

ARTICLE

The Avestan *īšti-* in Middle Persian texts

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Abstract

Middle Persian translations and interpretations of Avestan texts employ the word *īšt* in the translation of the Avestan *īšti-* “capability, capacity, competence”. The word became a vocabulary item in the Middle Persian corpus. It seems to be a calque of its Avestan counterpart. The Avestan *īšti-* has presented challenges in the Avesta scholarship and is translated with words from different semantic domains. This article discusses the definition of Avestan *īšti-* and how it is reinterpreted and understood in the Middle Persian translations. It is argued here that Av. *īšti-* refers to “capability, capacity, and competence”. However, it is understood and interpreted in the MP texts as “wealth, property”, “remuneration”, or “reward”. It is sometimes translated to a verb form from *xwāstan* “desire, want”.

Keywords: *īšti-*; Avestan; Middle Persian; Translation; *Zand*; *Dēnkard*

1. Introduction

Studies on the Middle Persian (MP) interpretation of the Avestan (Av.) texts, traditionally called *Zand*, have recently received significant scholarly attention (e.g. Zeini 2020; Malandra and Ichaporia 2013; Cantera 2004). These studies undertake to clarify the reception of Avestan language and texts in later periods and the extent to which the translations of the *Avesta* influence MP texts. Another crucial question that has been posed in recent years is whether these translations could still contribute to our understanding of the Avestan texts. It seems that the old tradition of translating and interpreting the sacred texts reflected in *Zand* would at least partly contribute to our analysis of the *Avesta*. This article presents a study of the disputed Av. term *īšti-* and its MP translation to establish how precisely MP translators understood the Av. term in their interpretations.¹

Moreover, it aims to clarify the meaning of *īšt* as a vocabulary item in MP. Before examining Av. *īšti-*, it is essential to discuss some of the features of MP translation texts and the process of their translation, to clarify the context of our discussion. Following this, the etymology of Av. *īšti-*, its syntactic context, and its derivatives are discussed. Finally, MP *īšt* and its appearances in *Zand* and other MP texts are analysed and compared diachronically.

In this article, the examples consist of the Av. original sentence, MP interlinear translation, and MP comments, respectively. OAv. translations are adopted from Humbach

¹ I am obliged to Thomas Jügel (Ruhr University Bochum) who read and commented on this article, and contributed several insightful observations. I am also thankful to Almut Hintze (SOAS University of London) for her instructive comments. I remain responsible for possible mistakes.

(1991a).² The translations of *īšti-* are deleted to visualize the notion in the lines. Other translations are also consulted to check whether the Av. text's alternative interpretation matches the MP translation. Examples from other texts are either cited from a reference or translated by the author.

1.1. Zand

Before engaging with the word and its usages, it is beneficial to review the qualities of *Zand*. It will clarify our discussion about the occurrences of the word in the Middle Persian translation of the Avesta.

Zand includes a loose word-for-word translation of the Av. Text, usually accompanied by an idiomatic translation into MP and a commentary. For example, the Old Avestan (OAv.) phrase *ustānāiš ... zastāiš* (Y.29: 5) “with outstretched hands” is glossed into MP *pad ... ustān dast* “with *stretched hands” and explained by a comment *tuxšāgīhā* “diligently”. The MP gloss has no obvious sense in MP.³ Therefore, an adverb modifies it. The word-for-word translation usually follows the source word order (Josephson 1997: 153–5; Cantera 2004: 241) and a (pseudo-)etymological approach according to the phonetic similarity (Andrés-Toledo 2017: 398; Musavi 2019: 293), in this example, the gloss *ustān* for the Av. *ustānāiš* is thus.⁴ Therefore, it is usually possible to distinguish the translation of Avestan words from comments, although the comments are not specially marked as such in the manuscripts.⁵

Malandra and Ichaporia (2013: 1) have observed a twist in the terminology: they suggest that the word-for-word translation of the Av. texts should be referred to as “gloss”. Their suggestion is supported by the fact that it would attempt to transfer every source word's notion interlineally, indicating very little about MP grammar. By contrast, MP comments would represent every phrase's proper MP translation wherever they are appended to the text.

The MP interpretation follows the source language word order to the extent that it frequently violates the standard MP syntax. For instance, in example 1.2 (Y.44: 2d) below, the MP translation *kē man druwand pad ēd ī tō sūd petyārēnēd* is scrambled and follows the Avestan word order, while the canonical MP word order would be (ōy) *druwand kē man pad ēd ī tō sūd petyārēnēd*. Therefore, a comment is added to clarify the intended meaning of the word-for-word translation. Here, the interpretation (1.3) of *pad ēd ī tō dēn* “(at) your religion” is also provided between the lines and explains *pad ēd ī tō sūd* “(at) your benefit” (end of 1.2).

	<i>yā</i>	= <i>mā</i>	<i>draḡuuā</i>	<i>θβā</i>
(1.1) Av.	who.NOM.SG.M	I. ABL.SG ⁶	deceitful.NOM.SG.M	you.ACC.PL.N ACC.PL.N
	<i>sauuā</i>	<i>paitī.ərətē</i>		
	benefits.	turn away:PRS.3SG.MID		

² As the translation is clarified with commentaries in the second volume, the interpretation is often linguistically consistent, and the work is widely quoted.

³ For a suggestion about its origin, meaning and the MP comment in Y.28 see Shaked 1996: 648.

⁴ The pseudo-etymological approach according to the phonetic similarity does not necessarily lead to a non-etymological association, for example here Av. *zastāiš* “hands” is correctly glossed with MP *dast*.

⁵ For a different view see Cantera 2004: 241.

⁶ Kellens and Pirart (1990: 208) find it possible that *mā* be another form for the enclitic ablative singular *maṭ* or dative-genitive singular *mōi*.

- (1.2) MP *kē man druwand pad ēd ī tō sūd petyārēnēd⁷*
 REL I deceitful at that EZ you benefit counteract:PRS.3SG
 Av. Tr. “(That) deceitful one who (intends) to turn away from me Thy benefits?”
 MP Tr. “The deceitful who counteracts me against your benefit.”

- (1.3) *pad ēd ī tō dēn*
 at that EZ you religion
 “your religion”

However, in example 2.2 (Y.44: 12e), the Avestan word order is not strictly followed, since Av. *nōiṭ* and MP *nē* occur in different positions in the sentence. The insertion of the pronoun *xwad* in the MP translation, with no Av. counterpart, also contributes to communication of the meaning. Still, since the MP translation follows the (pseudo-)phonological etymology, the intended meaning is not clear. The problem is that MP *menom* is used to translate Av. *mainiētē*, since they both derive from OIr. *MAN* “think, consider” (Cheung 2006: 262). Still, MP *menīdan* does not demonstrate the meaning that the *Zandist* understands, i.e. *šnāxtan* “know, recognize”, therefore a comment (2.3) was necessary to clarify, using *šnāsēm*:

- (2.1) Av. *ciiṇhaṭ huuō nōiṭ aiiām*
 How⁸ that_there.NOM.M not this_here.NOM.SG
aṅrō maniiētē
 harmful.NOM.SG.M think:PRS.3SG.Mid
 (2.2) MP *az cē ka xwad awēšān pad āyišn nē gannāg*
 from what when self they at approaching not harmful
menom
 think:PRS.1SG
 Av. Tr. “Evidently, the latter, not the former, harmful, intends (to turn away).”
 MP Tr. “Why I myself by (their) coming do not consider them evil.”

- (2.3) *kū cē=rāy awēšān wēnom ā=šān pad dēw Nē šnāsēm*
 namely what=for they see:PRS.1SG and=they as devil not know:PRS.1PL
 “Namely, why when I see them, I do not recognize them as devils?”

Moreover, some words used in *Zand* are not (or are no longer) used in Middle Persian (Cantera 2004: 246). Thus, comments are introduced to convey the message either by paraphrasing, adding more information, or rendering different possible interpretations. For example, the MP adverbial phrase *andar druzōdmān*, which glosses OAv. *drūjō dāmānē* (Y.49: 11d) “in the house of deceit” is explained by the MP comment *andar dušox* “in hell”. This could be because *druzōdmān* is not a real or frequent MP word and would need clarification. Another possibility is that the “house of the deceit” is understood, but is not clear and precise. Therefore, an interpretation clarifies that it is synonymous with “hell”.

