

# Lexical Variation in Younger Avestan: The Problem of the ‘Ahuric’ and ‘Daevic’ Vocabularies Revisited

Elizabeth Tucker - University of Oxford

Younger Avestan texts contain a striking example of lexical variation. Simply stated, there are two sets of nouns which refer to parts of the body and two sets of verbs for moving and speaking, which are employed on the one hand for good and on the other for evil animate beings. The religious background to the two distinct vocabularies is early Zoroastrian dualism, which assigns not only all supernatural beings and humans but also animals to either the good creation of Ahura Mazdā (‘Ahuric’ vocabulary) or to the opposing evil creation (‘Daevic’ vocabulary). However, the linguistic origins of this limited diglossia are not well understood although a number of explanations have been proposed, including loans from Old Indo-Aryan to account for ‘Daevic’ lexemes. My paper will argue that a detailed philological analysis of the Avestan text passages where such lexical contrasts occur points to a chronological development within Avestan which has not been noted in previous treatments of this topic.