Old Persian $p-\theta-i-m$

1. The only representative in Old Persian of the IE word
for 'path' found in Skt. $pánthāḥ$ is an accusative spelled
$p-\theta-i-m$. It is found in DNa 58, where the king, just before
the end, says: $p-\theta-i-m$ $tayām$ $rāstām$ $mā$ $?avarada$ "The path
that is right thou shalt not ?leave." The passage shows
clearly that the word is feminine, whereas Skt. $pánthāḥ$
and Av. $pantå$ are masculine. The word may have had long
or short $-i-$, and it may have had an $-n-$ (which has not yet
been observed, as far as I see): $pa(n)\theta\overset{\times}{i}m$.

2. The interpretation of this word provided some difficulty.
It is now generally agreed that the Sanskrit and Avestan
words point to a stem in a first laryngeal, $*p(o)nt-(e)h_1-$.

KENT 1953, 61b compared Skt. $pathí-$, but the few i-stem
forms of Sanskrit clearly originated in the plural, e.g.
instr. $pathíbhiḥ$, where the i is a vocalized laryngeal
(AiGr 3, 308). This explanation is impossible here, as in
Iranian a laryngeal in inlaut was not vocalized, as in Av.
$pad\mathbf{a}bī\check{s}$ (WACKERNAGEL 1928, 108f = KlSchr. 335f; MAYRHOFER
1964, 75f).

3. As an alternative, which also accounted for the feminine
gender, WACKERNAGEL (l.c.) assumed that a suffix $-ī-$ was
added to the stem $pa\theta-$ (accepted by MAYRHOFER l.c. and in
BRANDENSTEIN-MAYRHOFER, HbAp 140). I think that this inter-
pretation is not very probable, and I would like to suggest
an alternative explanation, which, if true, would be of
considerable importance.

RV $pathy\overset{\grave{}}{ā}$ = $pathíyā$ fem. 'road, goddess of the road' -
which I do not find mentioned in this connection - does not
point to an original $pathī-$. This is an $ā$-stem, derived from

an adjective in *-iHo-*. It is an abstract derived from an
adjective, 'that/she of the road'. Cf. with **pathyā́-* also
rathyā́-.

The reshaping of *paθ-* into a stem *paθī́-*, though one
cannot say that it is impossible, is not very probable
because of the function of the suffix *-ī́-*. It must be the
suffix found in *devī́*, as a *vr̥kī́h*-type form would have had
acc. **paθiam*, written **p-θ-i-y-m*; this accusative form is
not attested in Old Persian, MAYRHOFER 1980, 139.

The suffix *-ī́-*, of course, makes feminines of adjectives
and 'Motionsfeminina'. Other uses are rare.

The only Old Persian words that (may) have the suffix *-ī́-*
(the geographical names are irrelevant, as their etymology
is often unknown; they are: *Bāhtrī́-*, *Harauvatī́-*, *Uvārazmī́-*)
are *būmī́-*, perhaps *dipī́-*, and *aθangainī́-* 'of stone'. The last
word has *vr̥kī́h*-inflection; MAYRHOFER 1980, 135f. The two other
words may be *i-* or *ī-*stems. *būmi-* was originally an *i-*stem.
dipi- is also used as a neuter; it is a loan from Elamite.
Old Persian, then, has few *devī́-*nouns, but they are rather
rare anyhow.

For Avestan I checked the reverse index of BARTHOLOMAE.
The *vr̥kī́h*-forms can be easily found in MAYRHOFER 1980, 130-
152. We find *-ī́-* in the feminine of adjectives and among
the nouns Motionsfeminina. Substantivized adjectives are
pərəθβī́- 'Oberfläche' and *strī́-* 'woman' (Gr.στεῖρα); probably
also *sāδayantī́-* 'Kleidungsstück'; perhaps *a-fra-marəntī́-*
'Nichtaufsagen' and *x^varəntī́-* 'Genießen, Essen'. *maxšī́-*
'fly', probably from a root noun (cf. Skt. *makṣ-*; see MAYR-
HOFER KEWA s.v. *mákṣā*; other Sanskrit forms are all feminine),
indicates a female (cf. Gr. μυῖα), as did *sūnī́-* 'dog' (Skt.
śunī́- 'bitch'), though this word came to indicate the dog
in general and became masculine. Three other words meant
'woman, female': *xšaθrī́-*, *hāirišī́-*, *jahī́-*. *būmī́-* probably

replaces earlier **būmi-*, as in Sanskrit. That words for
'earth' belong to this category (cf. Skt. *pṛthivī́-*) is
understandable. The remaining words do not easily fit into
this picture: *sūrī-* 'skin', of unknown etymology; *manaoθrī-*
'neck', a strange formation (it belongs to a group of words
that show many difficulties); *daoiθrī-* 'Sprache, Rede';
vohunī- 'blood' beside *vohuna-* id.; *təvišī-* 'strength'
(Skt. *távišī-*).

The last word, which is of PII date, resembles most the
development assumed for *paθī-*: it is an *ī*-stem formed from
an old neuter, **taviš-*. Here, however, a feminine power may
have been meant (cf. AiGr II 2, 406, § 251a Petit). The case
seems not to be parallel to the one here under discussion,
as a personification in the case of 'path' is not evident.

For Sanskrit we have more evidence, which is discussed in
AiGr II 2, 368-477, esp. 387-409 (§§ 248-253). Beside the
feminines of adjectives and the Motionsfeminina we find:
1) abstracts from roots (§ 251a; hardly from nouns, sub b):
   śácī- 'force' (note the meaning), *śámī-* 'work';
2) Sachwörter - mostly *vṛkī́ḥ*-nouns - are rare (§ 251d):
   except *bhūmī́-*, which was originally an *i*-stem, a few words
   (*kumbhī́-*, *sthālī́-*, *vā́śī-* 'axe' etc.).