⁷ MP *petyār-* imitates Av. *paitī.ar-*, though the MP cognate is not attested to demonstrate the exact same sense as here (turn away). For example, in DK3:27:7 *gēhān petyārēnīdan* means “to destroy the world”.

⁸ For this translation see Kellens and Pirart (1990: 241).

On the one hand, studying these comments contributes to our understanding of Zoroastrians in that era and their conception of the *Avesta*. It also demonstrates their translation techniques and linguistic skills (Cantera 2004: 268). The latter point is of particular linguistic interest since Avestan is a more synthetic language in which noun declension and verb inflection are intricate. MP employs a simpler verbal inflection. The active/middle distinction is lost, and fewer non-finite verbs are included in the verbal system. The loss of the wide range of non-finite forms in MP limits the syntactic possibilities of the translated forms, changes the syntax of MP compared to Old Iranian, and makes it difficult to render a MP word-for-word translation of the Av. text. For example, the NP *ustānāiš zastāiš* in (3.1) is translated by the prepositional phrase *pad ustān dastīh*. As in this example, MP usually exerts adposition to express the case except for nominative, accusative, and vocative cases. Spiegel's early observations show that noun phrases in the nominative, accusative, and vocative cases are not usually periphrastic. Still, other cases use prepositions, including *az*, *pad*, *ō*, *rāy*, *andar*, and the like (1860: 21–23; Cantera 2004: 269).

Another strategy is to translate the non-finite form into a conjugated verb, as in example 3 (Y.29: 5a):

(3.1) Av.	<i>aṭ</i>	<i>vā</i>	<i>ustānāiš</i>	<i>ahuuā</i>
	PRT	PC.1NOM.DU ⁹	outstretched:INS.PL.M	fervour.INS.SG.F
	<i>zastāiš</i>	<i>fṛnāmnā</i>	<i>ahurāi=ā</i>	
	hand:INS.PL.M	devoting.NOM.DU.M	ahura.DAT.SG.M=PPS	
(3.2) MP	<i>ēdōn</i>	<i>az ašmā</i>	<i>pad ustān-axwīh</i>	
	Thus	from you.PL	at stretched vitality	
	<i>ustān-dastīh</i>	<i>franāmom</i>	<i>ō ohrmazd</i>	
	stretched handedness	propagate (faith).PRS.1SG	to Ohrmazd	
Av. Tr.	“We two devote ourselves to the Ahura, with hands stretched out with fervour.”			
MP Tr.	“Thus, from your with stretched vitality and stretched handedness, I propagate (faith) to Ohrmazd.”			

The Av. middle-voiced present participle *fṛnāmnā* “devoting” is translated to the finite verb *franāmom* “I promote”. Likewise, in this article (example 11, below), we will see how the Av. *īšti-* is also sometimes understood as a verb.

Middle Persian translations benefit from several Avestan loanwords, artificial neologisms, and genuine MP vocabulary.¹⁰ An artificial MP neologism is probably seen in the MP compound *ustān-axwīh*. Since the composition is structurally uncommon, one would assume that this is not a normal formation. An example of an Avestan loanword in MP is *apagaiiēhe* “of death”,¹¹ which is only observed in a few of the Av. manuscripts,¹² but frequently in the MP glosses and comments on the translation of Av. texts to mean “dead”.

The attestation of several elements of MP translated vocabulary, particularly in cases such as *apagaiiēhe*, makes it essential to think of a multi-step process in interpreting these texts. The Av. texts were read, analysed, and memorized traditionally in a place called *hērbedestān* (Kotwal 2012). This was a form of advanced priestly school where

⁹ Otherwise enclitic PC.2ACC.PL.

¹⁰ For more on this classification see Buyaner (2010: 80).

¹¹ GEN.SG of *apa-gaiia-* M. death (Bartholomae 1904: 73).

¹² For example, in manuscript J2 of Y.62: 4 (Avestan Corpus 2021).

Zoroastrian priest-teachers (*hērbēdān*), read, elaborated on, and interpreted the Avesta orally for students (*hāwištān*), who memorized and retained the exegesis so it could be taught to the next generation. After the introduction of writing, *hērbēd* also undertook to write down their interpretations. The names of two *hērbēd* authors are mentioned in the colophons of ŠNŠ¹³ and PT.¹⁴

Nevertheless, the case of MP *īšt* has similarities and differences with neologism and loan translation. While it is often used in the translation of the Av. *īšti-*, it is different from *apaḡayiiēhe* as it has gone through a phonetic evolution where it lost its final vowel, as well as a semantic change that is discussed further below.¹⁵

2. The etymology of Avestan *īšti-*

Avestan *īšti-* is a feminine noun that is understood and translated in different ways by Avestan scholars. It has been taken to include a wide range of related meanings, from “assets”,¹⁶ to “ability”,¹⁷ “power”,¹⁸ “command”,¹⁹ “wish”, and “ritual”.²⁰

Humbach concluded that the word corresponds to more than one Indo-Iranian word and translated it differently in different contexts (1991b: 106). He assumes three Sanskrit cognates for the Iranian *īšti-*. The Ved. Skt. ¹*īṣṭi-* “impulse, acceleration, hurry, order, invitation, dispatch”,²¹ while the Ved. Skt. ²*īṣṭi-* means “seeking, desire, wish, request”²² (Monier-Williams 1899: 169; Humbach, 1991b: 106). On the other hand, Kellens and Pirart (1990: 224) refer to another Skt. noun *īṣṭi-* “sacrifice, sacrificing”, which is the name of an oblation in Rigveda consisting of butter and fruits as opposed to the sacrifice of an animal or Soma (Monier-Williams 1899: 169). Another definition derives from the Ir. verb *īš* “to own, possess; rule, master, reign” (Skt. *īṣ*) and means “command, ability”²³ (Humbach 1991b: 106). Since the root *īš* contains connotations related to owning and possession, then meanings like “possession, wealth, and property” are also suggested.²⁴

The initial vowel in the word *īšti-* is often long (*ī*). A short vowel (*i*) is only seen in Vr.23: 1 (*īṣṭim*)²⁵ and Yt.19: 32 (*īṣṭim*) (Bartholomae 1904: 377). Etymologically, the initial vowel is expected to be a long one, so the short vowel in Avestan is probably a transmission failure.²⁶ Moreover, it is occasionally spelled *tīsti-* in a few Indian manuscripts of the Avesta (for example, in K11A, Lb2) (Avestan Digital Archive 2021). This is etymologically the expected spelling for the Iranian cognate of the Skt. **īṣṭi-*. Manuscript B is observed to

¹³ *ustād pēšyōtan ī rām herbed* (Ch. 21, 8b).

¹⁴ *kay-husraw mihr-ābān herbed* (Col. B, p. 298).

¹⁵ Although it is sometimes difficult to draw a boundary between these two categories (Buyaner 2010: 80–81).

¹⁶ *Vermögen* (Bartholomae 1904: 376). Bartholomae’s reading has two more senses, namely: possession, good, wealth; and the ability of taking into possession (ibid.).

¹⁷ *Können, Imstandsein, Kraft* (Bartholomae 1904: 376).

¹⁸ Insler (1975: 205) translates the word as “power” in all of the *Gāthās*.

¹⁹ Humbach (1991a) understands the word in the following stanzas to mean “command”: 32: 9; 34:5; 46: 16, 18; 48: 8; 49: 12; 51: 2.

²⁰ Kellens and Pirart (1990: 224) understand it as “*manière sacrificielle, rite*”.

²¹ This definition is used in Y44: 10 and 46: 2 (Humbach 1991a).

²² It is only used in Y51: 18 (Humbach 1991a). This is probably why the translations for *təm cistīm dājamāspō huuō.guuō īštōiš x’arānā* (Y51: 18) are not satisfying.

²³ This definition is used elsewhere in the OAv. texts.

²⁴ See the translation of Yt. 8: 17 in Martínez and De Vaan (2014: 108) where *īšti-* is understood as “wealth”.

²⁵ This is also confirmed by the available manuscripts (G19, T40, T39) in the Avestan Digital Archive (ADA). However, it seems that there are several different recorded forms of the word, most probably due to the difficulty the scribes had in its interpretation. For example, TU2, VL1, G18 show the form *īštəm*, G27, *ašm*, and K11B *īštīm*, AV977/978 *ašəm*.

