

Zoroastrian Middle Persian I

A course on language, script, and Pre-Islamic Iran

Milad Abedi

Module number: 272f626, Spring Semester 2022

This course provides a comprehensive introduction to Zoroastrian Middle Persian Grammar and to its writing systems via text reading.

Participants will also be introduced to the history of Iranian languages, historical grammar of Persian, and common issues in Iranian linguistics.

The selected texts contain an assortment of different genres, from Biblical texts to political and encyclopedic texts; a book written in the Islamic age is even included to provide a complete picture of Zoroastrian Pahlavi literature. Each text will contain linguistic, social, historical, and cultural commentaries.

This course is constituted by a 1-hour weekly tutorial, and it is recommended to those who are interested in pre-Islamic Iranian literature and who are curious about a diachronic understanding of the Persian language.

No prior knowledge is needed; however, any knowledge of any new or ancient Iranian languages can be helpful. Also, any knowledge of Semitic languages can ease the understanding of the writing system.

	<i>Writing system and manuscripts</i>	<i>Grammar and linguistics</i>	<i>Cultural and historical remarks</i>	<i>Texts</i>
1		Introduction to the Iranian languages (IL), IL history, general remarks on IL grammatical features, IL placement in the IE family, IL writing systems, Introduction Middle Persian texts		
2	Basics of writing system	Origin of the MP verbal system (past and present stems)	A general introduction to the history of the Pre-Islamic Middle East with a focus on ancient Iran	<i>Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān</i>
3	Basics of writing system	MP verbal system (moods and aspect)		<i>Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān</i>
4	Basics of writing system	MP verbal system (negation, denomination, and participle)	Greek-Iranian contacts and faces of Alexander the great in Iranian literature	<i>Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān</i>
5	Basics of writing system	MP verbal system (final remarks and verbal endings)		<i>Ardā Wīrāz</i>
6	Logogram 1 (prepositions, postpositions, and)	MP morphology (nouns, pronouns, and adjectives)	A general introduction to Zoroastrianism	<i>Ardā Wīrāz</i>
7	Logogram 2 (personal pronouns)	MP morphology (adverbs and adpositions)	Middle Persian fruits, foods, and flowers	<i>Husrav ī kawādān ud rēdag-ē</i>
8	Basics of writing system	MP enclitical constructions	A Chinese-Middle Persian bilingual inscription from Xi'an, and Pre-Islamic Sino-Iranian contacts	<i>Mēnōg ī xrad</i>
9	Logogram 3 (verbs)	Ergative	Middle Persian games (chess and backgammon)	<i>Wizārīšn ī čatrang ud nihīšn ī nēw-ardaxšīr</i>
10	Manuscript 1	MP word order	A Middle Persian poem	<i>Draxt ī āsūrīg</i>
11	Logogram 4 (nouns, adjectives, adverbs)	MP historical phonology		<i>Bundahišn</i>
12	Manuscript 2	Iranian languages and contact phenomena	Zoroastrianism and the emergence of Islam	<i>Gizistag Abāliš</i>
13	Inscriptional Middle Persian and Manuscript 3	Review of the grammar, From Old Persian to New Persian	Iranian languages and Caucasus	<i>Šapur Hājītabād</i>
14	Manuscript 4	What happens if you read classical Persian texts without knowing Middle Persian?	How to write a letter in Middle Persian?	<i>Abar ēwēnag ī nāmag nibēšīšnīh</i>

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2022**



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Course Content
and Schedule