doubt as a proper name. There is, moreover, no epithet that can be used in antonomasia at the place of Ἄπαθος Ναπάτ (cf. A. Panaino, art. cit., p. 123). This also accounts for borzant-, which, even if it is often used referring to Ἄπαθος Ναπάτ and it is important for the development of his name in the Pahlavi tradition, is also assigned to Miθra (Yašt 10.7, 10.25), Ahura Mazdā (Yasna 57.4) and other divinities (cf. Bartholomae, AWW, col. 959-960). In the Avesta, miθrā ahura hozantia is more likely to refer to Miθra and Ahura Mazdā, first of all on the basis of the testimony of Ny. 1.7 (called "a condensed hymn to Miθra" by I. Gershevitch), which mentions explicitly Ahura Mazdā before the appearance of the compound (cf. Gershevitch, op. cit., pp. 262-264).
The goddess is thought of as a river containing a great amount of x'arənəh-. Yašt 5.96: arduuī ... masō xaiiieite x'arənəhō yatha vīspā āmā āpō yā żmā paiti ftracinti yā amawaiti ftracaiti "Arduuī, that flows impetuously, possesses as much x'arənəh- as all these waters that flow on the earth."