²⁶ De Vaan (2003: 238) suggests that whenever the consonant cluster *-št-* is followed by a vowel other than *ī*, the initial vowel would be short. Otherwise, it would be lengthened. The only exception is the locative singular *īštā*.

show the form *yas̄īm* (ADA, B8, p. 7) which would be a later “*Verschlimmbesserung*” by the scribes. Another explanation would be that the Indian manuscripts show a confusion between /s/ and /ʃ/ especially in the context before /t/ (Cantera 2014: 307).

3. The syntactic contexts of Av. *īsti-*

3.1. Attestations based on the available evidence

Table 1 demonstrates that *īsti-* can function as an argument or an adjunct of intransitive,²⁷ (mono)transitive and ditransitive verbs. However, *īsti-* is not attested as an agent, causer, or instrument. The verbs used with *īsti-* include: giving/taking verbs, namely give, grant, assign, withdraw, and rob; a few requesting verbs, including request, implore; and considering/contemplating verbs including consider, venerate, esteem, be appreciated.

Table 1. Verbs used with *īsti-* (arranged in OAv. and YAv. sections for comparison)

	Occurrence	Root	TAM marking	Voice	Role of <i>īsti-</i>	Valency
Y.44: 10	<i>daidīiat</i>	DI: see	INJ.3SG	ACT	patient	3
Y.53: 1	<i>sṛāuūi</i>	SRU: hear	AOR.INJ.3SG	PASS	patient	1
Y.34: 5	<i>θrāiīōidiūi</i>	θRĀ: protect	INF	MID	patient	3
Y.32: 9	<i>apa.iiantā</i>	apa.YAM: take away	AOR.INJ.3SG	MID	patient	2
Y.32: 9	<i>bərəxδqm</i>	BARG: esteem	P-oriented verbal ADJ	-	patient	2
Y.46: 2	<i>āxsō</i>	ā.KAS: look	AOR.SBJV.2SG	ACT	patient	3
Y.49: 12	<i>yāsṣ</i>	YĀ: implore	A-oriented PRS.PTCP	ACT	source/ extent	3
Y.46: 18	<i>cōišəm</i>	CIŠ: assign	AOR.INJ.1SG	ACT	source ²⁸	3
Y.51: 18	<i>vərəntē</i>	VAR: choose	PRS.1PL	MID	source	2
Y.60: 7	<i>fra.zahīt</i>	fra.ZAH: abandon	INJ.3SG	ACT	patient	2
Y.65: 11	<i>jaiīiāmi</i>	JAD: request	PRS.1SG	ACT	patient	2
Y.68: 11	<i>dāiīatā</i>	DĀ: give	IMP.2PL	ACT	patient	3
Vr.23: 1	<i>yazamaide</i>	YAZ: venerate	PRS.1PL	MID	patient	2
Yt.8: 15	<i>daδqm</i>	DĀ: give	INJ.1SG	ACT	patient	3
Yt.10: 108, 110	<i>baxšāni</i>	BAXŠ: grant	SBJV.1SG	ACT	patient	3
Yt.5: 26	<i>uz-barāni</i>	uz.BAR: withdraw	SBJV.1SG	ACT	patient	3
Yt.19: 32	<i>uz-barat</i> ²⁹	uz.BAR: withdraw	SBJV.1SG	ACT	patient	3

²⁷ Passive.

²⁸ In this sentence, *īsti-* accompanies another noun which is the patient of the sentence. See West (2011:36) for genitive of source for more.

²⁹ See Hintze (1994: 177–8) for more discussion on the meaning of the prefix *uz* added to *BAR*.

Table 2. Adjectives used with *īšti-*

Adjectives used with <i>īšti-</i>	Distributive	Measure	Quality
Y.32: 9: esteemed			<i>bərəxδā-</i>
Y.53: 1; Vr.23: 1: the best <i>īšti-</i>		<i>vahištā-</i>	
Y.60: 7: delightful			<i>x^vāθrauuaitī-</i>
Y.65: 11: of many kinds			<i>pouru.sarəδā</i>
Y.65: 11: strong			<i>amauuaitī-</i>
Y.68: 11; Yt.10:108: full of delight			<i>pouruš.x^vāθrā-</i>
Yt.5: 26: both	<i>uiiē</i>		
Yt.8: 15: of men			<i>vīriqm</i>
Yt.19: 32: both	<i>uiiē</i>		

Therefore, it is alienable, desired, and contemplated. It also demonstrates that *īšti-* has played the role of the patient whenever it is a core argument of these verbs.

īšti- is not attested in the plural form and is described with distributive, measure, and quality adjectives in the context (Table 2). The measure adjective “the best” shows a gradable entity, though it would also indicate absolute supremacy.³⁰

Possessive personal clitics, used with giving/taking verbs, can also indicate the beneficiary (West 2011: 36). Moreover, the possessive pronouns can be used in parallel with genitive nouns, assuming similar functions (West 2011: 36). The use of genitive animate nouns with *īšti-*, especially in the case of animate arguments (Table 3), would refer to the possessors of *īšti-*, for example, *Zaraθuštra* and *Ahura Mazda*.

In a few occurrences, *īšti-* is used with inanimate entities³¹ in the genitive, namely good thought, insight, power, and the best truth. In example 4 (Y.48:8):

(4) *kā* *tōi* *vayhəuš* *mazdā* *xšaθrahiā* *īštiš*
 what.NOM.SG.F you.GEN.SG good.GEN.SG Wise.VOC.SG.M power.GEN.SG.N *īšti-*.NOM.SG.F
 “What is the *īšti-* of your good power, O Wise One?”

One assumption would be that using a genitive case describes an entity’s attributes (West 2011: 36). For example, “*īšti-* of power” would mean that *īšti-* is an attribute of power. It could also be that *īšti-* takes objective genitives just as the verb *īš* governs genitive³² objects, thus it would mean “command over power”. In example 5 (Y.50: 1), *cahiā* *auuajhō* is the object of the verb *isē*:

(5) *kaṭ* *=mōi* *uruuā* *isē* *cahiā* *auuajhō*
 Q my.GEN.SG soul.NOM.SG.M command.PRS.1SG.MID INDF.GEN.SG help.GEN.SG.N
 “Does my soul command any help?”

³⁰ On this usage of superlative adjectives see West (2011: 34).

³¹ These entities are personified in later attestations, but do not seem to be animate characters in OAv. texts in which these attestations appeared.

³² Or dative.

Table 3. Possessors of *īšti-*

	NOM	ACC	GEN-animate	GEN-inanimate	LOC
Y.32: 9: He takes away my <i>īšti</i> , the good thought's esteemed existing (one).		īštīm		<i>vaṇhəuš manəḥhō</i>	
Y.44: 10: The <i>īšti-</i> of my insight sees actions through statements of right-mindedness		īštiš		<i>maxiiā cistōiš</i>	
Y.46: 16: where power ³³ is in the <i>īšti-</i> of good thought ³⁴				<i>vaṇhəuš manəḥhō</i>	īštā
Y.49: 12: imploring that which is the best in your <i>īšti</i>		<i>auuat vahištām</i>	<i>və (Ahura Mazdā)</i>		īštā
Y.46: 2: You shall look upon the <i>īšti-</i> of good thought		īštīm		<i>vaṇhəuš manəḥhō</i>	
Y.46: 18: I assign through the good thought, the best of my <i>īšti-</i>			<i>maxiiā</i>	īštōiš	
Y.51: 2: I shall show the power of my <i>īšti-</i> for you, O right-mindedness			<i>mōi</i>	īštōiš	
Y.53: 1: the best <i>īšti-</i> of Zaratustra becomes famed		īštiš	<i>zaratustrahe</i>		
Y.48: 8: what is the <i>īšti-</i> of your power?		īštiš		<i>xšaθrahiā</i>	
Vr.23: 1: We venerate the best <i>īšti-</i> which is of the best truth.		<i>vahištām īštīm yəm</i>	<i>ašahe vahištahe</i>		

Table 4. *īšti-* as a dependent noun

	ACC	GEN-inanimate	GEN-animate	LOC
Y.51: 2: I shall show you the power of my <i>īšti-</i> , O right-mindedness.	<i>xšaθram</i>	<i>mōi</i>	īštōiš	
Y.51: 18: Jāmāspa Hvōguva (chooses) that insight, the glories of <i>īšti-</i>	<i>xʿarənā</i>	īštōiš		

Interestingly, *īšti-* is attested to depend on just a few nouns (Table 4), namely power³⁵ and glory. It seems that in the case of “the glory of *īšti-*”, it refers to either the domain or the source of glory.