   A noun *paθī-* would belong to group 2.

   In the following instances words were transformed into
ī-stems (§ 253):
a) dual neuters; cf. the parts of the earth in Avestan;
b) feminine *i*-stems. (Of course, this might have happened to
   a form *paθi-*, if this was feminine.)
c) feminine stems in a consonant; WACKERNAGEL mentions three
   instances: *purī-* 'town', *dvārī-* 'door', Prakr. *disī-* 'Ge-
   gend';
d) through analogy (*jyótiṣī-mant-*, *ulkuṣī́-mant-*) rare;

e) a compound ending in a root noun in *-ī-*: *padavī-*.
It will be noted that none of these instances is parallel
to our case. c comes closest, but the word for 'path' was
originally masculine.

Thus I conclude that it is rather improbable that our
word was transformed into an *ī*-stem.

4. If the word was not an *ī*-stem, it must have been an
i-stem. One might then assume that *pa(n)θ-* was transferred
to the *i*-stems. Again I think that this is not very probable.

From Old Persian we have only few *i*-stems. I give them
here, as KENT's lists are not complete.

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masc. duvarθi-        fem. aršti-
      pasti-               bāji-
      θarmi-               išti-
      ?arašni-             šiyāti-
                           ?dipi-
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adj. *manauvi-* (or *-t-?*), *skauθi-, ušabāri-, yāumaini-*
names masc. *Arakadri-   Fravarti-*   fem. *Kāpišakāni-*
            Bāgayādi-   Imani-   *Sikayauvati- ((??))*
            Cišpi-   Pātišuvari-
            Dadarši-   θāigraci-

Of course our material is very limited, but it seems
allowed to conclude that *i*-stems were not very frequent, so
that it is not very probable that the word under discussion
was transferred to this category.

In Gatha-Avestan *i*-stems are predominantly feminine
(BEEKES 1988, 124f): 56 fem. against 9 masc. (and 10 adj.;
hysterodynamic are 4 masc. and 2 adj.). If this means that
the Iranian *i*-stems were predominantly feminine, it is un-
likely that a masculine word (the word for 'path') was trans-
formed into an *i*-stem.

The description of the Sanskrit i-stems (AiGr. II 2, 291-307) shows no productive category in which our word would fit.

I conclude that it is improbable that our word was transferred to the i-stems.

5. Elsewhere the word has been transformed in an organical way. In Slavic it became an i-stem on the basis of the accusative. Latin has $pons$, $pontis$, also on the basis of the accusative. Gr. πόντος, πάτος cannot be explained from the original inflection, but the transformation is trivial. The reshaping into an i-stem in Sanskrit has been mentioned above. There are n-stem forms in Sanskrit and Avestan, after $ádhvan$-, $advan$-. Late Avestan has $pa\theta\bar{a}$ (fem.), which will have been based upon the acc. $pant\bar{a}m$. Armenian perhaps had an i-stem from $-eh_1$- > $-i$-.

The alternative I would like to suggest is the following. In my Origins (1985) I argued that the nominative of the hysterodynamic nouns (the type $d\acute{a}tar$-) originally had the suffix in the zero grade, without ending (e.g. $*d\acute{e}h_3$-tr, not $*d\acute{e}h_3$-$t\bar{o}r$). The $\bar{a}$-stems belonged to this type, and here it is evident, to my mind, that the nominative had $-h_2$ down to the separate languages (1985, 20-37). This interpretation is now confirmed by Goth. $bandi$ (BEEKES 198x). The inflection of the h_1-stems, type Lat. $v\bar{a}t\bar{e}s$, to which $p\acute{a}nth\bar{a}\mathring{h}$ in all probability belonged, was also hysterodynamic, i.e. as follows; I add the forms of 'path' with their PII developments (cf. 1985, 37f):

$-h_2$	$-h_1$	$p\acute{e}nt$-h_1		> PII $*p\acute{a}nti$
$-eh_2$-m	$-eh_1$-m	$p(o)nt$-eh_1-m >		$*p(a)ntaHam$
$-h_2$-os	$-h_1$-os	pnt-h_1-os	>	$*patHas$

This nominative would have given $*panti$ in PII, and I suggest that Old Persian developed an i-stem from this nominative. This development would be exactly parallel to that of Skt.,

Av. *jani*- from $*g^w enh_2$. If this is correct, it would confirm the assumption of this type of nominative.

This explanation is extremely simple. If, as we saw above, *i*-stems in Iranian were predominantly feminine, it also explains that the word became feminine[1].

One might object that both Avestan and Sanskrit have in the nominative a reflex of *$*pant\bar{a}s$. As the laryngeal in final syllable was vocalised in PII, we would have to assume a paradigm *$*panti$, *$*pantaHam$ for PII, which was preserved down to Iranian and Indo-Aryan, and a nominative *$*pantaHs$ created independently in Avestan and Sanskrit[2], whereas Old Persian developed an *i*-stem. But the development is exactly parallel to that of *$*g^w enh_2$-, *$*g^w neh_2 s$, where Indo-Aryan and Avestan both developed full paradigms, perhaps independently.

In conclusion I would say that an $\bar{i}$-suffix is rather improbable; an (added) *i*-suffix is not very probable either; and an explanation of the *i*-stem from the nominative seems possible.

Notes:

1) A parallel is provided by the Slavic languages. Here Russ. *put'* is the only masculine *i*-stem.
2) This is also the opinion of VAILLANT, Gramm. comp. 2. 1,173: "et c'est sur acc. -*ehm̥* donnant -*ām* en indo-iranien qu'a été refait nom. -*ās*." Unhappily the author does not say what the original nominative was in his view.

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