However (in the case of power), it probably indicates the realm over which the power or rule is practised (ibid: p. 39). For example, in 6 (Y.51:2) “the power of *īšti-*”:

³³ “Power” for *xšaθra-* is the closest available translation. Humbach (1959: 86) defines it as the magical potency with which the priest inclines the deity (Kellens and Pirart 1990: 232). For further discussion on how and why it is not a very spatial concept see Provasi 1974.

³⁴ Difficult to figure whether good thought is related here to *īšti* or power. This translation follows Humbach 1991a.

³⁵ So comparing examples 4 and 6, *xšaθra-* and *īšti-* depend on each other in different contexts.

Table 5. Co-occurring noun phrases in parallel structures with *īšti-* (arranged in OAv. and YAv. sections for comparison)

Y.32: 9	<i>srauuā</i> : reputation	<i>sānghanāiš xratūm</i> : the intellect of the living
Y.34: 5	<i>xšaθrəm</i> : power	
Y.60:4	<i>paitīštātāē ātaranqm</i> : for the hindrance of the hostile	<i>fraša.vaxšiiāi raiiqmca x^varənaḥqmca</i> : for the re-growth of riches and glory
Y.60:7	<i>x^vāθrauuat x^varənō</i> : delightful glory	<i>x^vāθrauuaiti āsna frazaiṅtiš</i> : delightful successful daughter
Y.65:11	<i>frazaiṅtīmca x^vāparqm</i> : beneficial daughter	
Y.68:11	<i>tanuuō vərəθrəm</i> : bodily overcome	<i>āsnqmciṭ frazaiṅtīm</i> : a successful daughter
Vr. 23:1	<i>vahištəm ahūm</i> : the best being	
Yt.5:26	<i>saoka</i> : profit	
Yt.8:15	<i>vqθβqm</i> : flock	
Yt.10:108	<i>āsnqmciṭ frazaiṅtīm</i> : successful daughter	<i>tanuuō druuatātəm</i> : bodily health

(6) <i>taibiiācā</i>	<i>ārmaitē</i>	<i>dōišā</i>	= <i>mōi</i>
you.DAT.SG	right mindedness.VOC.SG.F	show.AOR.SBJV.1SG	my.GEN.SG
	<i>īštōiš</i>	<i>xšaθrəm</i>	
	<i>īšti-</i> .GEN.SG.F	power.ACC.SG.N	

“I shall show the power over my *īšti-* for you, O right-mindedness.”

The co-occurring noun phrases in parallel structures (Table 5) show that in the YAv. texts, *īšti-* is an exalted and desired possession which was requested to be granted by gods to the faithful as a worldly reward.

In example 7 (Yt.8: 15), “*īšti-* of men” is followed by “flock of men”:

(7) <i>kahmāi</i>	<i>azəm</i>	<i>daḍqm</i>	<i>vīriiqm</i>	<i>īštīm</i>
who.DAT.SG.M	I.NOM.SG	give.INJ.1SG	virile.ACC.SG.F	<i>īšti-</i> .ACC.SG.F
	<i>vīriiqm</i>	<i>vqθβqm</i>		
	virile.ACC.SG.F	herd.ACC.SG.F		

“To whom will I give *īšti-* of men, a flock of men.”

and in 8 (Y.65: 11) by “a beneficial offspring”:

(8) <i>īštīm</i>	= <i>vō</i>	<i>jaiḍiiāmi</i>	<i>pouru.sarəḍqm ...</i>
<i>īštī</i> .ACC.SG.F	you.ACC.PL	implore.PRS.1SG	of many kind.ACC.SG.F
	<i>frazaiṅtīm=ca</i>	<i>x^vāparqm</i>	
	offspring.ACC.SG.F=and	beneficial.ACC.SG.F	

“I implore you for a *īšti-* of many kinds and of strength ... and for a beneficial offspring.”

Another point is the attestation of the concept of the non-*īšti-* in 9.2 (Yt.10: 110) following a reference to *īšti-* in 9.1 (Yt.10: 108). These two quotations help clarify the notion:

(9.1) *azəm baxšāni xšaiamnō kahmāi īštīm*
 I.NOM.SG grant.SBJV.1SG capable.NOM.SG.M who.DAT.SG īšti- .ACC.SG.F
pouruš-x^vāθrəm
 full-comfort.ACC.SG.F

“To whom shall I, the capable, grant the comforting īšti-?”

(9.2) *kahmāi ain-īštīm duciθrīm azəm baxšāni*
 who.DAT.SG non-īšti-.ACC.SG.F misery-bringing.ACC.SG.F I.NOM.SG grant.SBJV.1SG
xšaiamnō
 capable.NOM.SG.M

“To whom shall I, the capable, grant the non-īšti- that brings misery?”³⁶

These two quotations (9.1 and 9.2) are a part of the two parallel inventories of things that should be granted to Mithra’s worshipper(s) or taken from his non-worshipper(s). These lists include “health of the body” against “illness and heath” and “raising noble progeny” versus “slaying noble progeny”. Therefore, the “comforting īšti-” seems to be semantically opposite to the “*ainīšti-* that brings misery”. Thus, *īšti-* is a reversible concept.

According to example 10 (Y.51: 18a–b), *īšti-* is of a more conceptual nature. The glories stemming from *īšti-* are here used in parallel structures with insight and the power of good thought:

(10) *təm cistīm dājāmāspō huuō.guuō*
 that.ACC.SG.F insight.ACC.SG.F Jāmāspa.NOM.SG.M Hvōguva.NOM.SG.M
īštōiš x^varənā
īšti-.GEN.SG.F glory.ACC.PL.N

Jāmāspa Hvōguva (chooses) that insight, the glories of *īšti-*

ašā vərəntē taṭ xšaθrəm
 truth.INS.SG.N choose.PRS.3SG.MID that.ACC.SG.N power.ACC.SG.N
manajhō vaṇuhāuš vīdō
 thought.GEN.SG.N good.GEN.SG possession.GEN.SG.M

“With truth he chooses that power in possession of good thought.”

4. Derivatives of *īšti-*

The adjective **īštīuuant-*³⁷ (Yt.7: 5, Ny.3: 7) “possessing *īšti*” derives from *īšti.uuant-*. It is, along with other rhyming adjectives such as *xštāuuantəm* “shiny, beautiful”, *yaoxštāuuantəm* “skilful”, *saokauuantəm* “beneficial”, *zairimīiāuuantəm* “having a permanent house”, used to describe the moon. The existence of the adjective composed of the noun *īšti-* and the possessive adjective maker *-uuant* “possessing, having” confirms that *īšti-* is a possession.

³⁶ For further discussion about the adjective and other possibilities for its interpretation see (Gershevitch 1959: 260–1).

³⁷ Geldner *īštāuuant-*. For detail see Taraf 1981: 171.

5. Interim conclusion

We have already considered the linguistic taxonomy of the verbs, and genitive nouns used with *īšti-*, as well as its possessors, in the Av. texts. We also demonstrated that it has only been a patient for the verbs of giving/taking, requesting (to have), and considering/contemplating semantic groups. It is not attested to be the agent or subject of an intransitive verb, has never been attested in plural form, though it is described as having many kinds and belonging to *Ahura Mazdā* who can grant it to *Zaraθuštra* and the faithful. Therefore, *īšti-* is an exalted alienable property of a gradable quality or absolute supremacy since it is described as strong or best. Moreover, *īšti-* is used in expressions with inanimate entities, such as *xšaθra-* “power”, *vohu- manah-* “good thinking”, *x^yarənah-* “glory”, *aša- vahišta-* “the best truth”, and *cistī-* “insight”. These expressions can be interpreted in several ways. They can refer to *īšti-* as the source, attribute, or domain of these entities. Insofar as the limited data is representative of *īšti-* usage in different periods, these findings show that *īšti-* in Avestan refers to “capability, capacity, or competence”. Therefore, the adjective *īštiuuant* means “competent, capable”, and the reverse concept of non-*īšti-* “incapability, incapacity, or incompetence”.

6. Middle Persian *īšt*

How did Middle Persian interpreters translate and understand Avestan *īšti-*? The Avestan corpus shows 25 occurrences of the word, nine of which have no MP translations (belonging to Yt.5, 8, 10). The occurrences with a MP translation belong to *VištāspYašt*, *Visperad*, and mostly *Yasna*. Of the 14 occurrences in *Yasna*, eleven belong to the *Gāthās*.

In a few examples, the Avestan noun is translated into a verb,³⁸ all derived from the verb *xwāstan* “want, desire”. It indicates that MP interpreters considered the word as a root from *Iš* “want, desire”. For example, in 11 (Y.46: 16d):

(11.1) Av. *yaθrā* *vaṇhāuš* *manaṇhō* *īštā* *xšaθrəm*
 where good.GEN.SG thought.GEN.SG.F *īšti-*.LOC.SG.F power.NOM.SG.N

(11.2) MP *ānōh kū* *wahman* *xwāst* *ēstēd* *xwadāyih*
 there where *Wahman*³⁹ desire.PST.PTCP stand.PRS.3SG sovereignty

Av. Tr. “Where power (is) in the *īšti-* of good thought.”

MP Tr. “There where *Wahman* has desired sovereignty.”

Several other Avestan forms, usually stemming from the OIr. root *Iš* “want, desire” are also translated into the MP verb *xwāstan* “want”. For example the OAv. *īšiiā* (Y.48: 8.c) “desired” is translated to the MP *xwāhišnīh* “desiring, requiring”.

The relation of *īšti-* and *xšaθra-* is expressed in periphrastic perfect *xwāst ēstēd* “has desired”. Thus, the intended meaning would be “sovereignty is in the desire of *Wahman*”. However, the verbs which appear in the MP translation of the Av. *īšti-* differ

³⁸ Y46: 16, 48: 8, 51: 18, 53: 1.

³⁹ *Wahman* literally means “good thought”, but in Zoroastrian texts is personalized and gained more qualities in the MP legends as the first of *Amāša Spəntas*, the auxiliary of *Ohrmazd*, and the adversary of *Akōman*. A comment in the MP translation of Y47: 3: d alludes to the personification of *Wahman*’s character and the related myths in MP texts: *ka-š wahman dād ā-š harw cē kard pad hampursagīh ī wahman kard* “When he created *Wahman*, whatever he did, he did according to consultation with *Wahman*”.

in their time, aspect, and mood (TAM). In 12.2 (Y.51: 18), the TAM marking of the verb *xwāstan* is different:

(12) Av.	<i>tqm</i>	<i>cistīm</i>	<i>dājāmāspō</i>	<i>huuō.guuō</i>
	that.ACC.SG.F	insight.ACC.SG.F	Jāmāspa.NOM.SG.M	Hvōguva.NOM.SG.M
	<i>īštōiš</i>	<i>x^varənā</i>		
	īšti-.GEN.SG.F	glory.ACC.PL.N		

(12.2) MP	<i>ān ī</i>	<i>frāzānag</i>	<i>dastwar jāmāsp</i>	<i>ī hwōwan</i>	<i>xwāhēd</i>	<i>xwarrah</i>
	that EZ	wise	minister Jāmāsp	EZ of Hwōw	desire.PRS.3SG	glory
Av. Tr.	“Jāmāspa Hvōguva (chooses) that insight, the glories of <i>īšti</i> .”					
MP Tr.	“The wise minister Jāmāsp of Hwōws desires glory.”					

There are also occurrences in which *īšti-* is translated into a noun stemming from the verb *xwāstan* “desire”. In example 13.2 (Y.48: 8), the MP text would be understood in relation to the Avestan text as seen below:

(13.1) Av.	<i>kā</i>	<i>=tōi</i>	<i>vajhāuš</i>	<i>mazdā</i>
	what.NOM.SG.F	you.GEN.SG	good.GEN.SG	Wise.VOC.SG.M
	<i>xšaθrahiā</i>	<i>īštīš</i>		
	power.GEN.SG.N	īšti-.NOM.SG.F		

(13.2) MP	<i>kadār</i>	<i>tō</i>	<i>ohrmazd</i>	<i>ān ī weh</i>	<i>xwāhišn</i>
	Which one	you	Ohrmazd	that EZ good	desire
	<i>ī xwadāyīh</i>				
	EZ sovereignty				
Av. Tr.	“What is the <i>īšti-</i> of your good power, O Wise One?”				
MP Tr.	“O you Ohrmazd, which one is the best desire of sovereignty?”				

As is evident, here, *īšti-* is translated into the noun *xwāhišn* “desire”. Moreover, *ān ī weh* corresponding to *vajhāuš*, which is related to *xšaθra-* (not *īšti-*), while in the MP translation, *ān ī weh* describes *xwāhišn* (not *xwadāyīh*). The Av. word order is not followed strictly by the MP translation here.

Elsewhere (Table 6), MP interpreters usually use the calque *īšt* in their glossing of the Avestan text and spell it with the Avestan letter *ī*.⁴⁰ In *Zand* texts, MP *īšt* seems to be used only as an equivalent for the Av. *īšti-*. The only exception is in *Yasna Haptaḡhāiti* (Y.40: 4), where it glosses the Avestan *īštəm*, PPP of the verb *iš-* desire.⁴¹ Zeini (2020: 277–8) left MP *īšt* untranslated, being a learned (loan)word from Avestan scholarship, in his recent study on YH. In comments, he also refers to the occurrences of the word and correctly recognizes the semantic domain of MP *īšt* to be “property”, but casts doubt on its semantic detail. Finally, Zeini (2020: 164) concludes that since, in the broader MP literature, *īšt* occurs in the proximity of *sūd*, then, *sūd* “profit”, *xwāstag* “wealth, property”, and *bar* “fruit, yield” are used interchangeably to comment on *īšt* without noticeably modifying its meaning. The problem with this assumption is that the word also occurs in the

⁴⁰ In only two out of the ten occurrences of *īšt* (Y.68: 11) it is spelled with a MP *y*.

⁴¹ For more discussion on the Av. *īšta-* see Hintze 2007: 306.

Table 6. The Av. *īštī-* “property, wealth” and its MP translations

Occurrence	Av.	MP	MP comment to clarify <i>īšt</i>
Y.46: 16d	<i>īštā</i>	<i>xwāst ēstēd</i>	-
Y.49: 12d	<i>īštā</i>	<i>īšt</i>	-
Y.40: 4	<i>ištām</i>	<i>pad īšt</i>	<i>pad xwāstag</i>
Y.32: 9b	<i>īštīm</i>	<i>īšt</i>	<i>xwāstag</i> in a longer phrase
Y.46: 2e	<i>īštīm</i>	<i>īšt</i>	<i>ā-m dahē</i>
Y.65: 11	<i>īštīm</i>	<i>īšt</i>	<i>xwāstag</i>
Y.68: 11	<i>īštīm</i>	<i>īšt</i>	<i>xwāstag</i>
Vr.23: 1	<i>īštīm</i>	<i>xwāhišn</i>	-
Y.48: 8a	<i>īštiš</i>	<i>xwāhišn</i>	-
Y.53: 1a	<i>īštiš</i>	<i>xwāhišnīh</i>	-
Y.60: 7	<i>īštiš</i>	<i>īšt</i>	<i>xwāstag</i>
Y.34: 5a	<i>īštiš</i>	<i>īšt</i>	<i>xwāstag</i> in a longer phrase
Y.44: 10e	<i>īštiš</i>	<i>īšt</i>	<i>bar</i>
Y.46: 18b	<i>ištōiš</i>	<i>īšt</i>	<i>xwāstag</i> in a longer phrase
Y.51: 2b	<i>ištōiš</i>	<i>īšt</i>	-
Y.51: 18a	<i>ištōiš</i>	<i>xwāhēd</i>	-

proximity of a few more desired possessions in Av. and MP texts, but this does not mean that they are defining the word.

In addition to the direct translations of Avestan texts, *īšt* is also attested in the MP texts of the *Dēnkard* (DK), where they render interpretations of the Avestan exegeses. Therefore, *īšt* is another example of the words from the MP translations of the Avesta which later became a MP vocabulary item. As shown in Table 6, *īšt* is also frequently explained by MP *xwāstag* “wealth, property”. As stated above, the *Zandist*(s) apparently understood the word *īšt* to derive from the root *Iš* “want, desire”. MP *xwāstag* (literally “wanted, desired”) also derives from the MP verb *xwāstan* “want”. Thence, it seems that the *Zandist*(s) used the original MP *xwāstag* synonymously with the calque *īšt*.

Table 7 shows the occurrences of *īšt* in MP texts. For the majority (five out of seven) of these quotations, it is easy to find the Av. original text since the quotations, though not a strict translation, keep the same discourse. The interesting point is about the MP quotation of the Av. Yt.5: 26, for which no *Zand* text has yet been found. The last two MP examples seem not to refer to any particular line in the Avesta but, instead, render a general understanding of the Avestan texts. The MP heading for the part from which these two quotations are extracted, contributes to this idea. For example, DK9: 66 starts with the heading *wīstom fragard Wohuxšatr* “the twentieth chapter, *Wohuxšatr*” which refers to *Gāthā* 51, traditionally called *vohu-xšaθra* after its two initial words.

Table 8 compares *Zand* translations with the related MP quotations in the *Dēnkard*. As expected, in these quotations the viewpoint is different. Since the narrator of the *Gāthās* (the majority of occurrences belong to *Gāthās*) is considered to be *Zarathuštra*, there are fewer first- and second-person pronouns and more third-person pronoun (e.g. Y.51: 2, Y.44: 10). Exceptions are when the issue concerns the *hērbed* and *hāwīšt* relationship (e.g. compare the *Zand* and MP quotation of Y.46: 18 in Table 8) or a general/still significant issue (e.g. Y.32: 9).

Table 7. *īšt* “property, wealth” in MP texts

MP text	MP translation	Av. text	Av. translation
DK3:286: 11 <i>u-š ul burd az dēwān ... harw 2 īšt ud sūd</i>	He (Yima) took away from deus both <i>īšt</i> and benefit	Yt.5: 26 <i>azəm uz-barāni haca daēuuāēibiō uiiē īštišca saokaca</i>	I shall withdraw from the daēvas, both <i>īšti</i> , and profit.
DK9:32: 11 <i>gannāg mēnōg ... ān ī man īšt appurd</i>	The Evil Spirit robbed my <i>īšt</i> .	Y.32: 9 <i>apō mā īštīm apaiiantā bərəxdəm hāitīm vañhəuš manajhō</i>	He (the blasphemer) robs my <i>īšti</i> -, the good thought’s esteemed existing (one)
DK9:39: 26 <i>ō ōy tō-iz ān ī xwēš īšt be dahēš</i>	You, too, should give (your) own <i>īšt</i> to him.	Y.46: 18 <i>vahištā maxiiā īštōiš vohū cōišəm manajhā</i>	I assign through the good thought, the best of my <i>īšti</i> -.
DK9:64: 11 <i>ān ī ohrmazd īšt xwāstār bawēd</i>	He wants (lit. becomes the seeker of) the <i>īšt</i> of Ohrmazd	Y.44: 10 <i>... θβā īštīš usən mazdā</i>	the <i>īšti</i> - ... (inspired) by you at will, O Wise One!
DK9: 66: 4 <i>u-š īšt ī pad xwadāyih be šāyēd dād</i>	And he can give (in the sense of allot) the <i>īšt</i> regarding sovereignty. ⁴²	Y.51:2 <i>taibiūcā ārmaitē dōišā.mōi īštōiš xšaθrəm</i>	I shall show the power of my <i>īšti</i> - for you, O right-mindedness.
DK9:69: 14 <i>ōy ān ī amā īšt kū xwāstag pad xwēših ī amā dāšt ēstēd</i>	He has kept our <i>īšt</i> , namely our property in our possession.	-	-
DK9:69: 16 <i>pad īšt tō zardušt rād hē</i>	Regarding <i>īšt</i> , you, Zarathuštra, are generous.	-	-

There are references to the Av. texts in the MP quotations, which could not be made if the author had access only to the *Zand* translations and not the Avestan originals. For example, in Y.44: 10, the controversial Av. *usən* is translated to MP *hunsand hom* in *Zand*, but to *xwāstār bawēd* in the MP quotation in DK9. Moreover, the author of the *Dēnkard* seems to have had access to the comments of the *Zandist*(s). For example, in Y.32: 9, the *Zandist*, in a comment, refers to a commitment or a treaty between the adversaries (who have robbed *īšt*) and the faithful for conditions under which the faithful could keep their belongings. The DK quotation uses this comment for referring to the commitment:

(14) *u=š* *ān* *ī* *man* *īšt* *appurd* *paymān-ēw* *kard*
and=PC.3SG that EZ I *īšt* rob.PST commitment-1 do.PST

“And he robbed my *īšt*, made a commitment.”

⁴² I am grateful to Fatemeh Seyyedi who generously shared with me her unpublished findings about this quotation in her PhD dissertation (defended 2010, at Olum va Tahqiqat Azad University, Tehran, Iran) on the translation and analysis of *Bay Nask*, DK9.

Table 8. Av. originals, *Zand* translations, and MP quotations

Av. original	Av. tr.	<i>Zand</i>	<i>Zand</i> tr.	MP quotation	MP quot. tr.
Yt.5: 26: <i>azəm uz-barāni haca daēuuaiēibiō uiiē īštišca saokaca</i>	I shall withdraw from the daēvas, both <i>īšti-</i> , and profit.	–	–	DK3: 286: 11 <i>u-š ul burd az dēwān ... harw 2 īšt ud sūd</i>	He (Yima) withdrew from dewes both <i>īšt</i> and benefit
Y.32: 9: <i>apō mā īštīm apaiiantā bərəxδqəm hāitīm vañhəuš manayhō</i>	He (the blasphemer) takes away my <i>īšti-</i> , the good thought's esteemed existing (one)	<i>kē-šān bē ān ī man īšt appurd</i>	They who stole (everything) except for my <i>īšt</i>	DK9: 32: 11 <i>gannāg mēnōg ... ān ī man īšt appurd</i>	The Evil Spirit robbed my <i>īšt</i> .
Y.46: 18: <i>yē maibiūā yaoš ahmāi ascēt vahištāmaxiūā ištōiš vohū cōišəm manayhā</i>	To him, who is useful to me, I for my part promise through good thought the best (things) in my <i>īšti-</i> .	<i>kē ō man gyān [kū hāwištīh ī man kunēd] ōy pad-iz tan pahlom ... kē ō man īšt ...ā-š wahman cāšēd</i>	He who (gives) me life [namely be my student], he is the best in body. He who gives me <i>īšt</i> , to him Wahman has taught (to do so).	DK9: 39: 26 <i>kē menišnīg tan pad hāwištīh bē ō tō dahēd ō ōy tō-iz pahlom ān ī xwēš īšt bē dahē-š</i>	He who gives his thoughtful body to studentship to you, to him, give from your best <i>īšt</i> .
Y.44: 10: ... <i>θβā īštīš usən mazdā</i>	the <i>išti</i> ... (inspired) by you at will, O Wise One!	<i>ā-š ēd ī tō īšt,... hunsand hom mazdā</i>	then to him your <i>īšt</i> , ... I am satisfied, Ohrmazd	DK9: 64: 11 <i>ān ī ohrmazd īšt xwāstār bawēd</i>	He wants (lit. is seeker of) the <i>īšt</i> of Ohrmazd
Y.51: 2: <i>taibiūācā ārmaite dōišā.mōi ištōiš xšaθrəm</i>	I shall show the power of my <i>ištī</i> for you, O right-mindedness.	<i>pad-iz tō spandarmad dahād ō man īšt ī pad xwadāyīh</i>	to you, Spandarmad, shall give, to me, the <i>īšt</i> of sovereignty.	DK9: 66: 4 <i>kē bowandag-menišnīh (xwadāyīh) ō xwēš kunēd, ... u-š īšt ī pad xwadāyīh be šāyēd dād</i>	The one who right-mindedly achieves sovereignty, to him, <i>īšt</i> of sovereignty shall be given.

Table 9. Verbs used with *īšt* “property, wealth”

Occurrence			TAM marking	Voice	Role of <i>īšti-</i>	Valency
Y.32: 9b	<i>appurd</i>	(he) robbed	PST.3SG	active	patient	2
Y.40: 4	<i>(rād) hād</i>	shall (he) be generous	SBJV.2PL	active	patient	1
Y.44: 10e	<i>dānēnd</i>	(they) give	PRS.3PL	active	patient	3
Y.46: 2e	<i>dahē</i>	(you) give	NPST.2SG	active	patient	3
Y.46: 18b	<i>dahēd</i>	(he) gives	PRS.3SG	active	patient	3
Y.49: 12d	<i>xwāhānd</i>	shall (they) want	SBJV.3PL	active	patient	2
Y.51: 2b	<i>dāhād</i>	shall (he) give	SBJV.2PL	active	patient	3
Y.60: 7	<i>frāz abesthād</i>	shall (it) be destroyed	SBJV.3SG	passive	patient	1
Y.65: 11	<i>zayēm</i>	(I) ask	PRS.1SG	active	patient	3
Y.68: 11	<i>dāhē</i>	(you) give	NPST.2SG	active	patient	3
DK3:286: 11	<i>ul burd</i>	(he) took away	PST.3SG	active	patient	2
DK9:32: 11	<i>appurd</i>	(he) robbed	PST.3SG	active	patient	2
DK9:39: 26	<i>be dahē</i>	(you) give	NPST.2SG	active	patient	3
DK9:64: 11	<i>xwāstār bawēd</i>	(he) wants	PRS.3SG	active	patient	2
DK9:66: 4	<i>šāyēd (dād)</i>	is worthy of giving	PRS.3SG	active	patient	3
DK9:69: 14	<i>dāšt ēstēd</i>	has kept	PRF.3SG	active	patient	2
DK9:69: 16	<i>(rād) hē</i>	(you) are (generous)	NPST.2SG	active	patient	1

Therefore, it could be assumed that the author of *Dēnkard* had access both to the Avestan texts and the MP translations, probably in bilingual manuscripts like those that include Avestan and MP texts in the same book.

Table 9 demonstrates that MP *īšt* can function as an argument or an adjunct of in-, (mono)transitive or ditransitive verbs. Here again, the intransitive verbs are either copula or passive. In MP, too, *īšt* is never attested to act as an agent, rather usually a patient. The verbs used with *īšt* could be categorized as giving/taking, destroy, and request (to have) verbs. There is no trace of contemplating/looking verbs anymore.

A few nouns are used with *īšt*, and they belong to two groups: the first consists mostly of genitive pronouns (*ān ī man* “that of mine”, *ān ī ašmā* “that of yours”, *ān ī tō* “that of yours”) and sometimes genitive nouns, usually animate entities referring to the possessor or the recipient of *īšt* (*ān ī xwarrahōmand* “that of the glorious one”). In contrast, the other group consists of inanimate entities and refers to the attributes (*ān ī ahlāyih īšt* “the *īšt* of righteousness”, namely righteousness features *īšt*). There is also an attestation of *āb īšt* (Y.65: 11) in example 15.2, which seems to define the nature of the requested *īšt*.

Although in the Av. original (15.1), *apō* refers to the goddess(es) of waters. Here (15.2), too, *īšt* is further explained by *xwāstag*:

(15.1) Av.	<i>āpō</i>	<i>īštīm</i>	<i>vō</i>	<i>jaiδiīāmi</i>	
	water.VOC.PL.F	īšti-.ACC.SG.F	you.ACC.PL	request.PRS.1SG	
(15.2) MP	<i>āb</i>	<i>īšt</i>	<i>az ašmā</i>	<i>zayēm</i>	<i>xwāstag</i>
	water	īšt	from you.PL	ask.PRS.1SG	wealth
Av. Tr.	“O Waters, I request you (to give me) <i>īšti</i> .”				
MP Tr.	“I ask you for <i>īšt</i> , i.e., wealth, of water.”				

As with *xwāstag* “wealth, property” in 15.2, comments usually clarify the meaning of the word *īšt*. For example, in Y44: 10 *ēd ī tō īšt* “your *īšt*” is immediately interpreted as *bar* “fruit, yield”. For a better understanding, let’s refer to a few sentences before and after its occurrence, in example 16:

(16) <i>kē</i>	<i>ān</i>	<i>ī</i>	<i>man gēhān</i>	<i>pad ahlāyīh</i>	<i>frādahišnih</i>
who	that	EZ I	material world	at righteousness	increase
	<i>abganēnēd</i>				
	throw.PRS.3SG				
“Who increases my world righteously”					

[<i>kē</i>	<i>dēn</i>	<i>ēn</i>	<i>xwāstag</i>	<i>az</i>	<i>frārōnīh</i>	<i>kunēd</i>]
who	religion	this	Wealth	from	righteousness	do.PRS.3SG
[The one who gives to the religion this wealth according to righteousness.]						

ud pad bowandag menišnīh saxwan ud kunišn rāst dahēd
 and at right-mindedness word and deed right give.PRS.3SG
 and gives the genuine word and deed according to right-mindedness

[<i>kū</i>	<i>tis</i>	<i>bowandag menišnīhā</i>	<i>gōwēd</i>	<i>kunēnd</i>]
namely	Thing	right-mindedly	say.PRS.3SG	do.PRS.3PL
“[namely says and do thing(s) right-mindedly]”				

kē ān ī man frazānagīh [kū frazām ī tis pad frārōnīh
 who that EZ I wisdom namely end EZ thing at righteousness
dānēd] *ā=š* *ēd* *ī* *tō* *īšt* *[bar]*
 know.PRS.3SG then=pc.3SG that EZ you īšt yield
 “Whoever (has) that wisdom of mine, [namely knows the outcome of thing(s) regarding righteousness] then to him your *īšt* [yield]”

[*kū ān mizd ī ō tō dahēnd* *ō=z* *ōy dahēnd*]
 namely that reward EZ to you give.PRS.3PL to-also he give.PRS.3PL
 “[Namely that reward that they give you, they also give him].”

hunsand hom ohrmazd [ka man kam nē dahēnd]
 satisfied be.PRS.1SG Ohrmazd if I little not give.PRS.3PL
 “I am satisfied, Ohrmazd [if they do not give me little]”

Therefore, it seems that *īšt* here refers to the reward given to the faithful who dedicates his wealth to religion, speaks and acts right-mindedly, and knows the end of things wisely. However, there is also probably a reference to the remuneration paid by the faithful(s) to the priest(s) as a sacrifice for their religion where (ex. 16) it refers to the increase of “my material world” and conditions satisfaction to when “they do not give me little”.

In example 17 (Y.46: 2), *īšt* seems to be the reward of righteousness and good thinking:

(17) *man ka kam-ramag [kū=m xwāstag kam]*
 I when few-herd namely=PC.1SG wealth little
 “When I have little herd [literally my wealth (is) little].”

ud ka=z kam-mard hom [kū=m gund ud abzār]
 and when=also few-man be.PRS.1SG namely=PC.1SG group of followers and means
kam ...]
 little

“And when I also have few men [namely few followers and few means].”

garzom ō tō ān ēn wēn ohrmazd
 complain.PRS.1SG to you that this see.IMP.2SG Ohrmazd
[kū=m cārag xwāh]
 [namely=PC.1SG solution want.IMP.2SG

“I complain to you, see this, Ohrmazd! [namely find a solution for me]”

rāmišn=im kāmag kē dōst ō ōy dōst dahēd
 ease=PC.1SG desire Who friend to DEM friend give.PRS.3SG
 “I desire the ease that a friend gives to the (other) friend”

pad hammōxtišn ī wahman [ka pad frārōnīh hammōxt]
 at teaching EZ Good Thought [if at righteousness teach.PST.PTCP
ēstom]
 stand.PRS.1SG]

“according to the teaching of *Wahman* [if I have learned righteously]

ān ī ahlāyīh īšt [ā=m dahē]
 that EZ righteousness īšt [then=PC.1SG give.NPST.2SG]
 “the *īšt* of righteousness [then give me that]”

In seven occurrences of *īšt* in MP texts (out of ten), it is almost immediately described by *xwāstag* “wealth, property”. Another example is 18 (Y.46: 18b):

(18) *kē* *ō* *man* *īšt* [*kū=m* *xwāstag dahēd*] *ā=š*
 who to I *īšt* [namely=PC.1SG wealth give.PRS.3SG then=PC.3SG
wahman cāšēd
Wahman teach.PRS.3SG

“He who (gives) me *īšt* [namely gives me wealth] then him *Wahman* teaches.”

Regarding the two examples (17 and 18), it seems that the teachings of *Wahman* and *īšti-* are associated, which should have stemmed from the Av. collocation of the two. The relation of the Av. *īšti-*, as was explained above, should be of source-fruit nature. Similarly, in the MP translations, it is as if *īšti-* is the reward that is dedicated to the faithful according to the teachings of *Wahman*.

In YAv. texts, too, *īšti-* is understood as “wealth”. In example 19 (Y.68: 11):

(19) *ō* *ōy* *tan-drust-rawišnīh* *ō* *ōy* *tan-wazdwarīh* *ō* *ōy* *īšt* *ī* *purrxwārīh*
 ...
 to he body-healthy-going to he body-strength to he *īšt* EZ full of ease
 [*xwāstag*]
 wealth

“To him, the health of the body, to him, the strength of the body, to him comforting *īšt* [wealth].”

Thus, the interpretation of *īšt* in MP translations of OAv. and YAv. does not present a detectable difference and seems homogeneous throughout the *Zand* texts. Moreover, it seems that according to example 20 (Y.32: 9a–b), *īšt* is an article of the disputed property. Being once stolen by the adversaries, its ownership should be kept according to the acceptance of a particular commitment under the authority of the adversaries:

(20) *pad* *dušhammōzišnīh* *ī* *sraw* *ā=šān* *murnjēnīd* [*dēwān*]
 at bad-teaching EZ spell then=PC.3PL kill.PST [dews]

“By the bad-teaching of the spell, they killed [dews (killed)]”

ōy *kē* *ān* *ī* *zīwišnōmand* *rad* *hammōxt* [*ō* *kasān*
 he who that EZ living wisdom teach/learn.PST to people
 The one who learned/taught the living wisdom [to people,

ast *kē* *ēdōn* *gōwēd* *ay* *sraw* *ā=šān* *murnjēnīd* *ī* *ōy*]
 be.PRS.3SG who thus say.PRS.3SG namely spell then=PC.3PL kill.PST EZ he
 “There is someone who says thus: their spell killed that one].”

kē=šān *bē* *ān* *ī* *man* *īšt* *appurd*
 who=PC.3PL except that EZ I *īšt* rob.PST
 “They who stole (everything) except for my *īšt*.”

[*paymān kard dāšt xwāstag pad dastwar ī man abāyēd*
 commitment do.PST hold.PTCP property at authority EZ I should.PRS.3SG
dāštan
 hold.INF

“[(They) committed that (if) the property is held, (then it) is to be held under my authority.”

ī ka šāyēd dāštan pad ān rāh šāyēd dāštan] ⁴³
 EZ if can.PRS.3SG hold.INF At that way should.PRS.3SG hold.INF EZ

ārzōg ast pad wahman [kū ka frārōnīh dahēnd
 wish be.PRS.3SG at good thinking namely if righteousness give.PRS.3PL
abāyišnīg]
 fitting

“If it is possible to hold (it), in that way (it) can be held, which is the wish lies in good thinking⁴⁴ [namely, if they hold (it according to) righteousness, they are fitting.]”

In example 21.2, it seems that *ī arzōg ast pad wahman* refers to Av. *īšti-*, and thus again, the relation between *īšt* and *Wahman* is exposed:

(21.1) Av. *apō =mā īštīm apa.iaṇtā*
 PREV =PC.ACC.SG. *īšti*-ACC.SG.F away.take:AOR.INJ.3SG.MID
*bərəxḍqm hāitīm vaṇhāuš manahō*⁴⁵
 esteemed.ACC.SG.F exisitant.ACC.SG.F good.GEN.SG thought.GEN.SG.N

(21.2) MP *kē=šān bē ān ī man īšt appurd ī arzōg ast pad wahman*
 who=PC.3PL that EZ I *īšt* stole.PST EZ wish be.PRS.3SG at *Wahman*
 Av. Tr. “He robs my *īšti-*, the good thought’s esteemed existing (one).”
 MP Tr. “They who stole (everything) except for my *īšt*, which is the wish by means of *Wahman*.”

Accordingly, it can be concluded that MP *īšt* is the reward of righteousness and will be granted to the faithful, according to *Wahman*.

7. Conclusion

Scholars studying the OAv. texts alone have used different translations for the word *īšti-* in different contexts. Av. *īšti-* has been taken to include a wide range of related meanings, from assets to ability, power, command, wish, and ritual. The noun *īšti-* is a feminine noun that is not attested in the plural form, nor is it attested in a syntactic context in which it assumes an agentive role. In this article I have argued that the noun denotes an alienable, desired, contemplated, and gradeable concept. These findings show that *īšti-* and its usages in Avestan refer to ability or competence. Hence, one explanation is

⁴³ It seems that the *Zandist(s)* take correctly that it refers to *īšt*.

⁴⁴ Another possible translation of *ārzōg ast pad wahman* would be “the wish by means of *Wahman*”.

⁴⁵ Here GEN case is the subject for the verbal adjective *bərəxḍa-*. For details on GEN/DAT as the logical subject in Iranian languages see Jügel 2015: 21.

that it derives from the Ilr. verbal root *HAIŠ “to be able, to rule” (Cheung 2006: 158) and means “capability, capacity, or competence”. The adjective *īštiuuant* then means “capable, competent”. It is how expressions like *xšaθrahiīā īštiš* “the capability of power”, *maxiiā cistōiš īštiš* “the competence of my insight”, and *vahhāuš manajhō īštā xšaθram* “power (is) in the capacity of good thought”, come to light. Moreover, *īšti-* is a reversible concept. Therefore, the reverse expression *ainīšti-* means “incapability, incapacity, incompetence”. *Ahura Mazdā* is invoked to grant the competence/capacity to the truthful, comforting them, and to take it away from the deceitful and leave them in misery.

In the Pahlavi version Av. *īšti-* is occasionally translated by forms of the verb *xwāstan* “to want, desire”, though their TAM markings can differ and do not reflect any pattern. Otherwise, where the noun *īšt* is used in the translation, it is usually explained by *xwāstag*, which literally means “(what is) desired” and acquired the meaning “wealth, property”. The MP comments reveal that *īšt* is the reward in return for righteousness and good thought, which is given to the faithful. Likewise, the priest who performs the rituals and dedicates them to the divinities on behalf of the faithful is rewarded by them with remuneration, which is also called *īšt*. Moreover, MP translation seems to refer to a pact with the adversaries who control the faithful/ priest’s property to let him own *īšt*. Moreover, this interpretation is further supported by a connection between the concepts of capability and wealth in Iranian languages. For instance, MP *tuwāngarīh* “richness, wealth”, deriving derives from the noun *tuwān* “might, power”. Therefore, the association of the two meanings “capability, capacity, competence” and “wealth, property” is not surprising.

The reference to Av. *īšti-* in the inventory of the worshippers’ wishes in YAv. and its association with Good Thought in OAv. is understood differently in MP texts in so far as Good Thought is personalized in the latter texts and has acquired a mythological character. Thus, in the MP translations, *īšt* is granted as a reward to the faithful by *Wahman*.

To sum up, it has been argued here that Av. *īšti-* means “capability, capacity, and competence”. In MP texts, the noun is reinterpreted and understood as (a rewarded) “wealth, property” “remuneration”. It is also sometimes translated to the verb *xwāstan* “desire, want”. Table 10 may illustrate the result of the present investigation:

Table 10. The semantic domains of Av. *īšti-* and MP *īšt*

Av.	MP
<i>īšti-</i>	<i>īšt</i>
Capability, capacity, competence	Wealth, property; remuneration; reward

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List of abbreviations

A	Agent	OP	Old Persian
Av.	Avestan	P	Patient
ABL	Ablative	PASS	Passive
ACC	Accusative	PC	Personal Clitic
ACT	Active	PL	Plural
ADA	Avestan Digital Archive	PRS	Present
AOR	Aorist	PREV	Preverb
DAT	Dative	PST	Past
DU	Dual	PT	<i>Pahlavi Texts</i>
DK	<i>Dēnkard</i>	PTCP	Participle
EZ	Ezāfe	SBJV	Subjunctive
F	Feminine	SG	Singular
GEN	Genitive	ŠNŠ	<i>Šāyist nē Šāyist</i>
INJ	Injunctive	V.	<i>Vidēvdād</i>
INS	Instrumental	VOC	Vocative
M	Masculine	Vr.	<i>Visperad</i>
MID	Middle voice	Y	<i>Yasna</i>
MP	Middle Persian	YAv.	Young Avesta
N	Neuter		
NOM	Nominative		
NPST	Non-Past		
OAv.	Old Avestan		
OIr.	Old Iranian		

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